

# Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

## Thanet & East Kent Insider

7<sup>th</sup> August 2009

### 1. Margate High Street

Margate High Street has featured on national news channels this week following a report by the Local Data Company that the seaside town has a retail vacancy rate of 25%, the highest in England and Wales. In short, the report claims that one in four shops in Margate is empty. The undoubted success of Westwood Cross and the equally evident ill effects of empty rates legislation have received much of the blame, but this Chamber has been heartened by some of the suggestions received to stimulate the retail sector. One caller recommended moving the market from Cecil Square to the High Street. As he put it, "This would not only stimulate footfall where it is most needed, but would free up an additional 40 parking spaces". Another recommendation was to allow free street parking on Saturdays. The new parking concessions in Dover Town Centre have been warmly received by local traders. From Sunday 24 May to 29 November 2009, Dover motorists are able to park without charge between 4.00pm and 6.00pm. Another suggestion put forward in all seriousness is to train High Street shopkeepers in how to deal with the media to present a more positive image in contrast to the "It's all miserable here so you wouldn't want to come into my shop" angle which so delights visiting journalists and reporters. The fact of the matter is that Margate is preparing itself to receive more tourists this year than last. An expected boom in UK holidays makes Margate well placed to take advantage of favourable pound/euro exchange rates. With the prestigious Turner Contemporary rising from the seafront, the promise of a fast train from London from next December and the recent go ahead for the first stage of a new Dreamland Heritage Amusement Park, Margate's famed blue-flagged beaches may find themselves welcoming a resurgence of visiting tourists fully appreciative of the town's unique charms.

### 2. Do you like Mondays on Kent TV?

Kent County Council is asking for your views on its internet-based broadband television channel, Kent TV. The trial period is coming to an end and KCC would like to receive some feedback from Kent residents on the service. In the words of television editor, John McGhie, "Kent TV is very much a community channel and so we genuinely want to know how well - or not! - we are doing." If you would like to give your views, email [info@kenttc.com](mailto:info@kenttc.com) within the next seven days. From email addresses already registered with Kent TV, there is a short survey available at <http://www.kenttv.com/survey>. The company is operated from Maidstone Television Studios by Bob Geldoff's, Ten Alps. We understand that group revenue for Ten Alps for the year to the end of March fell 1.5 per cent to £80.2m but net profit was up 7.1 per cent to £3m. Before the Band Aid concert made Bob Geldoff a household name, he plied his trade as lead singer of the Irish rock band, Boomtown Rats. Their first single was "Looking After No.1", but the band is best known for its track, "I don't like Mondays" which topped the charts for four weeks in July 1979. We trust that the £3m surplus at his company last year will help Mr Geldoff feel a little better about the start of the week.

### 3. House Prices

A report by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) released yesterday shows an increase in buyer demand with mortgage approvals reaching 55,000 per month "where they could stay until the end of year". Although "very weak by historical standards", the recovery provides some welcome news to established real estate companies in East Kent. Property is at the heart of our local economy. Owners of commercial and industrial premises have suffered the ill effects of the Rating (Empty Properties) Act 2007 which in the last financial year triggered the demolition of 15m sq ft of business buildings in England and Wales; many of which would have otherwise been available to start up enterprises at relatively low rents. The imposition of Home Information Packs on 14 December 2007 combined with a credit squeeze foreshadowed a severe downturn in the residential housing market from which it is only now showing signs of recovery. RICS expects around 75,000 completions on new houses this year. Although concerned by the impact of unemployment and an uncertain market, RICS's senior economist, Brigid O'Leary, concludes that "There has been a clear change in the housing market over the past few months and, as a result, it is unlikely that we will now see the kind of house price falls widely predicted at the start of the year." Chamber members happy to assist readers with residential housing are Cooke & Co of Cliftonville tel: 01843 231833; Fox's Removals & Transport of Margate tel: 01843 294422; FLS Tenant Referencing Services Limited of Canterbury tel: 01227 719898; L & G Mortgage Solutions of Birchington tel: 01843 845600; Let Direct of Margate tel: 01843 224808; Oakwood Homes Estate Agencies Ltd of Margate 01843 221133; Right Location Lettings of Ramsgate 01843 599666; Terence Painter Properties of Broadstairs tel: 01843 866866. Commercial property enquiries can be directed to the following; Cockett Henderson Chartered Surveyors of Broadstairs tel: 01843 861964; Commercial Group Properties of Manston tel: 01843 860866; CP Simons of Bovey Tracey tel: 01626 833170; Evan Business Centre of Canterbury tel: 07753 799333; Gora Developments of London tel: 0207 637 4565; Harrison & Co of Margate tel: 01843 291348; Hemispheres Property Consultants of Ramsgate tel: 01843 596663; Inter Scaffolding of Margate tel: 01843 291045; MPG Properties of Ramsgate tel: 01843 596224; South East Surveys of Broadstairs tel: 01843 603325; Standen Contracts & Groundwork of Canterbury tel: 01227 712514; TCB Property Maintenance of Margate tel: 01843 228484; Urban Surveying & Design Ltd of Broadstairs tel: 01843 867507.

#### **4. Health & Safety & Posters**

Jon Cleverdon of Chamber member J Cleverdon Limited, tel: 01843 866599, advises us that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is warning businesses not to be misled into buying unnecessary and expensive copies of the new health and safety law poster. Jon informs us that employers have a duty to display the poster prominently in the workplace or provide employees with a copy of the pocket card version. There is evidence of misleading promotions wrongly claiming that the old posters must be replaced immediately and that the new law poster should be displayed on every notice board within business premises. This is incorrect and employers could be led to believe that they are not meeting their legal requirements. Employers can verify if they have a genuine HSE law poster by checking the unique, serially numbered hologram on each poster. Under HSE Information for Employees Regulations, businesses have five years to switch to the new poster and pocket cards, so they must be replaced by 5 April 2014. Employers displaying the old poster after 6 April 2009 must ensure it is legible and that the addresses of the enforcing authority and the employment medical advisory service are up to date. The new law poster, pocket cards and Easy Read and Large Print formats can be ordered from HSE Books on: 01787 881165. The pocket card and Easy Read and Large Print formats can also be downloaded free of charge from the HSE web site at <http://www.hse.gov.uk>. This website is also a useful source of information on some operational requirements such as rest breaks. For instance, HSE tells us that a worker is entitled to an uninterrupted break of 20 minutes when daily working time is more than six hours. It should be a break in working time and should not be taken either at the start, or at the end, of a working day.

#### **5. What are dilapidations?**

The Chamber received two interesting questions about a commercial lease last week. "What are dilapidations? Should I be worried about them?" The answer to the second question is probably "yes". Dilapidations are breaches of a covenant in a lease to repair a building. Usually the tenant has an obligation to ensure that the building leased must be left in an acceptable state of repair for the next tenant. A leaking roof or a broken window are two obvious examples of breaches but the issue can be much more complicated. As in most property matters, it pays to use professionals. We have been advised by Chamber member South East Surveys that from its eleven offices across the South East it can arrange a schedule of dilapidations, valuation of property assets and a wide range of allied services from its chartered surveying practice. For more details, contact South East Surveys direct by email to [broadstairs@southeastssurveys.co.uk](mailto:broadstairs@southeastssurveys.co.uk) or telephone 01843 603325.

#### **6. Visa Rockets**

Our friends at HSBC have informed the Chamber that Visa Europe has reported that spending on its Business Cards increased year-on-year by 11% in the second quarter of 2009. The figures also showed that transactions increased by 19% to a record level with travel and temporary staff recruitment leading the way.

#### **7. A Fast Drag**

Mark Spray of Chamber member Invicta Motors tells us that he has been much impressed by a local Drag Racing Team which maintains two vehicles plus an ex-American ambulance. He wonders if any readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider know of a storage facility where the vehicles could be kept in return for advertising and promotional opportunities at the events the team attends. Any enthusiast excited by spinning wheels and extreme performance machines should contact the team direct by telephoning Tom or Alex, tel: 07976 973494. If you find travelling to work and going shopping to be more in your line, Mark would be pleased to advise you on purchasing a new car. In order to take advantage of the Car Scappage Scheme, your old banger must have been registered in the UK before 31<sup>st</sup> July 1999. Subject to certain conditions, you could then qualify for a £2,000 discount on the purchase of a new car. The scheme is scheduled to finish by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 at the latest and will probably finish sooner as the limit of 300,000 eligible claimants is rapidly approaching. For details, give Mark a call at Invicta Motors, Westwood, tel: 01843 853555 ext 1704.

#### **8. Locate In Kent Reports**

We are grateful to Dr Richard Matthewman of Locate in Kent for contacting the Chamber with news of the Redundancies and Investments Monitor for the three months to June 2009. Based on data brought to the attention of Locate in Kent, it shows a decline of 10% in the number of investments and a 19% drop in the number of new jobs in Kent & Medway compared to the same period the previous year.

#### **9. A Change of Wind**

News has reached the Chamber of an incident at an East Kent School during a music lesson. The recorder teacher was trying manfully to teach his class the basics of melody and was becoming increasingly frustrated that his 14 year-old students did not share his own talent for playing the instrument. The class was getting distinctly restless and the teacher's instructions more and more frenzied. As he wrote some simple notes on the backboard, the teacher turned around suddenly to find a boy on the front row pulling a face with particularly distorted features. This was the last straw. Finally, losing his temper, the teacher shrieked, "Jones, you stupid boy. When I was 14 years old, I was told that if I pulled an ugly face and the wind changed, the face would stay with me". With a nonchalant innocence, Jones replied, "Well sir, you cannot say you were not warned". That Jones will go far.

## 10. Our Sponsors

The Thanet & East Kent Insider is grateful for the support and sponsorship provided by Girlings, Express By Holiday Inn and Adecco. Girlings Solicitors has been managing the legal affairs of commercial and private clients for over a century. Twenty-six partners and one hundred and twenty members of staff ensure a comprehensive range of services from the local offices in Ashford, Canterbury, Folkestone, Herne Bay and Margate. Offices in France and Spain complement specialist departments for charities, individuals and companies. For details, telephone 01843 297828. Express By Holiday took on the daunting task of restoring the former Prospect Inn at Minster. The result is a spectacular hotel that combines the best of Oliver Hill's 1930s design with ultra modern facilities and technological support. Conveniently located for business guests and holiday makers in East Kent, the meeting rooms and 105 bedrooms are available at competitive prices throughout the year. For details, telephone 01843 820250. Adecco is the world's largest HR solutions company offering a comprehensive service of temporary and contract staffing, permanent recruitment, outsourcing, outplacement, career services, training and consulting. Officially designated as a 2009 British Superbrand, Adecco is represented in Thanet and Dover by its Broadstairs office, tel: 01843 609292.



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***It's happening now, it's happening in Thanet & East Kent.***  
**For details of membership, email [admin@tekc.co.uk](mailto:admin@tekc.co.uk)**

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