

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

11th December 2009

1. Paul Carter Breakfast

This is the final call for bookings for the business breakfast of 17th December 2009. Regular readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider will recall that Paul Carter, leader of Kent County Council, is due to speak at the Pegwell Bay Hotel, Ramsgate. Booking is essential. To secure your place, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Paul Carter Breakfast". Cost: £12.00 including full English breakfast with tea or coffee. A vegetarian option is available. Chamber members will note that some distinguished speakers have graced our programme of events during the past year including the Minister for the South East and the Chairman of SEEDA. Paul Carter completes the set and will be assured of a good audience to hear of KCC plans to assist Kent businesses in 2010.

2. Cinderella In Ramsgate

The Granville Theatre in Ramsgate, tel: (01843) 591750, is showing Cinderella from today until 3rd January. The origins of the story of Cinderella can be traced back 2,000 years to a girl, Rhodopis, who had been left to wash clothes in a stream while her fellow servants went to a party organised by the Pharaoh. An eagle snatched the girl's sandal and later dropped it at the feet of the Pharaoh. You can guess the rest. Local theatrical impresario and Chamber member Michael Wheatley-Ward promises 'entertainment for all the family' with the magic and fun that only live theatre can produce. Michael's production features all the favourites including Buttons and the Ugly Sisters. To give your family or friends a treat this Christmas, give the theatre box office a call to 01843 591750.

3. Problems With Telephones

The Chamber has been assisting members in a wide variety of sectors in the past week. For obvious reasons, the details of the cases must remain confidential. However, some issues have arisen which deserve a wider hearing. Not for the first time has a company experienced serious difficulty in transferring to a new telephone supplier. One of this country's major telephone companies has displayed a breath-taking disregard for the basics of customer service with one of its managers declaring that as a matter of policy she never talks to a sister company. It seems that some specialists in communications are not so special and neither are their communications.

4. VAT Update

We are grateful to Phil Bowman and his team at Acorn Bowman Finance for an update on the changes in VAT. Phil acknowledges that VAT issues are not everyone's cup of tea. But, in supplying such a well written summary for some higher salary earners, we think Phil takes the biscuit. He tells us that from 6 April 2011, those with income over £130,000 will have employer pension contributions added to see if they are over the £150,000 income threshold that will trigger restrictions on higher-rate tax relief. As a consequence, there will be an immediate increase in the number of individuals who will potentially have restricted relief on significant future pension accrual between 9 December 2009 and 5 April 2011. Individuals whose relevant income excluding employer contributions exceeds £130,000 for the current tax year or two previous tax years will, from 9 December 2009, be subject to the same restrictive tax relief provisions that, since 22 April 2009, had applied to individuals with relevant income over £150,000. Anyone who finds this confusing should give Phil a call on 01843 609365. Other Chamber members who understand these issues include Neville Weston tel: 01843 594571, Michael Martin Partnership Ltd tel: 01227 770500, Levicks Chartered Accountants tel: 01843 862716, JW Accountancy Services tel: 01304 830229, J Cleverdon tel: 01843 866599, IGF Invoice Finance tel: 01732 849872, County Consultancy tel: 01843 579316 and Certax Accounting tel: 01843 280004.

5. The Past Costs Money

One Chamber member is facing a large bill to fund archaeological research. This is not the fault of the company or the district council or the planning officer or the archaeologist involved. All have acted with impeccable integrity and sound common sense. The problem lies with the legislation. If a manufacturer wishes to build an extension or site a hopper next to its factory, planning permission is required. There is nothing unusual in that and most sensible people would support the case for proper environmental controls. Similarly, no community-minded company would want to bespoil an important historical site. However, if it is deemed to be in our national interest that a simple procedure on an industrial site built on top of waste above worked ground requires expensive consultants on site to examine the spoil, it cannot be right that academic archaeological research should be funded by the company alone. The additional costs and interruption to production reduce the competitiveness of our manufacturers and serve to drive production facilities overseas. Our manufacturers get their hands dirty. They produce goods we can see and touch. In the case in question, the manufacturer exports the vast majority of its production adding considerably to the UK's economy. Richard Lambert, Director General of the CBI said recently, 'Manufacturing is the powerhouse of UK productivity growth'. Well, it isn't if there is an archaeology tax of £20,000 every time you dig a hole in the ground.

6. Doing Business With The Japanese

This Chamber is often asked to provide a speaker for formal occasions. Last Tuesday evening at the Royal Temple Yacht Club, the Chamber Chief Executive addressed an astute audience of senior figures from the East Kent coastal business community on the subject of "Doing Business In Japan". While acknowledging the many differences in language and culture, he emphasized a long list of

similarities and common values. Japan shares with Britain a long history as a monarchy and a tradition of prizing good manners and respectful behaviour. Both countries drive on the left. As island nations, Britain and Japan have not always been on good terms with their near continental neighbours. There is a direct parallel between the failed Mongol invasion of Japan in 1281 and the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Just as Britain's current car industry owes much to Japanese investment, Japan's early railway infrastructure could not have proceeded without British support. It was a British train driver who was in charge of Japan's inaugural passenger train which left Tokyo in 1872. Much to the embarrassment of the waiting dignitaries at Yokohama, he arrived 15 minutes early. Some critics may say that such an error has not been repeated in Britain since then. Questions from the floor later included the etiquette required when presenting business cards and the reasons behind the post war boom in Japanese manufacturing. An emphasis on customer service is characteristic of all major companies in Japan and the experience of one Chamber member, as listed at 3 above, just would not happen in Osaka, Tokyo or Kobe.

7. A Christmas Story Allegedly

One member of the Thanet & East Kent Chamber, the largest business support organisation in the area, has sent us a Christmas story which we have every reason to doubt is genuine. But, gentle reader, we will leave you to be the judge. In early autumn, the Archbishop of Canterbury was allegedly approached by Bernard Matthews. Allegedly, Bernard suggested to the Archbishop that if in the three months before Christmas he could change the Lord's Prayer from "Give us this day our daily bread" to "Give us this day our daily turkey", then Bernard would give £1 million to the church. The good Archbishop dismissed the offer out of hand. The following day, Bernard telephoned with a revised proposition and offered £10 million only to receive a similar refusal. Keen to seal a deal, Bernard called the next day with an offer of £50 million. Realising the good that he could do with such a large sum of money for only a minor and temporary change to a prayer, the Archbishop reflected deeply and eventually agreed. During his sermon the following Sunday, he announced to the congregation the small change to the prayer and listed some of the good works that would immediately ensue. His closed his briefing with the words, "Of course, dear brethren, this will mean the ending of the Hovis sponsorship".

8. 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 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

Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited

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