

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

2nd April 2009

1. Weight on Your Shoulders

The British Chambers of Commerce has just published its 2009 Burdens Barometer. It shows that the cumulative cost to business of new regulation since 1998 has risen to £76.81 billion, a rise of over £10 billion from last year. There is evidence of a dawning realization that loading cost after cost on British companies is damaging our competitive position as there are now 18 new laws which produce a net cost saving of £1.4 billion. The overall cost remains shockingly high and increasing which must constitute a significant cause of business failure. The two costliest burdens are the Working Time Regulations 1999 which has cost business £17.8 bn to date with a recurring annual charge of £1.8 bn The Vehicle Excise Duty (Reduced Pollution) (Amendment) Regulations 2000 (EU Pollution Directive 98/69/EC) is next in line as to date it has cost British business £10.4 bn with a recurring price of £1.2 bn. The visit this week of President Barack Obama of the USA leads us to reflect on the words of one previous US President, Calvin Coolidge. When asked how he was going to manage to take a Summer holiday and still be free to authorize new legislation, he replied famously, "We have enough laws already, I don't need to sign any more". We think he had a point. For a free copy of the 2009 Burdens Barometer, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Business Burdens 2009".

2. Calling All Artists

This Chamber has been offered the unique opportunity to invite a Kent artist to the Figurative Art festival due to take place in France at Clochemerle in the heart of the Beaujolais area. Attracting 20,000 visitors during the three-day period, the festival has traditionally provided an exceptional opportunity to sell original works to an interested clientele. The festival Director, Allain Renoux, restricts the number of artists allowed to exhibit and thus ensures that the artists invited get the attention they deserve. If any reader of the Thanet & East Kent Insider has a favourite Kent-based artist to recommend, please ask him or her to email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line Clochemerle Arts Festival.

3. Winston Churchill Fellowship

This Chamber has been asked by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust to highlight the grants available for overseas travel in the following categories: Business & Finance, Education & Vocational Travel, Environment Food & Rural Areas, Science Engineering & Enterprise and The Arts & Older People. There is over £500,000 in the pot. Grants average around £5,500 and usually cover a stay overseas of 4 to 8 weeks. The closing date for completed applications is 6 October 2009. If you have an idea for a project that will benefit the community and requires you to travel overseas, the Churchill Memorial Trust would like to hear from you. No qualifications are needed but all applicants must be over 18 years old, a resident of the UK and a British Citizen. For details, tel: 020 7584 9315 or email office@wcmf.org.uk.

4. Winning Mentality

On Friday of last Week, Kent Cricket Club hosted a lunch to celebrate the Playing for Success initiative which has inspired school children to adopt a healthier life style. There are four participating centres; Margate Football Club, Kent Spitfires Study Centre at Canterbury, the Fleet Learning Zone at Ebbsfleet United football ground and Buckmore Park Kart Circuit where Lewis Hamilton learned his trade. Sponsored by Kent County Council, the Playing for Success programme has acquired an enviable reputation for enthusing hitherto recalcitrant learners with a fun packed programme that combines literacy, numeracy and computer classes with opportunities to meet sporting stars on their home patch. Speaking at the lunch were Kent cricketers Geraint Jones and James Tredwell, who both admitted to being totally convinced by the project. Adding his voice to the support was Kent-born athlete, Ian Wynne, an Olympic medalist in the 2004 Athens games who gave a graphic account of how he had spent 16 years in training to prepare for an Olympic 500m Kayak final race lasting 1 minute 38 seconds. Claiming the rapt attention of the assembled audience of mostly overweight business executives, Ian explained how the night before his Olympic final he had helped a female pentathlete unload her equipment from the Olympic village bus and in doing so had slipped and severely damaged his ankle. From being the favourite for the gold medal, he suddenly became a likely candidate for a swift return home and a lifetime of acute disappointment. Anyone who remembers the final will recall that Ian did make it to the start line with a heavily-strapped ankle and powered his way to the finish to snatch the bronze medal position in the final few strokes. After retiring from Olympic competition, Ian continued his ferocious paddling to set a world record in 2007 for crossing the Channel in a canoe. His time of 2 hours 59 minutes from Dover to Calais stunned the boat world and caused a few ferry captains to review their propulsion systems. Integrating sports stars into the curriculum to inspire children with the will to succeed will bring enormous benefits to our community and shows again where Kent County Council has got it right. For details contact Andy Moore at Andy.Moore@kent.gov.uk or see the website at www.playingforsuccesskent.co.uk

5. Load of Rubbish

What might be a load of rubbish to you is useful raw material to W Brazil & Bros, MPL Waste Management and Thanet Waste. These three remarkable companies collect and recycle almost every type of commercial waste, reducing your costs and increasing your storage space. MPL has announced a special offer for Chamber members. For just £27.50 per week, MPL will site a hydraulic baling machine on your premises which can compress up to 90 kg of cardboard and plastic. The company will then collect this from you and recycle 100% of the bale. Keep your staff and customers happy with your enviable environmental credentials and save time, money and space. For further details, contact these champions of East Kent's green economy direct; Matt Lee at MPL Waste Management tel: 01843 232584; Spencer Ray at TW Services tel: 01843 821500; Ann Brazil at W Brazil & Bros tel: 01843 864162.

6. House Prices

The monthly rise in house prices for March 2009 of 0.9% announced earlier today by the Nationwide Building Society follows the announcement by the Bank of England in February of a 1.9% rise in mortgage applications. Whether this trend will be sustained is open to debate but it represents good news for the owners of freehold property and constitutes the first sign in 16 months of an upturn in the residential market. Estate agencies in membership are well equipped to advise buyers and sellers on where the best deals are available. For details contact Lovetts tel: 01843 861455; Oakwood Homes Estate Agencies Ltd tel: 01843 221133 or Terence Painter Properties tel: 01843 866866. If you wish to contact a Letting specialist, we recommend Let Direct tel: 01843 224808 and Right Location Settings tel: 01843 599666.

7. Stress and ACE

The Academy for Chief Executives met earlier this week in the business suite at the Express by Holiday Inn at Minster for the second session of the East Kent chapter. Guest speaker for the morning was Sue Firth, the celebrated TV business psychologist who specializes in advising senior executives on how to handle stress. She outlined the chemical effects of sudden exposure to stress and why our bodies produce adrenaline, cortisol and serotonin. Sue explained how 18 months ago it was discovered that the heart reacts to the onset of danger before the brain. The human body requires a primitive binary distinction between choosing "flight or fight". Giving the example of the frozen face of George Bush when he was first informed of the attack on the New York World Trade Centre, Sue recommended coping in such extreme situations by taking 6 deep breaths per minute with a pause before each intake. Thanks to a willing volunteer and the assistance of a linked computer, she demonstrated the remarkable effect on the heartbeat of this simple technique. As the recession is in full swing, correct decision-making under stressful conditions is at a premium. With further examples, Sue showed how business performance can be improved if senior managers manage their stress levels through a balanced diet of rest and relaxation in which good humour, music, sport and other physical activities can play a key part. The Academy for Chief Executives (ACE) in East Kent offers a supportive non-executive board to senior staff where confidences are fully respected and the collective experience of the group can offer solutions to seemingly intractable difficulties before they become insurmountable problems. For details of ACE, email jo.gideon@chiefexecutive.com or telephone 07957 151787.

8. Easter Break

This is the last edition of the Thanet & East Kent Insider before Easter. Publication will continue after the break. Chamber members are invited to send any news items, contributions or special offers to admin@tekc.co.uk as per normal. Full Chamber services will be maintained over the holiday period and the out-of-hours helpline remains unchanged.

9. Cricket, Names and How to Acquire Instant Prestige

Martin Siggers is scheduled to enjoy a benefit season at Kent County Cricket club. Siggers is a bowler who has matured wonderfully well in Kent. Why is his progress special? He has clearly benefited from having a ready-made nickname. Anyone familiar with the traditions of cricket will know that it is almost a statutory obligation for well-known players and associates to have a nickname; preferably one that ends in "ers". Thus the doyen of cricket commentators, Brian Johnston, was endlessly referenced as "Johnners". Mike Atherton, a former England cricket captain, presented a clear case for being "Athers" and as such he is universally celebrated or affectionately pilloried, depending on whether you come from Middlesex or Australia. As with most cultural norms, there are exceptions. The extraordinary facial growth on the visage of the late BBC scorer, Bill Frindall, determined that he should be known around the world as "The Bearded Wonder" rather than "Frinders" which is also too close in sound to a well-known brand of fish fingers. Some might argue that Siggers had an unfair advantage in life, but, as a true entrepreneur, he has profited from it. After working his way through the ranks at Derbyshire, Essex, Leicestershire, Norfolk and Durham, Siggers joined Kent in 1998. He has enjoyed a successful career culminating in caps for England in 2003 and 2004. This Chamber considers that any aspiring cricketers might like to take note of the importance of having a name ending in "ers". A young bowler with the legal name 'John Robertson' could consider a change to "Robbers", although this could attract undue attention in matches against the Metropolitan Police. By extension, if you have ever thought of acquiring a personalized number plate and have found the charges by the DVLC exorbitant, an alternative is to change your name to match the initials of your current vehicle. For instance, if your name is Roger Smith, you play club cricket for Chislet and you own a clapped out Ford Skoda with the registration number JLM 683K, you could immediately acquire prestige, the attention of England selectors and envious glances from supermodels by changing your name to John Lewis Mowers. You might also find a job in the off-season

demonstrating machinery for one of our newest Chamber members, the Country Mower Centre, tel. 01227 772779. After all, once you have joined the Thanet & East Kent Chamber, the grass is not allowed to grow under your feet.

10. Sponsors

We are grateful to Adecco Recruitment, tel: 01843 609292; Girlings Solicitors, tel: 01843 220274 and Express By Holiday Inn tel: 01843 820250 for sponsoring this edition of the Thanet & East Kent Insider.



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***It's happening now, it's happening in Thanet & East Kent.
For details of membership, email admin@tekco.co.uk.***