



Deer at Knole Park, Sevenoaks
by Mary Makins, Pembury

IMAGES OF KENT

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Green 'earner' for Coalition

FROM past experiences we should know that the Government's right hand doesn't know what the left is doing. (KoS, New airport schemes).

We are continually being punished with green taxes, airport taxes, told to turn our TVs off standby, save plastic bags for re-use, etc, etc.

However, the Government wants to go ahead with yet more pollution and depletion of the Earth's finite resources by building another airport.

This makes it very clear they are only paying lip service to 'saving the world' and are more interested in the fact that pretending to be 'green' is a 'nice little earner'.

Just a glance at our cities ablaze through the night makes a mockery of the petty savings we are expected to make, and the invention of yet more taxes, whose only effect is to give the Government more of our money to waste.

Most of our main party MPs couldn't find their own backside in the dark.

Let's save the country, get them out and Ukip in.

Phil Granger, West Malling

Remember all war's victims

I HAVE to admit I am becoming a little tired of war memorials, especially those which commemorate only those who died in uniform and on our side.

Surely the time has come to broaden our remembrance to include the victims of war.

Far, far more people die in modern war than are listed on memorials: victims of terror or of indiscriminate bombing and shelling, whether British, German, Irish, Iraqi or Afghan, they too had families, they too had a single unique life to lose.

Whether you think of servicemen as heroes or villains, surely you must also have compassion for their victims.

If we are to have yet another memorial on the White Cliffs, can we not dedicate this one to all the victims of war throughout the world?

**Hedley Grenfell-Banks
Hothfield, Ashford**

Cameron's out of his EU depth

SO now the politicians expect the public to trust them again.

They really are a poor bunch of people and I don't begin to understand their reasons for wanting to be in control of our late wonderful country because they haven't a clue how to run it.

Mr Cameron had better learn to swim because he is so out of his depth with his dealing with the EU, and as for Mrs Merkel – forget it.

He is going to drown – Germany is, without doubt, going to run Europe

Mrs Merkel is looking after her own country by listening to the people and acting accordingly. Mr Cameron, on the other hand, insists that the whole of this country is wrong and only he is right.

It is time for him to act on what the people want by holding a referendum. At least if they get it wrong they can only blame themselves.

Throughout Europe there are many governments that are just not up to the job and

it is time for us to get out of the EU. Standing alone is something we have done many times before.

We may have half of our economy involved with Europe, but we also import a vast amount from Europe so they would not want to lose that.

Once we are clear of the EU we can shut the door and get rid of everyone who has no right to be here, and also those who are draining this country.

We could also make a start in governing our country, outlaw the Human Rights Act and get rid of the 10,000 criminals clogging up the prisons. Yes it will be hard, but it is going to be anyway with the ever-hungry EU wanting more money pumped into a lost cause.

When I voted it was for someone to run this country, not someone to take orders from Brussels. Every promise made at the election has been broken and yet we are still expected to trust this rabble.

You can't solve this problem Mr Cameron so let the people have a go while there is time.

If you can't do that then make way for someone who can, please.

RE Tucker, Sheerness

Join climate change march

KENT Green Party is urging Kent and Medway residents to attend the annual Climate March being held in London on Saturday, December 3.

Climate change is not an abstract idea for Kent and Medway. The exceptional number of extreme weather events Kent has experienced since the 1987 hurricane all show the influence of climate change, not as a single cause of extreme rainfall or of droughts, but as factor which makes our weather worse.

Climate change puts more moisture in the atmosphere, making periods of rainfall often more powerful than in the past.

It also means whole climate systems can move north or south, creating long periods of drought as seen in Kent and Medway in the recent past.

But Kent and Medway's long coastline is also vulnerable to sea level rise.

Given a major new report stressing how extreme weather is made worse by climate change, and indica-

tions many countries are failing to cut greenhouse gas emissions, we need better action in the UK and abroad.

Dr Geoff Meaden, Chilham

How to cut building costs

AT the launch of the Kent Property Market report, Kent County Council leader Paul Carter spoke about the need to boost construction by simplifying the procurement process and building regulations, which he says are adding 25 per cent to building costs compared to mainland Europe. But that's not the main problem.

Higher salaries, rents and rates account for some of the difference but the main reason for greater construction costs is the procedures that are adopted.

Attempt to cut costs by appointing consultants on the lowest fee bid and they are unlikely to have the time or resources to keep a close eye on progress. So ironically, you often end up with projects on the lowest fee percentage costing the most to construct.

Good value is generally achieved through holistic design, where costs are considered from the outset and where someone is answerable at every stage. Unfortunately the majority of projects involve numerous consultants, who can be a significant cost and are often so far removed from the client they don't fully understand the fundamental brief.

In many cases design inefficiency occurs at the early concept design stage. And with each consultant adding their input at various points in the process, it can be difficult to pinpoint where the error occurred and costs can spiral.

The solution is to have an expert who fully understands costs working within the contractor's own organisation. Why? Because they will be involved in the project from the outset, can take full responsibility, and will have the authority to stop the project and review it if necessary to make sure the budget is kept under control.

So while Paul Carter's comments are valid, streamlining procedures would go a long way to reducing building costs, which will help generate new business growth and get the Kent economy moving.

Duncan Murray, Managing Director, Directline Structures, Ashford

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Business park to retain steam railway links during expansion

By Nick Ames

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EXPANSION at a thriving west Kent business park is to incorporate an important part of the county's steam-railway heritage.

Earlier this year, development plans to build 12,000 sq ft and 20,000 sq ft units at the Hawhurst Station Business Park were approved, with parts of the former railway site to be incorporated.

The station, which closed in 1961, was survived by an old steam-engine shed and signal box, still painted in Southern Railway colours.

The 14-acre site, just off the A299 between Hawhurst and Cranbrook, will see further development, but park-owner Peter Dunlop is keen to protect Kent's railway heritage.

He said: "We have worked closely with the planning authorities to agree a way of enhancing facilities here while preserving the history of steam railways in Kent.

"One option we are considering is to relocate the signal box to the Kent & East Sussex Railway at Tenterden."

Dunlop's family business, Kent Woodware, marks its 100th anniversary on Tuesday, December 13, after a century on the site.

He said: "My grandfather started the company in 1911 when he rented land on the old railway-station site. We used to manufacture wooden components for the bedding, brush and tool handle trades.

"My father bought the site when the station closed in 1961, and when I joined in 1966 trade was booming, while the business park was also attracting other traders.

"By the 1990s it was no longer economical for us to continue and we ceased manufacturing, but in 2001 I restarted the business."

The businessman has also commissioned design and construction company Directline Structures



MODERN TWIST: Hawhurst Station Business Park is incorporating parts of the former railway site

to develop the environmentally-sensitive site by adding steel-framed industrial units.

He said: "I have been delighted with the quality of their work. They have kept to schedule and to budget, and they deal with all the planning and technical issues, leaving me free to get on with running my business.

"It is reassuring to know they are on the case."

There has been interest in the newly-built units from farther afield, but they have been quickly snapped up by two companies already operating from the site.

Family-owned food import and distributor Maws Fine Foods will take one of the units, while desserts-manufacturer Rhokett also needed larger premises to expand their businesses.

Duncan Murray, from Directline Structures, said: "Maws move into the new unit from the engine shed on the site, while Rhokett is expanding from another unit we built five years ago.

"It's very encouraging to see existing tenants committing their futures to this part of Kent."

The units should be completed by February 2012.

RETAIL



FULL HOUSE: Fremlin Walk centre in Maidstone

Shopping mall expects full unit uptake during the Christmas period

MAIDSTONE'S Fremlin Walk management team has claimed that all shop units will be full during the Christmas rush.

Despite huge competition from Bluewater shopping centre, Hempstead Valley and Chatham high street, the Fremlin Walk group says the recent additions have proved the town centre is attractive to both businesses and customers alike.

Lloyd Wright, centre manager at Fremlin Walk, is confident the new shopping sector will be jam-packed this festive season.

He said: "Given the retailer interest, our 0 per cent vacancy rate and the investment in the town-centre regeneration, it is clear that Maidstone has a bright future.

"We have a stylish offer that is reflective of what our catchment area demands.

"Despite reports in the trade press which list towns like Maidstone as being 'hard hit' by recession, our retailers trade well and we have excellent relationships with them."

Top clothes retailer Superdry has recently taken up a unit and will be fully let by Christmas, while other units have been taken up by House of Fraser, Zara, Laura Ashley, Pret a Manger and Pandora.

The town centre is also showing figures of shop vacancies at 10 per cent, below the national average of 14 per cent.

Wine merchant given invaluable help on voyage to set up shop in Far East



GOOD CHEER: Robert Lench

A SPECIALIST wine merchant based in Sevenoaks is celebrating the opening of an office in Hong Kong this month with advice and support from UK Trade & Investment (UKTI).

BWI Ltd's speciality is the wines of the Bordeaux region. It covers all aspects of the wine-distribution business and even has its own wine-producing chateau in France, Chateau Carignan, bought in 2007.

The firm was established in 1998 by Andy Lench as a UK-based sister company to Bordeaux Wine Locators, which he had formed after emigrating to the US. BWI was set up to offer wine opportunities for private clients looking to buy, collect, consume and invest in fine Bordeaux wine.

In 2003, Andy brought his brother Robert in as managing director to build the business internationally, using his background in financial services.

A prime focus of this development was to access the growing market for high-quality wines in the Far East, principally Hong Kong, but also

Singapore and Malaysia amid others.

Robert recalled: "We were sending someone out to the Far East about three times a year, so it was clear that soon we would need a permanent presence in the region.

"In August 2010, to help make this happen, and to access expert advice on building our business in the region, I approached Terry Dunk, an international trade adviser with UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) in the South East. Terry had been recommended to me by a whisky producer he had advised."

With financial and logistical support under UKTI's Tradeshow Access Programme, BWI was able to exhibit at the Hong Kong Wine & Spirits show in November 2010.

Meanwhile, UKTI staff at the British Consulate-General in Hong Kong have been providing local knowledge and contacts to facilitate the setting up of a BWI office in the territory, introducing Robert to hardware-suppliers to equip the operation, for example,

Prior to working with UKTI, BWI's sales turnover was £8.85 million, of which £1.51million (17 per cent) was from exports. Exports now comprise some 20 per cent of turnover, and the firm hopes to raise this to 30 per cent over the next 18 months.

"The support we have received from UKTI has enabled us to move the business forward more quickly than would otherwise have been possible," said Robert.

"I have been very impressed with all the UKTI staff I have encountered, both in the UK and in Hong Kong.

"It's one thing knowing our own business, but quite another knowing how to conduct it in a foreign market, and UKTI has been invaluable in this respect, with practical as well as theoretical assistance.

"Caroline Sprod in Hong Kong has been particularly supportive, while Terry Dunk at UKTI South East has put a lot of work in to strategic planning and familiarising us with the market."



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