

Noticeboard

December 08



BISHOP'S STORTFORD
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Tel: 01279 505953
www.bschamber.org



A BIT OF CHEER FOR CHRISTMAS

In spite of the general gloom



In spite of the general gloom of the credit crunch hanging over us, at least the town looks bright and cheerful with the Christmas Lights. This year, nearly all the lights are LED, helping the environment by saving on electricity consumption. The new lights in North Street are twinkling away having replaced the old tungsten bulbs.

But what has happened to the lights that used to cross both South Street and Potter Street? Over the last few years it has become more and more difficult to put up Christmas Lights. All the lights, the connections, and the wiring has to be checked and approved to Health and Safety Standards by a qualified electrician.

At one time the lights were erected and dismantled by volunteer members of the Chamber of Commerce and Town Centre Management. A cherry picker would be hired and away they would go. When bulbs went out over the Christmas period the same people would climb a ladder and change them. By hiring the cherry picker they were able to decide when the lights were worth changing and when to leave them.

Now all that has changed.

The lights have to be erected and dismantled by a qualified company and this adds significantly to the cost of putting on the Christmas Lights. If bulbs require changing, the company has to be informed and a qualified electrician is sent to the town to change them and a hefty charge is made for each call out. This means that broken lights are repaired only when there are sufficient 'black holes' to make a call-out worthwhile.

A further example of an additional cost of putting on the Christmas Lights is the charge of £1,000 just to test and approve the installation.

So where does the money come from? It comes via donations from various local organisations, some of the retail outlets and town centre companies, the Chamber of Commerce, Town Centre Management and, of course, from the Town Council, which put aside £6,000 - (and were still able to reduce their part of the Council Tax for 2008-09).

For the first time, Riverside Walk will have its own display of festive lighting, the retailers having bought the old Christmas lights from Town Centre Management. It is to be hoped that this will encourage people into that end of the town.

Because of the spiraling costs and Health and Safety concerns, many towns are cutting back drastically on their Christmas Lights - or doing without them altogether - which is a pity because, with the media forecasting doom and gloom all round for goodness knows how long, we need something to cheer us up and brighten our lives.



New LED lights in North Street

NextStep, Charringtons House, The Causeway, Bishop's Stortford, Herts. CM23 2EN

Tel: 01279 505953 Fax: 01279 505988 e-mail: secretary@bschamber.org www.bschamber.org



October 22nd saw the sixth Bishop's Stortford Means Business Exhibition held, for the third time, at the Rhodes Arts Complex in South Street.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AT THE BISHOP'S STORTFORD MEANS BUSINESS 2008

This popular event grew significantly this year, with a total of 64 exhibitors, up from 45 last year. Well over 200 people, either a company representatives or as local residents, visited the exhibition and were able to discuss products and services with local companies and organisations, as well as attending seminars and informative talks. Exhibitors ranged from a sandwich bar to a physiotherapist to a major car manufacturer.

Chamber Chairman, John Gearing, gave an up-to-date view on the redevelopment of Bishop's Stortford, whilst East Herts Council Chairman, Cllr. Tony Jackson, gave a report on the progress of the 20-20 project for the planning of Bishop's Stortford's future development.



The girls from Axis Magazine visited the Chamber stand. What a job, but someone has to do it!

The Chamber is one of the sponsors of the event, and many members took advantage of the preferential rates for exhibiting that are offered to Chamber members.

Bishop's Stortford Means Business is organised by Business Kinetics.

Bob Lee, Business Kinetics

I ONCE GOT A JAPANESE BAROMETER FOR CHRISTMAS -
Now I know WHEN it's Raining in Tokyo!

"THANKS, DEAR, YOU GAVE ME JUST WHAT I NEEDED
TO EXCHANGE FOR WHAT I WANTED."

THERE IS HELP OUT THERE

The Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform (BERR) has produced an 'Action for Business' programme aimed at helping UK businesses overcome the current financial and economic problems.

Included in the Government's initiatives are:

- Access to Bank Finance via the **Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme**, available to companies over five years old with growth ambitions.
- **Small Business Finance Scheme**, a new, temporary guarantee scheme.
- **'Business Health Checks'** via Business Link.
- Helping businesses more easily find **government funded support** by streamlining over 3000 schemes into 30 by March 2009.



All these schemes will be accessible via Business Link. There are links to both the BERR and Business Link through our web site www.bschamber.org

VAT

It is worth noting that, although the standard rate of VAT fell from 17.5% to 15% in the pre-budget statement, there were no changes to reduced VAT rates or changes to VAT exemptions.

The **sectoral rates of the VAT Flat-rate Scheme** will be amended in line with the standard rate reduction. The eligibility tests for the flat-rate scheme will be simplified from 1st April 2009.

HMRC BUSINESS PAYMENT SUPPORT LINE

Tel: 0845 302 1435

Open Monday - Friday 8.00am - 8.00pm. Saturday and Sunday 8.00am - 4.00pm

The support line is for new enquiries only. To enable the advisers to help you they will need:

- Your Tax reference number
- Details of the tax you are, or will have, trouble paying
- Basic details of your business' income and outgoings.

BUSINESS LINK HELPLINE NUMBER: 0845 600 9006

BUSINESSES CAN HAVE EARLY DELIVERIES - AT A PRICE!

Royal mail has responded to the Chamber's enquiries about late morning deliveries to businesses, giving their reasons for being unable to guarantee deliveries at a reasonable time. They give details of their other services that might help to solve the problem.

Companies can make arrangements with Royal Mail to have their post delivered at a specified time. Called 'Timed Deliver', the service is available to customers within a 10 mile radius of their local delivery office but at a cost of £3,000 per annum.

Alternatively, arrangements can be made via 'Mail Collect' for a company staff member to call into the sorting office in South Street to collect the mail before 8.30am - at a cost of £2,520 per annum. Royal Mail can only guarantee to provide the mail that has been sorted and prepared by that time. After 8.3am postal collection is free.



ROUNDABOUT UPDATE

Following last month's report on sponsored roundabouts, the District Council's Executive, after a Scrutiny Committee Meeting, will be ensuring that floral displays will be seen on some roundabouts.

After the adverse reaction to the '*as seen and with one extra grass cutting per year*' sponsorship policy, a number have now had large tubs placed in the centre, ready for the Spring. Organisations such as Stortford in Bloom will be encouraged to contribute to the displays by donations or in kind.

However, floral displays are not always suitable, as some roundabouts are already attractively landscaped with grass, bushes and mature trees. The Executive does not consider that they need to be dripping with flowers, as the District is not competing with the Bournemouths and Margates of this world,

Whittington Way/Villiers-sur-Marne Roundabout



but it does concede that floral displays do add to a 'feel good' factor for residents, businesses and visitors to the town. The pilot scheme will be reviewed after one year.

The previous report incorrectly stated the numbers being piloted. The number is still a total of 11 but with **4** in Bishop's Stortford, **5** in Hertford and one each in Buntingford and Ware. Sorry about that.

WHY BLACK and WHITE?

Lack of a sponsor for this month's 'Notice Board' has forced us to step down the presentation, and photocopy in black and white.

It is essential that the 'Notice Board's' production costs are kept to a minimum and, without sponsor-ship, too much of the Chamber's finances would be used up on one item.

Sponsors are required for the April, June & August editions.

We hope that you will find it just as interesting and 'newsy' as before but we really need members to participate in the production with their own contributions.

KEEP US INFORMED

Let us have your company news, tell us who is moving in and who is moving on. Comments on articles in the Notice Board, whether you agree with the writer or not, are always welcome. If your company has won a large contract, gained an award or even beaten the credit crunch let us know.

SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship costs £250.00 and gives a ¼ page on the back page in full colour and a 1/2" strap line at the bottom of each of the centre pages (see example below).

The publication goes out to all Chamber members, local Town, District and County Councillors and council officers. The library, Town and District Council offices and the Tourist Information Office all stock the publication.

Interested?

**Contact Les Pinnell on
01279 505953, or
secretary@bschamber.org**

PLEASE REMEMBER Until a new Chamber Secretary has been appointed, the Chamber office is only open Monday and Wednesday, 10.00am - 2.00pm

Take advantage of TRAIN TO GAIN

TRAIN TO GAIN is the national skills service designed to help you improve the skills of your workforce and as a route to improving the performance of your business. It supports employers in all types and sizes of business sectors.

The help available is targeted to the size and type of business and offers advice from basic skills through to management and leadership training. Employers with 5,000 or more employees will receive advice from the National Employer Service.



To take a lot of the time-consuming organisation off the employer's shoulders, **Skills Brokers** take over much of the work such as identifying the requirements, scheduling, courses and business support, all with the aim of minimising disruption to your business. If you prefer, you can use a college or other training provider instead of a skills broker.

To get things underway and to find out more, call

0800 015 55 45

www.traintogain.gov.uk
and for details of brokers

TRADE WASTE COLLECTION

Our Chairman mentioned to me that he had recently changed his trade waste collector from the private sector to the Council's waste collection service and had just about halved his collection costs.

Although the Notice Board has carried details of the Council's waste collection services before, I decided to follow this up and look at the service again.

Provided your business is based in the Council's administrative area, they will collect your waste and ensure you meet your legal duties. The Council will collect at times to suit you and provide a choice of bin sizes or sell waste sacks.

From the Council you can expect

- Legal compliance with the 'Duty of Care'
- Choice of wheeled bins at competitive rates
- Fast efficient weekly collection
- A reliable first-class service from a proven team.



www.eastgerts.gov.uk/businessandcommerce

MARKET TRADER DONATES CHRISTMAS TREE

Market Trader, Rosso Rospo, who runs the highly successful flower stall on Market Square, has kindly donated a Christmas Tree to Bishop's Stortford.

The tree was erected by the Bishop's Stortford Town Council's works team and new tree lights have been provided by the Town Council.

The decorated tree is situated on Market Square and the individual lights on the tree are sponsored to raise money for the Isabel Hospice.

LIGHTS OF LOVE CEREMONY GETS THE TOWN'S CHRISTMAS UNDER WAY.

The Lights of Love Ceremony took place in the Market Square on Friday 5th December, signalling the town's run-up to Christmas. The event is in aid of the Isabel Hospice and each Christmas light is a donation of £5 to the Hospice in memory of a loved one.

This a simple ceremony, with carol singing, prayers and a short reading and is a reminder, early in December, of the real meaning of Christmas.

Everyone, especially the children, joined in the enthusiastic countdown to the tree lights being switched on.

