

Energy Costs: “If everyone is closed, what will happen?”

Companies of all sizes in East Kent are facing a dire threat to their survival due to steep rises in electricity costs. In contrast to our French cousins on the other side of the English Channel where modest increases have been greeted with welcome relief, some of our local businesses are looking at potentially ruinous increases in contract renewal charges.

Chief Correspondent of ITV’s Good Morning Britain Richard Gaisford highlighted the sharp differences in a broadcast from Gravelines yesterday when he said: “The French government is insisting that electricity prices cannot go up by more than 4%. That is keeping people here in France very happy and it is a very different picture to the scenes we are seeing just a few dozen miles away across the channel.”



Richard explained that the French government owns 85% of EDF and is in the process of buying the whole company. This gives the French government control over the prices levied. Although EDF supplies more than 20% of the UK’s electricity, the absence of government subsidies in the UK means that our businesses are currently facing huge rises.



The future facing Chamber of Commerce member The Lane, a delightful restaurant in the centre of Deal, is in sharp contrast to their counterparts in Calais. Facing a rise in electricity costs from £15,000 to £100,000 a year, owners Chris and Anna Vidler lamented: “It is almost suicide for our business”. They are hoping that: “Someone does something or there’s some help out there or something changes”.

Good Morning Britain quotes the owner of the Hotel Normandy in Calais who is mystified why there is currently no UK government support for his counterparts in East Kent and asks the question: “If everyone is closed, what will happen?”.



Chamber of Commerce Chief Executive David Foley joined the broadcast in support of East Kent companies and said: “We cannot afford to have seven, eight or nine times increases in energy prices. It is simply not in this country’s best interests”. Without prompt action to relieve commercial gas and electricity prices, Good Morning Britain risks becoming Good Night East Kent Companies.

In a telephone call to some Chamber members later, he said that he is confident that pressures from the Chamber of Commerce Presidents, Sir Roger Gale MP, Craig Mackinlay MP, Natalie Elphicke MP and others will encourage the new Prime Minister to act swiftly when taking up office next week and added: “There is simply no sense in offering salvation to companies to survive the pandemic and then leading them to perdition later through ruinous energy prices”.

Information

Thanet & East Kent and Dover District Chambers of Commerce provide professional business support to the East Kent coastal business community.

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