

South London Business News

2nd December 2003 - Issue 10

Welcome – David Main, Chief Executive



Welcome to issue ten of our electronic newsletter. Since issue nine we have been working hard to represent South London and remain extremely busy. The Skills agenda has been to the fore recently with our Learning brokers project and the White Paper. Ivan Lewis MP – Minister for Skills – has kindly agreed to launch the Learning Brokers scheme on 21st January 2004 when we will meet with businesses from South London. Put this date in your diary! It will be a good opportunity to put the business case to the Minister on education and skills issues. The event will be at around 6.00pm in Central London; further details will follow.

We are continuing to work with the South London Partnership on the development of a sub-regional planning framework for South London. Part of this process is the development of a strategy for business in the sub-region, entitled South London Economy 2015. We are also working on a business manifesto for London 2004 – which will outline our policy objectives and serve as a challenge to the Mayoral candidates. We will be inviting the candidates to comment on our proposals. We will let you know what they say!

Retaining South London's businesses!

With Simon Turnage now in post as Business Retention Manager, the Business Retention team is operating programmes in Croydon, Sutton, Merton, and Kingston. In early December we will begin a business retention programme in Richmond.

Common issues which are emerging from these visits include:

- Problems with congestion, lack of parking and extensions to controlled parking zones
- Poor quality of skills and attitudes of school leavers in the workplace
- Pressure on land for residential redevelopment and the consequent loss of employment land and high costs of that which remains – leading to a shortage of suitable commercial premises and some out migration to beyond the M25 where overheads are lower.
- Poor communication between local authorities and the business community and a lack of understanding of each others role.
- Overseas competition in the marketplace – for the provision of cheaper labour
- Continued downturn in the manufacturing sector
- Telecommunications companies appear to be recovering and reporting a potential growth in sales in the near future.

Invest in South London

Overseas inward investment leads remain low, so we have been using the quiet spell to reconsider our South London offer. This will ensure we are in a strong position to sell South London once the FDI market improves.

On 29th October we kick-started our brand development by hosting an event - Invest in South London - at the Marriott County Hall Hotel. We asked those who attended to work in small groups to brainstorm what they thought South London's strengths and weaknesses were as an inward investment location, and consider how we should market and promote the sub-region. The evening was chaired by Richard Lane from BDO Stoy Hayward, with a presentation from Michael Charlton, of London First Centre, on what companies look for when considering where to locate.

The evening was a great success . A small group of key stakeholders is taking the findings and ideas forward.

www.southlondonbusiness.co.uk/property

The database is continuing to grow from strength to strength and is now recording over 50,000 hits per month. There are over 1600 properties currently listed, from over 60 property agents across 8 Boroughs.

We have recently extended the service to cover Richmond – they are now the eighth Borough to participate. We have also added a serviced-office database, provided by Instant Offices. This offers a free search facility for serviced-offices across South London. For more information please select the link: www.southlondonbusiness.co.uk/property/commercial.php

Innovate South London

The Innovate South London team are still very busy meeting a wide range of local partners and providers of potential services; talking to prospective clients; arranging business clinics; finding suitable property; and producing a range of promotional material. A PDF copy of their new brochure is attached with this newsletter.

Lavinia Popa has joined the Innovate South London team as Project Manager and will assist with the development and management of the new innovation centre. Innovate South London will shortly be moving into their new offices in Airport House in Croydon – which will house their initial incubation space.

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