

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

18th September 2009

1. Tiles

Bathroom looking dated? Kitchen needing a new look? If so, Cliftonville Tile Centre may have the answer. This shop at 187 Northdown Road, Cliftonville offers an extensive range of tiles including mosaic, stone, glass, Victorian and contemporary. This Chamber member works with the residential and commercial sector and is always willing to discuss your particular needs. Customers travelling by car will find parking spaces at the rear of the shop. If you wish to discuss your requirements first, give Michelle or Colin a call during office hours, tel: 01843 296603. Genuine tile enthusiasts will like the Villeroy and Bosh range and may be tempted to fix the tiles themselves. There is a useful instructional video to be found at

www.associatedcontent.com/video/90158/how_to_tile_a_bathroom_floor.html?cat=6

2. Hollywood In Thanet

Not yet perhaps, but MEDB Films with the support of Kent County Council is paving the way for a vibrant film industry in East Kent. Paul McGann, Bob Hoskins and Ramsgate's own Brenda Blethyn and have all starred in this company's feature film output. Another star in MEDB's address book is Rula Lenska, a former student of Ursuline College at Westgate-on-Sea who is entitled to call herself Countess Roza-Marie Leopoldyna Lubinska if she so chooses. Based at Chamber member Royal Harbour hotel, MEDB Films has pioneered the UK use of DOGME 95 techniques which require a faithful portrayal of the real world with minimal post-production. Another successful entrepreneur in the arts is Roger Dudding who directed the extraordinarily successful social programme of last month's Ramsgate Yacht Week. The DVD produced by his film company gives a clear overview of the successful evenings at the Royal Harbour culminating in a performance by the Counterfeit Stones who, according to witnesses, performed better than the Rolling Stones ever did in their prime and gave satisfaction to everyone in the audience. The imminent refurbishment of the Old Customs House, the promise of high quality executive apartments at the Royal Sands development and the continuing attraction of the surrounding blue flag beaches suggest that Ramsgate is well positioned to take full advantage of the launch of the High Speed 1 fast rail link to London St Pancras which is due to launch its full programme of services on 13th December 2009. Southeastern Railway has already estimated that the HS 1 link to Ashford has boosted the average house price by £12,000. Will we see a similar rise in Ramsgate from next December? This Chamber is monitoring the market and will keep readers fully informed.

3. Branding

How does your company manage the branding of its products and services? Is your company name a byword for integrity and quality? Is branding so important anyway? Jez Frampton, Global Chief Executive of Interbrand, clearly thinks so. In the preface to Best Global Brands 2009, he writes, "In times of rampant change, brands remain a powerful source of continuity and trust." This year's list is headed again by Coca Cola followed by IBM, Microsoft, GE and Nokia. Google has risen from 10th to 7th. Toyota has dropped 2 places to 8th. The top fifty brands are heavily dominated by US companies. HSBC is the only British company to feature and appears in 32nd position. The correct branding is an important element in your company's success. As Jez Frampton puts it, "Tough markets demand differentiation and value-add like never before. If your brand isn't clear and compelling, you will soon become lost in a sea of price-based competition". Some Chamber members have reprofiled their companies with success. The Consilium Group under Justin Baker now trades as Logo ID and is winning business from new customers.

4. Consultants Forum

The Thanet & East Kent Chamber is inaugurating its first Chamber Consultants Forum on Tuesday, 13th October 2009. Targeted at the growing number of independent, business advisors, the Chamber Forum will bring together like-minded professionals interested in sharing best practice and discussing a mutual referrals system in order to maximise the effectiveness and scope of their services. Over half of East Kent companies have no marketing or business plan and would clearly benefit from objective guidance from experienced practitioners. For details, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Chamber Consultancy Forum 13 October 2009".

5. Planning For Success

If you are among the more than 50% of Kent companies without a business plan, see item 4 above, Chamber members can help you. Empowered Business brings the experience and knowledge of big business to the particular problems and circumstances of smaller firms. Empowered Business adopts an approach that centres on you in order to maximise growth and overcome any obstacles to success. For details email Martin White at martin@empoweredbusiness.co.uk or call his mobile, tel: 0776 826 7515.

6. Pre-Pension People Plea

Thanet Senior Citizens Forum has approached the Chamber to ask if we can help with a request from programme maker Wall to Wall Television which is making a film for Channel 4. Will Dixon is looking at the current system to try to provide a sense of what the future holds for those people heading towards retirement. The film is due to be transmitted on Monday October 5th in the Dispatches slot at 8pm on Channel 4. If any readers know of friends, colleagues or family members who are about to retire who might like to be interviewed for the programme, please feel free to put them in contact with Will Dixon direct by email to will.dixon@walltowall.co.uk or by telephone to 020 7241 9330.

7. Rating (Empty Properties) Act 2007

This Chamber's long-standing campaign against the empty rates legislation, introduced with much controversy in April last year, has received a welcome boost from the Chief Executive of the UK Warehouse Association, Roger Williams, who is quoted as saying, "The Government's move to scrap rate relief on empty industrial property has led many landlords to demolish perfectly sound warehouse property as a way of avoiding paying the substantial amounts of tax that unoccupied facilities now incur. Indeed, a recent report by property consultants Lambert Smith Hampton, found that owners of properties tended to wait for 12 to 18 months once a property had become vacant before making the decision to demolish it, which indicates that the speed of demolition of warehouse buildings is likely to increase in the near future." This is precisely what this Chamber predicted nearly two years ago. The continuing demolition of warehouses, factories, pubs and offices deprives established businesses and start-ups of the budget accommodation that is sorely needed by the East Kent Business community.

8. Business Rates

Next Tuesday's Business breakfast, see item 1 of last week's Insider, will feature an interactive session with a senior official of the Valuation Office Agency (VOA). The civil administration is listening to us and we welcome it. This Chamber has learned that the Government is looking to raise in excess of £22 billion annually from almost 1.8 million properties. This is approximately five percent of total tax receipts, confirming Britain's position as the most heavily taxed property economy in Europe. We have a once only opportunity next Tuesday to plead the case for Chamber members in the Thanet & East Kent business community. Once the business rates have been fixed, it will be difficult to make any downward adjustments in the five years from April 2010.

9. Margate Harbour Arm

The issue of branding, see item 3 above, may have been in the mind of Jean Berwick when she named her delightful café on Margate Harbour Arm, Be Beached. No-one with an appreciation of good food and healthy eating would mind being marooned on Be Beached as the dishes are freshly made from local produce and enticing for sailors and landlubbers alike. For details of Jean's menu, give her a call, tel: 01843 226008 or 07961 402612. To enquire about a Christmas lunch party, email info@bebeached.co.uk and expect a prompt reply.

10. The Venerable Elvis Speaks

The Bank of England reports that lenders are now approving over 80% of new mortgage applications, up from 70% at the beginning of the year. This is good news for retailers of real estate, but will we know the difference? Estate Agents are perennial optimists as the following recent encounter between two local agents confirms. "How's business?" "Wonderful, marvellous, terrific, absolutely fantastic, but it will improve." Overselling is not a feature of all markets but it can challenge our moral perspectives. Bearing in mind the current controversies in Formula 1 and rugby where basic principles have been threatened by the ever increasing need to sell the sport, we turn to our spiritual guide in such matters, the Venerable Elvis. Thanet's celebrated hermit lives in simple circumstances in a modest hovel in the hinterland between the redundant power station in Sandwich and the disused quarry in Manston. Renowned for his short statements of beautiful simplicity on issues of the day, the Venerable Elvis has treated readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider to some insightful comments such as that offered in these columns on 5th November 2008 when he advised, "When checking the depth of a swimming pool, do not use both feet". Granted exclusive access as always to the great man, our reporter braved

Thanet's early morning mists to ask the Venerable Elvis why nearly all companies these days feel the need to inflate simple statistics and rarely resist the temptation to overstate their case. The Venerable Elvis never wastes words and can be unnervingly direct if he so chooses. He stroked his long grey beard in silent contemplation before turning to our reporter, his sole visitor in 4 weeks, and said abruptly, "I've told you a million times not to exaggerate". We are indeed blessed to have such a wise man in our midst.

11. 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 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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David Foley
Chief Executive, Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited
Director, Channel Chamber of Commerce
Fellow, Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce
Tel: +44 (0) 1843 609289
Fax: +44 (0) 1843 609291
Email: davidfoley@tekc.co.uk
Mobile: +44 (0) 7967 284850

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

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