

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

25th June 2009

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1. Danish For Breakfast

On Tuesday of this week, the Chamber played host to Ole Bigum Nielsen, the Danish project Director of Thanet Off-shore Wind Farm (TOW). To a full house over breakfast at the Kent International Hotel in Ramsgate, Ole outlined the progress to date and the benefits to local businesses of this £800m project. Although the name Vattenfall may not be familiar to many UK businesses, the parent company has a turnover of £15.6bn and is the fifth largest producer of electricity in Europe. TOW is the largest of 15 wind power projects in the Vattenfall project pipeline, accounting for 300 of the planned 660MW output from UK off-shore installations. The construction of the TOW 100 wind turbines involves anchoring monopiles to the sea bed and topping them with transition pieces. As a precaution during the construction phase, Vattenfall has stationed a vessel on the perimeter of the wind farm to warn any ships that approach too close. The first monopile was fixed on 20th March 2009, just five months after Vattenfall acquired the project. Ole declared that more than 38 are now in place. The first transition piece was added on 19 May and at the time of the breakfast meeting, 19 were already in position. The next stage of the operation is the addition of the tower sections, nacelles, hubs and blades which will start at the end of the year. The accelerated programme has a tight timetable that requires the turbines to be producing electricity by October 2010. Around 200 workers are expected to be employed in the coming year with a permanent maintenance team of 20 technicians to remain during the life span of the turbines. Vattenfall is engaged in discussions with Crown Estates about the possibility of tendering for an additional TOW of similar dimensions to follow on from the current project. This Chamber will shortly be arranging a Vattenfall Symposium for any contractors not already involved who wish to trade directly with the company. Any chamber member wishing to participate is invited to email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Vattenfall Symposium"

2. Tech Spec & Main Contractors

If you are not technically minded, skip the next sentence. Techies will take delight in knowing that 100 Vestas V90 wind turbines with a total capacity of 300 MW when in full operational mode will increase the UK's wind energy production by 30%, generating enough electricity to power 240,000 households. TOW is located 12 kilometers from Foreness Point off the Thanet coast. The seven main contractors employed are A2SEA A/S of Denmark, MPI, SIF and Smulders of Holland, Prysmian of Italy, Siemens of Germany and SubOcean of Aberdeen. Vattenfall has publicly declared its intention to "employ as many local British contractors as possible" and the Chamber will be working closely with the company to ensure that the services and products of appropriate Chamber members are brought to the attention of key decision-makers at Vattenfall.

3. Reduce Your Costs

We have been advised that some companies have energy contracts due for renewal in October 2009, the anniversary of deregulation. Many of these contracts will have a 90-day notice period which if not invoked leads to roll-over continuance. Our understanding is that energy companies have a statutory obligation to remind their corporate clients of the contract renewal date. We have learned of cases in the past when the notification has not been received. The users have been denied the opportunity to review their energy costs which have therefore remained at uncompetitive levels. We are aware that it is not practical to contest every invoice before payment. In view of the surge in utility charges and the disparity in prices available from national suppliers, we do advise all members to review what they are paying for their electricity, gas and telephones to ensure that they are getting the best deal and do not commit unwittingly to higher prices than necessary. One member of the Thanet & East Kent Chamber specializes in utility review and we have heard nothing but good reports about his services. A recent client reduced telephone charges by over 50% and another was able to claim a large cheque for previous overcharging by the electricity company. For a review without obligation, contact Martyn Young at Atlantic Business Resources by email to myoung@atlanticbr.co.uk or by telephone to 0781 353 7456 or 08456 185088

4. Blots on the landscape

News has reached this Chamber of a study by English Heritage published last Tuesday which analyses the state of conservation areas of which there are 9,300 across the country. Civic societies have listed the main blots on the landscape in our towns and cities under review as follows: unsympathetic replacement doors and windows (83% of conservation areas), poorly maintained roads and pavements (60%), the amount of street clutter (45%), loss of boundary walls, fences or hedges

(43%), unsightly satellite dishes (38%), the effects of traffic calming or traffic management (36%), alterations to front elevations, roofs and chimneys (34%), unsympathetic new extensions (31%), the impact of advertisements (23%) and neglected green spaces (18%).

5. Good News

We offer our congratulations to David Atkey and his team at Academy FM for receiving the blessing of Ofcom to press ahead with plans for a community radio station based at the Marlowe Academy. Roger De Haan, a benefactor without parallel in East Kent, has generously donated radio equipment. The station is set to give genuine work experience to pupils from a wide range of schools and community groups in Thanet who will relish the opportunity to play a full part in the management and operation of live broadcasts. This Chamber looks forward to contributing fully to the successful launch of Academy FM and welcomes the addition to the information, education and entertainment available shortly to the Thanet and East Kent community.

6. Golf

If you believe as Sir Winston Churchill did that "Golf is a game whose aim it is to hit a very small ball into an even smaller hole with weapons singularly ill-designed for the purpose" then you may not wish to enter a team for the 2009 Chamber Golf Tournament which will take place at the prestigious Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club on 2 October 2009. Teams of 4 players compete in a variety of competitions. For the first time in this annual event, groups will also compete for the Ray Haines Memorial Trophy, donated by Chamber member the Walpole Bay Hotel (tel: 01843 221703) to commemorate the contribution to the East Kent business community of the late Chief Executive of the Dover District Chamber of Commerce. For details of availability and further information, telephone Graham Rayner on 07899 87353507 or email mail@dovertchamber.co.uk.

7. Five Years On

Earlier this evening, Chamber member The Fire Strategy Company (FSC) held a social event at the Manston Phoenix Club at the Defence Fire Training and Development Centre to celebrate its 5th anniversary. Established in 2004 in a back room, the company has grown rapidly to become a leading national player in the proactive management of risk. Key to the expansion has been a client-centred approach that takes full advantage of the facilities available at Manston. Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) accreditation just received to operate courses such as "Crew Commander Managing Incidents" means that FSC becomes only the second such establishment in the UK, adding further weight to its international reputation for Aviation, Fire and Rescue Training. In a formal speech during the evening, managing director Russ Timpson paid handsome tribute to his staff, his banker John Kirk at NatWest, the Station Commandant at Manston, Wing Commander Mark Watson, and most of all, his wife Ursula Timpson who all kept faith and belief in the company during the difficult early days. Inspired by the selfless devotion to duty of the 18 men of the Fleet Air Arm who flew from Manston in 1942 in the famed Channel Dash, FSC has adopted the Swordfish aircraft as a badge of pride to be awarded to successful graduates of its courses. In a final flourish, Russ presented Mark Watson with a framed print of a Swordfish aircraft in battle signed by one of the three survivors of raid. We wish Russ and his colleagues every success as the company continues to develop and offer serious career opportunities to school leavers and professionally-trained technicians from East Kent and beyond. For details of FSC courses, email enquiries@firestrategy.com or see the website at www.firestrategy.com.

8. Employment Tribunal? No, Thank You

Chamber member, Boys & Maughan, inform us that 3,420 age discrimination cases were accepted in the 11 months prior to February 2009 compared to 2,949 in the year to March 2008. There were a whopping 42,416 equal pay claims last year. Such cases can be time-consuming, frustrating and potentially ruinous for a small or medium-sized company. The best way to avoid such disasters is to stop them before they start. With this in mind, on Tuesday, 21st July 2009, the Chamber will be hosting a business breakfast revealing "Ten Top Tips to Keep You Out of an Employment Tribunal". Andrew Baker, a partner at Boys & Maughan, will offer some simple tips to protect you from falling victim to expensive litigation. For further information and a booking form, please send an email after 30th June to admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Employment Tribunal? No Thank You".

9. Timber Frame Houses

Chamber member OFP Ltd announces its new website at www.ofpltd.com. This company has built a loyal base of clients interested in timber frame homes. It can take less than 2 weeks to erect a typical 3-bedroomed home with consequent significant savings in labour and energy costs. An unusual feature of the OFP website is the invitation to "Ask Alastair". This section features answers to previous questions where the Managing Director, Alastair Narraway, provides a fascinating

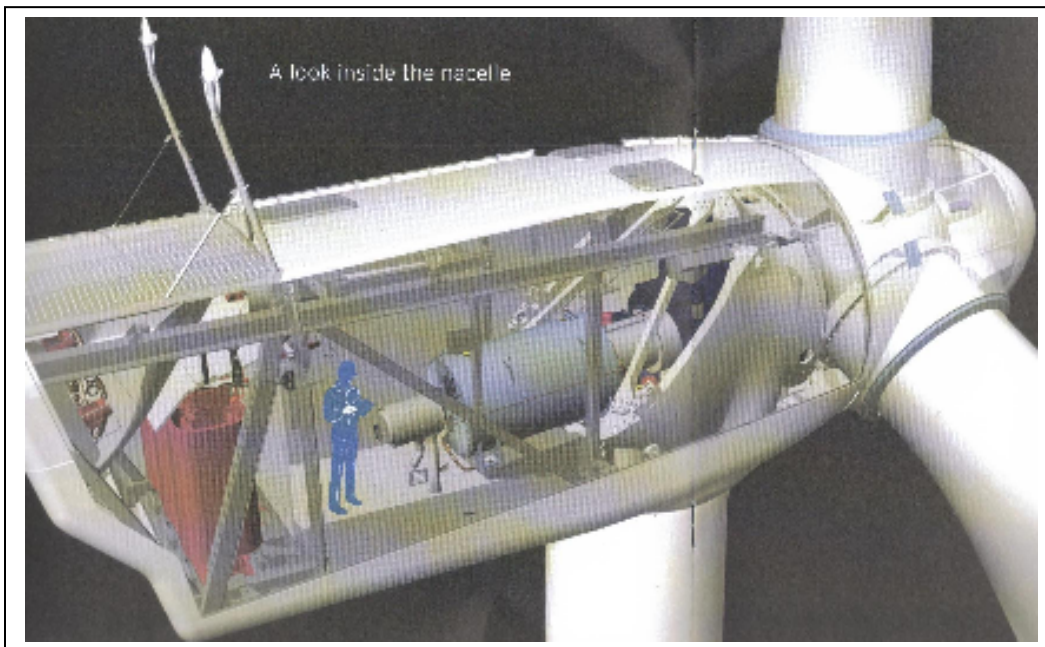
insight into timber engineering including the revelation that the Church of St Andrew at Greensted, Essex is made of wood and is still serviceable after nearly 1,000 years. This seems to answer more than adequately a common question about timber frame buildings, "Will it last?" Building professionals seem to think so, as satisfied clients include Coombs Construction, Walker Quality Homes and Quinn Estates. However, if you do purchase a home from OFP and after 1,000 years you are not entirely satisfied, give Alastair a call on tel: 01304 613298. You might like to check with the Chamber first, as his telephone number may have changed.

10. News from the Chambers

The Channel Chamber of Commerce is offering companies the opportunity to refresh their sales skills. Chief Executive, Peter Hobbs reports, "We are delighted to be able to offer members a new sales forum - brought to you in cooperation with Salespunch. We will be discussing topical sales related subjects openly with the aim of sharing experiences and views and attendees will leave with practical ideas on how to help increase sales revenues." The meeting will take place on Thursday 9th July in Folkestone and will last for two hours from 7.30 am. Bacon rolls and coffee will be served. The cost is £10 for members, £30 for non-members. For details, telephone 01303 270022 or look at the website at http://www.shepwaybc.co.uk/events_detail.php?id=288. The Dover Chamber of Commerce reports that a French entrepreneur is looking to launch a freight company in Dover. Convinced that the business start-up process is much simpler in the UK than in France, he has received a warm welcome and the support of government agencies more than pleased to assist an inward investor. The decline of the pound against the euro has diminished the differential between fuel costs in France and in England and the availability of good quality used tractor units at low prices have been key factors. Other Chamber members who operate Heavy Goods Vehicles are sanguine about his prospects, although there has apparently been an upturn in car parts freight as manufacturers seek to replenish stocks that have fallen to historic lows.

11. Inside a Wind Farm

The image below is reproduced by kind permission of Ole Bigum Nielsen of Vattenfall. It shows an artist's impression of the inside of a Vestas V90 wind turbine.



12. Keeping the Faith

If you are mired in the gloom of recession convinced that things could not be worse, then please take note of the experiences of one Doncaster Rovers supporter, the editor of this bulletin. Many football teams hover between different divisions as their results reflect the form of the players and the bank balances of the directors, but few teams plummet quite so dramatically as did Doncaster Rovers in the 1990s. In the 1998/99 season, this once proud club found itself scraping a living in the Conference having been relegated ignominiously from the football league. One story at the time quotes the manager leaving the Belle Vue stadium to visit a tobacconist around the corner to borrow 20p to telephone a supporter.

Clearly taking pity on the benighted coach, the shopkeeper replied, "Here's 40p, telephone them all". Allegedly an associate of the club commiserated with the owner in a conversation that went something along the lines of, "I'm sorry to hear about the fire at the stadium". To which the reply was, "Shhush for heaven's sake, it's next week." The truth is that the owner/chairman, Ken Richardson, was convicted on 5th March 1999 for conspiracy to commit arson, relating to the burning of the stadium in 1995. The task for Yorkshire Police was made relatively easy as the firestarter engaged had left his mobile telephone at the scene of the crime. In such circumstances, keeping faith with your team appeals more to the heart than the brain. Following the purchase of the club by John Ryan, the cosmetic surgery magnate who has two claims to fame via his most famous client Melinda Messenger, the team has undergone an amazing reversal of fortune. Successive promotions have brought Doncaster Rovers to a comfortable mid table position in the second tier of English football, the Championship. Die-hard fans will now be able to see the team compete week in, week out against the likes of Newcastle United and West Bromwich Albion. All of this just goes to show that now matter how bad things may look, they can indeed suddenly get better. Of course, it helps if you have a rich cosmetic surgeon to support your sagging bank balance.

13. Sponsors

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