

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

6th November 2009

1. Making More Money

This is a reminder of the Thanet & East Kent Chamber business networking breakfast due to take place in Sandwich from 0730 – 0900 hrs on Tuesday 24 November. Delegates will be treated to a series of short two-minute presentations by experts. Each speaker will concentrate on boosting your turnover or reducing your costs. A free individual consultation the following week will be available as well as the opportunity to enjoy an English breakfast and promote your goods or services to fellow delegates. Cost: £15.00. For details, email, admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line 'Business Breakfast 24th November 2009'.

2. News On House Prices

Chamber member HSBC tells us that the National Association of Estate Agents reports that the average estate agent branch had 287 house hunters on its books in October 2009 chasing 57 properties for sale. The difference between asking and selling prices has decreased from 10.9% to 8.8%. President, Gary Smith is quoted as saying 'there is strong demand for property and more optimism in the housing market than we have seen for months'. Some encouraging news for the East Kent property market is always welcome. If you consider that the recent upturn is a prelude to a subsequent fall, the dreaded 'w' scenario, get some advice from the specialists who have the latest information and can provide professional advice on all aspects of buying and selling residential property. Contact the following Chamber members in East Kent: Cooke & Co Estate Agents 01843 231833; FLS Tenant Referencing Services tel: 01227 719898; L&G Mortgage Solutions tel: 01843 845600; Let Direct tel: 01843 224808; Margate Harbour Arm, also trading as Ramsgate Estates tel: 07968 209047; Medics On The Move tel: 01843 599918; Oakwood Homes Estate Agencies Ltd 01843 221133; Right Locations Letting tel: 01843 599666; Terence Painter Properties tel: 01843 866866. For information on commercial property, contact Commercial Group Properties tel: 01843 860866; Coombs tel: 01227 457641; CP Simons tel: 01626 833170; Evan Business Centre tel: 07753 799333; Harrison & Co tel: 01843 291348; Meadowside Chartered Building Consultancy 01843 841055; MPG Properties tel: 01843 596224; OFP Limited tel: 01304 613298; Priory Property tel: 01843 861352; TCB Property Maintenance tel: 01843 228484 and W W Martin tel: 01843 591584.

3. Good News For East Kent

Figures for August 2009 released by Visit Kent also provide some welcome good news and encouragement for the East Kent coastal business community. Tourism is a major contributor to the local economy and employs a significant percentage of the area's work force. The latest figures available from the National Office for Statistics show that 9.2% of the workers in Thanet are engaged in tourism related activities. Neighbouring areas show a similar dependency on inward bound visitors; Canterbury, Whitstable & Herne Bay 8.1%; Dover, Deal & Sandwich 8.3% and Shepway 10.7%. Although cross-channel passenger numbers were down 5% for August, Dover Harbour Board reported record receipts from cruise ships. In the last financial year, cruise ship revenue was up 28.9% and is set to rise further. Any retailer aiming to attract cruise ship passengers, especially the independent travellers, has the right to expect a more than fair return from their investment in marketing. Overall visitor numbers to Kent show an annual increase of 10% with coastal attractions heading the league tables with a 27% rise. Perhaps most encouraging to the private operator is the news that attractions in Kent charging entrance fees improved by 11% and those with free entry declined by just over a quarter. As the saying goes, 'You pays yer money and you gets yer choice.'

4. What about Hotels?

It is difficult to assess the full picture of serviced accommodation bookings in Kent since the majority of hotels and guest houses do not report their figures. However, Visit Kent is doing the best it can with the returns received which show an increase in Thanet of 5%. Shepway leads the East Kent statistics with a 12.5% rise. Tourist Information Centre (TIC) visits may provide a surer guide to trends. The TICS in Ashford, Canterbury and Deal show an annual increase of 20% or more. Despite its location next to the public toilets, Dover TIC has recorded a creditable 14% rise. Ramsgate TIC, which is cunningly hidden from public view in Albert Court and requires its own tourist information centre to enable visitors to find it, recorded a decline of 31% in visitor numbers.

5. What About English Heritage

The Thanet & East Kent Insider has featured many articles on tourism. The 750 words on the subject in the edition of 25th July 2009 included a report on a meeting with English Heritage board members who had stated that their strategy for East Kent 'is to focus on improving the visitor experience in order to promote overnight stays.' This has proved to be the case. At another meeting just last week, it emerged that there is broad support for bringing more tourists to East Kent. This is the view of Baroness Andrews who succeeded Sandy Bruce-Lockhart as Chair of English Heritage. Although a resident of Lewes, she confirmed that East Kent figures largely in EH's plans for the future. The considerable investment in the Great Tower of Dover Castle, recreating with a light touch the court of Henry II, is part of a rolling programme that seeks to attract more visitors to East Kent and to encourage them to stay longer. Other EH properties in East Kent include Deal Castle, Dymchurch Martello Tower, Richborough Roman Fort, St Augustine's Abbey, Walmer Castle, Faversham Stone Chapel and Reculver Towers. After the EH meeting, the editor of this publication visited the wartime tunnels under Dover Castle in the company of Lord Lee of Trafford. A former Tourism Minister in Margaret Thatcher's government, John Lee is a formidable advocate for in-bound tourism and speaks powerfully in the House of Lords as a spokesman on Culture, Media and Sport. His support for future projects would be a considerable asset for the East Kent coastal business community. On a beautiful day at Dover Castle, he looked out across the Channel to see the French coastline clearly outlined above a billiard table flat sea. No doubt he speculated that had the prevailing wind blown in another direction in 1588 when the Spanish Armada passed or if Napoleon had seized his chance in 1803 or if this country had not evacuated over 330,000 men from Dunkerque in 1940, then the meeting earlier that day could well have been with Spanish Heritage, French Heritage or German Heritage. Now there's a thought.

6. Core Data

Here is some core data for people who like that sort of thing

	Thanet	Source
Population	129,900	ONS June 2008
Area	10,329 Hectares	KCC Dec 2008
Median Gross Weekly Pay By Workplace	£384.40	ONS 2008
Median Gross Weekly Pay By Residence	£426.80	ONS 2008
Public administration workers	35.2%	NOMIS 2007
Hotel, restaurant, distribution workers	28.7%	NOMIS 2007
Managers & senior officials	12.2%	NOMIS 2009
Manufacturing workers	9.9%	NOMIS 2007
Total companies	3,850	TEKC Estimate, June 2009
VAT registered businesses	2,835	NOMIS 2007
Companies fewer than 25 workers	92.5%	ONS 2007
Adults of working age no qualifications	15.4%	NOMIS Dec 2008
Households with no working parent	23.4%	Thanet Works March 2009
Indices of deprivation	1 st in Kent	Out of 12: KCC Jan 2008
Indices of highest level of deprivation	65th in England	Out of 354: KCC Jan 2008

7.

Comparative Data

Here is some comparative data for people who like to know how they doing in comparison with their neighbours. Thanet shows a month-on-month rise in employment of 1%, i.e. a 1 point decrease in unemployment. It is too soon perhaps to talk about a recovery but this is good news nonetheless.

	Thanet	South East	GB	Source
Tourism related employment	9.1%	8.0	8.2%	NOMIS 2007
Unemployed Males	8.2%	4.1%	5.8%	NOMIS Sep 2009
Unemployed Females	3.0%	1.9%	2.4%	NOMIS Sep 2009
Total Unemployed	5.7%	3.0%	4.2%	NOMIS Sep 2009
Unemployment change since last month	-1.0%	0.0%	-0.7%	KCC Sep 2009

JSA claimants per unfilled jobcentre vacancy	11.3	5.3	6.7	NOMIS Sep 2009
NVQ4 and above	17.5%	31.5%	29.0%	NOMIS Jan - Dec 2008
NVQ 3 and above	34.8%	50.8%	47.0%	NOMIS Jan - Dec 2008
NVQ 2 and above	54.8%	68.9%	65.2%	NOMIS Jan - Dec 2008
NVQ 1 and above	79.3%	83.4%	78.9%	NOMIS Jan - Dec 2008
No qualifications	15.4%	8.9%	12.4%	NOMIS Jan - Dec 2008

Data from NOMIS, ONS, KCC, Thanet Works, All rights reserved.

8. Classified Adverts

We have all heard of the newspaper advert that reads something along the lines of 'For sale: Oak desk suitable for lady with thick legs and large drawers', but one perspicacious Chamber member swears that the following advert appeared in his local paper when he was living in Birmingham. 'Labrador dog for sale: eats anything and is fond of children'. We trust that it was not sold as a school pet.

9. Our Sponsors

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It's happening now, it's happening in Thanet & East Kent.

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