



South London Business

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South London Business

...it's all about business

*By Peter Pledger,
chief executive,
South London Business*



The new financial year has not brought any more certainty about the future. We have almost daily announcements of new initiatives to support business from government, new programmes from the Mayor and new announcements from local councils to counter the raft of bad news and fear of worse to come.

In March we heard an excellent presentation from Kate Barker of the Monetary Policy Committee who addressed a meeting of South London businesses and explained the approach the Bank of England is taking. The position was complex, the policy of Quantitative Easing imaginative but the outcome uncertain. (See page 6.)

All these initiatives from the public sector are welcome and the better initiatives will provide the support businesses need to get through the recession. However, the truth is that while these programmes are essential to ease the burden they can never be enough to reverse the decline.

There is a strong body of economic opinion that argues that what we are going through, while painful, is not only inevitable but also useful to clear out poor businesses, bad practices and mistakes in policy. There is clearly some merit in this argument. After all many realised the spiralling of debt was unsustainable but few had any idea of the madness that created the toxic debts that underpinned this crisis.

This position suggests that while we should mitigate the worst aspects, our main action should be to wait, take the pain and build on what comes out at the end of the recession.

Such a fatalistic approach not only seems defeatist but also may lose us the opportunity to invest, adapt and develop.

Yes we are going through pain. Arguments about the relative interest rates, exchange rates and fiscal approach will continue but surely the smart thing to do now is to invest, focus on key sectors, develop the employees with the right skills for the future and diversify our industrial base so that we grow from this setback.

I am not suggesting that we can buck the market but I am suggesting that a passive approach waiting for the economic cycle to turn can never be the right business approach. We need to do what we can to

trade our way out of this mess, to build the businesses to generate wealth and jobs and to focus on the possibility of change and growth and not accept the perceived inevitability of a long term recession.

The work of William McKee and the Outer London Commission is one process the public, private and voluntary sector should be using to stimulate the growth in the South London economy. (See page 32.)

But we can do more.

South London Business will be launching a programme to provide training and support to thousands of staff that have recently been made redundant to enable them to access training and support to secure new jobs across South London. For details see the South London Business website.

We will also be developing new products, events and activity to support business growth over the next few months.

The activities of Celsius – the club for the largest and most significant businesses in South London – will increase to stimulate more business to business activity and we will focus on celebrating the positive through such activity as the South London Business Awards.

I hope you and your business will want to work with us as we grow South London out of this recession. If you are not yet a subscriber to South London Business you can join today for a flat rate fee of £179 + VAT. Please e-mail julie.leggatt@southlondonbusiness.co.uk

Peter Pledger – chief executive

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Quality management accolade for South London Business

South London Business has been awarded the ISO9001:2008 quality management system certificate.

The accreditation, which is awarded by Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance Ltd, applies to South London Business' provision of advice, guidance, information and advocacy to companies south of the Thames in London.

It also covers the provision of publications and events and, says the citation on the certificate: "Development of management projects relating to the delivery of individual

learning skills and business support, strategy development and business engagement."

The accreditation is valid for a period of three years.

Commenting on the achievement, Peter Pledger, chief executive of South London Business, said: "We took the decision to go for the newer and more exacting 2008 standard and passed. This underlines the quality of the work we continue to undertake to ensure the voice of business in South London is heard where it matters."

RBS backs Hawes & Co.

The Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) has recently provided estate agents Hawes & Co. with a funding package to assist with working capital, which includes funding from the recently launched Enterprise Finance Guarantee (EFG) scheme.

Established in 1885, Hawes & Co. is an independent estate agents with six offices across Wimbledon, Raynes Park, New Malden and Surbiton. It offers residential sales, lettings, property management services and international sales. Malcolm Gee, partner at Hawes, turned to his relationship manager at RBS Adrian Mars to discuss the possibility of arranging extra funding to help with general working capital for the business.

RBS restructured Hawes' existing facilities and provided a substantial funding package from the Government-backed EFG scheme. The scheme aims to provide necessary working capital or investment

finance for profitable businesses to help them through the difficult economic climate. Under the EFG scheme the government will guarantee 75 per cent of any loans made, with the bank covering the remaining 25 per cent.

Gee said: "Last year was a challenging time for estate agents and it became evident that we would need extra financial assistance to ensure the business could thrive and prosper in 2009. The funding package has helped with general cashflow and has allowed us to focus on our long-term objective of moving the business forward. Indeed we have already seen a substantial increase in activity and are very positive looking forward."

Mars added: "Hawes is a long-standing customer of ours and an established business in South London that benefits from an experienced management team. We were happy to support it particularly during the current climate."

Wimbledon is going for gold

Wimbledon's Going for Gold campaign – a partnership between the Merton Chamber of Commerce, the local authority and the town centre's businesses was launched in March.

Going for Gold aims to raise Wimbledon's game in the run up to, during and beyond the 2012 Olympics (where the tennis event will be held). The campaign's main aim is to make the town centre better for business, workers and residents. It will encourage shops, restaurants and hotels to run promotions throughout July 2012, increasing footfall and improving the public environment.

In March, Stephen Hammond, MP for Wimbledon, addressed an audience of local businesses at a breakfast launch, offering his views on the opportunities Wimbledon has in the run up to 2012. Diana Sterck, CEO of Merton Chamber of Commerce, called on businesses to get involved in the campaign, to beat the



Merton Chamber
CEO Diana Sterck

recession and improve the competitive position of the town.

Going for Gold is run and managed by Merton Chamber of Commerce, the voice for business and enterprise in Wimbledon.

For more on Wimbledon Going for Gold, see the Merton Chamber feature on page 38.

SLB awards shortlist online

As we went to press, companies shortlisted for the prestigious 2009 RBS South London Business Awards were being announced. For further information, and to find if your favourite local company has been shortlisted, please visit www.slbawards.co.uk. On the awards' website there is a competition and the chance to win two free tickets to attend the dinner, worth £195.

Following a rigorous judging process, the winners of the 2009 Awards will be announced at a gala dinner and awards

ceremony on May 20 at Selhurst Park Stadium, home of South London football team Crystal Palace.

Barry White, regional director, Business & Commercial Banking for South London commented: "We are delighted to be involved in the South London Business Awards again this year and are looking forward to celebrating business success with the local business community. Winning one of these awards is a significant achievement and a great recognition for businesses that are doing well in the region."

Retouching Frost Group's branding

Frost Group Limited (FGL), a Croydon-based insolvency firm, is pleased to announce the completion of its re-branding, with the launch of a newly-designed website at www.frostbr.co.uk

The re-branding has followed the company's ethos of taking a modern, fresh approach to financial heartache. Frost Group offers advice to companies, unincorporated businesses and individuals, bringing a modern, pragmatic and commercial approach to solving all nature of financial problems.

Jeremy Frost, managing director of FGL, said: "We are approachable, positive, and deliver on well-managed expectations to provide peace of mind to our clients. We believe in customer satisfaction and in assisting our clients to achieve their goals; and we produce high quality solutions to today's financial problems."

Frost Group are licensed insolvency practitioners and undertake all aspects of corporate and personal recovery work, as well as helping companies and individuals with turnaround and refinancing.

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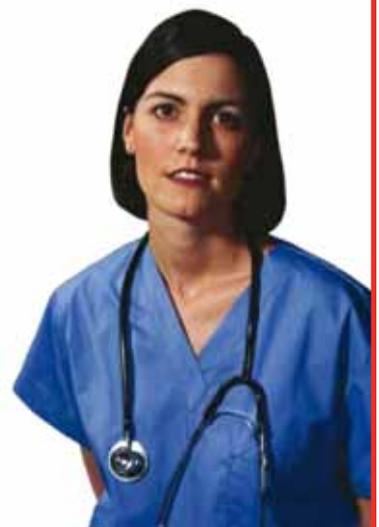
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Banker briefs business

Kate Barker speaks to South London Business

The Bank of England's decision to introduce quantitative easing – that is, increasing the supply of money in the economy – was a necessary move as the latest response to the current financial crisis. This was the view expressed by Kate Barker, a member of the Bank's Monetary Policy Committee, in an exclusive briefing to business leaders from South London.

"I strongly support the move to quantitative easing, and consider that once this became necessary, it was important to act in a decisive manner," Ms Barker told her audience at the Park Plaza County Hall Hotel. The event was organised by South London Business before an invited audience.

Looking to its potential effects, Ms Barker explained: "While the scale and timing of these various impacts is uncertain, quantitative easing should bring about a pick up from the present weakness in nominal spending, supporting economic activity. Concerns about inflation expectations falling too far should also be eased, and together these factors should push CPI (Consumer Price Index) inflation back towards the two per cent target, after a period below target in the near term."

There were, she said, many challenges for policymakers emerging from the present economic turmoil, and she went on: "In the future, there may well be efforts to devise measures to manage the overall growth of credit, and to ensure financial institutions take on less overall risk than in the immediate past. But it is not entirely easy to devise sound policies to prevent individual households from taking on more risk during stable periods, due to their misperceptions of the long-term outlook."

The implications might be that the public sector also needed to move to a stronger



Kate Barker with Peter Pledger, SLB chief executive, and Sir Bob Scott. Below left: Barker addresses delegates and, right, in discussion

financial position in times of stability than appeared justified just in terms of the public finances, "...in order that it can provide support to the private sector when the inevitable economic shocks occur."

Earlier in her talk, Ms Barker had addressed the issue of the level of interest rates, with the Bank Rate only recently having been reduced to an historic low of 0.5 per cent. Addressing the issue of financial institutions and their response she said: "Since it is very difficult to pay savers negative interest rates, the last few interest rate cuts have not been passed on fully to savers or borrowers. While this has enabled banks and building societies to retain a margin between saving and borrowing rates, it has also lessened the impact of Bank Rate cuts. For some mortgage lenders with a large stock of tracker mortgages, lower interest rates have increasingly

squeezed their margins, potentially reducing their ability to increase lending in the future." This is where quantitative easing had come into play.

She told her audience: "It is clear that governments as well as central banks remain focused on tackling this crisis with a range of policies aimed both at supporting the overall economic position of their economies and at tackling the specific problems in the banking sector which are holding back the supply of credit. In addition the fall in the oil price is a beneficial factor, and for the UK the substantial depreciation of sterling (now well over 25 per cent since its most recent peak in July 2007) will support the substitution of domestic production for imports as well as boosting exports when the global economy recovers. As the MPC commented in the February Inflation Report, this all adds up to a powerful stimulus."

Today the economic problems were those of instability. The evidence over the past month was of more pronounced weakness in the global economy and of fragility in the financial markets. This suggested that the downside risks to growth, and therefore to inflation, identified in the February Inflation Report, were in danger of crystallising.

"I believe," concluded Ms Barker, "that the MPC's significant move to increase the money supply will help to support the economy through this difficult period, and that it is the best course in order to achieve our objective of keeping inflation to target in the medium term. Of course, I recognise that at some point this stimulus may need to be unwound, possibly rapidly, to avoid an overshooting of inflation – and remain equally committed to acting as necessary to prevent this."



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Bromley Creatives work together for the benefit of all

A new website for the Bromley Creative Community (BCC) had recently been launched. The website, www.bromleycreative.org.uk, is a free central resource for anyone interested in creative, arts and media services in the London Borough of Bromley.

Launched in 2009, with the support of Bromley Council, BCC is a new independent, non-profit venture run by creatives for creatives, to promote the wide range of creative, arts and media services offered by organisations in Bromley.

The website, developed by Comms Plus Beckenham, March Studio Bromley, NCJ Consulting Bromley and Carol Ann Walters Press and Publicity Beckenham, includes useful 'How To' articles in the library, a creative services directory and lots of new and updated features available exclusively to BCC Premium members in the member area, such as local creative industry news and events.

Membership allows creatives to expose their expertise to new clients who are looking for professional creative, arts and media suppliers in the Bromley area. It is also a chance to find support from like-minded local organisations, exchange ideas, promote activities and build joint ventures.

Events, awards and fund-raising activities are planned for the future.

A basic listing on the website is free. A premium listing is available for just £57 per year for companies (any number of employees), £27 per year for sole traders, and free for affiliate members, registered charities, voluntary and amateur arts sector. There are also sponsorship opportunities for suppliers to the creative sector.

Malcolm Woodfield, creative director at March Studio, says: "BCC membership will allow Bromley's creative community to communicate and network easily and this will no-doubt give birth to some exciting new creative projects in the borough."

Jackie Barrie of Comms Plus adds: "Although some members may be competitors to each other, BCC is an opportunity for

creatives to work together for the benefit of all. Some exciting synergies have already developed among the members to date. In an economic climate when budgets are being cut, it's wise to join BCC as a potential new route to market."

Prospective members should visit www.bromleycreative.org.uk for full information, member success stories, and to join BCC.

From left: Nadja Rothmund (March Studio), John Hickinbottom (Blackfox Creative), Malcolm Woodfield (March Studio), Jackie Barrie (Comms-Plus), David Owens (MisterPrint)



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LBBN is a project of the Bangladesh British Chamber of Commerce and is funded by the LDA.
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Take a ten minute assessment

One in five businesses suffer major disruption each year; SmithGreenfield urges Surrey companies to ensure they are prepared.

Leading Croydon insurance broker SmithGreenfield Services plc is calling upon local companies to ensure that the appropriate plans and procedures have been put in place to safeguard their business should disaster strike. A recent survey has found that as many as one in five businesses suffer a major disruption each year, and that 80 per cent of businesses affected by a major incident either never re-open or close within 18 months.

"All too often, companies find themselves firefighting in a crisis situation," says Steve Smith, director of SmithGreenfield Services. "Our experience suggests that many companies fail to take adequate measures to protect themselves, fearing that planning of this nature is too costly and takes up too much executive time."

He continues: "But should your business be unexpectedly interrupted – whether this is caused by a burst water main or a terrorist attack – without proper plans in place, a crisis can escalate into a disaster from which there is no possibility of returning to 'business as usual'."

Smith would encourage local companies to develop a business continuity plan.

"An appropriate insurance policy, in which risks are assessed accurately, is vital to cover losses incurred through damage to property and machinery. In addition, however, a Business Continuity Plan will help to keep the business alive, providing reassurance for staff, customers and suppliers."

SmithGreenfield has produced the following guidelines for companies wishing to safeguard against business interruption:

- **Develop a Business Continuity Plan:** SmithGreenfield's '10 Minute Assessment' is available to businesses wishing to develop a BCP. Using the results from the assessment, SmithGreenfield can put you in touch with relevant experts to assist in building a secure plan.
- **Ensure that staff are fully trained and that the plan is rehearsed regularly:** A BCP will only work if all staff are aware of their own responsibilities and feel confident in being able to fulfil their role should a crisis arise. A 'dummy run' could be unrealistic, but talking through the plan and keeping it up-to-date is vital in ensuring that everyone is prepared.

- **Ask your suppliers and customers about their own business continuity plans:** You need to know where you stand should disaster strike your supply chain. This information will affect your own business continuity plan.
- **Make sure your business is covered:** In the event of an unexpected crisis affecting your business, it is critical that you have appropriate insurance. Local experts SmithGreenfield Services will provide impartial advice and guidance.

Smith concludes: "Business interruption poses a real and serious threat, which is confirmed by the introduction of BS 259 99 as a benchmark for business continuity in the UK. At the same time, I believe that this presents an opportunity for companies to gain a competitive advantage by demonstrating to their customers and suppliers that they are taking every precaution to ensure the on-going smooth operation of their business."

For a copy of SmithGreenfield's '10 Minute Assessment', and for help with safeguarding your company against business interruption, please contact Steve Smith at SmithGreenfield Services plc on 0844 873 3919 or email corporateclients@smithgreenfield.co.uk

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All change on disciplinary rules... again!



By Fintan O'Toole
HR Dept

In October 2004 the three step disciplinary and dismissal procedure was introduced with an aim at reducing the number of claims going to tribunal and to provide a simple procedure that would be easy for employers to follow.

It was a complete nightmare; complicated legal argument went back and forth on the meaning of the procedures and tribunal claims increased significantly. Dismissals were automatically unfair if any part of the process was missed and awards could be increased by half. Since April 6, 2009 the statutory dispute resolution procedures have been repealed and replaced by the new ACAS Code of Practice.

The new Code of Practice is easier to understand but again leaves many areas unexplained. Tribunals will still have the ability to increase or decrease an award by up to 25 per cent where an employee or employer unreasonably fails to follow the code. The need to take out a grievance before making a tribunal claim has been removed so we may simply see claims being made earlier.

There are a number of grey areas which we will have to wait for case law to determine. Many of the requirements remain the same in the new ACAS code such as the right to be accompanied, and for employers to carry out any necessary investigations. Above all is the need to follow a fair process before dismissing an employee. Overall we will have to wait and see if this new system works better in practice than the dispute resolution procedures but with an increasingly litigious workforce and an uncertain economic climate we may well be changing one set of rules for another.

Employers should review procedures to ensure they comply and it is a good opportunity to provide training for on handling workplace disputes. If you'd like an assessment of your current procedures and processes contact the HR Dept.

The HR Dept provides support to SMEs on all people issues. Subscription to their Advice Line gives access to professional support with a full indemnity against employment tribunal costs. For more information and a review of your employment processes call Fintan O'Toole on 0845 6349169 or email fintan@hrdept.co.uk www.hrdept.co.uk/slondon.htm

www.southlondonbusiness.co.uk



Compliments galore



"I normally tend to shy away from networking events for some reason, but after spending the day with 1230 I have decided I would like to be a member and come along to your other events. I enjoyed Sue Stockdale and Jane's presentations immensely and am feeling very inspired and ready to push things forwards again today. I made contact with some great people, and am sure that this will be the start of something great.

"I think you did a wonderful job, and I am so glad I was involved. I will have no hesitation in recommending your network and have done twice so far, already. A big thank you to you and your team for such an inspiring and enjoyable event."

So said Lucy Brindley of Little Cherry eco-friendly toys, who was just one of the 128 business women attending the 1230 Any Other Business? event in Bromley Central Library.

The day was packed with a "must do" programme. Guest speaker was Sue Stockdale of Mission Possible. Stockdale, pictured below, was the first British woman to walk to the Magnetic North Pole. Stockdale told those attending: "The journey to start up and grow a business is like going to the North Pole, you know there will be highs and lows and every day will be different – but it's a fantastic adventure."

"All the speakers were great and spoke with passion and commitment to their businesses," said Paola Bagnall of Hypnotherapy Inner Power.

1230 co-founder Jackie Groundsell added: "1230 gives business women confidence and the opportunity to meet, share experiences and to grow their businesses. Every monthly meeting is extremely rewarding in achieving this. 1230 AOB? as an annual conference provides the opportunity to work with the Bromley business community on a much larger scale with motivational speakers and invaluable workshops as well as meeting other like-minded business women; working in partnership with our sponsors NatWest strengthens the offering."

Business partner Penny Denby commented: "We were delighted that Mayor of Bromley Councillor Denise Reddin was also able to join us for what was

possibly the largest ever speed-networking session in the borough, if not the UK."

Mark Burgess, area director, UK Business Banking at NatWest, commented: "The event was a great success and feedback from the attendees has been very positive. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the day, particularly listening to the motivational speakers. Senior business manager, Chiara Zuccon and I worked in partnership with 1230 to organise the event and we feel that it has helped highlight our continued commitment to women in business. The NatWest initiative, 'Women in Business' is something that we are very proud to be involved in and through this initiative we have worked with 1230. We're really pleased the event was so well received."

With approximately 22 per cent of Bromley businesses being owned by women (London Annual Business Survey 2007) it is no wonder that 1230 The Women's Company is so successful.

The future is bright for 1230 members. With the launch of the 1230 Franchise, 2009 will see more 1230 groups open in Kent and across the country. The 1230 TWC Franchise provides a business opportunity for women who want their own part-time or full-time business running 1230 networking groups. The 1230 team is there of course to help them succeed.

For further information about 1230 groups or the 1230 franchise business opportunity please visit the website www.1230.co.uk or call 020 8650 8015



Note for your 2010 diary – 1230 AOB? is on Tuesday 16 March 2010 in Bromley Central Library, Keynote Speaker – Jan Caville.

BS 8901 Pilot implementation programme finishes on a high

The Sustainable Events Group (SEG) have delivered the final workshop in their groundbreaking BS 8901 Sustainable Event Management programme, bringing to a close the first major implementation of the new standard. Ten organisations from across the industry participated in the programme, which began in July last year.

David Stubbs, head of environment and sustainability for LOCOG (London Organising Committee of the Olympics Games) spoke congratulating the participants on their vision in embracing the standard. He went on to say that following the launch of the LOCOG Sustainability Sourcing Code, LOCOG will be seeking to be compliant with BS 8901 and will be actively encouraging suppliers to do the same.

Anne Hayes, head of market development at BSI British Standards, who is responsible for the roll out of BS 8901, was also in attendance and expressed thanks to the participating organisations for their commitment

and leadership in taking up the standard and for the feedback that they had provided. "We focussed the programme on turning BS 8901 into a reality for all the organisations taking part," said Tim Sunderland from SEG. "By doing this we could understand what worked well and what didn't. The learning from our programme is being used by BSI to improve the standard with the intention of launching a new amended version early in 2009."

The participant organisations were reassured by Patrick Loy, head of events at the Greater London Authority (GLA), who explained that BS 8901 is referenced in GLA tender documents and that a hefty ten per cent of points awarded in the tender process for GLA events is based upon sustainability performance. He went on to say that he felt it was only a matter of time until all major event clients referred to BS 8901 within their tender documents as it presented a measurable benchmark of competency and commitment to sustainability in the event industry.

The organisations involved in the programme including ExCel London, Kew Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Marylebone Cricket Club (Lord's Cricket Ground), Limelight Sports, 15 Hatfields, Eden Catering and innovation are all on their way to third party certification. Hugh Walker of Eden Caterers welcomed the fact that third party certification was now available as it means that organisations really need to demonstrate that they are taking BS 8901 seriously. Walker went on to say: "Through the SEG programme we now understand what BS 8901 requires and the effort needed to achieve compliance. Third party certification will establish the credibility of those organisations that have really made the extra effort and are genuinely working to BS 8901."

The Sustainable Events Group is building on the success of this pilot programme. The Sustainable Events Group would be pleased to hear from anyone interested in attending future events – see www.thesustainableeventsgroup.com for more information.

Advertising feature

Is this a good time to start a business?

You might think that 2009 would be a terrible time to launch a business but with the right business idea and good support new start-ups can do well. Businesses launched in tough times are leaner and more focussed than those started in boom years, which gives them the strength to grow fast when times get better.

Tesco Stores, Microsoft and Dyson were all launched in depressions or recessions and companies of all sizes which started in tough economic times have been the stronger for it. Already the downturn is encouraging many to set up new businesses. Some think self-employment is now the more secure option and latest figures show that many redundant executives are starting their own businesses. So how easy is it to set up a first business?

Those launching start-ups usually know their own field of business or access expertise

through a franchise. The start-up cash needed may be modest and can come from savings. The biggest difficulty usually is solving the practical problem of obtaining premises on reasonable terms and lining up all the linked services needed. Many businesses are started at home or in temporary premises and need to make the move to high quality workspace with the minimum of disruption.

The business of arranging telephones, internet access, repairs or redecoration, buildings insurance, and waste removal takes up unwelcome quantities of time. As time is a new business's greatest asset Capital Enterprise Centres (CEC) is offering a package at its Capital Business Centre in South Croydon which aims to take care of those problems. High quality offices, studios and workshops can be taken on a flexible monthly licence with no long term commitments and a comprehensive property



management service is also provided. Finally to further assist new businesses CEC offers easy access to wide ranging business support and advice.

CEC operations director David Clapham says: "We provide highly cost effective and hassle free business space allowing our tenants to concentrate on building their businesses. They can review how their business is working each month and keep a tight control on overheads. We also offer them easy access to quality business services from companies and organisations we know and trust."

With the monthly licence an all-in charge covers rent, building

insurance, refuse collection, security and water rates with property management taken care of by an on-site centre manager. The licence allows significant savings to be made on legal fees, which can be more than £1,000 for a lease, compared to zero for a licence.

In addition CEC has lined up special arrangements with a range of professionals such as accountants who will be available to advise start-ups at the Capital Business Centre.

CEC Centres have already proved to be a good location for start-ups with one person operations growing into substantial companies and there is even a Virtual Office service to help those beginning businesses at home.

For more details on the Capital Business Centre in Carlton Road, South Croydon call centre manager Carol Matthews on 0208 916 2000, or log on to www.capitalspace.co.uk

It's time to train

Businesses across South London are facing increasing pressure to 'beat the squeeze'; whether this is to cut costs, to manage client and customer relationships more effectively or to drive operational efficiencies, everyone's feeling the strain.

But with research by the UK Commission on Employment Skills showing that companies who don't invest in training are two-and-a-half times more likely to fail than those that do, business leaders are being encouraged to make sure that skills don't drop off the radar.

Shape up and save your business

Beating the squeeze depends on your workforce having the right skills to make your business more productive and more efficient. Train to Gain puts those skills within the reach of businesses in West London. A free consultation is on offer from specialist advisors who can offer impartial, one-to-one guidance on the kind of skills that can help your business beat the downturn.

Employers are increasingly recognising that training has a beneficial impact on the bottom line and profitability. In the current climate, the question should not be whether a business can afford to invest in training, but how a business can afford not to.

There are five key areas where businesses in London can make the most of existing talent – and ultimately become more flexible and successful in a difficult market. From determining how new skills can transform a business with minimum disruption, to finding the funding to make it happen, the focus is on immediate savings and tangible results.

Step 1: Identify areas where you can boost your business

The right skills can make a real difference to a business – now and in the future. Our business skills advisors can work with you to pinpoint critical areas, to develop new skills and to meet business priorities.

For instance, customer loyalty can be improved through better customer service and a competitive edge can be harnessed by adopting new ways of working, new products and new innovations. A better-run business equipped with the right skills can transform its fortunes, improve workforce motivation and ultimately make the difference between survival and collapse.

Step 2: Create a tailored plan for success

Businesses get better results when staff have the right skills to do the best job. The expert advisors are there to create bespoke plans for introducing new techniques and skills that improve business-critical operations. They will set a roadmap to help transform your business and make sure it's ready for future challenges.

Step 3: Find the people who'll show you how

For all businesses, especially small and medium sized enterprises, any disruption to the regular flow of operation is a problem. That's why Train to Gain aims to maximise learning for employees whilst minimising disruption to regular business. The key is making sure most learning happens in the workplace while people get things done, working with expert training providers who best meet business priorities.

Step 4: Get the funding to make it happen

Train to Gain is committing almost £1 billion this year to help businesses get the training they need, so funding should no longer be a barrier to accessing the best and most appropriate learning solutions.

Step 5: Evaluate your progress to ensure real results

Training can deliver real results to businesses, but the way it's delivered and who it's delivered to should be continuously evaluated. Our business skills advisors will be able to provide impartial, one-to-one guidance on shaping your business expertise to beat the downturn. They will then follow up on your plan to ensure you're getting the advice you need, and that the skills you're acquiring are having a real impact on your business success.

In these challenging times, a highly skilled workforce isn't an optional extra – it's an economic necessity. Training has short term impact, but will build long term competitive advantage in your business. While others are putting training on hold, businesses that invest in their people are staying ahead of the competition.

That's why now, more than ever before, it's time to train.

For more information about how training can help your business, please go to www.skillsforlondon.org or join the Skills for London Linked In Group at www.linkedin.com

Case study

David Fahey Decorators

David Fahey Decorators is a high quality business that specialises in the interior and exterior refurbishment of both commercial and residential properties. David Fahey Decorators has built an extensive portfolio of projects, mainly servicing building contractors and interior designers. While they wanted to continue providing an excellent service to their existing customers, they also wanted to expand the business and increase its turnover. In order to do this they needed to recruit more staff, which would in turn require management development training for senior personnel. After meeting with a skills advisor, David Fahey Decorators was introduced to the Train to Gain service. Following this, an appropriate training provider was sourced to offer bespoke management coaching and training sessions. The skills advisor was also able to refer the business to other areas of possible funding and support. Leadership and Management training enabled managers to analyse current sales and marketing statistics in order to identify possible growth areas and develop new strategies to achieve its business goals. Implementing a structured reporting process has also been a significant step in helping the business expand. "Train to Gain has not only provided us with the financial means to develop our existing business platform, but it has given us a new perspective as to how we want our company to evolve. The skills advisor Jon Brookes has provided us with more information than we anticipated, for which we say thank you," says David Fahey, managing director.

"Now is precisely the time to keep investing in the skills and talents of our people. When markets are shrinking and order books falling, it is their commitment, productivity and ability to add value that will keep us competitive. Investing now in building new skills will put us in the strongest position as the economy recovers"



Sir Michael Rake – chairman, BT Group plc;
Mervyn Davies CBE – chairman, Standard Chartered plc
and others, in an open letter to UK employers.

Our
future.
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our hands.

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Gain 

Beat the squeeze

Get the skills you need
in place. This year, we've
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funding to get businesses
like yours through these
tough times.

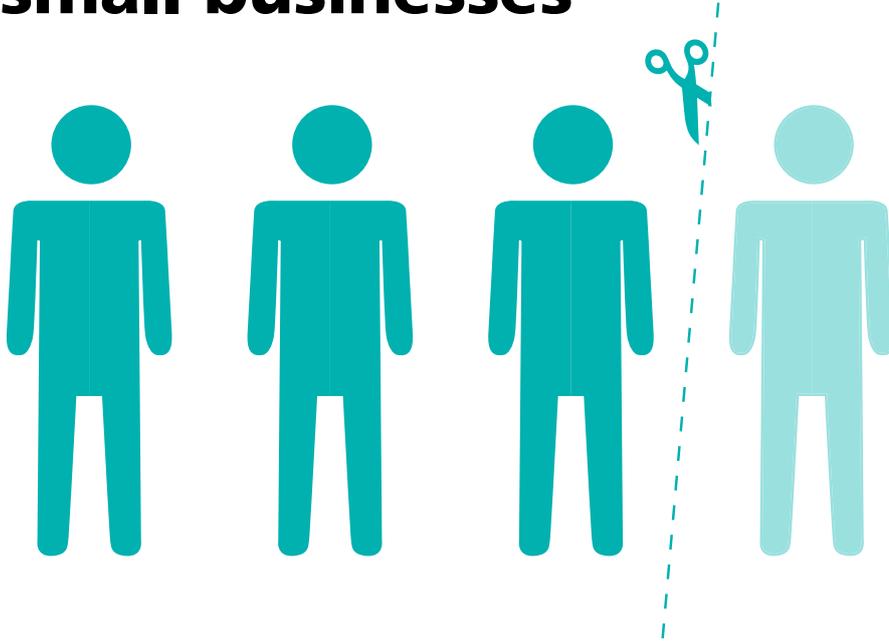


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Redundancies should be last option for small businesses



With unemployment figures in the capital continuing to rise, Business Link in London is urging South London's small businesses to seek expert advice and support so they can consider all the options before making staff cuts.

Growing numbers of businesses will look seriously at redundancies over the coming months as Britain's economy heads deeper into recession. However, Business Link in London, the capital's leading

Top tips for avoiding redundancies

- 1: Reduce staff hours if business is quiet
- 2: Cut down on overheads to prioritise staff pay
- 3: Improve efficiency to reduce unnecessary outgoings
- 4: Find out about financial support from the government
- 5: Cut costs by sharing services with other local businesses



business support service, has warned of the profound impact this could have on South London's SME community.

Denis Palmer, regional manager at Business Link in London, said: "Nearly two million people are employed by small businesses in London, so it is vital that these businesses see redundancies as a last resort.

"It's an incredibly pressurised environment right now for many businesses in South London, so it is completely understandable that many of them will be considering staff cuts. We've found that many of them are simply unaware of some of the alternatives open to them though – there are many ways of reducing costs before resorting to redundancies.

"These businesses are often based on the individual skills of a small number of people – lose them and they can be incredibly difficult to rediscover when the economy picks up."

However, there are steps that small businesses can take to make much-needed savings, without resorting to redundancies. Business Link in London has five top tips for South London's small businesses to help them keep their staff while remaining profitable. For example, many small businesses are unaware that they may be eligible for a range of grants and funding support, which would reduce the need for redundancies.

Palmer continued: "Business leaders should seek advice on the options open to them. The key to thriving in 2009 will not be in knee-jerk cost cutting measures – it will be in carefully planning where your business can grow, the extra help needed to achieve that growth and identifying how to get the help that is available. This is where Business Link can really add value to small businesses."

Showing support

The London Development Agency (LDA) has announced a further push to ensure that London businesses are aware of the support and advice available to beat the downturn.

More than ever, firms across London are looking for advice that can help them get through the current economic difficulties. Over 5,000 firms called Business Link in London in January this year. This increase followed the launch in December of the LDA's campaign to make companies aware of support on offer – part of the Mayor of London's Economic Recovery Action Plan, which is already producing positive results for London.

"Keeping London Working" is a clear and concise guide aimed at ensuring that London has a thriving and prosperous business sector. The guide is intended to reach 500,000 businesses across London in the next few weeks.

Peter Rogers, chief executive of the London Development Agency, said: "The LDA knows that many of London's businesses are facing difficult times. We are investing more public money in support programmes to help London's businesses survive and prosper. This help can mean the difference between success and failure – so companies should know that free advice and support is available."

The renewed drive includes top tips for businesses, urging them to:

- Remember to ask the experts such as an accountant or Business Link
- Attend one of the LDA-backed seminars run by KPMG and Deloitte
- Get advice on managing cash flow
- Make sure employees have the right skills
- Keep focused and remember to delegate
- Look out for surprises – just how healthy is your business?

"Keeping London Working" and the 2012 Business Guide published in March are downloadable from the LDA website – www.lda.gov.uk. The scheme will also be placed in libraries, town halls and Jobcentre Plus offices, and promoted through the Learning and Skills Council, London First, the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Federation of Small Businesses.

Both guides will be promoted through business groups across London and at business events organised by the LDA and its partners.



Employers... does your understanding
of pensions need to grow?

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The *Pensionwise* programme is a free online tool developed specifically for employers offering occupational trust-based pension schemes with defined contribution arrangements. It is:

- quick and easy to use
- clear and jargon free
- up-to-date and relevant
- available 24/7

To access the programme, visit:

www.pensionwise.tpr.gov.uk



Sponsored column

Help with big decisions

Just as people don't buy a house without conducting a survey on the state of the property, people thinking of buying a franchise should always obtain professional advice. Enter Menzies...

"I have been working with franchises for a number of years and it never ceases to amaze me the number of people who approach me for advice after they have bought the franchise," comments Jenny Cheung, head of Menzies LLP's franchising team. "Buying the wrong franchise for you could not only cost you your initial investment outlay, the trading loss from the initial start up period and your time costs, but also the opportunity cost of investing your money elsewhere."

Whilst buying a franchise business is perceived to be a safer route to being your own boss, success is not automatically guaranteed. In order to maximise the best chance of success, it is best to always seek professional advice from a franchise accountant to ensure that there is no fallout from an ill-considered decision.

As experts in the franchising sector, Menzies LLP has a breadth of knowledge and experience, which is crucial to the decision making process. Every entrepreneur needs a trusted business adviser and quality tax advice, and Menzies prides itself on being professional, approachable, and dedicated to client care.

Menzies LLP is affiliated with the British Franchise Association and operates a network of six offices across the south east of England with offices at Heathrow and Kingston upon Thames servicing the South London area.

For any franchise enquires, please contact Jenny Cheung on 020 8974 7500 or jcheung@menzies.co.uk. Alternatively, more information can be found about the Menzies franchising service at www.menzies.co.uk



PM unveils real help

The Prime Minister has announced a package of real help and protection for consumers struggling to make ends meet because of the global downturn.

Speaking to an audience of consumer groups and money advice agencies, he announced action to prevent people getting trapped in a cycle of debt, measures to ensure fair treatment by courts and debt-enforcement agencies, and a crackdown on scams and get rich quick schemes.

He also set out his commitment to a stronger regulatory regime for banks and announced a White Paper on modernised consumer rights law to give people a fairer deal.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown said: "The changes we're dealing with as a country right now are enormous. But we are determined to do our bit – when we see hard-working, hard-pressed people being buffeted about by a storm not of their making, we will never pass by on the other side."

Yvette Cooper, chief secretary to the Treasury, said: "It is vital that people who are facing money worries know where to turn to for help. The announcement will boost the substantial help and advice we are already providing, so people can get help to cope with the downturn and to plan for the future."

Consumer affairs minister Gareth Thomas said: "Many people are already struggling to stay on top of their bills and pay their debts. We want anyone in difficulty to be able to access the advice they need. We are taking action to ensure consumers are treated fairly and to put them back in control of their finances."

The Government set out a package of real help to benefit consumers during the downturn:

- Fair rules for debt enforcement – new measures will be introduced to provide clarity for debtors and certainty for creditors in advance of full independent regulation of the bailiff industry. Bailiffs' powers of entry and force will not be extended and reforms to charging orders will not be introduced. There will be consultation, which will set out the new rules and the way forward.
- Credit cards – the Government will stop lenders from raising credit card borrowing limits where customer have not requested the increase, and it will end the practice of firms sending unsolicited credit card cheques. The Government will legislate at the earliest opportunity.
- National Fraud Strategy – the Government has set out the action it will take to tackle fraud which costs the UK £14 billion a year, and protect consumers from mass marketed frauds such as bogus lotteries, get rich quick schemes and investment scams.
- Debt Relief Orders – from April, people on low incomes with limited debts who could

"When we see hard-working, hard-pressed people being buffeted about by a storm not of their making, we will never pass by on the other side"

not previously afford to go bankrupt have been able to write off their debts and start again after a period of 12 months. This is not an easy option for people in debt – the insolvency will be a matter of public record and creditors will be able to apply to have the order revoked. But it will help those trapped in poverty.

- The Money Guidance pathfinder – impartial sales-free advice on money issues will be available in the North West and North East of England from next month. It will help people stay in control of their finances, help them cope with income shocks and avoid the distress of problem debt.
- Debt advice – the Government is currently reviewing the provision of debt advice to tackle any gap between capacity and demand and ensure we get the most out of the existing network of providers. This work will conclude before

Check your

Check your new personal tax code for 2009/10, say tax experts from the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW). If it is wrong you could end up paying too much or too little money.

"Your new tax code will be used by your employer or pension provider from April 6, 2009 to make sure you pay the right amount of tax and get the tax allowances and relief to which you're entitled," said Anita Monteith, technical manager in the tax faculty at the ICAEW.

"Not everyone needs to get a new coding notice every year, so don't worry if you haven't received one. Many will just increase by a fixed amount. HMRC will tell your employer or pension payer what your new tax code is. They will also tell any agent acting for you.

"Your tax code depends on how much tax free income you are allowed. For example, if your only allowance is the

for consumers



the summer. The Government invested £15.85 million in the debt advice sector at the last Pre-Budget Report in addition to the £130 million invested since 2006.

- Mortgage advice – making £2.5 million available for advice agencies to support the delivery of the new Homeowners Mortgage Support scheme.

And to safeguard a fairer deal for consumers in the future, the Government will:

- Lead the way internationally with reform and regulation of the banking sector to clean it up and make it deliver for consumers. The Turner Review will set out proposals for further strengthening the FSA and protecting savers' deposits, the Treasury will publish a White Paper on financial services regulatory reform around the time of the Budget, while the forthcoming Walker Review will make recommendations to improve corporate governance, with particular regard to risk management and remuneration.
- In light of the Turner Review and the current OFT consultation on strengthening consumer protection, review the split of responsibilities between the FSA and the OFT for the regulation of second-charge mortgages.
- Publish a White Paper on action to help consumers in the summer – with proposals to simplify and modernise consumer rights.

Sponsored column

Business rates



By David Fearon
partner, Thackray
Williams LLP

"This town is coming like a ghost town," ...so goes 'The Specials' song from 1981 and the same is true today. As the gaps in the high street turn hitherto thriving shopping centres into ghost towns, landlords have been left with the aftermath.

In April 2008 the Government changed the rules on charging business rates on empty business premises. Currently properties with a rateable value of over £15,000 (approximate value £250,000) are subject to full business rates three months after becoming vacant for shops and offices and after six months for warehouses and other industrial buildings.

What can a landlord do to avoid this increasing burden other than tearing the building down? The most successful strategy is intermittent occupation. The landlord either rents or even occupies personally for at least six weeks so as to trigger a new rates free "void" period of either three or six months depending on the nature of the premises. This procedure can be repeated.

Alternatively tenant charities benefit from 80 per cent rate relief providing the property is used wholly or mainly for charitable purposes. If the property subsequently becomes vacant the landlord can apply for relief on the basis that it appears when the property is next in use it will be wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes. This would apply for a high street charity shop although care would need to be taken as to the occupier's charitable status.

Other solutions have relied on the premises not being fit for occupation either by statute (e.g. a prohibition order) or by the gutting of the premises. This latter option has not yet been decided at law and certainly the Valuation Office Agency is not agreeing to exempt properties for this reason. A number of landlords have lodged appeals with the Lands Tribunal for a final determination on this approach.

Mitigation is only a temporary solution. Government has powers to suspend the empty rate charge by up to 50 per cent if it wishes to do so. This would revitalise the commercial property market before the high street really does become a ghost town.

David Fearon is a partner in the Business Services department at Thackray Williams LLP. For more information call David on 020 8290 0440 or email david.fearon@thackraywilliams.com www.thackraywilliams.com

PAYE code

basic Personal Allowance of £6,035, your code is based on this. Simply replace the last digit with a letter, which depends on your personal circumstances.

"Check to see if your number has changed significantly. If it has, is it because your allowances have changed or you have additional sources of income or have made extra payments eligible for tax relief? Has your letter changed? If so, does it correctly describe your present circumstances?"

Common tax code letters and what they mean:

- L – for those eligible for the basic Personal Allowance – it is also used for 'emergency' tax codes
- P – for people aged 65 to 74 and eligible for the full Personal Allowance
- V – for people aged 65 to 74, eligible for the full Personal Allowance and the full Married Couple's Allowance and estimated to be liable at the basic rate of tax
- Y – for people aged 75 or over and eligible for the full Personal Allowance
- T – if there are any other items HMRC still need to review in your tax code

- K – when your total allowances are less than your total deductions
- BR – generally used for a second source of income where all allowances have been included in a tax code applied to the main source of income.

Monteith added: "If you have two or more jobs at the same time it's likely that you'll have received more than one tax code. The same applies if you have income from two or more pensions, or a pension and a job. If you do, it is especially important to check that the letters and numbers that make up your tax codes are right.

"If you think your tax code is wrong, or you don't understand it, you need to contact the tax office on your coding notice straight away. Alternatively speak to your employer or pension payer or ask a chartered accountant to help."

Further information on how to check your tax code can be found at www.hmrc.gov.uk/incometax/codes-basics.htm

And the winner is...

Lambeth firms enjoy their Oscar night

Following hard on the heels of Hollywood's Academy Awards, Lambeth businesses have enjoyed their own 'Oscar' celebration.

A glittering event at the Brit Oval in March paid tribute to the winners of the second annual Lambeth Business Awards, run by Lambeth Council and organised by South London Business.

More than 300 guests were on the edge of their seats for the award announcement

– made in traditional reverse order – by host Declan Curry, BBC business presenter. Referring to the current recession he said: "It's never been more important to be good in business."

The biggest cheer went up for the announcement of Business of the Year 2009 – an award chosen by the judging panel from the winners of the other 11 categories, and sponsored by Lambeth Council. The coveted award went to Solarcentury, which had earlier picked up the award for Best Green Business.

Charlotte Webster, head of public relations at Solarcentury, which designs and installs solar power for buildings, said: "This award is the biggest recognition for all-round achievement. We want to be successful in solar but also as an employer and an innovator. The key to success in sustainability is success in business."

Derrick Anderson, Lambeth Council chief executive, commented: "Lambeth has a vibrant, creative and diverse business community. This competition honours the sheer determination, acumen and savvy of successful businesses operating in this difficult economic climate. I hope that those honoured will be an inspiration to fledgling companies and people contemplating setting up in business."

The awards are co-sponsored by Lambeth Council, Lambeth First – the borough's strategic local partnership, Lambeth College, London South Bank University, and media partner South London Press.



Category award winners, highly commended and commended firms

Best Cultural and Creative Business – sponsored by City Screen

Winner: **Alchemy Events**
Highly Commended: JP Creative
Commended: Okido Studio

Best Hospitality, Leisure, Travel and Tourism Business sponsored by Lambeth College

Winner: **Schmidt's**
Highly Commended: Opus & Upstairs
Commended: Tsunami Restaurant

Best Young Entrepreneur – sponsored by Lambeth College

Winner: **Claire Morton – Alchemy Events**
Highly Commended: Tahir Fayyaz – Urban Retro
Commended: Carla Campbell – Instant Melodies

Best Social Enterprise – sponsored by London South Bank University

Winner: **Banya Family Placement Agency**
Highly Commended: Southbank Mosaics CIC
Commended: Mr & Miss Black and Beautiful

Best Retailer – sponsored by Morrisons

Winner: **Beamish & McGlue**
Highly Commended: Big Squid
Commended: The Film Lounge

Best Green Business – sponsored by London Development Agency

Winner: **Solarcentury**
Highly Commended: Pli Design
Commended: Ganesha

Best Employer – sponsored by London South Bank University

Winner: **Fusion Glass**
Highly Commended: Political Lobbying & Media Relations
Commended: JP Creative

Best Women in Business – sponsored by Tribal

Winner: **Jeannette Pritchard – JP Creative**
Highly Commended: Serena White – Fats Fitness
Commended: Claire Morton – Alchemy Events

Best Innovation – sponsored by London Knowledge Innovation Centre

Winner: **TruCall**
Highly Commended: Paul Wayne Gregory
Commended: Solarcentury

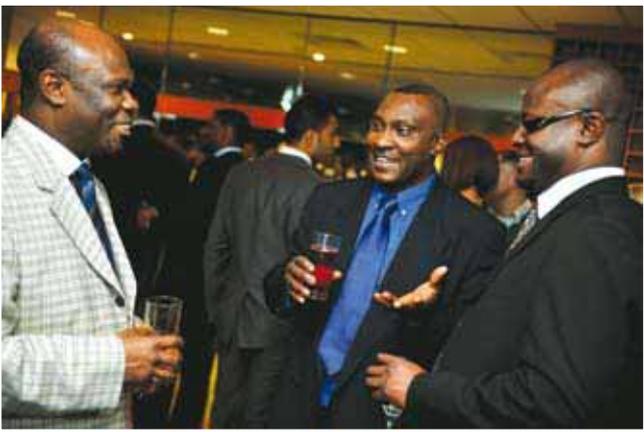
Best Customer Service – sponsored by Business Link London

Winner: **Pimlico Plumbers**
Highly Commended: Fusion Glass
Commended: Tatersall Training

Best Market Trader – sponsored by South London Press

Winner: **Terry Beeke**
Highly Commended: Michael Gregory
Commended: Clive Bell





Gongs for innovative London councils

Just a week on from the Oscars, 12 innovative London councils were among 56 authorities across England to have collected their own set of gongs for performance.

The Beacon Awards scheme is funded by Communities and Local Government and run by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA). Now in its final year, the scheme celebrates innovation, excellence and quality local services among councils, focusing on the issues of the moment.

Beacon status is awarded to authorities representing the diversity of local government – urban and rural, unitary and two-tier, and from different parts of the country. The scheme is relevant to all kinds of authorities, including fire, transport and police authorities. IDeA works with the successful authorities to organise bespoke learning events and activities.

This year's awards recognised groundbreaking work in supporting the local economy, community cohesion and better-quality housing, among other key issues. The winners of the 2009 Beacon Awards received a share of £3 million government funding to expand their work and pass on their knowledge and expertise to even more councils, promoting best practice across the country.

London's winning councils, and their recognised categories, included:

- Bexley – Cutting red tape: delivering real economic and social benefit through better regulation;
- Croydon – Raising economic prosperity through partnerships;
- Greenwich – Homes for the future and Olympic Games and Paralympics legacy: using the opportunity of hosting the Games to encourage communities to be more active;
- Southwark – Cohesive and resilient communities.

Congratulating the winning authorities, communities minister Sadiq Khan said: "My congratulations go out to all this year's winners. These authorities are the top performers in their field, setting the standard for innovation, service excellence and improvement. With the added emphasis on economic recovery in this year's Beacons, the winners are ideally placed to share their knowledge and skills to improve the sector as a whole.

"The Beacons are about showcasing the very best in service delivery, and in this, their final year, we really have seen some exceptional examples, from outstanding work to build cohesive communities to building quality homes for the future. Each and every one of the shortlisted authorities are delivering the real improvements that matter most to the people they serve, a real achievement in these tough economic times."

A new award scheme is set to build on the success of the Beacons in the coming year. Currently advertising for chair and vice chair positions, more details of the scheme will be announced in due course.



Croydon Council with their award.
Photo by Simon Wright Photography



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PrintCarrier.com was founded in 2004 by young entrepreneur Günter Makowski. It quickly grew into a multi national organisation, with PrintCarrier currently having bases in 12 countries across Europe. PrintCarrier UK opened in 2007 with offices based in Derbyshire. This has been hugely successful, with the UK office needing to recruit three more members of staff in the past month alone due to a rapid increase in orders. The company believes in the importance of developing its employees, and utilising their specialist knowledge and professionalism to ensure first class customer service as well as an exceptional end product. Quick turnaround times and reliable service are ensured by a highly developed logistical system.

"Our most valuable asset is our staff", says Makowski "who are highly motivated to go the extra mile that makes all the difference. High-quality products, professionalism and reliable delivery times are part of our long-term customer relationship concept", said Günter Makowski at a meeting for customers and employees recently. The goal of the company is to become the European market leader in the online printing sector, and they are well on the way to achieving this ideal.

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Get qualified partnership

Work based qualifications like NVQs could benefit your bottom line and your staff

In this time of recession, individuals and businesses need to be ready for the trials that lie ahead. There is no better defence in the current climate than a well-trained and productive workforce. Our fully funded NVQs can give you the competitive edge without incurring huge costs to your business; while you reap the financial rewards.

Work based qualifications save your business money and increase productivity by utilising your staff's untapped potential. This is of benefit to your business and your employees; who will gain valuable on-the-job training and validation for their skills and experience. Assessment is carried out in the workplace so there is no disruption to your business or arduous evening courses for your staff to attend. Furthermore, the programmes are fully funded, so you don't pay a penny.

Recognising Potential

Through the offer of staff training it is possible to increase staff motivation and retention to boost your business' productivity. A skilled workforce means a stronger sales case for important contracts,

and increases the efficiency and professional profile of your business.

NVQs are as valuable to your staff as they are your business. They encourage creative and innovative thinking and provide a relevant qualification that reflects the actual roles and responsibilities of your employee. They reduce barriers to learning and assist progression. This was true in the case of Zoe Brooke who came to Prevista last year on her manager's recommendation.

In school Zoe had been made to feel like an underachiever and had no formal qualifications before her referral. Despite having thrived in the workplace since, Zoe had little confidence when it came to learning, yet she was keen to broaden her employment prospects. After meeting with a Prevista Skills Broker her training needs were assessed and an action plan was put into motion.

Despite her initial reservations Zoe managed to complete the six-nine month course in just three months and found that the course was not only beneficial to her career but proved an enjoyable learning experience: "The course was really interesting and has helped me to

understand a lot more about the processes in the business"

Since completing the course Zoe has progressed to the role of area sales manager. The course had given her the confidence to move forward in her career and become the valuable asset to the company she is today.

Academic qualifications have little relevance to your staff's day to day roles. NVQs provide an opportunity for them to gain an invaluable qualification and reduce your recruitment needs by enabling you to source in house talent. All the work is carried out by skilled tutors, to the highest national accreditation standard. Qualifications are available across a range of industries and sectors, tailored to you and your staff's needs.

For more information about fully funded qualifications through the Get Qualified partnership don't hesitate to contact Prevista today.

To book an appointment with one of our specialist Skills Advisors, who will be able to take you through this simple process call Prevista on 0845 659 1008 or email skills@prevista.co.uk

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Individual Membership

You qualify for Individual Membership if you belong to specific employment groups – please call for details of qualifying categories. You need to provide relevant ID, such as your payslip, ID card or professional qualification, plus a current utility bill (electricity, gas, water) from your home address. The annual Individual Membership fee is £25 (plus VAT) which includes a free spouse card.

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Mon - Fri	09:30 - 21:00
Saturday	09:00 - 19:00
Sunday	11:00 - 17:00
	Individual
Mon - Fri	12:00 - 21:00
Saturday	09:00 - 19:00
Sunday	11:00 - 17:00



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Membership must be obtained before purchases can be made.

Night flights could double by 2020

A third runway at Heathrow could open the way to around 80 extra flights every night from as early as 2020 – double the current number.

The increases would be possible because there are no restrictions on the number of aircraft that can land or take off between 11-11.30pm and 6-7am.

Now the 2M Group is calling for the early morning and late night shoulder periods to be included in the new night flight controls, which are due for review in 2012.

Communities likely to be affected by extra night noise would include a large swathe of west London as well as currently quiet areas in Buckinghamshire, which would be under the new take-off paths.

The noise impact of aircraft is currently measured over a 16-hour day, which excludes the night period. The effects are expressed as a contour showing the area within which average noise exceeds 57 decibels.

Transport secretary Geoff Hoon gave BAA the go-ahead to increase annual capacity at Heathrow from 480,000 to 702,000 by 2030. But this growth will only be possible if it can be achieved within the limits of the existing contour. To give the airlines extra headroom, this was based on the results for 2002 – the last year when Concorde was flying.

Richmond Council leader Cllr Serge Lourie, speaking on behalf of 2M, said: "This 90 minute period at the start and end of the day is like a 'Get Out of Jail Free' card for the airport operator. Whatever problems it is experiencing in accommodating additional flights during the rest of the day, it will have a free hand at these times.

"We know ministers have concerns about whether the additional capacity offered by the third runway can ever be achieved in practice. Current transport department forecasts predict 487,000 flights with a third runway in 2020 – an increase of just 7,000 on the current limit. That's simply because they cannot be confident that the type of aircraft that will be flying in 2020 will be significantly less noisy than today.

"The Government has a duty to bear down on noise at night – for too long it has let the airlines off the hook during these unregulated shoulder periods. The impact of more early morning and late night arrivals and departures from a third runway will be felt on all sides of the airport. The 2M Group will be lobbying for a tightening of night flight controls when the current regime ends in 2012.

"Unless this loophole is closed communities could begin experiencing noise

from night flights using the third runway from as early as 2020."

The 2M Group estimates that, based on existing usage between 6-7am, around three-quarters of the additional night flights would be on the third runway with the rest coming from increased use of the existing runways in the shoulder period.

The 2M Group is an all-party alliance of local authorities concerned at the environmental impact of Heathrow expansion on their communities. The group, which took its name from the two million residents of the original 12 members, now represents 23 authorities with a combined population of five million people and is supported by the Mayor of London.

The most recent councils to join are Haringey in North London and Wycombe, where there are concerns about departures from the third runway.

The full membership comprises the London Boroughs of Richmond, Brent, Camden, Ealing, Greenwich, Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Kingston, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Sutton, Southwark and Wandsworth, the boroughs of Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead, Wycombe and South Bucks District Council.

For more information on 2M visit www.2MGroup.org.uk

"Unless this loophole is closed communities could begin experiencing noise from night flights using the third runway from as early as 2020"

Stansted decision heralds untold environmental degradation

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) reacted with dismay to the failure of the High Court legal challenge to block expansion at Stansted Airport.

The Government's decision in principle to approve Heathrow's third runway was described by the Mayor of London Boris Johnson as "driving a coach and horses" through London's green plans to reduce carbon emissions by 60 per cent by 2025. However, the failure of the appeal against the Stansted expansion goes much further as it sets a precedent.

CPRE had provided financial support to the challenge because of the important legal principles it raised about protection of the countryside. The legal action challenged three aspects of the Government's planning decision, which were that:

- The increase in noise and

damage to tranquillity from extra flights had to be ignored in order to carry out government policy to increase flying;

- Extra flights could be approved without any consideration of the impact on climate change;
- The economic impact on the UK could be disregarded. This has a particular impact on rural areas as domestic tourism provides a financial lifeline.

Ralph Smyth, CPRE's senior transport campaigner, said: "The decision flies a jumbo jet through commitments to reduce noise and greenhouse gas emissions. The Government can't keep on relying on its outdated aviation policy, which is damaging countryside, the climate and the economy. The recent drop in passenger numbers travelling by air provides a perfect opportunity for an urgent rethink."

helping south london prosper

Reed Education maintains high recruitment standards

Reed Education, a specialist education recruitment agency with an office in Croydon, has been re-accredited with the DCSF Quality Mark for the seventh consecutive year.

Following sample assessment visits Reed Education clearly demonstrated 100 per cent compliance with the Quality Mark Standards and this has confirmed their re-accreditation for a further two years until 2011.

This accolade demonstrates that they have continued to achieve the highest possible standard of recruitment selection and vetting of supply teachers and demonstrated the dedication and professionalism that goes into ensuring these stringent compliance standards are met on a daily basis.

Reed Education, with 17 offices across the UK offers services in recruitment across all education sectors. The agency was founded in 1998 and has quickly gained a reputation for offering an excellent service to both clients and candidates.

Richard Taylor, divisional director for Reed Education said: "I'm extremely proud and delighted that we have been re-accredited with the Quality Mark.

It is recognition of Reed Education's high standards of recruitment and vetting and gives increased confidence to our schools that our standards are of the highest in the industry."

Kevin Green, chief executive of the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) which manages the Quality Mark scheme, said: "Reed Education is to be praised for continuing to excel themselves in reaching the optimum standard for recruiting supply teachers. The Quality Mark is becoming increasingly recognised within the industry as guaranteeing effective and ethical provision of supply teachers who are so crucial to the lifeblood of schools."

Supply teachers make an increasingly important contribution to the smooth running of schools. At the same time, it is essential to ensure that the supply staff that are being placed within the schools are of the required standard and have been correctly vetted by the agency supplying them.

Within this context, the Government's Quality Mark Scheme plays a crucial role by providing a recognisable quality threshold and by promoting high standards in the provision of supply teachers.

Time to de-stress

Job losses, a failing economy and increased cost of living mean 2009 is set to be a stressful year for all of us.

When times get hard it's all too easy to overlook your health and well being. However, research has shown that your diet is key when it comes to keeping your cool.

In order to boost your energy levels and steel yourself against irritations and pressure, nutritionists advise a healthy, balanced diet rich in fruits, nuts, seeds, complex carbohydrates, B Vitamins and, of course, water. But it can be time consuming and confusing ensuring you are giving your body what it needs.

Luckily, the experts at gourmet food delivery service The Pure Package are here to offer a helping hand and remove one less stress from your day. Their team of expert chefs and nutritionists take care of choosing, preparing, and cooking your food.

After discussing your specific dietary requirements and preferences, the team will prepare your breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks and deliver them to your door, or to work every morning. Stress free and flavour full, the convenient service is pure genius and will help you to perform at your best, whatever your day throws at you.

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Business on Another Level at Hotel Verta means taking our guests' business meetings just as seriously as they do. Our West location is ideal for access to and from the city. Our facilities are cutting edge, many of our rooms are flooded with daylight and have panoramic views of the Thames, we have the ability to comfortably accommodate from 12 to 200 delegates. And when it comes to service, as with everything else, we go above and beyond.

The Falconbrook Spa experience commences in the opulent Spa Vitality Suite, with its Techno-gym equipped fitness room and sumptuous spa facilities, including a sparkling vitality pool and jewel like thermal rooms. On

the Spa therapy floor guests will find clean lines contemporary ambience. Here, every need is catered for in a therapy experience that encompasses four therapy rooms and serenity of our relaxation room. With our spa

concierge service, guests are guaranteed to emerge recharged and refreshed.

Douglas Acton – director of sales
020 7978 0875
douglas.acton@vonessenhotels.co.uk



IT firm is one of the best

Penta Consulting has been recognised by *The Sunday Times* as one of the UK's Best Small Companies to Work For.

The specialist IT and telecoms staffing company was ranked 70 in the newspaper's ninth annual survey of UK firms with fewer than 250 employees, a report considered by many as the definitive guide to workplace excellence among small businesses.

Penta employees scored the company particularly high in terms of the leadership skills of the senior management team and in 'My Company' which measures how people feel about the company they work for. Penta people also gave a big thumbs up to their managers as well as to their colleagues and rated their opportunities for personal growth as excellent.

Paul Clark, group managing director said: "It's fantastic to be recognised as one of the nation's best small businesses to work for and I'd like to thank all our staff for their hard work and commitment to Penta. This is a very special award because it asks staff to rate a number of factors which in turn measure employee engagement so it's a true reflection on how

they feel about working at Penta. When we launched Penta ten years ago one of our key drivers was to create an inspiring working environment where staff were valued, recognised, rewarded and well looked after. This top accolade, as we near the end of our tenth anniversary year, is a real boost but we always want to do better, so we will be working hard to improve our ranking."

This latest award comes hot on the heels of Penta's two-star outstanding accreditation awarded by the workplace engagement specialists, Best Companies.



Paul Clark, group managing director, and Robert Harverson, non executive director (far right), receiving the award from Jonathan Austin

Pastures new

After seven years with South London Business Susan Shaw, director of partnerships, is off to pastures new. Having been seconded to SLB from the LDA in 2002, Susan has fulfilled a variety of roles including director of partnerships and international trade. Susan's secondment finished at the end of March 2009. During her seven years she managed a variety of contracts and was successfully won a pilot project from the LDA for the creation of the London Innovation Centre; created and managed a multi-year innovation programme; participated in a number of trade missions with the South London Export Club and managed SLB's partnership agenda. Chief executive Peter Pledger said: "I am sorry Susan is leaving us, and would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank her for her hard work, dedication, and commitment both to our company but also every business in South London. Susan has worked tirelessly to represent and support the business community during her time with us. We all wish her well for the future." Echoing Pledger's praise, Sir Bob Scott, SLB chairman, said: "I would like to thank and congratulate Susan for her hard work and wish her well for the future." Susan will be hosting a leaving drinks reception in late April and anyone wishing to attend should contact Adrienne Foskett on 020 8666 0221.

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Raising the standard of affordable homes in Streatham

Notting Hill Home Ownership is pioneering the way in raising the standard of affordable new homes with the launch of Carew Grove, its impressive new shared ownership scheme in Streatham.

With the launch of its latest scheme Carew Grove, the company has certainly raised the bar by creating a product which is the antithesis of what is normally associated with affordable housing. By setting its standards higher than its competitors and showing that design integrity does not have to be compromised when it comes to affordable housing, Notting Hill Home Ownership has created a distinctive signature look that defines contemporary, yet practical, everyday living.

Carew Grove is the redevelopment of the former police residence building on Leigham Court Road and is set within a green and tranquil setting. The scheme comprises 25 apartments and a selection of the residences will benefit from a balcony. Notting Hill has also set the benchmark for the development by incorporating three-bedroom apartments into the design, answering the needs of the HCA and the Mayor for larger family units in London. In the past, shared ownership was mainly targeted to offering accommodation to singles and couples, but Notting Hill Housing is dedicated to changing this and

providing homes to everyday Londoners, including families.

The old police residence has been extensively remodelled and refurbished into attractive, innovative and family-friendly homes. The remodelling programme has ensured that every home benefits from energy saving technology, and residents will appreciate the long-term sustainability of the building, and its eco-friendly credentials.

For further information on Notting Hill Housing Group please visit www.nottinghillhousing.org.uk



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Housing Minister urges councils to take a stand on empty homes

According to housing minister Margaret Beckett, councils in London will be given more support to help them bring empty homes back into use in the current economic climate.

New guidance is being published with the Empty Homes Agency, setting out the range of strengthened powers local authorities have to deal with the problem of empty homes, including the use of Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs).

While the number of long-term empty homes has fallen by nine per cent over the last decade, Mrs Beckett is calling on councils to take firmer action to tackle the blight of empty homes and to re-use properties. This could provide a significant contribution to housing supply, with new house building falling right now.

The total number of vacant dwellings in London is 82,327, with 28,344 being vacant for more than six months.

The guidance sets out how local authorities can use the tools at their disposal for dealing with empty homes, including:

- Increasing pressure on owners to bring their empty properties back into use. The guidance makes clear that councils should try to track down owners of empty properties, for example by placing adverts in newspapers, visiting their home address, or using professional search agencies if appropriate.
- Encouraging local authorities to issue an EDMO as a last resort where other measures have failed, by explaining clearly how they can be used. EDMOs allow local authorities to take over the management, not the ownership, of a property. The guidance shows that even the threat of an EDMO can have a significant impact on encouraging owners to work with councils to bring homes back into use.
- Acting on local residents' concerns and petitions to bring empty homes back into use through a range of powers, including EDMOs. Under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill going through Parliament at the moment, local people will be able to petition councils to bring empty homes back into use.

Beckett said: "Empty homes blight local neighbourhoods and can potentially attract anti-social behaviour. That is why councils must do all they can to bring empty homes in their area back into use.

"I believe that with an increased focus and more consistent approach we can bring more homes back into use. With house building slowing in the current economic climate, that is more important than ever.

"The new guidance helps strengthen the role of councils by setting out the broad powers they have to deal with empty homes, and is part of the range of actions we are taking to support the regeneration of our towns and cities."

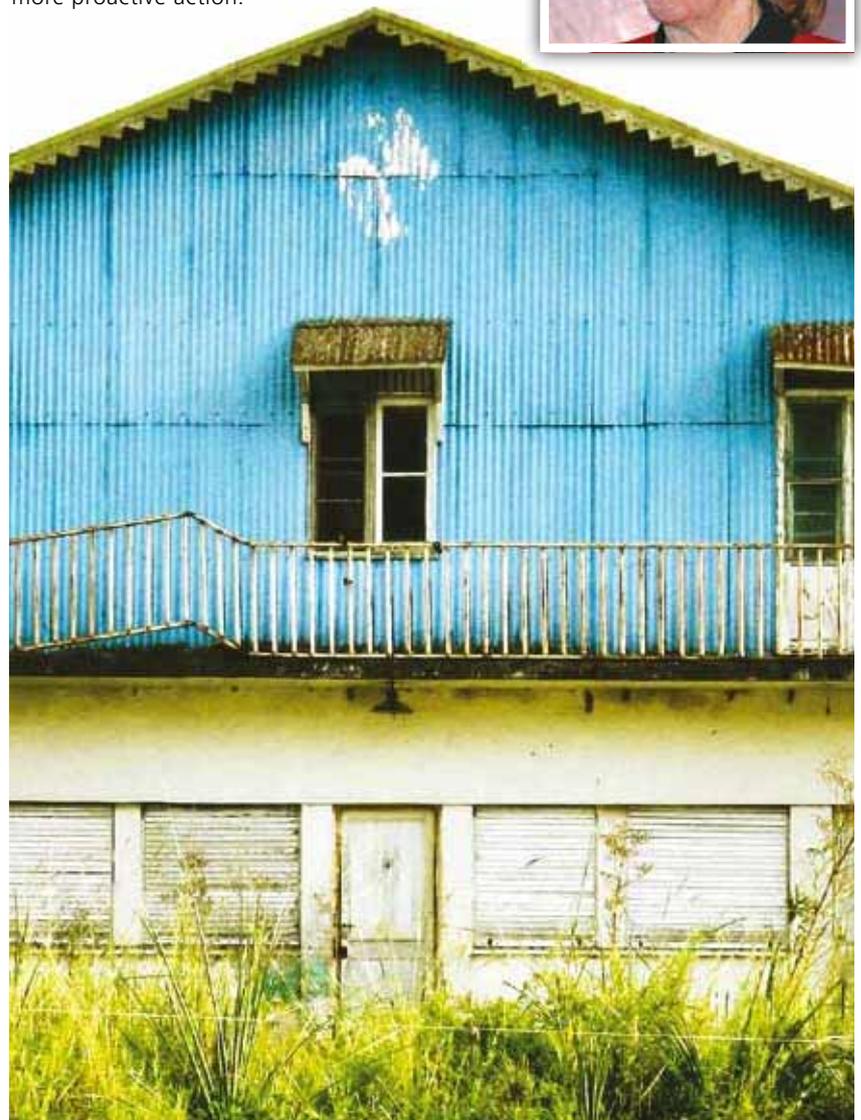
Empty homes not only restrict housing supply, but poorly maintained empty properties attract vermin, cause damp and other problems for neighbouring properties. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors also estimates that houses adjoining such properties can be devalued by as much as 18 per cent.

One action a council can take to reduce the number of empty homes is to warn empty homeowners that it will issue an EDMO unless they take steps to re-use the property. Mrs Beckett wants to see this proactive measure more widely adopted, and will be writing to local authorities to make this clear. The Government is also due to bring local authorities together next month to encourage them to take action on empty homes.

Chief executive of the Empty Homes Agency David Ireland said: "Local authorities have the power to be great at helping return empty homes to use. Some already are, but with the recession causing more homes to fall empty it has never been more important for all councils to do more. New homes from empty properties can help meet some of the need left by falling house building rates. I'm delighted that the minister is supporting this guidance and urge local authorities to take her challenge to take more proactive action."

"I believe that with an increased focus and more consistent approach we can bring more homes back into use. With house building slowing in the current economic climate, that is more important than ever"

Margaret Beckett MP



£1 million scheme will help green apprentices in London

A £1 million fund to recruit a new generation of green-fingered apprentices to keep England's parks and green spaces growing has been announced by housing minister Margaret Beckett.

Local councils will invite budding horticulturalists of all ages to apply for a traineeship scheme that will offer them the opportunity to improve their green skills and make sure that towns' and cities' green spaces stay green.

Beckett announced the new funding in a speech to leading experts in the green space sector as well as planners, developers and health officials at the ParkCity conference in London.

She said: "These new apprentices will be green ambassadors in their communities, taking responsibility for our parks and open spaces and making sure they are of the highest quality for everyone to enjoy.

"Green spaces and green infrastructure should not be an added luxury. If we really are to tackle climate change, and protect both our environment and our health, green spaces need to be at the heart of our communities.

"We will work closely with planners, developers and experts in the green sector to ensure we have the skills and resources we need to make this happen."

In London, the local authorities in Brent, Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Lambeth, Newham, Southwark, and Waltham Forest will be looking for people who can prove their gardening prowess and follow in the footsteps of one former green apprentice, Alan Titchmarsh. His apprenticeship gave him the opportunity to get involved in an area he was already interested in, but also proved a stepping-stone to a star-studded career in horticulture.

Adding his support for the scheme, Alan Titchmarsh, MBE, said: "The practical skills provided by apprenticeships are every bit as important as university degrees, especially those involved with the landscape and environment. As a former apprentice myself, I value apprenticeships tremendously and am relieved and delighted that this initiative is under way."

With the public health, environmental and social benefits of green spaces widely known, the new funding comes as part of the Government's drive for more top-quality green spaces through programmes such as the Green Flag Scheme, as well as putting the green agenda at the centre of planning policy and housing growth.



Help awarded to reduce landfill waste

Waste facilities in three areas in England will see major improvements thanks to £319.2 million of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) investment made by Defra today.

One of the three projects to receive PFI credits included the South London Waste Partnership (comprising of four unitary authorities: Croydon, Kingston-upon-Thames, Merton, and Sutton), which has been awarded £112.9 million in PFI credits. Their waste management project has the potential to divert up to 102,600 tonnes of biodegradable municipal waste (BMW) from landfill per annum once operational. The other projects were led by Hertfordshire County Council, awarded £115.3 million in PFI credits, and Norfolk County Council, awarded £91 million in PFI credits.

Environment minister Jane Kennedy said: "Reducing our reliance on landfill is an essential part of the drive to tackle climate change and I welcome the ambitious commitment made by these partnerships. This will create a real incentive for the local authorities and industry to work together to reduce waste as well as reducing the environmental impact of landfill."

These projects will make an important contribution to tackling climate change. Not only is there the potential to divert a total of 342,600 tonnes of BMW from landfill per year by 2020, they will also reduce carbon emissions from landfill. The total potential carbon dioxide emissions savings is approximately 137,500 tonnes, which is equivalent to removing 43,200 cars from the road for a year. In addition, these projects have the potential to create over 100 jobs once the plants are operational with up to 1000 jobs during construction and commissioning.

All authorities involved are aiming for a long-term minimum recycling and composting rate of over 50 per cent by 2020.

B&Q's most sustainable store launched

B&Q continues to invest in sustainable development, with the opening of its New Malden store earlier this year. Situated on the A3 at Shannon Corner, the store is easily visible with a three-storey high glass "super shopfront" and a 35m high signage tower topped by a 20 KW wind turbine, the largest integrated turbine yet installed on a building in the UK.

New Malden is a new model, large format Home Improvement store that requires half the land area of a traditional B&Q Warehouse development, making efficient use of valuable urban land. The full size trading area is on

the first floor above two levels of parking. Servicing, the building yard and a trade counter also sit underneath the main store.

New Malden has been built with sustainable materials where possible; with FSC certified wood specified throughout, recycled plastics in the customer toilets and low VOC paints used throughout the building.

The building will achieve almost a 50 per cent reduction in CO₂ emissions, when compared with a traditional unit of similar size, and will be B&Q's most sustainable store to date. It features many energy saving technologies, a number of which have already been trialled in other B&Q's development,

and some which are available for customers to purchase for their own homes.

David Childs, director of B&Q properties, says: "As part of our commitment to One Planet Living, we set ourselves sustainability targets for this store that significantly exceeds planning and building regulation standards. We are incorporating technologies which significantly reduce this store's impact on the environment and also makes good business sense, for B&Q; for example in reducing our utility bills. New Malden is an important store for us, in a valued location and will enable us to provide our customers in South West London with the best store we can offer."

Environmental hero

Futures Supplies & Support Services Ltd, based in Croydon, has been presented with its Green Heroes 2009 Wall Shield in recognition of its environmental project – Focusing on the Future.

The trophy was presented by top botanist and TV personality Professor David Bellamy OBE and Warren Edmondson of Nettoyer Media, aboard the Royal Yacht Britannia, Edinburgh (pictured), in February.

The shields are awarded annually in recognition of companies, councils and communities carrying out projects that enhance the environment and wish to share their experience and knowledge with the world.

The judges commented: "As a distributor of cleaning products, Futures Supplies has taken the decision to be responsible retailers and supply products which are effective but safe, and give guidance to all its customers. It believes that business is not just about the bottom line, but about the future too."



The award-winning project will be featured in the next Green Book, the world's only work of reference on environmental best practice. Futures Supplies also won a Green Apple Award, which was presented in November during a special prize giving ceremony at the House of Commons.

The Green Apple Awards campaign is run by The Green Organisation, an independent, non-political, non-profit organisation that recognises, rewards and

promotes environmental best practice around the world.

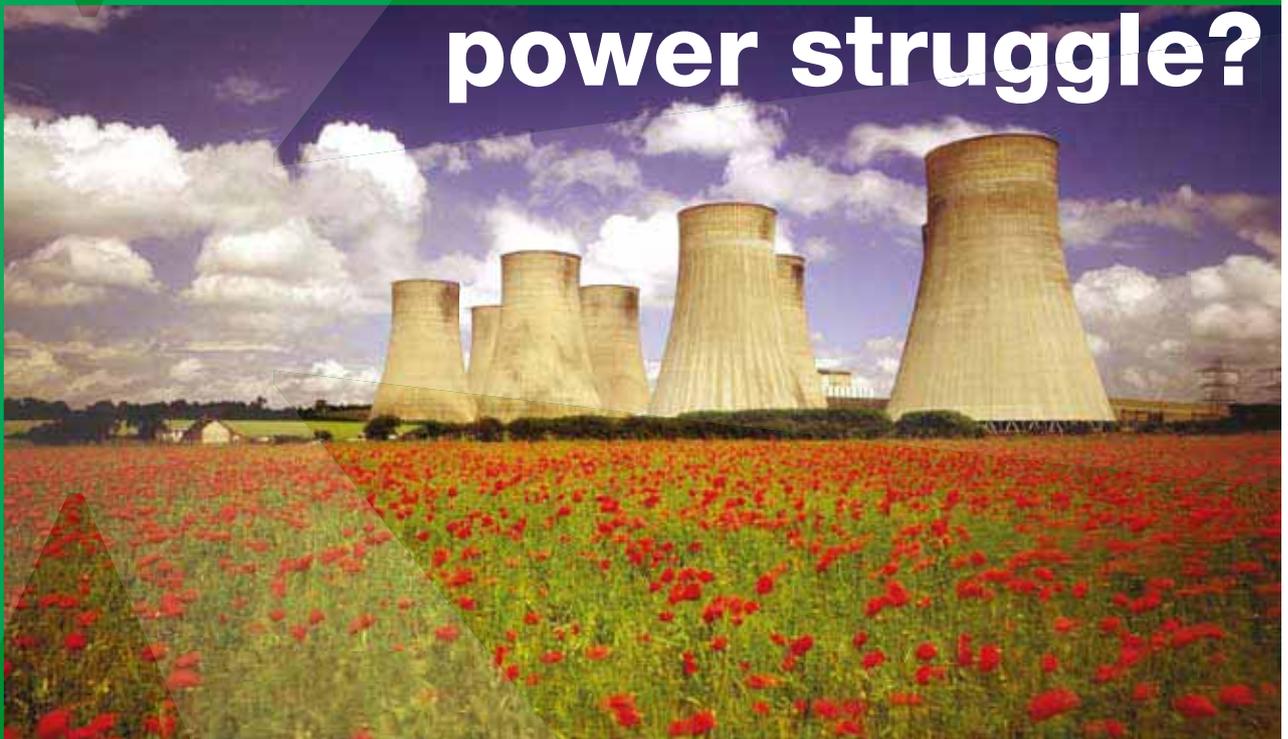
Its supporters include the Environment Agency, the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and various other professional bodies.

National organiser, Roger Wolens commented: "Organisations that go the extra mile and become Green Heroes are demonstrating a serious commitment to the world around them. They invest in a better future for us all and deserve to be recognised for their efforts."

Futures Supplies is an award winning, established independent trade supplier of washroom and cleaning products, including the Ecover range. The company's objectives are to deliver service, quality, value, reliability and sustainability through continuous improvement.

More details on the company, its products and environmental project can be found at www.futures-supplies.co.uk

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Greener Business *

Export to thrive, not just survive

SMEs can emerge stronger from the credit crunch, says UKTI London

Far from being a deterrent to internationalisation, the current economic situation provides an incentive for UK firms to seek out new markets and evaluate

potential for export development, positioning themselves to take full advantage when growth returns.

No one knows how long the downturn will last, but SMEs face issues such as remaining competitive in the current market, the rising cost of importing raw materials, raising finance for capital investment, and taking advantage of opportunities for export, exploiting the reduced value of sterling against key currencies.

The perennial arguments in favour of exporting are now even more compelling. Over 95 per cent of the world's consumers live outside the UK. Exporting enables companies to diversify their portfolios and weather domestic economy changes. It helps small companies grow and become more competitive in all markets.

It is argued that SMEs, with their lower productivity, are less equipped than larger companies to take advantage of a globalising economy. However, though globalisation has contributed to the worldwide impact of the credit crunch, it also holds a key to survival, recovery and prosperity, presenting growth opportunities to SMEs, as well as challenges. Similarly, while expanding your export base – new markets, spreading risk, reducing dependence on domestic business, creating additional revenue streams – is a sound precautionary tactic, it is also strategically progressive.

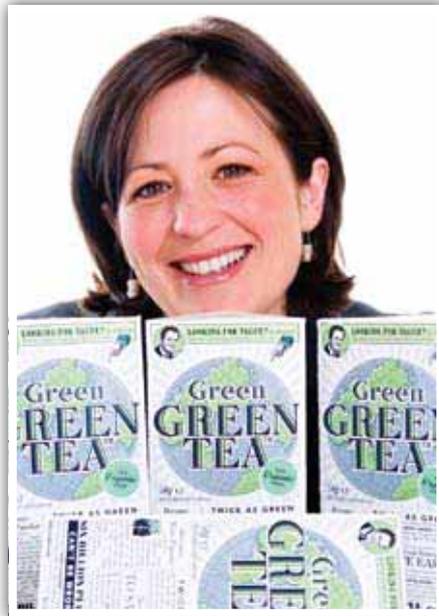
Organic herbal tea supplier Today was Fun Ltd, based in Lambeth, is one SME using this strategy to good effect. The company took advantage of UK Trade & Investment's (UKTI) Passport to Export scheme of assistance for new and inexperienced exporters to help it penetrate new markets.

Company founder Sharyn Wortman explained: "Our export business has grown exponentially over the last four years. In February, we exceeded our sales target thanks to one customer in Kuwait. We met the buyers earlier in the year while exhibiting at Alimentaria in Barcelona, and they are quickly shaping up to become one of our largest customers.

"In the current climate, orders of this magnitude are essential to ensuring the ongoing success of our business."

To get a company and its products and services noticed, effective research, marketing and communications are critical to business expansion.

For many SMEs, internet sales are important for revenue development. A company's website is its shop window



Today was Fun founder Sharyn Wortman

to the world, so it should be fit for purpose. Just as a well-presented, user-friendly site can enhance business, a bad one can damage reputations and lose new business. It should be up to date, provide an accurate reflection of your product/service (in different languages, as appropriate), and be optimised so that you appear near the top of search results, driving traffic towards you.

Staff

Get the best out of your most important asset – your staff. Reduce employees' sense of relinquished control of events by getting everyone involved, so they feel part of the solution, for example set up online surveys for employees to suggest cost-cutting ideas and hold brainstorming sessions.

Redundancies can be unavoidable, but if employing new staff is a cost you cannot afford, try investing in your staff, training and developing them to improve performance and acquire much needed skills. Exporting will present various challenges to repay this investment – not least communicating in foreign languages, developing familiarisation with other cultures, or learning to handle import regulations and documentation in overseas markets.

Streamlining

Streamlining business and cutting costs are essential to making a business more resilient, but should be handled judiciously so as not to create false, even damaging, economies. Try not to

economise in the areas of R&D, sales and marketing, which are dedicated to improving products/services and getting them noticed. There is a strong argument for increasing marketing budgets during uncertain economic times, but there are more cost-effective ways to market a business. E-marketing is a powerful tool, literature and information can be sent direct to customers, saving on postage and printing costs. It is also a way of leading them to your website.

Most SME exporters sell to just a few foreign markets, underlining the untapped potential that exists. Look for business in emerging markets. SMEs should view the economic slowdown as an opportunity to take business from larger companies with higher costs. Use this time to your advantage and emerge ahead of the game when the economy bounces back. Act now – not just to survive in the present, but to thrive in the future.

Innovation and product improvement

Essential elements in creating business growth and longevity, these aspects are even more relevant in unstable economic times. They are particularly relevant for exporters. Overseas sales can prolong product life, appealing to new markets where they may still have potential, and helping to offset the significant cost of developing the next generation of products. They will also make a company more competitive in international markets, and provide a source of learning to enhance competitiveness at home.

The pressure to innovate is the greater for UK companies that do not have the advantages of economies of scale and cost that manufacturers in Asia, for example, do. Concentrate on improvement and innovation, to distinguish your company from the competition. A well-maintained marketing and sales infrastructure are vital to keep your customers (retailers or end-users) aware.

Some commentators say current market trends may wipe out SMEs unable to compete with competitors manufacturing low-cost products. However, those that demonstrate committed leadership, the ability to adapt to changing economic conditions, effective market planning, dedication to quality and innovation, and the persistence to remain competitive are more likely to emerge stronger, more competitive and with a greater chance of long-term success and growth.

You are not alone. There are many expert organisations to which companies can turn for advice and support in tough economic times, including UKTI, Business Link, and Chambers of Commerce.

Akome in the Caribbean

Akome Energy Build is finally realising its international potential. The South London business has brought cool energy solutions to a Caribbean ice-cream manufacturer, after approaching UK Trade & Investment for help with trading in international markets. Assisted by UKTI London the company is now enjoying export success in the Caribbean for its commercial energy reduction service.

The Croydon-based company is an accredited UK energy consultancy that helps companies operate more efficiently, and with less impact on the environment, by reducing their energy costs and CO₂ emissions.

An initial energy survey, carried out by Akome's team of assessors and engineers, identifies areas where companies can achieve greater energy efficiency. The team then employs a variety of green energy systems and solutions, including solar heating and power, wind turbines, biomass heating, and combined heat, power and ground source heating and cooling, to ensure that this is achieved.

Thomas Akomeah, Akome's managing director, approached UKTI in 2008. The organisation's Overseas Market Introduction Service (OMIS) arranged a series of appointments for him with potential clients during a trade mission to the Caribbean (supported by Croydon Enterprise). The visit provided an introduction to pitching and positioning the company's services abroad, and gave Akome confidence in its export potential.

After the mission, British high commissioner Duncan Taylor recommended Akome's services to Barbados's largest ice-cream

manufacturer BICO Ltd, which was seeking independent consultants to carry out an energy audit of its ice-cream factory and commercial cold store.

Following an energy survey, financed by the Barbados Investment Development Corporation, Akome's energy-saving solutions – including wind turbines, photo-voltaic power cells, and a reflective coating which, when applied, reduced the temperature of the cold stores by reflecting 95 per cent of direct sunlight – enabled the company to save an impressive 40 to 50 per cent on its energy bills.

Akomeah says: "The UKTI trade mission provided an essential introduction to selling our services overseas; and the OMIS report, which furnished a series of meetings with Caribbean companies, gave us the opportunity to meet some key contacts in Barbados. The phone call from BICO came out of the blue, on the British high commissioner's recommendation, and we are thrilled with the success of the project. I am very much looking forward to exploring further overseas markets with the help of UKTI and the OMIS scheme."

UKTI London international trade advisor Bryan Treherne said: "Akome is a forward-thinking company with what could be a far-reaching solution to energy conservation for international companies. With such a huge potential for energy-saving solutions in overseas markets, Akome looks set to thrive in spite of the current downturn.

"Encouraged by his successful Caribbean trade mission visit, Akomeah is now looking into opportunities in South Africa, and is visiting Tanzania, Ghana and Kenya as a delegate on UKTI's trade mission to East Africa."

Business brings innovative rice-growing to Nigeria

After more than six months of negotiations, Croydon-based company Trans4mation Agritech (T4M) has negotiated an impressive 25-year contract to grow rice in Nigeria, using innovative Vietnamese rice-growing techniques. With the help of UK Trade & Investment (UKTI), the company is also finding joint venture partners.

The project will give the UK a share of the worldwide rice industry by adapting 30,000 hectares of land in the Niger Delta for mechanised farming for large-scale commercial rice, cassava and other associated crop production and processing.

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has welcomed the project, as it will contribute to food security, employment creation and sustainable development for all nine Niger Delta States of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

T4M's group operations and development director Dr Sample Ibemerum established the project in consultation with Professor Vo Tang Xuan. Professor Xuan is a Vietnamese rice expert who has developed a short-duration, disease-resistant Vietnamese strain of long grain rice with a three-month growing cycle (reduced from the usual four to six months). The rice is perfect for growing in the Niger Delta, which has a similar soil texture, topology and climate to Vietnam. A demonstration farm in Ghana is already producing 20,000 hectares of the three-month strain, following initial tests.

Dr Ibemerum approached UKTI in 2008 with the aim of finding Vietnamese joint-venture partners. Prior to a UKTI trade mission to Vietnam in November 2008, international trade advisor Bryan Treherne advised the company to take part in the organisation's Passport to Export programme of advice and support for new and inexperienced exporters, and to commission an Overseas Market Introduction Service (OMIS) report on the Vietnam market.

The report produced a list of potential joint-venture partners, including government ministries, research institutes, universities and agricultural machinery companies concentrated in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, through which business has been established with several companies.

After the visit, Dr Ibemerum said: "Rice knows no boundaries. On behalf of T4M, I'd like to say thank you to the UKTI London international trade team. I'd also like to extend my thanks to all UKTI Embassy staff in Nigeria, and in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi in Vietnam, for all their support, guidance and advice, and for making our trade mission to Vietnam a success. Our first trade mission was so successful, we are planning a second in 2009, and are hoping to access markets in Poland, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria with UKTI's help."

Treherne added: "The project represents a landmark achievement for a UK company, and it has been a pleasure working with such an enthusiastic company, who know what they want to achieve and go all out to reach their objectives. It confirms that UK companies are very capable of trading internationally."

helping south london prosper



Innovation thrives in South London

'Innovate or die' is a famous phrase, and certainly has great resonance in the current economic climate.

As part of our aim to promote and encourage businesses to grow, South London Business has recently completed a London Development Agency-funded Innovation Programme which included a series of very successful events across seven South London Boroughs – Kingston, Sutton, Merton and Bromley – which were organised in partnership with the respective local Chamber of Commerce. The programme provided the London Development Agency with an opportunity to showcase key funded business/innovation services across South London – including Knowledge Connect, Designing Demand, British Library, and Thames Innovation Centre.

Many locally based businesses have also had the opportunity to showcase their products and services. All the events were very well attended and have been held in excellent venues and locations.

Overall, the programme has resulted in over 400 businesses attending the seven events, over 80 businesses offered further assistance to improve their performance and five businesses actively engaged in new collaborations with the "knowledge base".

Examples of support offered to businesses include:

- One to one clinic sessions with Business Link
- Membership and support through LINNOC's High Growth Business Club
- Support through Merton Chamber's Greening Your Business programme

- Further support from UKTI on international trade
- Links made with the LDA funded Knowledge Connect and Designing Demand programmes
- Links made with the Universities – e.g. St Mary's College in Richmond and Greenwich University
- Links made with the National Physical Laboratory

Examples of businesses supported include garden design company Belderbos, based in Ham. The company was set up four years ago and has grown into a company with a turnover of nearly £1 million. The MD Ed Belderbos is a member of Wandsworth Chamber of Commerce and he attended the Wandsworth Chamber innovation event in October 2008. As a result of attending the event, he joined the High Growth Business Club run by the London Innovation Centre in Croydon and also linked up to the LDA funded programme Designing Demand. Through using input from both programmes, Belderbos has developed a route map and new materials that he is confident will power his business forward even in the face of economic difficulties.

Another company, the Art of Computing attended the Merton Chamber innovation event and they have subsequently made a link with the Go Green programme run by southlondon.biz. According to the MD Costas Galonis, the company is one of a few providing "cloud" computing, which enables clients to host their services on virtual servers using an internet connection. One of the important by-products is power saving.

Feedback on the events...

"Overall, the event we held in Croydon was a great success, attracting a large number of delegates with regards to the bookings and more importantly the delegates turning up at the event. The decision to recruit a high profile speaker to attract the numbers proved successful with many of the delegates attending to hear from Trevor Baylis. Trevor's life to date provided a great deal of inspiration to many businesses in attendance with a great deal of humour and advice for taking their business forward."

Matt Sims, general manager, Croydon Chamber of Commerce

"The BIG Event was the last in the series of Innovation Events under the Business Engagement Programme and all opinion and feedback suggest it was a resounding success. Attracting a large number of delegates and a good cross section of local businesses, this was a showcase event for Wandsworth Chamber of Commerce and has been very favorably commented on by the event sponsors, Wandsworth Council, exhibitors and delegates. We are indebted to South London Business and the London Development Agency for presenting us with the opportunity to host this event."

Steve Pinto, chief executive, Wandsworth Chamber of Commerce

"The turn out was great and we got lots of positive feedback from the speeches and the workshops. This is the most ambitious event yet to be organised by the resurgent Sutton Chamber. Buoyed by its success we are already planning to provide further similar events for our members. We value our ongoing partnership with Sutton Council and are particularly keen to work with South London Business and the LDA again."

Cathy Endicott-Miles, Sutton Chamber and MD of ChangePoint Coaching

www.southlondonbusiness.co.uk

Vibrant economy for outer London

By Paul Cahalan

pcahalan@london-newsquest.co.uk

One or more transport "superhubs" could be created in South London to revitalise its flagging economy.

That was one big idea floated by William McKee, chairman of the Mayor of London's new Outer London Commission (OLC) at Newsquest South London's recent Listen to Business meeting at Twickenham Stadium.

At the first public meeting since the commission was established, Mr McKee explained he had just four months to draw up the plan that will help shape the future of this area for the next 20 years.

In front of an audience of 100 business and council leaders he appealed for everyone in the business community to tell him what they believe needs to be done to create a vibrant economy in South London, one fit for the future and that will also make it a better place to live.

The area's economy has persistently under-performed compared with both inner London boroughs and to neighbouring counties.

For South London to realise its potential he would need "the experience and intuition of businesses", he said.

The ideas put forward by Mr McKee to Boris Johnson in June will feed into the London Plan – the document that shapes the capital's major policies for the next two decades.

Mr McKee said: "Stable economies create better communities... and we are looking at creating four or five superhubs that we can develop.

"Around that we will build links to other hinterlands. We hope this star and cluster approach will make outer London more attractive."

Croydon has already been shortlisted as one possible superhub around which radial transport links would be improved (as have Stratford in the east, Brent Cross in the north and the Heathrow area in the west).

But Mr McKee stressed the commission also wanted to look at what could be done for other town centres of regional importance.

A number of suggestions were put forward by members of the audience including support for stalled plans to extend tram networks, making south London a centre of cutting edge green industries, increased use of the Thames for transport and a focus on supporting small and medium sized enterprises.

Sir Bob Scott, chairman of South London Business – which co-hosted the meeting with Newsquest South London – added a stronger influence for outer London would help the capital thrive.

He said: "Far from weakening the centre a strong outer London will end up strengthening inner London and all its attractions."

Are you maximising your business development opportunities? Promoting your products and services? Making new contacts and growing your business?

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- The latest news and information on South London – including market intelligence on our economy, designed to keep you ahead of the competition.

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Moving in the right direction



Nick Taimitarha, chief executive, Richmond Chamber of Commerce

In a move to reduce the impact of a five per cent rise in business rates, the Chancellor Alistair Darling has given businesses the option of deferring 60 per cent of the increase over the next two years. This means that businesses still face an increase of two per cent this year.

The five per cent increase is based on last September's inflation figures, although inflation rates have since collapsed.

CEO of Richmond Chamber of Commerce, Nick Taimitarha, welcomes the measure but feels the Government could have gone further. "Anything that helps ease the cash flow pressures on businesses is welcome news," he commented. "But business rates are increasing at the worst possible time."

Business rates are set to increase further still in 2010 as a result of a five-yearly revaluation based on their market rental values assessed in April 2008 which have now dropped significantly over the last year.

"In view of current inflation rates," added Taimitarha, "a freeze on business rates would have been more appropriate rather than merely staggering the increase."

Along with rent and staff costs, business rates are one of the biggest costs for many retailers.

"Whilst firms are already struggling with huge cash flow pressures as a result of the current economic downturn," he continued, "there is also no plan to halt a £100 million tax gain as a result of the recent abolition on business rate relief on commercial property."

www.southlondonbusiness.co.uk

A borough in business

In a borough renowned for its historical roots, Richmond Chamber of Commerce executive member, Sandy Eifion-Jones caught up with what is happening in the Richmond business scene and found a network bursting with energy and success.

Gathering in force at the Richmond Expo 2009 on March 12, a very modern Richmond business community displayed a complete indifference to the economy... and put up the victory sign.

Nick Taimitarha, the borough's rising business leader and dedicated voice of SMEs, hosted the event at The Harlequins Rugby Club on March 12.

As head of thebestofrichmond and CEO of Richmond Chamber of Commerce, he was in fearless mood, defiant of the current economic climate.

In a blazing attack on the downturn, he delivered a charismatic speech, an inciting rhetoric and assault on negative thinking.

As he took hold of the microphone, he began with a word on health and safety.

"Absolutely none of us here tonight will mention the word 'recession'," he declared, adding, "take time to meet and greet your competitors, they may be your best support system."

Over 600 business visitors applauded his words of wisdom, both obstinate in the face of gloom and cheerful in their battle cry: 'upturn!'

This was Richmond business at its best – and the Richmond Chamber of Commerce, with an exhibitor's stand at the event, was there to support.



Nick Taimitarha addresses Richmond Expo 2009

"This is not a denial that times are tough and the economy may be shrinking," Taimitarha continued. "But there is plenty of business going on out there, just look around you."

The event was also supported by fellow executive members of Richmond Chamber: Knew Image and SEJ Consultancy (UK) Ltd.

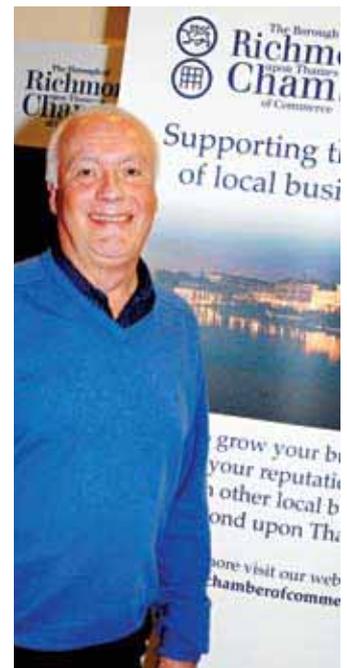
"It is often said that we are talking ourselves into a recession," Mr Taimitarha announced. "Well, I believe we can also talk ourselves into success."

After such success and a huge round of positive feedback from visitors and Standholders, The Richmond Networking Expo is likely to be held again next year,

bigger and better, whatever the economic conditions.

"We cannot change what is happening out there but we can control our reaction to it," Taimitarha finished. "Work on your mindset as much as your business."

After inventor Trevor Baylis OBE further inspired and entertained the audience, the evening drew to a close: smiling faces of exhibitors proof of businesses gloom-busting success.



For more information about Richmond Chamber of Commerce email@richmondchamberofcommerce.co.uk; T: 020 8541 4441; www.richmondchamberofcommerce.co.uk or contact Nick Taimitarha: 07773 789 835

Message from the chairman

Chris Wyatt, chairman
Wandsworth Chamber of
Commerce

2009 looks to be a year of uncertainty in the British economy. These are certainly difficult times for all businesses. However, we must be positive and rise to the challenges that face us. It is important that companies learn to start working together and help their businesses, by networking and promoting each other, where possible.

The Wandsworth Chamber of Commerce is ideally suited to assist in this type of co-operation and also to advise business of developments within the borough, through our close connections within the Economic Development Office at the Council. There is much happening in the borough, with major projects in Battersea and Wandsworth, regeneration initiatives in Roehampton, Tooting and Battersea and the latest development is the American Embassy move to East Battersea.

All these developments will bring opportunities for local businesses. The chamber will keep all its members up to date on all projects. Regular networking events are also held across the borough, allowing businesses to meet informally and explore business opportunities with each other. How often do you get a chance to connect with 30 – 40 business contacts over a lunch period?

We have launched our new website which we hope you will like. We are still sorting out some of the technical details, but there is lots of additional functionality which will help you to promote your business more effectively, including in the member directory. Basic listing comes free with membership. but you can upgrade to an enhanced listing.

See the new website at:
www.wandsworthchamber.org

I would like to thank all members of the executive board for their efforts this year in helping to keep the chamber active and vibrant in the borough.

Our prime objective is to help our members weather the current storm and get safely through to the better times, which will be ahead.

Let's work together and make it happen.

Chris Wyatt

Trust the drums

Trust. How do you measure the success of a training programme that claims to increase trust in the workplace? And why do we need it? Because the economy is collapsing due to a dire lack of it. Trust is a value, like honesty, justice and family. It's something you'd stand up and fight for. These things can't be measured with a questionnaire, they're made real by everyday actions and behaviour. So how do you recognize and expand trust and connection in the 2009 workplace?

Instant Teamwork is a West London teambuilding company with a difference. Recently their clients have been saving themselves the expense of away days and discovering the advantages of playing at home. "It transforms the office into a creative place, and you can feel the effects for weeks afterwards," says Debbie, training director of a local recruitment agency. "And when the drums are delivered it's like watching kids in



a sweet shop," continues Jack, the MD. "They can't wait to start hammering away. It's instant stress-relief at first, the teamwork comes later, and I have to hand it to the facilitators, they manage the transition seamlessly. From being on the brink of a riot to playing interlocking rhythms within 15 minutes is very satisfying."

Instant Teamwork has been in business for ten years and

work internationally, with groups from five to 500. "Trust is something my gran used to talk to me about," says Tom Morley, co-director and lead facilitator. "She made a lot of friends in the war, and she knew all about the Dunkirk Spirit. In any crisis it seems you have a choice to dig yourself a hole, or stand up and add what you've got to the group effort. And people discover they have a lot."

Instant Teamwork's sessions bring people together with drumming, boomwhacking, storytelling and leadership training. They are all about empowering individuals by re-introducing them to their own talents, and bringing 100 per cent of themselves forward, for the good of the group. Trust is built as colleagues take risks together, have a laugh and get seriously creative. And the results? Let's ask Jack: "As far as trust goes, the results are immeasurable."

Checkout the website www.instantteamwork.com or call Tom Morley direct on 07753 802 952.

Carry on Oasis

Founded in 1999, Wandsworth Oasis Trading (Oasis) is a small chain of charity shops located across the borough of Wandsworth. There are four shops, two in Battersea Park Road, one on Trinity Road in Tooting and one on Mitcham Lane in Furzedown.

Patrick Lethaby of Oasis, said: "We couldn't do our work without the 80-plus volunteers who give up their time to work in our shops serving customers, pricing donated goods and doing window displays to attract buyers into our shops. We also rely heavily on our trustees and other volunteers for the smooth running of Oasis."

Ten years old
This year Oasis celebrates

its tenth anniversary. Wandsworth Council has kindly donated its Civic Suite on July 16 for an evening that promises to be a lot of fun. Up to 250 people are expected at this themed event, including members of Wandsworth Chamber of Commerce who are using this event as their July networking evening. Tickets are £25 and include a three course meal and wine.

Join in
If you would like to come along to the event, please contact Patrick

Lethaby on wotc@btinternet.com. And don't forget, if you have any unwanted items lying around, please think of Oasis before you throw them out. Pick up of larger items can be arranged.

A balanced world

New member, Balanced World, is launching a ground-breaking natural solution for bone-density loss, plus help for women suffering the miseries of menopause. Based on 20 years of research, these totally safe and non-chemical alternatives to synthetic products are producing enthusiastic testimonials and opening up a very large market. They would love to hear from those with an entrepreneurial spirit who might consider joining them. For more information, call Joyce Webber on 01442 876022.

Introducing the Joint Management Committee

In an effort to help revitalise business in the London Borough of Sutton the Chamber has restructured. One of its first initiatives was to appoint a joint management committee whose sole responsibility will be to manage the affairs of the Chamber.

As a result, six sections have been created to be managed by respective executives: events and general enquiries, by Laurence Lowne; sponsorship by Paul Cawthorne; membership to be managed by Michael de Lemos; IT and website by Peter Hunter, Public Relations and Communications by Anthea Lashley-Small and District Communities and Issues by David Duncan.

The Chamber intends to become more proactive and be viewed as the voice of business in the borough. In addition to facilitating networking and addressing training needs of the business community, the Chamber will also be lobbying on issues affecting businesses in the borough and working with other partners on such issues as preparing school leavers for work.

Laurence Lowne

Laurence has been running his own business since 1988, providing a range of telephony and utility services at discounted rates for the home and business user. A networker of many years standing, Laurence helps to run the Business Referral Exchange breakfast group, which is now in its ninth year. A public speaker on home-based working, he's also a writer and columnist both on business and sport, nationally and locally. Laurence has over 25 years experience of sales and marketing and excellent organisational skills. He is managing the VIP events.

Anthea Lashley-Small MCIPR

Anthea Lashley-Small is a CIPR accredited public relations consultant and has been in practice for 30 years. She is runner-up 2008 South London Business Awards – Entrepreneur of the Year and managing director of Clavel Rowe Public Relations Ltd, an associate lecturer at the University of the Arts, London College of Fashion, and a member of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations and the Chartered Institute of Marketing. She is also a professional speaker and delivers talks and training on areas surrounding business relations. Anthea's responsibility of the Sutton Chamber board covers public relations and communications including media relations.

Michael deLemos

Michael has 24 years experience in sales and marketing in graphic design, print, and networking and internet services. He founded and remains involved with a number of businesses locally – Givers Gain Limited, Lifestyle Source Limited, Vetted Contractor, Vetted Supplier, Olympic Lifestyle, F-Media.biz and Michael deLemos Logistics. He is also a director of Sutton and Merton Young Enterprise, vice chair of the Sutton Town Centre Partnership and chair of the Sutton Town Centre Marketing Team. He regularly contributes to Sutton's Educational Business Programme and helps support local charity LCCA. Michael is responsible for membership and is presently executing an aggressive drive to recruit new members.

Paul Cawthorne

Paul was employed by Plessey for 12 years in engineering and software programming for air traffic control systems. Later he moved to Hasler GB, where he worked for ten years designing software for messaging systems and setting up distribution in Europe, USA and the Far East. Paul and wife Gillian formed P&G Associates in 1985, selling messaging systems, computers, networks and support services to clients. Paul has been associated with the Sutton Chamber for many years and is responsible for sponsorship.

Peter Hunter

Peter Hunter comes from an Information Technology background. His early IT career began with British Airways and Thorn EMI, before moving on to the teams who designed Blueyonder Services for Telewest, Virgin.net ISP, Which Online websites and NTL World Internet services. Over the last ten years Peter has been running a number of successful companies. He brings a world of big project and internet experience to Sutton Chamber's board. Peter is now responsible for the Chamber's website – www.suttonchamber.co.uk

Pole reveals Sutton businesses are prospering

A pole straw at the recent VIP breakfast hosted by the Sutton Chamber of Commerce revealed that 20 per cent of businesses in Sutton are seeing an increase in their business operations.

This was confirmed by a representative of Sutton Council who agreed that in comparison to other operations in the London Boroughs, businesses in Sutton are doing well. Two national retailers – Dream Beds and Peacocks have

moved into the town centre and a live music venue – The Academy opened its doors in April. There has also been some discussion with a major supermarket who is considering opening a branch in Sutton.

Meanwhile, David Duncan, who looks after Business Districts on behalf of the Chamber met with Terry Dobbs of Worcester Park Traders Association recently with a view to helping the shopping area and raising its profile.

Helping firms smarten up

The Holiday Inn, Sutton was the venue for the annual Sutton Smart Biz on Saturday April 25. The preceding day saw the popular Sutton Business Forum attended by almost 100 local business people networking and attending a range of seminars to help them boost their trade during the rest of 2009.

The Saturday event was hosted by Sutton Chamber and partners, themed – Managing and Boosting Your Business through the Economic Downturn. The free programme provided benefits for all businesses, no matter how they were faring in the economic

downturn, whether they were sustaining their business or taking advantage of the growth opportunities

The present business climate affects businesses in different ways. There are those who will be aiming to survive the downturn, there will be those suffering a loss in profits and staff, there will be those who are relatively unaffected and those that will be able to take advantage of opportunities.

SmartBiz is geared towards helping people looking to start up or grow their business, and this is the third year the event has taken place. The event is supported by Sutton Council, Business Link and Business Focus.

Every child's journey to work matters

During the month of April, the focus at Sutton Chamber was on our young citizens. In partnership with Sutton Education Business Partnership and Young Enterprise, Sutton Chamber and some of its members got involved in helping prepare students in secondary schools for the further education and the world of work.

At Sutton Chamber, we believe that as business people, it is crucial to play a role in helping to motivate our young people to acquire skills and the mindset required to be successful. They are our future employees. We therefore this month assisted with four projects – Science Stixx Challenge, Rucksack To Briefcase©, Mobiles for Money and the Young Enterprise.

Members of the Chamber attended the Science Stixx Challenge where students from a number of schools

around the borough learnt to apply physics theory to practical use in a fun way using old newspapers, glue and a rolling press. Rucksack to Briefcase© saw the girls of Carshalton School attended a career showcase in the form of a 'speed dating' session. Both students and the businesses had an enjoyable time. Mobiles to Money, was a charity fund raising drive organised by Carshalton High School for Girls for St. Raphael's Hospice. The girls even had the opportunity to rub shoulders with business men and women when they attend the VIP Breakfast and made a three person presentation on their activity.

There will be a report on Young Enterprise in the next edition of South London Business.

Rucksack to Briefcase(c) is a copyright of Clavel Rowe Public Relations Ltd and is used with permission.



*Above: a recent Sutton Chamber seminar hosted by Business Link for London at Carshalton College
Below: The Mayor of Sutton at the Young Enterprise stand*



Smarter Travel

Smarter Travel has renewed its involvement with Sutton Chamber for 2009 and sponsored the VIP Breakfast at the Holiday Inn on the May 6. In attendance were representatives from Transport for London and Chantal Cooke who broadcasts on digital radio and runs Passion for the Planet.

Love is in the air

It was a business meeting with a difference – no meeting agenda, no speakers and no entrance fees. It was Sutton Loves Business, a social event organised by Sutton Chamber as one of its initiatives to keep business moving in the current recession.

The inaugural "Sutton Loves Business" was held on Valentine's Day at Bar One Bar and attracted 12 businesses. The second "meeting" was held at The Cock and Bull on St Patrick's Day.

Each month Sutton Chamber hosts Sutton Loves Business at a different pub and anyone involved in business is invited to attend free of cost, to socialise and possibly make new business contacts.

In keeping with the spirit of St Patrick's Day, those attending were invited to wear something green, while local magician Theo the Magician provided the entertainment with the challenge by inviting the 15 guests present to bob a ball constructed from a balloon into the rim of a hat also make from a balloon.



*Left: Graham Willins, Nick Shrager and Theo Theodoris
Above: Brenda Knight having a go with hat and ball
Right: The fun side of Paul Cawthorne at Sutton Loves Business*

Let's raise our game together

In April 2007, when Merton Chamber launched the now named Wimbledon Going for Gold campaign, we did it for very obvious reasons. Wimbledon is a global brand and is known across the world because of tennis.

The All England Club becomes the centre of attention each summer and, to a lesser degree, when it hosts the Davis Cup. However, Wimbledon as a local destination and business centre doesn't appear to benefit much from the associated increase in visitors and being in the global spotlight. Many businesses in the town centre and the Village report that their business performs less well at these times than usual and there is evidence that many businesses treat the period as one of hassle rather

than opportunity. We want to make sure that this isn't the case in the years ahead and beyond 2012.

Wimbledon Going for Gold aims to harness the opportunities arising from us being a host town and borough in 2012 and to make a step change in connecting the increase in profile and visitors with the on-going development of the town, including making progress towards establishing a local Business Improvement District. There is no better time than in the current recession, to develop a unique offer for Wimbledon – one that works for business, residents and our local community, recognising its strengths and addressing its weaknesses.

With funding from the Council, local business and other sources

this campaign is a catalyst for change in our local town, day in and day out, to ensure that we have a truly lasting legacy as a result of the town's association with tennis.

Over 80 local businesses attended the launch event and plans for themed weeks and deonstration projects are well underway. If you would like to get involved why not attend the

Wimbledon business forum, a workshop style event to harness people's ideas and views, on May 6, 9.30am at Tapanco restaurant, central Wimbledon.

Please pledge your support, get involved and make a difference to your town today.

Diana Sterck
Chief executive
Merton Chamber of Commerce



From left: Andrew Wakefield and Diana Sterck, Merton Chamber, with Stephen Hammond MP and Cll Diane Neil Mills.

Forthcoming events

AGM & networking evening – May 14, Cannizaro House Hotel

Enjoy an evening of networking and a seasonal BBQ banquet in the picturesque surroundings of the Cannizaro House Hotel at the Chamber's AGM.

Our popular AGM welcomes members and non-members. Guests will receive a welcome drink on arrival before being seated for the brief AGM formalities, followed by a sumptuous BBQ in the gardens of the Cannizaro (weather permitting) while networking with local businesses.

Attendance to the AGM part of the evening is free to attend. The fees apply to the networking and BBQ part of the evening, which follows the AGM, and contributes towards the cost of the food and drink.

If you would like to attend the AGM and not the networking/BBQ, please email your name to caroline@southlondon.biz so you can be added to the AGM attendee list, or book online now.

Decision Maker series: email marketing – June 10, Wimbledon

The Decision Maker is a series of workshops aimed at owner/managers brought to you by southlondon.biz in partnership with the Ursuline High School, Wimbledon, Business & Enterprise Specialist School.

What is email marketing? In this three hour interactive workshop you will look at email marketing campaigns as well as e-newsletters. The session will cover:

- What are the benefits of email marketing?
- Email marketing best practice
 - How to avoid being a spammer
 - What should you send
 - Should you use text or html format
- What is permission based marketing?
 - How to get permission
 - How to build your list
 - Manage your database and avoid being black-listed
- How to produce an email newsletter yourself, looking at the tools and technology available to create a competitive advantage.
- Content for your newsletter, what to write plus tips and ideas for content

Book online now or call Caroline on 020 8944 5501

Caring for your customers – May 21, Wimbledon

There is no doubt that all successful organisations recognise the crucial importance of caring effectively for their customers. This programme gives the opportunity for delegates to reflect on the levels of their customer care and explore the different approaches to ensuring that it is as good as possible.

There will be a variety of exercises to maintain high levels of energy and participation. Also, delegates will be encouraged to consider what they personally want to get out of the programme prior to attending.

Book online now or call Caroline on 020 8944 5501

Compete For – how to register for Olympic opportunities – April 22, Wimbledon

Would you like your business to access the contracts involved in the Olympics in your area? If so, register to attend this workshop to find out how.

Morning session facilitated by Kevin Ma, specialist trainer from the London Business Network

- What is Compete For?
- Online tendering service
- How to register and search for opportunities
- Using www.competefor.com

Lunch provided with networking opportunity

Afternoon session facilitated by Philip Bingham from Business Link in London

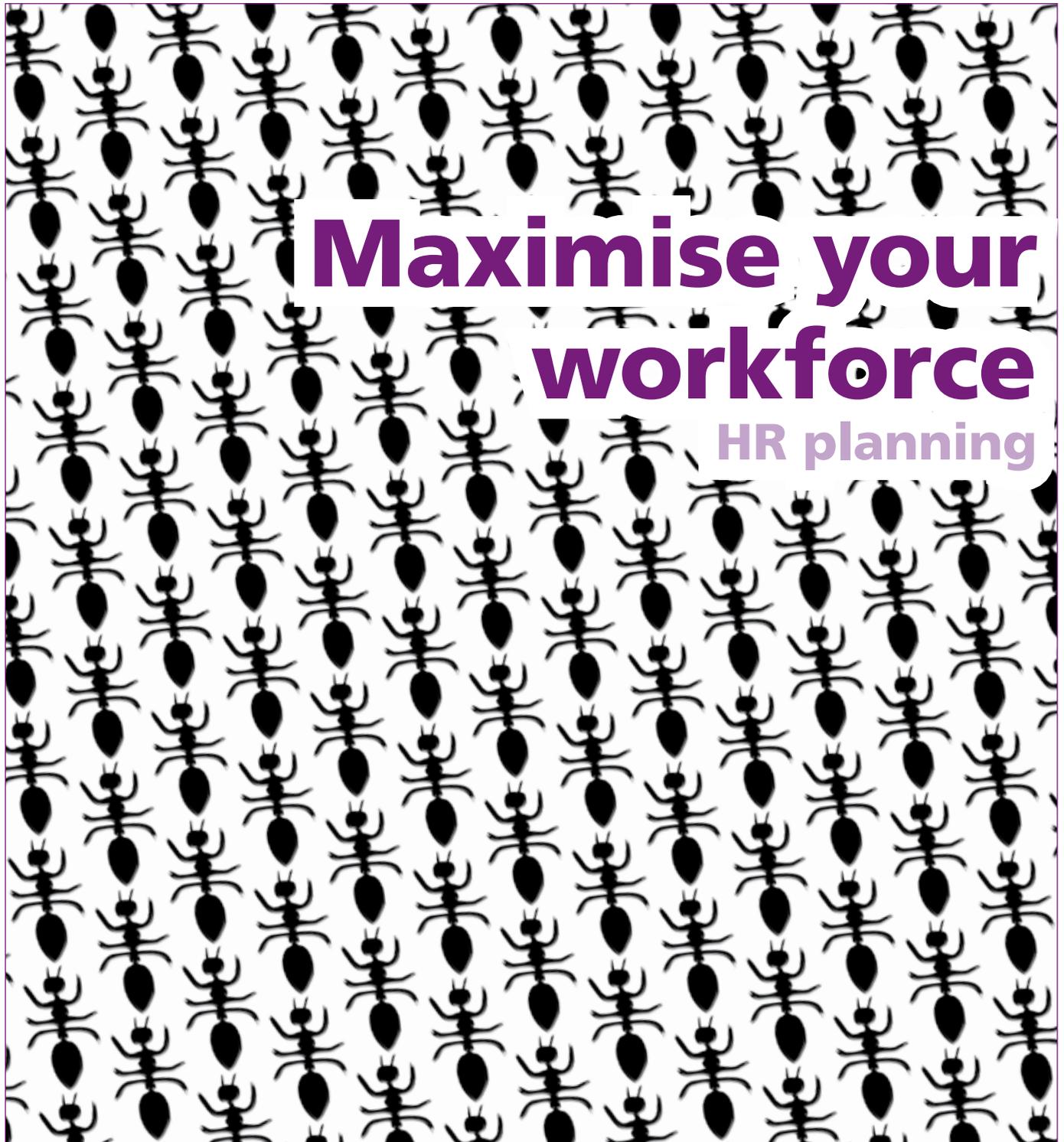
- What is a policy and why do you need it?
- What policies are required for procurement?
- Recommendations on drafting your own policies
- Putting policy into action
- Where to go for additional help

Free of charge for businesses operating in Merton

Book online now or call Caroline on 020 8944 5501

THE VOICE

The advertising and features supplement of South London Business



Employers turn to apprentices to ride out tough times

Hundreds of employers have given apprenticeships the thumbs up in a new survey, completed by Populus and commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council, in which 81 per cent of businesses said apprentices helped to generate higher overall productivity.

The research, carried out to mark Apprenticeship Week in February, also reveals one in five businesses questioned are hiring more apprentices to help them through tougher times with 22 per cent actively recruiting.

The survey's other key findings include:

- In London half of all companies questioned employed more women apprentices than men
- London also had the more than twice the national average for older apprentices, with one in seven being over 51
- Overall, two-thirds of employers believe their apprentices help them to be more competitive in their businesses (66 per cent)
- More than 82 per cent said they relied on their apprenticeship programme to give them the skilled workers they need for the future.

"Apprentices are 'doers' who make things happen and play a pivotal role in our economy"

Apprenticeships minister Lord Young, said: "This government has rescued apprenticeships, having more than trebled the number of people from 65,000 in 1997 to nearly a quarter of a million today, investing nearly £1 billion this year. The Prime Minister recently announced an extra £140 million to deliver 35,000 new apprenticeship places.

"The findings show just how well regarded apprenticeships are by employers. They are rightly valued across Britain as a means of providing employers with a well-trained workforce, which helps their business to succeed. They're about businesses investing in their future, whatever the economic climate.

"An apprenticeship offers a great deal to both young people and adults, giving them an opportunity to gain practical skills, a well-regarded qualification and invaluable on the job experience while being paid.

"The careers open to people who want to do an apprenticeship are growing all the time – from the more traditional like engineering to film production and IT. All of this shows just how important it is to bang the drum for apprenticeships."

In January, the Prime Minister announced an additional 35,000 new apprenticeship places across the public and private sectors backed by £140 million, which builds on a commitment to increasing spending on apprentices in the next year to just under £1 billion.

Ministers have also acted to make it easier for employers to take on apprentices by slashing bureaucracy. From April 2009, the new National Apprenticeship Service will lead the expansion and improvement of the apprenticeship programme. Since January 2009, prospective apprentices have been able to apply online for job vacancies advertised by employers.

Simon Waugh, chief executive of the new National Apprenticeship Service, said: "It is very encouraging to see that employers are really seeing the difference that apprentices can make to their business.

"Apprentices are 'doers' who make things happen and play a pivotal role in our economy. They will help businesses through these difficult times as well as helping to prepare for growth."

To find out more, employers should visit apprenticeships.org.uk or call the apprenticeships helpline on 08000 150 600.



Photo courtesy LSC

A focus for the future

A fresh focus on business advice and support, training solutions, apprenticeships, Train to Gain, events and networking

Business Focus, Bromley's premier business skills and consultancy organisation have joined forces with the employer focused team at Bromley College to offer a comprehensive range of business services to the local community and beyond. Blending years of business advice with education and outstanding resources produces a team that is able to help you grow your business and develop your staff.

Support and advice for existing and new businesses, training solutions, apprenticeships and government training schemes like Train to Gain are all part of the range of services offered by the team to grow your business and help you make the most of your market.

"Business Focus brings together twenty-five years of business advice, support and consultancy with expert training and education as one service," says Rosemary Lacovara, head of Business Focus. "Whether you are an individual considering your next steps towards starting your own business, a business looking to expand or change your direction or a large organisation planning to develop your workforce; Business Focus will be able to provide a range of solutions to enable your business to develop and thrive."



Fresh focus

What sets Business Focus apart from its competitors is its ability to think creatively, and build solutions that really fit customer needs. You might need training in the workplace that actually translates to your employees' day to day jobs. You might need a management qualification that is built around tasks that your managers will need to understand. The Business Focus team is proud of its creative thinking and its ability to intuitively understand what you need.

Sharp focus

Attention to detail is a crucial business skill – and that's what we provide when we undertake to implement a solution that works. From designing learning plans for apprentices, to assessing staff working through Train to Gain assessments, we make sure that every last detail is thought about carefully – not rushed through.

We want to bring businesses together to provide networking opportunities, and events where we share business expertise. Short courses that fit into busy business schedules are great places to start, and business breakfasts introduce exciting forums for discussion.

Invest in the future of your business, and talk to us today!

Business Focus. A focus for the future.
For more information call 020 8295 7070,
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For more information
020 8295 7070

Unemployed Londoners to receive extra support through ESF funding

The European Social Fund, in conjunction with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Jobcentre Plus, has awarded a new contract to leading training provider Seetec to help disadvantaged people in South East London return to work.

The Hardest to Help contract which has the delivery name Opportunities London, provides individual training, support and advice designed to fit a person's circumstance.

Opportunities London does not take a one size fits all approach. It offers various types of support and training from vocational certification, confidence and motivational therapy through to a range of practical help and advice. Customers can also access support on a part time basis so that they can work around their current responsibilities.

The programme is open to everyone who isn't working and participants do not have to be

claiming benefits to be eligible. It aims to help a wide variety of people including those who have a disability or health condition, caring or childcare responsibilities, are aged over 50, are homeless, have a criminal record and those who are just disadvantaged by their circumstance.

It is completely free and is available to anyone who lives within the boroughs of Bexley, Greenwich, Richmond, Kingston, Merton, Sutton, Croydon, Bromley and Lewisham.

Seetec has a friendly team of professional staff who are able to help with a broad range of issues. With over 20 years experience in delivering training and employment services locally, Seetec has helped thousands of people improve their skills and confidence and move into work.

For more information on Opportunities London, please call freephone: 0800 65 25 414.

One million apprentices can't be wrong

According to Sir Alan Sugar, apprentices "make things happen". The LSC's new apprenticeships TV adverts show that young people don't have to become a training and development burden for organisations. Instead, they help grow businesses by implementing the skills they learn outside of the workplace as well as inside.

Well, all the research seems to agree that at a time of economic downturn employers should actually invest in skills. One report shows that businesses are 2.5 times more likely to survive if employers train their staff. Another study reveals that 44 per cent of businesses who train and develop staff actually save money. Instead of recruiting new talent many businesses are discovering the joys of

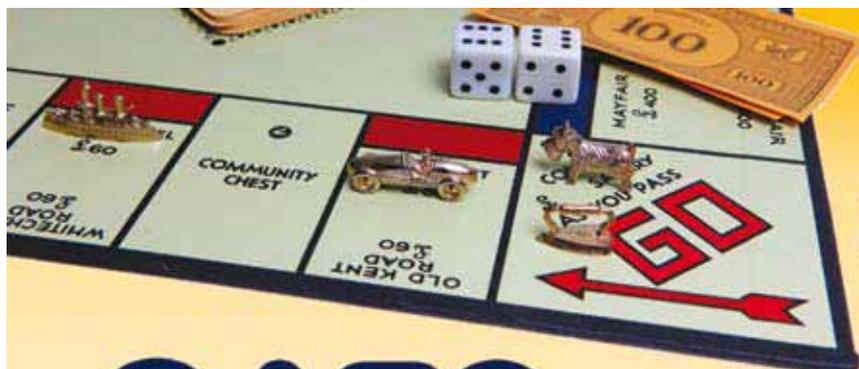
training and developing the staff they have, saving on recruitment costs, and temporary staffing.

With apprenticeships you have the opportunity to change the lives and the careers of your young employees for the better and enable them to become more productive. Apprenticeships will enable you to nurture those already working for you, help you attract new staff and close any skill gaps that you may have.

One million apprentices can't be wrong.

Over the past ten years these apprentices have improved the fortunes and enhanced the reputation of the companies they work for.

So if you have a new recruit or existing employee in mind for an apprenticeship, call Futures on 01689 885364 or visit our website: www.orington.ac.uk/futures





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Opportunities London is a delivery name of the ESF funded programme 'Hardest to Help'

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Part of the Department for Work and Pensions



European Union
European Social Fund
Investing in jobs and skills



Seetec

Social networking for small businesses

The online social networking phenomenon is growing at Kingston University.

The latest development is the KUBIS project which helps people who work in small businesses get the most out of studying.

The first course is being launched in May.

The new environment is called KubiSpace. It enables students to study without having to attend the university. Often students are mature learners, juggling work and family responsibilities, so this flexibility is important to them. They will be able to make contact with each other and with their tutors, but as KUBIS project director, Cate Thomas, points out, KubiSpace goes further: "It will also encourage learners to join and form online communities of practice outside the university," she said. "These will be with people in their sector in the

UK and internationally, so they will be able to learn from global best practice. The course provides learners with tools which help them locate, evaluate, manipulate, create and share online resources, in informed, creative and sophisticated ways. This means that they are able to attain the high level of information literacy so important for twenty-first century work and study," Cate said.

This exciting initiative offers an online foundation degree provision based on the strong Kingston University background in business and community engagement.

The KUBIS team at Kingston University

For more information about the course contact Cindy Bacon on: 020 8417 3136 or email kubis@kingston.ac.uk

"The course provides learners with tools which help them locate, evaluate, manipulate, create and share online resources, in informed, creative and sophisticated ways"



Kingston University London

LDA focussed on keeping Londoners working

A total of £173 million is being invested by the London Development Agency this year to support businesses and help Londoners find a job, stay in work and emerge stronger for the long term.

Personal Best is among the programmes designed to provide training and a qualification to Londoners preparing to re-enter the workforce. It also links to volunteering and opportunities associated with the London 2012 Games.

So far, Personal Best has been trialled in 11 boroughs with 875 Londoners taking part and among those assisted into work was David Holmes-White.

David recently obtained his FA Level 1 in football coaching after completing a six-week programme at the David Beckham Academy. In addition to coaching skills, David also gained valuable experience in catering, retail, stewarding, event promotion, fire safety, first aid and emergency health and safety. The knowledge and experience gained from this

programme helped David get a job in the leisure industry.

"I think it's a great way to gear you up for work, because it gets you into a routine before you actually start work and you get used to deadlines," he said.

Since the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson launched the Economic Recovery Action Plan in December last year, the LDA has been working with a range of partners to ensure all Londoners know what help is available and where to find it.

The work we do in London is not done in isolation – its part of a coordinated approach with central government and Real Help for Business now www.businesslink.gov.uk/realhelp

For more information on how the LDA can provide business support, jobs and training please visit www.lda.gov.uk or call Business Link on 08456 000 787. To order a copy of the Keeping London Working Guide, email info@lda.gov.uk or call us on 020 7593 9000.



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www.orpington.ac.uk/Futures

How you know what works – and what doesn't

It's no big secret that the best organisations are the ones with the best people. But if you think human resources and talent management programmes are all to do with P45s and payslips then you're probably not making the most of your own best people

A well structured HR plan will help to maximise the potential of your workforce. It's an extensive area, with stacks of literature devoted to the subject. But before you polish of your reading glasses, try following these simple tips to get your HR in line.

Strategy and workforce planning:

To get the right people at the right time you need a long term, comprehensive human resources strategy that is closely aligned with your wider business goals. It's important to keep the strategy up to date and responsive to internal and external labour markets.

Policy:

If strategy sets the framework, policy fills in the details. Policies should cover all appropriate areas – from health and safety to equal opportunities. Brush up on current legislation and recent changes in the law. And since your policies cover the way in which your employees should interact with each other, make sure everyone knows what they are.

Diversity and equality:

Remember, the most successful organisations often reflect the make up of their own local community, so one of the most important of your policies is that regarding equality and diversity. Ensure your recruitment process is in line with your equal opportunities policy; and measures for preventing and dealing with victimisation put firmly in place.

Recruitment and selection:

Develop good relationships with a short list of good recruitment agencies instead of approaching every one in town. And don't forget it's often far more cost-effective to hire or promote from within. Talent management is also an important element of recruitment and selection, so do everything you can to ensure high flyers are being identified as early as possible.

Compensation and benefits:

To get the right people you need to ensure that the compensation and benefits you offer are attractive and competitive within your sector. Equally, make sure your payment systems are satisfactory and that people are paid equally for equal work. Ensure sickness pay, maternity and paternity leave, and pensions are run well.

Induction:

Starting a new job can be disorientating, but a carefully planned induction will help. At the end of induction, new starters should understand what the business does and how they will contribute. As well as covering important health and safety issues, point out on-site and local facilities and social activities; and make sure the induction is tailored for individual roles.

Employee relations:

Company handbooks, employee consultation groups and participation in decision-making are great ways of keeping employees engaged with

your organisation. On a more formal note, keep any official position on trade union recognition under review. You also need an up-to-date grievance and discipline policy. Whatever you do, keeping employees informed is key.

Health, safety and well-being:

It goes without saying that every organisation needs a site and job-specific health and safety policy to prevent accidents and injuries. But it isn't just physical injuries that cause absenteeism and loss of productivity. Workers suffering from stress take an average of 21 days off sick a year, so it's worth implementing practices to promote well-being. Keep an open door policy too – employees should be able to seek help in confidence.

Performance management:

New staff are a significant investment. But how do you know that your investment is delivering? Appraisals are the most widely-accepted way of monitoring performance, but the quality of results depends on the quality of the appraisal itself. Be imaginative – for instance ask colleagues or clients to provide their feedback too. Appraisals are also essential for managing talent – they help to identify star players and what they need to continue to grow and develop within the organisation.

Training and development:

As your organisation changes and staff move up the career ladder, you need to make sure you retain the appropriate skills in-house and nurture the talent you have got. Training is an important part of any business's development and deserves a recognised budget.

Career management and executive development:

It is important to have some mechanisms for managing employees' longer-term careers, especially as part of a talent management programme. Otherwise rivals may tempt your most competent staff. Succession planning is also important to ensure you are not left in the lurch when your CEO retires.

Exit:

If you need to dismiss an employee, make sure your processes are fair and transparent. However, no matter how successful your organisation becomes, people will eventually choose to leave of their own accord. But if you manage the exit process effectively you can gain valuable feedback about your organisation.

And finally... one last tip that underpins all the rest. Measure, assess and monitor. That way you know what's working and what isn't.



www.agencycentral.co.uk



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The Marriott Hotel Twickenham is now open. Featuring 156 bedrooms, the 22 South Chophouse offering a relaxed dining experience, and the Side Step bar, featuring Sky and Setanta Sports, the Twickenham Marriott is London's Ultimate destination for business and sport. We look forward to welcoming you soon.



Offer to members:

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Changing lives at Olympia

Judging by the turnout at March's One Life Live exhibition, demand for career and life changing advice has never been higher with many of the visitors seeking alternative ways of working following redundancy or simply a desire to change direction.

According to organisers the most popular area of the Show and hugely over-subscribed were the SEED workshops for women looking to start their own businesses. Held in conjunction with HSBC, the SEED 'Be Your Own Boss' seminars had visitors queuing to fill the free, 30 minute slots, indicating the entrepreneurial spirit hasn't been dampened by the recession and starting a business is often a reaction to vulnerability in the job market and a desire to take control.

Founded by PR guru Lynne Franks, SEED (Sustainable Enterprise and Empowerment Dynamics), offers women the opportunity to reach their full potential. Specialist advisors from HSBC gave visitors valuable, one-to-one coaching about starting a business, with practical advice about the highs and lows of turning dreams into reality. Great ideas are key to any budding entrepreneur but financial experts can help translate a brilliant idea into a business and keep feet firmly on the ground.

HSBC is highly regarded not just for its expertise in business banking but for forging strong relationships with businesses to help guide them through the highs and the lows. Key to this is an in-depth knowledge of the business, how it operates and the ambitions of its leader and this level of dedication forms part of the bank's success and the reason HSBC has remained one of the strongest banks in the world with a solid capital base.

Commenting on the bank's presence at One Life Live, HSBC's Regional Commercial Director for West London, Carol Bagnald, said they were very impressed with the level of demand for advice.

"We were delighted to support this event. There was a huge number of visitors wanting advice, from starting up to expanding their business and of course also how to weather the current economic downturn. Its important that we are visible and accessible to help the business community in any way we can."



Cycling their way to business success

The Methodist International Centre (MIC) is an AA hotel and conference centre that also provides affordable accommodation for international and home students studying in London. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) values have always been high on MIC's agenda.

Here, James Barr, sales and marketing manager, discusses how exploring more sustainable travel options for staff and clients through the Enterprise – "A New Way to Work" scheme is helping them achieve their wider commitment to CSR.

Enterprise is a free service which offers sustainable travel planning advice and support to small to medium sized businesses (SMEs) with 20 to 250 staff. Barr explains why MIC approached Enterprise: "MIC wants to be seen as a proactive leader in the hospitality industry, and I truly believe there is a lot of scope to achieve this through Enterprise."

Through the Enterprise scheme, MIC's own expert travel advisor conducted a free assessment of the workplace, including a site audit and survey of staff and students. To support the implementation of the plan and the 'cycling' package that was developed for

MIC, Enterprise supplied free merchandise such as bike racks, water bottles, and rucksacks, as well as match funding.

By endorsing the use of bikes to and from work, MIC's travel plan is saving staff on travel costs, reducing carbon emissions, and promoting a healthier, more productive workplace. Barr is thrilled with the results: "Enterprise has showed us how our ideas can be turned into a reality and this is a very significant step forward for us." Chief executive officer Andrew Richardson agrees: "The partnership with Enterprise strongly reinforces our commitment to CSR values and sustainability in the workplace."

To find out more about the Enterprise "A New Way to Work" scheme, call the South East London Transport Strategy (SELTRANS) travel advisors on 020 8461 7918, e-mail seltrans@seltrans.co.uk, or visit www.anewwaytowork.org

"We are a social enterprise charity and want to reflect these values in the workplace"

James Barr



Advertising features in the July/August issue of South London Business include:

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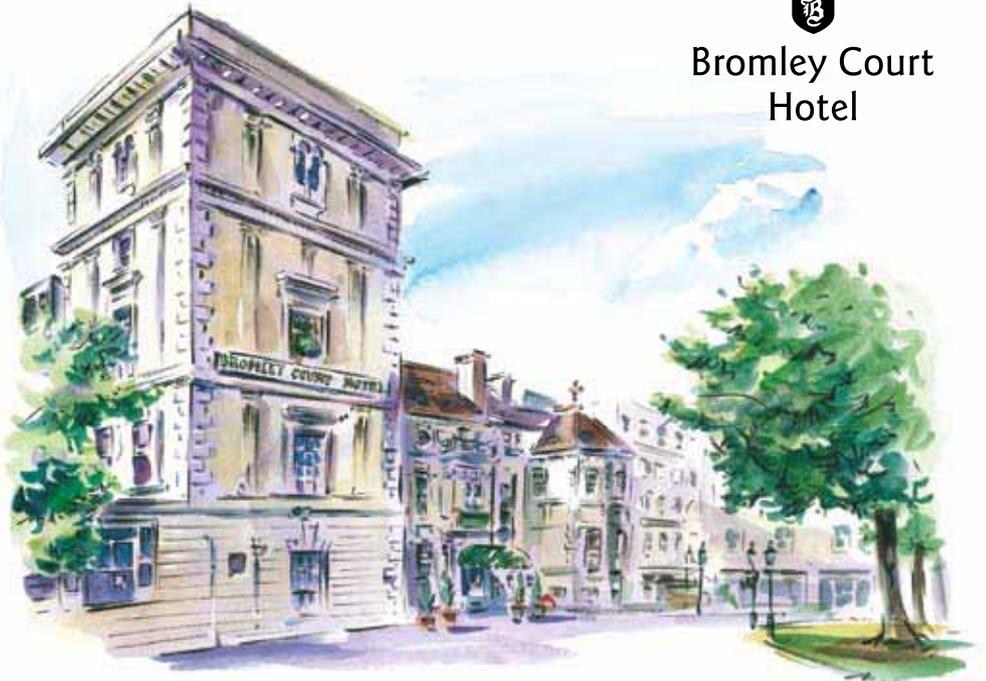
To advertise in these features, call **Gina Forshaw** on **0161 443 5073** or email gina@imprintpub.co.uk

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Advertising features

Bromley's premier conference venue

The Bromley Court Hotel and Conference centre in Bromley, Kent, is set in two acres of landscaped gardens, with easy access to major road and rail links. The M25 junction four is six miles from hotel, Bromley South Rail station just two miles. The Bromley Court Hotels main facilities are:

- **Accommodation:** 114 ensuite bedrooms, 59 currently air-conditioned. All recently refurbished to include all the modern facilities. All rooms non-smoking, all served by internet access. By April 2009, all rooms will be air-conditioned.
- **Conference/meeting/training rooms:** nine air-conditioned rooms offering facilities for one-to-one interviewing, up to 150 persons theatre style seated. Full day delegate rates from £42 per person
- **Banqueting/functions/weddings:** four air conditioned suites catering for small parties of 20 persons, up to 190 at a seated reception. Three suites have their own full bar and lounge areas as well as fully sprung dance floors. An excellent choice of menus and packages is available. The hotel is licensed for civil and partnership ceremonies.
- **The Garden Restaurant:** offers a variety of dining options from weekday lunches and dinners to our popular traditional family Sunday lunch and dinner. The restaurant also plays host to public events



Bromley Court Hotel

such as themed disco nights, dinner dances, murder mystery evenings to tribute band events as our annual diary of events programme. The restaurant and conservatory are fully air-conditioned and have an adjoining bar and lounge area, all overlooking the landscaped gardens with south facing patios.

- **Leisure Centre:** the Hotel has a leisure facility open to our guests or conference

delegates, including a spa pool, steam room with fibre optic lighting and a gymnasium consisting of a four point multi-gym, stepper, rowing, cycle and running machines.

For further information telephone 0208 461 8600, email enquiries@bromleycourthotel.co.uk, or visit www.bw-bromleycourthotel.co.uk

London Bangladeshi Business Network

The LBBN supports Bangladeshi owned businesses and entrepreneurs through a range of services such as improving access to business support, events and workshops, and direct support. With the support of specialist providers, both Bangladeshi and mainstream; the LBBN supports Bangladeshi businesses, and assists in the creation of new businesses, resulting in increased jobs.

The LBBN have skilled delivery partners, who provide dedicated support for individuals who would like to start up their own business. We also provide one to one business support, in order to help businesses achieve their goals.

We work with many mainstream business support providers across London, and actively refer

and signpost businesses to a wide range of business support programmes and workshops. We have also established a number of key delivery partners with specialist organisations, who have the skills, knowledge and experience required in order to provide specialist support to Bangladeshi Businesses in London.

The LBBN can help you to:

- Access specialist business support, including 1-1 support, coaching and business mentoring
- Understand all the business and financial support that is available for your business, and help you to access it.
- Identify and be aware of potential business opportunities resulting from the Olympics
- Learn more about the types of business you can set up,

and help you to develop your business ideas.

- Access potential business mentors from similar business sectors or from a similar background, through our networking events.

Come and visit us at the Baishaki Mela 2009, in Weavers Field, Tower Hamlets E1, where we will be hosting our very own Business Enterprise Zone. The Zone will showcase a variety of Bangladeshi owned businesses that have benefited from the support of the LBBN. The festival will take place on Sunday May 10, 2009 from 12am – 7pm, and will feature an exciting mix of contemporary and popular entertainment from Bangladesh as well as the local Bangladeshi community.

Transport info:

Bus: 8, 388 – Bethnal Green, 25, 205, 254 – Whitechapel

Underground; Bethnal Green, Whitechapel, Aldgate East, Aldgate, Liverpool St.

British Rail: Bethnal Green, Liverpool St

On Foot: Weavers Fields is approximately ten minutes walk from Bethnal Green Station.



Sowing the Cee'd

By Gary Pollard

The Cee'd, what sort of a name is that for a car I hear you ask. Well, there is method in Kia's apparent madness. Allow me to explain, the Cee'd is aimed at the European market and is the first Kia model to be built in Europe. With this in mind they took the letters of the European Economic Community and reversed them to form CEE and added the letters ED for "European design" to make CEEED, this looked a bit daft with all those E's so they replaced one with an apostrophe and the Cee'd was born.

Ideally, I wanted to road test the diesel model as it boasts some of the best fuel economy figures on the marketplace, some 60 miles to the gallon on a combined urban and motorway cycle. However, they were in short supply and I had to suffice with the 1.4 litre petrol derivative.

Externally the Kia is pleasing to the eye with a very European feel, not unlike the Seats and Skodas currently in the marketplace. Three years in design the Kia sheds the tag of the outgoing Cerato with a modern and slightly sporty appearance.

A close internal inspection left me pleasantly surprised. Previous models have had a cheap and plastically look to the

dash and console areas and been in keeping with the lower price tags that are synonymous with the Kia brand. The new model, however, has a stylish interior with new soft touch materials on the dash and surrounding consoles. Plush, comfortable, wide sports seats in the front add to the quality feel. You may think that the upgrades have pushed the price tag up a notch but the Cee'd maintains excellent value for money.

The rear is spacious with plenty of legroom for family, friends or clients. The rear seats have a 60:40 split and fold flat to give an excellent load/luggage area.

The visibility in the cockpit whether it be over the bonnet or the rear view is extremely good, in fact it is one the best driving positions in the marketplace. The three instrument dials are simplicity themselves and you certainly don't need a microscope to check your speed.

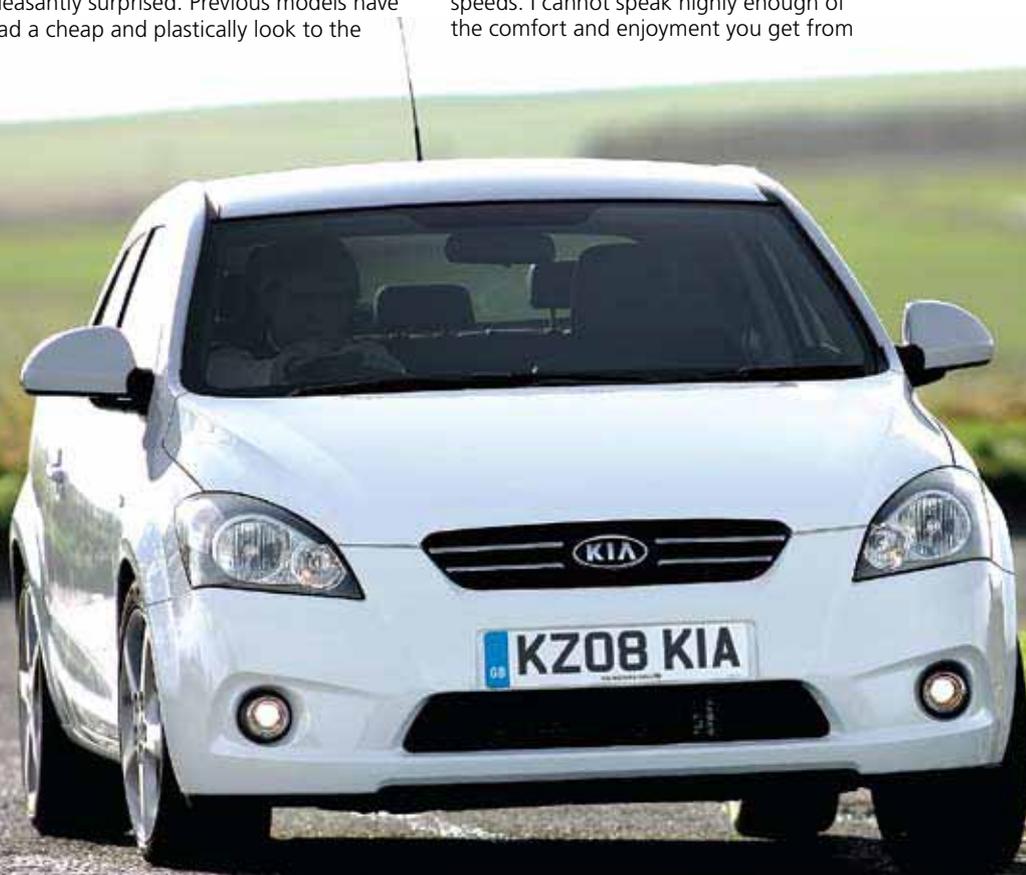
Perhaps the most pleasing thing I found with the Cee'd was the ride. Its excellent torsional stiffness meant that it really was an absolute joy. The handling was crisp and responsive, even in tight areas and at all speeds. I cannot speak highly enough of the comfort and enjoyment you get from

the Cee'd driving experience, it has been enough to tempt me to into putting on the list as a possible replacement for my wife's trusty old runabout that isn't being very trusty these days and is in imminent danger of being retired.

Another unique and, quite frankly, brilliant selling point of the Cee'd is the seven year warranty. Manufacturers do not put seven year warranties on to cars unless they are extremely confident about their product.

The only niggle I had was the lack of a remote key for the central locking however this is available as an option for the higher spec models.

The model range includes 1.4 and 1.6 petrol models and 1.6 and 2.0 diesel engines with varying levels of trim and accessory options. Obviously the 1.6 diesel with its tremendous fuel economy is going to be the big seller but the petrol equivalents more than hold their own against higher priced contemporaries. With prices starting at £11,270 and driving schools/instructors benefiting from free metallic paint and a £750 discount off list price the Cee'd is well worth a look.





Different fuel. Same spirit. The new Cayenne Diesel.

From the beginning, the Porsche Cayenne has redefined the limits of performance. Now the Cayenne offers a new kind of performance; a 3.0 litre V6 turbo diesel engine which, despite its 240 hp and 550 Nm of torque, delivers more than 30 mpg. So the Cayenne's range extends to around 621 miles on a single tank.

The Cayenne Diesel. From £495 per month to the limits you set.

Cash Price	£39,859.00
Deposit	£11,071.08
Amount of Credit	£28,787.92
Total charges	£6,075.37
First Monthly Payment	£570.00
35 Monthly Payments	£495.00
Guaranteed Minimum Future Value	£16,968.29
Total Amount Payable	£45,934.37

Typical 8.9% APR

Call **0700 0780 911** or visit www.porsche.co.uk/westlondon



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info@porschewestlondon.co.uk

Model featured is the Cayenne Diesel at £43,547.00 including metallic paint, 20" Cayenne SportDesign wheels, stainless steel skid plate (front), side running boards, 12 month road fund licence and first registration fee. Fuel consumption figures for the new Cayenne Diesel in mpg: Urban 24.4; Extra Urban 35.8; Combined 30.4. CO₂ emissions (g/km) 244.

The Guaranteed Minimum Future Value is the value of the vehicle at the time your contract ends. Advertised finance offer available on a Cayenne Diesel model with 12 month road fund licence and first registration fee through Porsche Financial Services on a Porsche Preferences Plan, at participating Porsche Centres. Image shown for illustrative purposes only. Terms and conditions apply. Other finance offers are available but cannot be used in conjunction with this offer. All finance subject to status to over 18's only. Subject to availability. £75 acceptance fee is included with first payment and £25 option to purchase fee is included in Guaranteed Minimum Future Value. Contract is based on annual mileage of 10,000 miles. Excess mileage will be charged at 20p per mile. Porsche Financial Services, Bath Road, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire, RG31 7SE. Registered in England number: 3708834. Porsche Financial Services Great Britain is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority.



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