

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

18th June 2009

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High Speed 1

This special edition of the Thanet & East Kent Insider celebrates the first public operation earlier today of the High Speed rail service from St Pancras to Ashford. The new link promises to boost regeneration in East Kent.

1. Who Was On The Train?

Southeastern had invited "members of the media and key stakeholders" to this momentous occasion billed as "the first major railway project for 100 years". Included in the select guest list was the former British Ambassador to Japan, Sir Stephen Gommersall, who is now Hitachi's Chief Executive for Europe. He was joined by Chiaki Ueda, Managing Director of Hitachi Rail Maintenance (UK) Ltd, as well as Dr Stephen Ladyman MP for South Thanet and Gwyn Prosser MP for Dover. Philip Carter, Chairman of Shepway Economic Regeneration Partnership, ensured that the interests of Folkestone and Lydd Airport were present. The advantages to Kent business were clearly outlined in the welcome pack provided. Just in case anyone did not get the message, Paul Wookey, Chief Executive of Locate In Kent, was on hand to ensure that no potential investment opportunity was lost. Local government was well represented from one end of Kent to the other with the leader of Dartford Borough Council, Cllr Jeremy Kite, as enthusiastic as the Leader of Dover District Council, Cllr Paul Watkins. Southeastern's Managing Director, Charles Horton, was particularly proud that this inaugural run was taking place nearly six months ahead of schedule.

2. How Long Did It Take?

In his formal speech before departure, Charles Horton promised that the train would leave on time and would take no longer than the scheduled 37 minutes. In fact, from the closing of the carriage doors at London St Pancras to the opening of the same at Ashford International, just 29 minutes elapsed.

3. How Long Will My Journey Take From East Kent?

The full timetable comes into effect on 13 December 2009. The latest published current and projected journey times are:

	Now	From 13 Dec 2009	Saving
Ashford	84	37	47
Birchington	105	86	19
Broadstairs	118	90	28
Canterbury West	110	59	51
Dover	116	69	47
Faversham	72	65	7
Folkestone West	99	55	44
Herne Bay	96	77	19
Margate	111	91	20
Ramsgate	129	80	49
Sittingbourne	69	56	13
Whitstable	88	71	17

4. Tech Spec

Each train consists of six air-conditioned passenger saloons or what we used to call carriages in the days of British Rail. There will be 338 seats available in all in configurations of 2 + 2. Including any standing passengers, the trains are licensed to carry a maximum of 508 passengers. Two trains can be linked to double the capacity. Top speed is 140 mph on the special track and 100 mph elsewhere. The distance from the Channel Tunnel to St Pancras is 68 miles of which 16 miles will be in a tunnel. Power to the Hitachi Class 395 train comes from overhead cables carrying 25,000 volts on the High Speed section and 750

volts via a conductor rail on the standard lines. Closed circuit television will monitor all passengers who will also be protected from accidents by the TVM 430/KVB train protection system.

5. How Many Trains Will Be Available?

There will be 29 train sets ready before December 2009. The original order was for 28 which would have excluded Dover. Steve Ladyman, then Transport Minister, pressed the case for an extra train in order to service Dover. Much to the delight of his Labour Party colleague, Gwyn Prosser MP for Dover, the Treasury relented. Following extensive works to Shakespeare Cliff tunnel the route to Dover is now secured. There are currently 18 train sets in Ashford. The remaining 11 left the Hitachi factory in Japan on 13 June and should arrive in August 2009.

6. Must We Wait Until December?

The short answer is "no". From 29th June 2009, Southeastern will be running a "Preview Timetable" which will operate from Monday to Friday with departures from Ashford International at 0648 hrs, 0713 hrs and 0748 hrs. Return journeys will leave London St Pancras at 1737 hrs, 1837 hrs and 1926 hrs.

7. What About Other Train Services in East Kent?

Hitachi is contracted to Southeastern to provide Class 465 traction units, what we used to call locomotives, in a replacement programme that will see a full fleet of 97 trains operating before April 2010. Such is the quality of the Japanese engines that Wayne Jenner, Southeastern's Engineering Director, expects reliability to improve by a factor of 10. As he put it, "We expect the modifications to virtually eliminate traction failures", although presumably the new tractor units will not eliminate split infinitives.

8. What Ever Happened To CTRL?

The Channel Tunnel Rail Link designation has been changed to High Speed 1 or HS 1. New lines will presumably become HS 2, HS 3 and so on. The editor of the Thanet & East Kent Insider enjoyed a fruitful discussion with Chiaki Ueda which included the importance of finding brand names that are suitable for a British clientele. Japanese companies sometimes find that the product names in their domestic market do not always transfer easily to Europe. One of Japan's best selling soft drinks is Calpis which, bearing in mind the colour of the liquid in the can, is not the most appealing name to a British consumer; especially not to a dairy farmer.

9. Why Is Ashford The Main Beneficiary?

In 2003, Ashford was identified by government as one of four key growth areas in the South East. Current plans allow for 28,000 new jobs and 31,000 new homes. Most East Kent towns will benefit to a greater or lesser extent from HS 1, Although passengers who usually embark at Margate may find that their journey time to the City of London will not improve, the majority of passengers who travel via Ashford should see a clear benefit. This Chamber has been promised a meeting with the Marketing Director of Southeastern to ensure that the interests of Easy Kent coastal towns are fully represented in the final timetable. We are mindful that a fast train service not only takes our residents to London but can bring London-based consumers to our retailers and service providers.

10. Thanet Off-shore Wind Farm

Bookings for the business breakfast "Thanet Off-shore Wind Farm: Investing Now, Investing In Thanet" scheduled for 23rd June 2009 are now closed for non-members of the Chamber. The latest news on this £800m project and the benefits for local companies will be explained by the project Director, Ole Bigum Nielsen of Vattenfall. A few places have been kept in reserve for any Chamber of Commerce member who would like to make a last minute booking. Email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Thanet Off-shore Wind Farm" before 1230 hrs on Monday 22 June 2009.

11. G Casino Calls

Chamber member G Casino of Margate Road, Broadstairs informs us that it will be hosting a corporate night on the first Tuesday of every month. For £6.95 per person, you can enjoy a fish and chip supper and a drink from the bar. If you have an evening free on 7th July, call Shelley on 01843 579999 for details. A Women's Networking lunch is scheduled at G Casino for 9th July. Women in business are invited to join their counterparts in other companies for an informal get together. A three-course lunch is priced at £11.95 and includes a glass of wine. Call Shelley to book.

12. Doctor, Doctor

News has reached the Chamber of a new economic reality which brought a Bulgarian plumber into a surgery in East Kent. Faced with a seriously leaking tap on one Saturday morning last month, Doctor A consulted his local trade directory and called the emergency plumbing service listed. Within the hour a plumber duly arrived; neat, tidy, punctual and with a full bag of tools. Within twelve minutes the plumber had fixed the leaking tap, cleaned the spilled water and left the surgery spick and span, just as the Doctor ordered. Impressed by the speed and efficiency of the workman, Doctor A engaged him in conversation and discovered that his plumber was in fact a Bulgarian by the name of Miroslav, which apparently means "peace and glory" in his native language. After congratulating Miroslav on his excellent work, Doctor A asked for the bill and was mortified to be faced with an invoice for £82.60. Doctor A could not believe his eyes. He spluttered, "You have just charged me £82.50 for just 12 minutes of labour. That's more than I am paid and I am a fully trained medical doctor." Miroslav reflected for a moment and then replied, "Yes, I know and it is more than I was paid when I was a doctor in Sophia." With that the dutiful plumber picked up his tools and departed, leaving the doctor in peace but not necessarily in glory.

13. Sponsors

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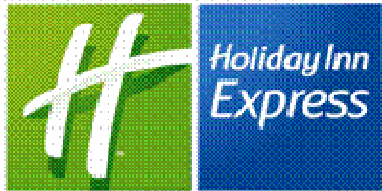


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