

# Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

## Thanet & East Kent Insider

11<sup>th</sup> September 2009

### 1. Business Rates and Breakfast

On Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009, this Chamber will be hosting a business breakfast at Salmestone Grange, Margate. The main speaker will be a senior official at the government's Valuation Office Agency. He will explain the current policy on setting business rates for shops, offices, factories and commercial premises in Thanet and East Kent. In addition, he will outline the plans for a revaluation exercise due to take place in the next three months which will fix standing charges for the period from April 2010. This breakfast meeting will be of interest to any company paying business rates. In addition, after the meeting, Chamber members will be able to discuss their own charges direct with one of the key decision-makers. The government's revaluation exercise will be based on land values in April 2008, i.e. before the peak of the recession and so it is important that the VOA is aware of particular circumstances in certain areas. If you are interested in how to reduce your cost basis for five years from 1 April 2010, this event is for you. Email [admin@tekc.co.uk](mailto:admin@tekc.co.uk) with the subject line "Chamber Breakfast 22 September 2009" for details. Chamber members benefit from the event sponsorship of MPG Properties. Fee: £10.00 for members, £15.00 for non-members, breakfast included.

### 2. Margate High Street

At a meeting yesterday hosted by the Margate Renewal Partnership, developers gathered to give their views on how the retail area with the highest percentage of empty shops in Britain can be improved; Margate High Street. Discussions focused on parking, relocating a street market, usage of the former Marks & Spencer building, street crime and footfall. The optimism for the future was based on a series of initiatives that is already bearing fruit. A drop in reported crime and new grant aid to be awarded to improve the external appearance of shops should help matters. The plans now at an advanced stage to redevelop the Arlington House site to include a Tesco outlet were featured in a press release of yesterday by the Thanet District Council Deputy Leader, Cllr Roger Latchford. He declared that, "We want to ensure that Arlington House residents, who are entitled to a say about how the appearance and quality of their homes, are consulted about how their surroundings are to be improved." We understand that the development might include a 50,000 sq ft area for a medium-size Tesco supermarket. Speaking exclusively to the Thanet & East Kent Insider later, Derek Harding of Margate Renewal Partnership said, "Margate is on the verge of some very welcome and exciting times. The town has been in decline for many years but we believe it is starting to turn the corner". David Kinnear of Margate Town Partnership echoed these words in another exclusive to the Insider. "Because of the struggles Margate has faced in the past, inward investors now have unique opportunities for developing projects in the town".

### 3. Turner Contemporary Gallery

Visitors to the site of the new £17.4m Turner Contemporary Gallery on Margate seafront can at last see the building appearing above the surface. Construction work began on 19 December 2008 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2010. As it is expected to host some extremely valuable paintings, the building will undergo extensive trials before opening formally around May 2011.

### 4. Average Wages

Figures released by the Office for National Statistics reveal that the median gross weekly pay for an employee at a workplace in Thanet is £384.40. Interestingly enough, the same methodology reveals that the median gross pay for a resident of Thanet is £42.40 per week more at £428.80. From this, we deduce that there is an incentive for companies to locate their workplace in Thanet in terms of reduced salary costs. On the other hand, a resident of Thanet is tempted to work outside the district in order to receive a higher average wage. [NOMIS Dec 2008].

### 5. Attracting Skilled Workers

An oft-quoted difficulty faced by some firms on the East Kent coast is attracting skilled workers. A visit to the government's databank reveals the extent of the problem. Thanet adult residents with a qualification at NVQ3 and above, the equivalent of 2 or more A-levels, number 34.8%, just over one in three. In the South East as a whole, half the population is formally qualified to this level, to be precise 50.8%. [NOMIS Dec 2008]. This may at first appear to be a significant barrier to inward investment. In fact, local companies are fortunate that the private sector has supplied some first class employment agencies that can provide the skilled talents and qualities required. This Chamber is blessed with some quality-driven agencies who regularly receive warm compliments for the quality of their service. Interested parties are invited to contact one or more of the following: Big Fish Recruitment tel: 08450 602999; Morgan Jones Recruitment Consultants tel: 01843 604890; HRGO 01843 591798; ILM tel: 01843 861616; TNG tel: 01843 570250; Connexions tel: 01622 607578 and Adecco tel: 01843 609292.

### 6. ACE Results

The Academy for Chief Executives held its September meeting on Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> September 2009. The work of this splendid organisation complements the activities of a Chamber of Commerce. ACE offers a confidential forum where senior business leaders can discuss their worries and concerns and receive impartial, dispassionate and wholly practical advice from the collective wisdom and experience of fellow delegates. Harassed directors reluctant to reveal their secrets to their managers and staff and perhaps unwilling to burden their families with their business plans find that the comforting environment of a trusted non-executive advisory board can provide genuine guidance on their future corporate strategy. Leadership skills are in sharp relief throughout and delegates return to their workplace with renewed energy and inspiration. For details, email [jo.gideon@chiefexecutive.com](mailto:jo.gideon@chiefexecutive.com) or telephone 07957 151787.

## **7. November Breakfast in Dover**

The Channel Chamber of Commerce is organising a Networking Breakfast at the Ramada Hotel, Whitfield on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November. This will provide an opportunity to meet Chamber members from Shepway. In the past such events have stimulated business-to-business sales and provided a useful forum for sharing best practice. For details, contact our partners at the Channel Chamber, tel: 01303 270022.

## **8. Have a Heart**

The British Heart Foundation is organising a Viking Bike Ride on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2009. Starting points are at Reculver, the Viking Ship at Pegwell Bay and Joss Bay depending on whether you wish to cycle 6, 11, 15 or 32 miles. Suitable for all the family and keen or occasional cyclists alike. Details are available from the events team by email to [eastevents@bhf.org.uk](mailto:eastevents@bhf.org.uk) or by telephone to 0800 100 2109.

## **9. Media Supporting Members**

The Thanet & East Kent Chamber features regularly in local, regional and national media. Anyone who saw the BBC television news yesterday evening may have seen the Chamber Chief Executive defending the companies of East Kent in the wake of the demise of RJ Barwick Construction and the knock-on effects on the building industry. This Chamber is sometimes quizzed on a new commercial initiative but more often on the latest business disaster. We are unfailingly supportive of our members and will always stress the benefits of the area. It would be helpful if Chamber members forward some more of their success stories so that we have a library of positive news stories to feed to a hungry media world. If you have won a large contract, secured your 10,000<sup>th</sup> customer, celebrated a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary or sold your first product to the USA, please tell us so that we can support you and the whole of the East Kent coastal business community. Email your stories please to [admin@tekco.co.uk](mailto:admin@tekco.co.uk).

## **10. Pay Up Please**

These columns regularly feature advice on credit control and measures to recover debt. Of course, Chamber members are not immune to the effects of the recession, but the Chamber depends on prompt payment of membership fees to fund our activities. Any members falling behind with a renewal payment will shortly receive a reminder, a copy invoice and an invitation to discuss payment terms if they are suffering temporary cash flow difficulties.

## **11. Quality Pays**

Readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider may take some comfort from knowing that attention to detail and advanced quality control procedures are often essential to sustained success, as the following account shows. A tourist from Texas was visiting Windsor Castle when he came across the splendid lawns that surround this royal palace. Aware of the British fascination with formal gardens and with a vague recollection of the importance of cricket and Wimbledon in the national consciousness, he spotted a venerable gardener picking a single leaf of clover from the edge of the lawn. Keen to fraternise with an expert, he asked, "How do you get the grass so green?" Bert Hardcastle, assistant gardener at the Castle since the age of 16, answered, "Well, we do aerate the soil in the Spring." "I do that", said Jack P Feller Jnr, "but my lawn in Dallas doesn't look as good at this." "Ah, yes", added Bert, "but do you feed the lawn in the Autumn?" "I feed it in the Autumn and I spike it in the Spring", replied Jack P Feller Jnr, "but my lawn in Dallas is not a patch on yours". "Ah yes," said Bert, "but do you cut it to two inches in the Summer". "Remarkably", continued Jack P Feller Jnr, "I do precisely that and I aerate it in the Spring and do everything you do in the Autumn, but my lawn in Dallas looks nothing like yours." Bert looked fixedly at the kindly American tourist in his unseemingly bright hawaiian shirt and said "Ah yes, but have you done it for 900 years?", With that he turned back to his lawn and continued his search for another clover leaf. He had found three that month.

## **12. 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 220274. Express By Holiday Inn 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. The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) has appointed Adecco as the Official Recruitment Services Supplier to London 2012. 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@tekco.co.uk](mailto:admin@tekco.co.uk)**

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