

# PENZANCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



# NEWSLETTER



Issue 8

27<sup>th</sup> August 2010

## BANK HOLIDAY BUMPER ISSUE!

This is a bigger issue of the Newsletter than normal as I have included information affecting members that I have obtained from sources such as the Federation of Private Business, the Federation of Small Businesses, and Business Link as well as the Cornwall Chamber of Commerce and Industry. I hope that those of you who are working over the Bank Holiday will have time to skim through this issue even if you are too busy to read it from cover to cover!

Have a good one!  
Mike Waters  
Chairman

## CORNWALL SUSTAINABILITY AWARDS 2010

Environmentally friendly and sustainable businesses from across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly can now apply to enter the 2010 Cornwall Sustainability Awards 2010. Full details can be found at: <http://www.cornwallsustainabilityawards.org> For more information on the Awards please contact Anthony Weight at Cornwall Council on 01637 872448 or Gitty Ankers at the Environment Agency on 01208 265060. The six categories are:

- \* Best Managed Company (Small, Medium and Large) sponsored by the Manufacturing Advisory Service in the South West (MAS-SW), Combined Universities in Cornwall (CUC), and St Austell Brewery
- \* Low Carbon Business sponsored by Environmental Skills Network
- \* Resource Management sponsored by Groundwork Trust
- \* Products and Services sponsored by Oxford Innovation
- \* Best Individual sponsored by the Energy & Environment Group (Wardell Armstrong International)
- \* Sustainable Construction sponsored by the European Social Fund Construction Sector Group
- \* Overall Winner Award sponsored by Business Link and chosen from the other category winners

Members who would like a cheap Environmental Policy tailored to their own business can contact the Chairman.

## PENZANCE HARBOUR

The objectors have already started an email and on-line campaign against the decision and we can expect a lot derogatory letters in the Cornishman who will probably give them maximum exposure. It should be noted that despite the decision the Cornishman has not approached anyone associated with the campaign for the harbour improvements seeking their comments, yet in an email from the Editor sent out yesterday

she claimed to have given full coverage of the response to the decision in the paper! Please send in letters of support to the Cornishman – they don't have to be masterpieces - the more there are then the more likely a few will get printed. Send to letters to Head of User Generated Content, Gareth Bartlett, 01872 247501 [gbartlett@c-dm.co.uk](mailto:gbartlett@c-dm.co.uk) or [jacqui.walls@c-dm.co.uk](mailto:jacqui.walls@c-dm.co.uk) . If emailing then give all the details that you would in a letter (full name, address and telephone number) – they only print your name and location.

If you cannot manage a letter then consider adding online comments to news items. It is important that support for the project is very visible.

See <http://www.thisiscornwall.co.uk/news/Ferry-link-Penzance-Isles-Scilly-ahead-despite-protests/article-2549387-detail/article.html>

The MP's statement is most peculiar. I would have thought it was drafted by FoPH but for the fact it is posted on the MP's own web site. See

<http://www.andrewgeorge.org.uk/index.php?p=Comment%20on%20Penzance%20Harbour>

We can expect FoPH to try and derail the project with a request for Judicial Review (claiming that the Council or Dept of Transport failed to follow procedures correctly) but they will have been discouraged by Mr Cartwright's failure (Jan 10) and his costs rumoured to be ~£8000. Costs for a typical Judicial Review hearing are in the order of £50,000 if you get to a full hearing with barristers on both sides – not a trivial matter and especially when an earlier attempt was thrown out with dismissive comments by the judge.

## **INTRODUCTION OF WORKPLACE PARKING LEVY**

It is thought that councils across the UK plan to introduce a workplace parking levy (WPL) scheme, which will see businesses being taxed on parking provisions they provide for staff. Cllr Graeme Hicks (Cabinet Member for Transport) speaking on Radio Cornwall this week said that Cornwall Council were not currently thinking about the introduction of such a scheme but that it could not be discounted. He went on to say that Cornwall Council are introducing a parking charge for staff wishing to use their car parks in an attempt to encourage car sharing, the use of public transport and bicycles, and the use of the Truro Park and Ride service. He said that these were valid reasons for introducing the workplace parking levy as cars' days are numbered!

The Forum of Private Business is deeply opposed to the scheme and believes it will provoke fury among business owners, who could be forced to pay tens of thousands of pounds each year simply for providing their employees with somewhere to park their cars.

Forum spokesman Chris Gorman said: "When the Nottingham WPL scheme was given the go-ahead last year, we said at the time that it would only be a matter of time before it spread to other towns and cities. Sadly, it appears those fears will soon be realised. In our view, and in the view of our members, it's simply a stealth tax which will have a disproportionate impact on small businesses. It's the equivalent of charging homeowners to park on their own driveways and will increase parking problems in town centres and cities. Businesses already contribute enormous amounts to public services through existing taxes such as business rates. Whatever its supposed justifications, the danger is that the WPL could open the floodgates to a raft of new taxes and charges being levied onto companies to pay for things which were previously paid for through general taxation. While councils' finances are under pressure, this is a very short-sighted idea as companies are likely to avoid areas with a WPL scheme in operation, meaning jobs, investment and therefore tax revenue will end up elsewhere."

Mr Gorman added: "This proposal comes as small businesses are battling with economic uncertainty, public spending cuts and worrying levels of inflation. We would urge any businesses whose local authorities are considering implementing a WPL scheme to oppose it in every way they can."

At the present time Cornwall Council are not considering such a scheme but the matter will be debated at the next Chamber meeting on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> September in the Green Bean.

### **What have we been up to this week?**

In this column the Chairman will be summarising what he (and others) have been up to during the past week on behalf of the Chamber:

Mike has been in touch with Richard Glover, Chief Executive of the Cornwall Chamber regarding Local Enterprise Partnerships (see article under Cornwall Chamber on page 5). He told Richard that Councillors and Politicians need to take a back seat in the work of the LEPs as business people know best what we need to help improve the economy and employment prospects. He also stated that it was essential that the business leaders sitting on the LEP included those from SMEs/Micro businesses and that those involved also needed a high degree of local knowledge. It is no use the LEP comprising solely of the MDs of large companies who may have recently moved to the County or who may have little or no experience of running a SME.

Mike was interviewed by BBC Radio Cornwall about the harbour scheme.

Mike was interviewed by BBC Radio Cornwall about in-town parking charges. Denis Nightingale, who conducted the interview, also sought the opinions of members of the public as well as retailers in the town, all of whom decried the high parking charges.

Mike has spoken with representatives of the company handling the sale of the heliport to Sainsburys regarding the forthcoming public exhibition of their proposals, it is hoped that the exhibition will be held in an empty shop in Market Jew Street, or some other equally central venue, at the end of September.

Jan and John Garrison have negotiated our return to the Penzance and Newlyn Rugby Club for our monthly meetings from October onwards. Previously they had decided to close the club on Mondays and Tuesdays to save staff costs, however, with the return of the Pirates to the Mennay Field they have reconsidered. Please note that the next meeting of the Chamber on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> September will be in the Green Bean Coffee Shop at the bottom of Market Jew Street as originally planned. We would like to thank Pheona and Justin for the use of the Green Bean for the past couple of months. The return to the Penzance & Newlyn Rigby Club will ease those parking difficulties that members have had (as well as negating high parking charges!) and will also help to support the Pirates' return to Mennay Field.

Parsons Brinckerhoff are currently working on behalf of Cornwall Council, looking at the potential economic costs and benefits of widening the A30 (over Bodmin Moor) to dual carriageway standard. This involves a preliminary assessment of any potential impacts that this may have upon the economy of Cornwall. Mike has completed a Stakeholder Questionnaire on behalf of the Chamber which contained the views of members regarding transport issues which have been voiced at our monthly meetings. (One would have thought that Cornwall Council should have the experience to undertake this work in-house rather than employing Consultants to do their work for them.)

Mike is still working on the paperwork for the Xmas Late Night Shopping extravaganza as well as trying to arrange sponsorship for the event. Not one member has yet managed to make a donation towards making sure that the event is as spectacular as possible – we need around £2K. Organising the event is taking quite a bit of time and effort and the end beneficiaries will be shops, restaurants and other businesses trading in Penzance Town Centre. It is hoped that this will not just be over the Xmas period but that the publicity surrounding Late Night Shopping will spill over into the New Year through increased footfall. In order to run the nights correctly we will also need volunteers to erect signage, put up barriers and act as stewards for the evenings, offers of help in this direction would also be greatly appreciated now rather than later. The Traffic Management Plan and the Street Trading Licence and associated paperwork HAS to include details and disposition of stewards and marshals, without these people it will be illegal for the event to proceed. The last thing we need is the adverse publicity that will arise if we have to call off any of the Late Night Shopping evenings; there will also be cost implications for the organisers and stall holders.

### **Micro firms should be exempt from pension reform ticking time bomb**

All micro firms should be exempt from the automatic enrolment pension scheme due to come into force in 2012 says the Federation of Small Businesses. The FSB is calling for all micro businesses to be exempt from automatically enrolling their staff into a pension scheme to remove the regulatory and financial burden on these businesses.

The FSB warns that the cost and time spent on administrative work will damage micro firms – those with 10 employees or less – and that the pension schemes set up by Government do not meet the needs of micro firms. The proposed changes are also very complicated for small businesses to put in place, and the FSB is concerned that small firms do not have the expertise they need to choose a pension scheme for their staff – FSB research shows that seven in 10 business owners do not feel confident in choosing a pension scheme for their staff.

For small and medium sized businesses, the FSB is instead calling for a default scheme to be set up in which everyone who is not currently saving should be enrolled. It should be based on the following principles to:

- Deliver to all employees and the self-employed the opportunity to save for a pension at an annual charge of 0.3 per cent or less.
- Use a national payment collection scheme, such as PAYE, to decrease the administrative burden on small businesses.
- Provide members with the option of investment in very low cost funds.
- Keep contribution rates under constant review to identify whether changes are needed to achieve objectives.

The FSB is also extremely worried that the majority of small businesses and their employees are unaware that the country's pension scheme will change in only two years time, and is calling on the Government to raise awareness of the default pension scheme to ensure that this ticking time bomb doesn't hit small firms without warning.

### **Equality Act 2010**

Businesses may need to review their existing policies as most of the Equality Act will become law on 1 October 2010. The Act brings together and replaces the previous discrimination legislation, but your obligations remain largely the same.

The Equality Act covers a range of groups that have protected characteristics relating to:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity

It simplifies and streamlines the law and strengthens particular aspects of existing equality law. As a result, you may need to review and change some of your policies and practices.

You can [find detailed information about the new Equality Act on the Government Equalities Office website](#)

## Doing business with the public sector

Workshop on 2 Sep 2010 at The Royal Cornwall Showground, Wadebridge, Cornwall

Income generation through public sector contracting is now showing massive potential and is currently valued at £175 billion even after the proposed cuts. Tenders from SMEs are highly sought after, and this event will provide you with the skills and knowledge to prepare bids with confidence.

What will you learn:

- the practical benefits of working with the public sector
- how to work successfully with public sector bodies, including the NHS, MOD, local authorities, emergency services and educational institutions
- why the public sector wants to be supplied by SMEs
- the tendering process and how to find opportunities
- getting the basics right when tender writing
- real tender notices: how to read and understand them
- using an SME's strengths for successful tendering
- case studies and practical examples
- analysing your competitors
- how to bid as a consortium or partnership
- how to prepare for implementing the contract

This workshop is suitable for those who have been trading for more than 12 months (maximum of two delegates per organisation). Public sector buyers will also be attending to give guidance on what they look for in a tender application. Booking is easy, download the detailed event description, call 0845 600 9966 or email [enquiries@blpeninsula.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@blpeninsula.co.uk)

## News from the Cornwall Chamber of Commerce and Industry

### LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

We have heard a bit about LEPs over the past couple of weeks but in simple layman's terms, without the need for political correctness, what on earth will a Local Enterprise Partnership do?

Politicians believe that private businesses and individual entrepreneurs should lead the economy. So we need to make it easier for private sector business people to do what they do.

It feels like the Government would believe that anyway, but given the scale and state of public finances we really need to encourage the private sector to fill what could be a big gap in employment and economic activity.

So the idea is that businesses and local authorities will get together to look at the local conditions that help or hinder business. This job used to be done by Regional Development Agencies but the Government has announced their abolition. The theory is that the old regions were too big and cumbersome and could not easily take account of differences on their 'patch'. An LEP will better-reflect what is happening on the ground.

We think it will need to do three things:

## **Strip out all of the guff from existing economic strategies**

Like any business, the area needs a high-level plan. We all know that there has been a lot of thinking already – probably too much – but to make sure we get a really focussed picture of the job in hand we need get to the true nub of things. Clearly identify the answer to the question: “*what are we going to achieve here*”? Take out the nice-but-vague platitudes; recognise the true opportunities and limitations; remove those statements that are there only to recognise the availability of Government/EU funding; re-phrase things to make sure that the important stuff is writ large in everyone’s mind instead of carefully or accidentally buried; make sure that our aims really do create opportunities for private sector wealth and job creation rather than the need for more hard-working but expensive public servants. This is important because such strategies influence how Authorities think about things like planning, regeneration, housing and procurement.

## **Make an action plan for where we will focus what little time and money we have**

Although this is all about growing the private sector, the public sector still has a big role to play. Despite difficult times, Local Authorities will have control over policies and budgets that can help deliver the strategy. On the basis of 1, what are we going to do right now (i.e. next 2, 5 and 10 years)? Senior business people do this all of the time: consider all of the things we *could* do, and then decide on the few things we *will* do. Based on evidence, instinct, expected return on investment and attitude to risk. This process often means casting aside some perfectly good ideas to ensure that we focus our energies to best effect.

## **Direct, oversee and review that plan; discussing and controlling only those things that get the job done**

Plans tend to succeed best when you have control over the relevant budgets and the teams doing the work. **Don’t** get distracted by noise from elsewhere; **do** review and change tack if things aren’t working out. Get the job done.

Other headlines are:

- The LEP needs to avoid becoming another well-meaning but expensive talking shop. This means a narrow brief focussing on a few tasks that can have real impact.
- It needs to focus most on what we are good at rather than what we wish we were good at. This should bring sectors such as tourism, care, engineering, food and drink etc back to the fore.
- We support the establishment of an LEP for Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly, as it best fits the task in hand. No other option offers such an effective brief. In particular we feel that the mooted Devon and Cornwall + is the worst of all worlds; not focussed enough to deliver on the ground but too narrow to provide a platform for the few ‘infrastructure’ and marketing priorities that might require a wider partnership.
- Even Cornwall Council’s careful politics of a wider “overarching” LEP for Devon and Cornwall give cause for concern. Of course, on those issues that are genuinely “sub-regional” we can come to ad-hoc arrangements with the most appropriate partners. However these need to be chosen for the task in hand rather than necessarily immediate physical geography. It is important that any LEP can take a practical view on all questions.
- We feel that it is wrong to specify the Cornwall Development Company (CDC) as sole delivery body for the LEP. If the intention is to develop a balanced economy we need to make it easy for alternative delivery options to come from the private sector – albeit most likely in partnership with CDC, colleges, Combined Universities etc.

## **BETTER PEOPLE, BETTER RESULTS**

A new initiative has been launched in Cornwall to help local businesses get the very best out of their employees.

'Better People – Better Results' is the result of a collaboration between two of Cornwall's leading human resources companies - Sapience HR and Talent Cornwall.

The companies will be holding a series of workshops aimed at providing SMEs with practical and pragmatic advice on how to get the best out of their people, and consequently improve the bottom line.

Sapience HR director Sue Hook explained: "We aim to deliver workshops that give sensible advice that is both inexpensive to implement and easy to understand. We have brought together years of good practice, hints and tips that are designed to prove that simple changes to the way we work with people can make a lasting difference."

Talent Cornwall director Dougie Woods added: "We aim to cover a full spectrum of people management issues. This is not about offering complex concepts or expensive solutions; we will not be covering detailed employment law or tricky concepts. Good people management is mostly about the application of common sense solutions and knowing how to adapt clever ideas into your organisation."

The workshops will be held at Pool Innovation Centre, which has come on board as co-sponsor for the initiative. Innovation Director Bernard Curren remarked: "We were delighted when this initiative was first proposed to us. The concept is fresh and new and aligned to the sort of business support initiative that the centre encourages, especially as it highlights the value of people as a resource in business. We are very pleased to be a part of it."

The workshops are being supported by Business Link and CPR Regeneration, who are both offering funding to organisations who wish to send managers onto any of the courses.

The organisers have also organised two half-day introductory sessions on the morning and afternoon of September 14, to give interested companies a greater insight into what the workshops offer. Places for the introductory event can be booked on-line via [www.betterpeople.eventbrite.com](http://www.betterpeople.eventbrite.com)

**STOP PRESS (RECEIVED JUST AT THE LAST MINUTE!)**

### **CHAIRMAN'S CONTACT DETAILS**

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