

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

6th March 2010

1. Edinburgh & East Kent Exclusive

The Thanet & East Kent Chamber is looking to develop commercial links with South-East Scotland following the announcement of £24.99 flights to Edinburgh from Kent International Airport from 27th May 2010. We are delighted to find strong fellow feeling from one of the most prestigious business support organisations in Scotland. In an exclusive message, the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce congratulates the Thanet & East Kent Chamber on our efforts to promote trade with our Northern neighbours. Ron Hewitt, Chief Executive of Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, welcomed the announcement of Fly-be's scheduled service from Kent International to Edinburgh airport. He said, "With connections going back before the Battle of Britain when RAF Turnhouse (Edinburgh) joined RAF Manston (Kent) in the front line, it's a great lift to see a new link being established in very different circumstances. That this is the first scheduled service from Manston since 2005, joining existing international cargo, charter and maintenance business, is a great addition to Edinburgh's hundred plus services. It is no accident that Kent International wants to link with the UK's second most successful financial centre, and we are keenly aware of the opportunities with the development of the High Speed Rail links and the value of Kent's businesses from the Medway to the East Coast, that this is an important opportunity for both ends of the link to develop rewarding relations. Our congratulations to Fly-be for their initiative and to Thanet & East Kent Chamber for their supporting role in joining the South-East of Scotland and England in this way." We thank you warmly Mr Hewitt and we join you in the congratulations to Kent International Airport and Flybe for what we hope will be the start of an increasing number of routes linking Manston to new trading partners.

2. Dreamland Business Breakfast

This is a reminder of the March Chamber business breakfast which should be of interest to any business or organisation interested in the regeneration of coastal towns. Amanda Cotterill, Chairman of Visit Kent, see item 6 below, tells us that tourism is the fifth largest industry in the UK. The advent of cheap holidays to Spain in the 1960s saw the beginning of a decline in traditional seaside holidays at East Kent resorts from which our coastal towns are only now just beginning to recover. Central to that resurgence are the new facilities such as the Turner Contemporary, a revitalised Dover Castle and the promise of a new Dreamland Heritage Park. Until 2002, Dreamland was responsible for 20% of the visitors to Thanet, see The Times of 3 February 2003. On Wednesday 24th March 2010, the new Dreamland Trust Project Director, Jonathan Bryant, will be speaking about the "the world's first heritage amusement park" at Dreamland, Margate. Local retailers and suppliers are set to benefit significantly from the increased footfall and boost to trade. The Dreamland Wakes Up business breakfast will start at 0730 hrs at the Fayrenew Hotel, Kingsgate, near Broadstairs. Tickets cost £12.00 for Chamber members and £15.00 for non-members. Payment is accepted in cash or by cheque on the door. Booking is essential. To reserve a place, email manager@tekc.co.uk with the subject line 'Dreamland Breakfast' and the names of those wishing to attend. Non-members should give full company contact details.

3. Our Schools, Our Future

Chamber Member King Ethelbert School is delighted with the success of its new building which opened last January. Pupils are benefiting from a new learning space that is proving ideal for art, creative design, ICT, music and food technology. With further developments promised, King Ethelbert's in Birchington is heading for the future with confidence. Head of School, Ms K Greig is justifiably happy with the response from staff and pupils and wrote recently, "I am always very proud to hear so many positive comments from the public when our students are in the community and I know they are a credit to our school. I would like to take this opportunity to thank staff for all the many activities they provide and to thank you for your much appreciated support of everything we do." Schools everywhere in the UK are being exhorted to be more 'business-like'. Kate Greig's words would have graced any corporate brochure. Kate and Executive Head Paul Luxmoore are building a school that is rapidly gaining the reputation as one of the best performing high schools in the South East. The OFSTED report of 19 November 2009 included the comments, "King Ethelbert School continues to provide an outstanding quality of education for its students. It rightly describes itself as a school where 'everybody is valued and supported, everybody is important and everybody works together', making the school an excellent place to be. A shared sense of purpose exudes across the school, and mutual respect and understanding underpin all its work. Common goals and hard work towards them are the norm." It doesn't get much better than that.

4. Business South East

The Chamber is grateful to the Enterprise Europe Network for an update on business confidence in the South East. We learn from their latest publication that that under a third of companies expect a measurable improvement in 2010. The Federation of Small Businesses reported that just under a half (48%) of companies experienced a fall in sales. Despite this sobering analysis, there was an improvement in turnover from 30% of those surveyed. The outlook for exports is sunnier in almost every respect. The Confederation of British Industry declared last month that the volume of exports had increased in the previous quarter and is expected to increase by 8% in the following three months.

5. Proposed Encampment in Hersden

The Chamber has received many enquiries for information about a planning application at Island Road, Hersden, Westbere for what is officially described as, "Proposed 25 plot gypsy caravan site including mobile homes, touring caravans and utility sheds". Mindful of the sensitivities involved in this controversial proposal, one Chamber member declared recently, "I am deeply concerned for the security to my property, and the knock on effect of my hopefully growing business." The Chamber will be making its own submission to Canterbury City Council and welcomes the view of Chamber members which should be addressed to admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Planning application CA//10/00232". We also encourage all readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider to submit their own opinion direct in writing by email to development.control@canterbury.gov.uk or by letter to Development Control, Canterbury City Council, Military Road, Canterbury, CT1 1YW. More details are available on the planning website at

<http://www2.canterbury.gov.uk/planning/acolnetcgi.cgi?ACTION=UNWRAP&RIPNAME=Root.PgeResultDetail&TheSystemkey=76088>. A list of associated documents can be found at

<http://www2.canterbury.gov.uk/planning/acolnetcgi.cgi?ACTION=UNWRAP&RIPNAME=Root.PgeAniteDocs&TheSystemkey=76088> and six pages of maps are available at

<http://www2.canterbury.gov.uk/planning/anite/fetch.aspx?R=eAX7sMghONCRkUfIfNkgvmwTfvs9j8RlaX0ekx44c4tnFs23SGoEHhs600euL5eeB+o66/NloGGU3UP9tFRDP6CUMgiNoAetx3TZxz8sBBw=>

The South East England Regional Assembly, SEERA, has produced a fact sheet entitled "Meeting the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople" which is available for downloading at [http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/documents/consultations/5/G&T%20factsheet%20\(Feb09\).pdf](http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/documents/consultations/5/G&T%20factsheet%20(Feb09).pdf)

Readers will note the following statement by SEERA: "However, racist representations need not be made intentionally or with malice, it is enough for a representation to be offensive to an ethnic group or make negative assumptions about them. A representation may therefore discriminate against Gypsies and Travellers, by assuming or implying that negative behaviour, such as fly tipping or criminal activities are typical of all Gypsies and Travellers and are 'likely' to occur if an authorised site is established. A comment stating or implying that all members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities partake in antisocial behaviour or have a propensity to violence is also discriminatory. It is also discriminatory to assume or imply, without supporting evidence that all Gypsies and Travellers do not pay council tax and constitute a financial burden on local authorities or society as a whole."

6. Thanet Voluntary Sector

The Thanet & East Kent Chamber was a guest at the Thanet Voluntary & Community Sector Forum of 24th February which, as always, was organised with impeccable efficiency by Lisa-Maria Browning. Chairman Steve Ward thanked Chamber members Pfizer Social Club and Thorley Taverns for their support during the year. He was particularly pleased to report an increase in funds from a mere £600 in 2007 to a current much healthier £12,000. Among the speakers was Christine Jenkins of Pfizer Ltd who gave a most useful step-by-step account on how, why and when Pfizer makes funds available for local initiatives. With a brief to "improve the health of people in East Kent" Christine outlined to an attentive audience the exemplary community support Pfizer offers. Readers familiar with the impact this company has made on the East Kent will know that respect for the community in which it operates has been genuine, significant and very much in accordance with its corporate values which state, "Pfizer plays an active role in making every country and community in which it operates a better place to live and work, knowing that the ongoing vitality of our host nation and local communities has a direct impact on the long term health of our business" If you are one of the companies that has recently been besieged by unsolicited mail from companies or business support organisations purporting to be what they are not, you may take comfort from Catherine's advice on the temptation to misuse office software, "Never send a round robin letter, it will go in the bin". So say all of us.

6. East Kent Area Reception

The Chairman of Kent County Council, John Davies and his charming wife hosted a splendid event at Thanet College last Wednesday evening. A metal detector on the door would have enjoyed few silent moments as the guests arrived wearing their chains of office and colourful badges. Speeches were short and praise for the resilience of Kent companies extensive.

John Davies declared that his theme for the year was “Backing Kent business” and he was true to his word as guests were treated to produce from the Garden of England. Sue Buss, out-going Principal of Thanet College, took justifiable pride in the pre-eminence of the catering students that had graduated from the college to prestigious positions at Buckingham Place, Eastwell Manor and embassies overseas. Sue also noted the many successes in other departments, including the warm relations with local companies which continue to inform and strengthen the college’s programmes for employers. The Chairman of Visit Kent, Amanda Cotterill, outlined her personal commitment to promoting tourism in East Kent and gave a rousing account of the opportunities available to local businesses in the next few years. Further contributions from Alex King, KCC Deputy Leader, and Kevin Lynes, head of KCC Regeneration and Economic Development, focused on the unique nature of East Kent and said much to change the minds of any remaining critics who perceive KCC to be unduly responsive to the needs of companies in West Kent rather than their county cousins in the East. Thanet & East Kent Chamber and Dover District Chamber of Commerce and the FSB were well represented as the leading business support organisations in East Kent. In a succession of informal discussions during the evening, the needs and interests of this Chamber’s members were cogently presented to the great and good among the public officials present.

7. Broadband

East Kent companies are suffering from slow broadband speeds. That is the conclusion from an informal Chamber survey of companies in Thanet and is supported by anecdotal evidence from enquiries. One Chamber member reports, “The low speeds available to my company restrict its future plans for development. It could be a deciding factor in relocating outside of Thanet in the future.” These words from the managing Director of a first-class media company represent a worrying development for all companies in East Kent. Internet usage will only increase as an increasing number of government departments move away from paper-based communication systems and the private sector upgrades to more memory hungry applications. Overseas competitors benefiting from ‘leap-frog technology’ are able to build superfast broadband connections into the infrastructure of their business parks and urban developments. A little known fact is that there is a super fast cable running through East Kent, owned and operated by Chamber member, Sota Solutions. A total IT solutions company, Sota has put corporate needs at the heart of its progress over the last 15 years. Sota promises “to meet and surpass the expectations of the modern forward-thinking enterprise.” Find out more by email to warren.dunham@sota.co.uk or give him a call to tel: 01795 413500.

8. KCA Ramsgate

The Chamber received late notice of the KCA's Psychological Therapy Service Centre Open Day, but we are still keen to bring this to the attention of any early birds who arrive in their offices on Monday morning with an open mind and an interest in ‘mild to moderate mental health’ and ‘substance abuse’. The KCA centre at 38 West Cliff Road, Ramsgate, Kent CT11 9NT begins activities with a formal welcome at 1030 hrs followed by briefings, short talks and workshops on issues such as Managing Anxiety and Feel Well. Lunch is offered to all delegates at 1230 hrs.

9. Cheque It Out Again

Our campaign with the FSB against the phasing out of cheques by UK banks has received positive support from many different sources. Feedback to date suggests that the main threat is to small businesses and voluntary organisations that do not have the electronic transfer systems enjoyed by larger organisations. Some may disagree with the view that “the decision-makers in London are so immersed in the big business world of multi-currency electronic bank transfers that they have no idea of what affects the lives of ordinary folk.” But many residents outside large conurbations will sympathise with the conclusion that “Many villages which have lost their post office have not only been deprived of a useful retail establishment but a welcome social market place where community values are strengthened and neighbourhood fellowship enhanced.” Perhaps the most heartfelt comment comes from Linda Durkin in Faversham who writes, “I have felt in despair recently since I heard about the suggestion of scrapping cheques. I work for [name supplied] in Faversham and quite frankly we work with cheques every day. There are certain complications with using on-line banking for us, not least dealing with the elderly.” If you would like to join the campaign to retain cheques, there is still time to sign the petition by clicking on the link at <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/KEEP-CHEQUES/> Fifty signatures have been added since we highlighted the issue in the last edition of the Thanet & East Kent Insider which amounts to just 2.5% of our readership. Come on key decision-makers in East Kent, start clicking.

10. Port of Dover

With our associates at the Dover District Chamber of Commerce, this Chamber is playing an active part in the Port of Dover privatisation proposals. The Chamber Port Advisory Group (CPAG) held its inaugural session at the County Hotel Dover yesterday and received submissions from large, medium and small companies as well as community groups. The sum

of £400m is required to develop the port. Since the borrowings of the Dover Harbour Board were included in the Public Sector Borrowing requirement, any funding that leads to an increase in the UK's deficit is likely to have to compete against the needs of a host of requirements from the public sector including hospitals, schools and the armed forces. The Dover Harbour Board concludes that "Strong indications have been given to the Board that such borrowing would be extremely difficult, if not impossible to achieve in the present climate and for the foreseeable future". In such circumstances, the Board prefers to fashion its own future with a defined plan rather than have one thrust upon it. Given the strategic position of Dover and its unique position in the local regional and national economy, every East Kent company stands to be affected to a greater or lesser extent. The Board states in its proposals that, "The Port organisation itself employs around 350 staff; however, the Port activity supports some 20,000 jobs, directly, indirectly and induced. 6,000 of those jobs are direct. The 2008 Arup independent report, commissioned by Dover Harbour Board, stated that the Port of Dover contributes almost £500 million annually to the South-East economy in the form of employee and visitor spending." The proposals submitted by the current management of the Port of Dover envisage the creation of a wholly owned operating company (Opco) as a company limited by shares through a voluntary scheme under the Ports Act 1991. This would be approved and confirmed by the Secretary of State for Transport. The Board would then transfer to Opco all functions, rights, liabilities and property of the Board. Staff would transfer into Opco. Opco would then own and run the Port operation. The Board's shareholding in Opco would then be disposed of to three entities; Employee Share Ownership Trust (ESOT), Port of Dover Community Trust (PDCT) and Private Sector Investors. The Thanet & East Kent Chamber welcomes attributable views on the proposals. With our associates at the Dover District Chamber of Commerce we will be making a formal submission on behalf of the East Kent coastal business community. Details of the proposals for restructuring can be found at http://www.doverport.co.uk/_assets/client/images/collateral/Briefing%20document.pdf Details of the plans for the new Cruise Terminal are available at http://www.doverport.co.uk/_assets/client/images/collateral/Our%20plan%20for%20the%20next%20generation%20T2.pdf

11. Premises Wanted

The Chamber has been approached by an organisation which is looking to rent, lease or buy premises in Thanet which could be used as a café with a function room, kitchen facilities, disabled access and a toilet or space to install one. The building needs to be on a public transport route, preferably on or near a busy high street. The organisations can undertake some refurbishment if required. Please email any suggestions to admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Premises available".

12. Ministerial Visit

Last Thursday, the Thanet & East Kent Chamber was invited to Margate Media Centre to meet Jim Knight MP, Minister of State for Employment and Welfare Reform. On a visit at short notice, the Minister was welcomed by Roger Latchford, Deputy Leader of Thanet District Council, Cllr Jo Gideon, Chairman of Thanet Works, Richard Samuels, TDC Chief Executive and Jacqui Ward Jacqui Ward - Integrated Employment & Skills Manager as well as board members of Thanet Works before joining some of the apprentices currently benefiting from the programmes funded by the Working Neighbourhoods and Future Jobs Funds. Accompanied by special Advisor, Catherine McDonald, the minister received a full briefing on the progress to date of Thanet Works and an unabridged insight into the local economy of the East Kent coastal towns. As a former Minister for Schools and Learners, he clearly enjoyed the opportunity to meet participants in the Thanet Works programme and to learn of the progress being made in some of the most deprived areas of Thanet.

13. In The End

During an average week, this Chamber receives many anecdotes, images and video links from members and associates for which we are most grateful. Some of them are entirely unsuitable for publication. Quite frankly, the one about the Scotsman and the Hoover is probably also physically impossible, but decorum dictates that we cannot give you the details of this and anyway if he had bought an upright cleaner, it would never have happened. From time to time, we receive comments on a higher plane reflecting on the human condition and worthy almost of comparison with that great Thanet philosopher, the Venerable Elvis, whose words occasionally grace these columns. The Venerable Elvis is Kent's only remaining hermit who lives in isolated contemplation emerging but rarely from his hovel and then only to comment on an exclusive basis to the Thanet & East Kent Insider. Thus, it is with especial pleasure that we treat readers to an insight from a Chamber member who owns and administers a considerable estate of commercial property in Thanet. He gives us a pithy statement on mortality as well as a warning to anyone offered a lift by the senior member of his family. "I want to die peacefully in my sleep, like my grandfather. Not screaming and yelling like the passengers in his car."

14. 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 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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David Foley
Chief Executive, Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited
Industrial Professor, Thanet College
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

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