

# Businessnews

The Voice of local business in Taunton Deane

Winter 2009

TAUNTON  
CHAMBER  
of  
COMMERCE

## PROJECT TAUNTON UPDATE

We are pleased to be able to update Members in respect of the Project Taunton developments as follows:-

# Taunton

**Firepool Lock** – Gadds and Knightsone Housing have confirmed their continued commitment to development of this site.

**NIDR** – this is now fully funded and planning consent secured. Work likely to start in 12 months' time but will cause major disruption to traffic flows, although will have extremely beneficial end results. SCC are currently looking at a traffic management plan to address these issues.

**Firepool** – details of the Development Partner have been delayed as negotiations are still taking place as to a final Agreement. Timings are being amended to reflect the current economic climate. Detailed planning application for the first phase expected to be submitted within 2 years. Essential infrastructure will start going into the site as soon as is practical, starting this year, just awaiting financial approval. Likely to see the demolition of existing buildings on site late Summer and all third party ownerships have now been secured by Project Taunton.

**Somerset Cricket Club** – Pegasus Homes work is ongoing (completion possibly June) together with the works for the new Club Hub. A planning application for the third phase of the Scheme, a new pavilion, has been submitted and approved and the planning application for the former Barnicotts building to be converted to a Business Incubation Centre has now been approved by the Local Authority.

**Somerset Square (Public Realm)** – work on the area between the new flats (Pegasus) and the Brewhouse, to known as Somerset Square and which will become public realm, is likely to start in June/July and is scheduled as a 12-13 week contract.

**Brewhouse Theatre** – feasibility studies ongoing in respect of the Theatre.

**Castle Museum** – work is currently ongoing at the Museum and expected completion is July 2010.

**Castle Green** – to link in with the project at the Museum a scheme has been prepared to improve the area around Castle Green. It will involve the closing of the Castle Green car park, changing of bus routes and the construction of a high quality public realm open space. A planning application is to be submitted shortly with the contract being "let" later in the year.

**Bus Station** – the future of the bus station is currently being reviewed. It is likely to stay on its existing site but with refurbishment and reduction in size. Feasibility discussions are currently ongoing.

**Third Way** – planning consent has been secured and the scheme is fully funded. Work likely to start on site May 2009 and be completed during 2010. This scheme will reduce the availability car parking in Enfield car park.

In answer to queries raised about the loss of car parking spaces in two locations, MG confirmed that the level of parking usage is currently dramatically reduced and whereas 12-18 months ago the impact of these schemes on car parking was a major issue, that is not now the case.

**Tangier** – Midas have cleared the site and have currently put a hold on development of the site. With their Joint Venture Partner they will review the situation in July.

**Park and Ride** – works to extend the Silk Mills site will take place this year as well as commencement of works at the Cambria Farm site.

**Supermarkets** – Tesco - talks have been taking place with Tesco who would like to expand their existing site. It has been confirmed that their existing site is far too small for the size of the development Tesco would like. They are now looking at a 2 store strategy. Morrisons definitely want a larger store and Waitrose are seriously investigating sites in Taunton.

**Mecca building** – there are no plans at this stage for development of the former Cinema, now Mecca Bingo. It is a listed building and there is total uncertainty at this point in time as to what to do with both the building and the site if it were to become available.

**Retail Scheme** – lengthy and detailed discussions are taking place between JP Morgan and Project Taunton in respect of this project. In the interim there is to be a short term refurbishment of the existing Old Market Centre to include upgrading of the public highway and entrances to the Centre. In the longer term, discussions will continue to take place in respect of developing a larger scheme. Talks are extremely positive and centre around a very large scheme which in itself will have some complex issues to overcome. Possibly looking at 3-4 years away before a scheme of this scale is going to be at "drawings" stage.



### COFFEE AND A CHAT?

THE LOUNGE AT HOLIDAY INN TAUNTON IS PERFECT FOR INFORMAL MEETINGS.

Drinks and refreshments available in comfortable surroundings to discuss the latest business venture. With ample free parking and excellent location, come and see what we have to offer.

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[www.heartofsomerset.com](http://www.heartofsomerset.com)

## CHRIS'S COLUMN

This is the first of what I hope will be a regular President's column in the Chamber Newsletter, designed to focus on, comment upon, highlight and to argue on the issues that are going to particularly affect local Taunton businesses.



I do not need to enlarge on the biggest issue that is currently impacting on not only local business but local authorities and other organisations as well as local consumers which is the challenge presented by the current state of the economy. There is no doubt that the down turn which has, for some time been directly hitting local businesses, is in 2009 starting to impinge directly on every person, authority and organisation in our locality.

Despite the down turn, local business is still taking place, the large majority of companies will survive and, the large majority of consumers of those businesses will retain their jobs.

As can you can read in the accompanying article on Project Taunton, there is some cause for optimism as, real progress with the Project is being made. Over the next three to four years major changes and improvements will be completed across Taunton. The resultant changes can only improve Taunton in the longer term as a place to do business and attract customers.

I believe that one of the most important elements of the President's role is to be able to represent the views of members and to lobby and argue on behalf of the local business community. In order to usefully comment on issues and, to have useful and constructive meetings with those in local public office, we, on the Chamber Executive, do need feedback and comment from our members on the issues that you think most important to you. After all, the Chamber is here to represent local businesses; the Chamber Executive has good contacts with local authorities, TDBC and Somerset County Council as well as our local M.P.

The Chamber has during the last year run regular network events that have enabled local business members to attend seminars on a range of subjects as well as giving the opportunity for networking, exchanges and for the Executive to hear member views. These events have been successful but, members may like to see other topics covered or, a different format for events or events at different times of the day, if so, we on the Executive Committee need to receive those comments so that, we can act on them.

We would also welcome members to join us on the Executive. We meet once a month plus host a Networking event each month, not very onerous but very rewarding.

We on the Executive look forward to hearing from you.

Chris Mitchell  
President

## MEMBER OF THE MONTH –

### Setsquare Secretarial (a low cost office staff resourcing service)

**Background:** Setsquare are the South West's leading recruiters for Construction staff with our base in Taunton and 7 offices nationally and have over 22 years of expertise in our field. Over that time we have developed a database of well over 200,000 candidates which is constantly renewed and updated.

Within our database are a substantial and ever increasing number of non-construction candidates seeking secretarial, clerical / admin work; skills that have traditionally not been part of our core business. It is these candidates that we now offer to 'Chamber' members.

**The Service:** We do not claim to be experts in recruiting Secretarial and office staff. Specialist Agencies who provide these professional services typically charge between 10 and 22% of the starting salary. Good value for the excellent service that they provide.

We however offer a no frills service: fax or email your vacancy, if we can match your requirements we will give you details within 3 days. We will arrange the first interview and ID check only. If you choose to employ, we will charge £400 for salaries up to £15,000; £500 for salaries from £15,001 to £20,000 and for salaries over £20,000 by negotiation.

In addition, we offer a payroll service.

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For further details and our Terms of Business please contact Hayley or Leanne on 01823 328450 or email [secs@setsquare.uk.com](mailto:secs@setsquare.uk.com)



## Headway Somerset

Headway Somerset, part of the national brain injury charity Headway UK, is looking for trustees to help run its operation in the County.

Headway provides therapeutic and rehabilitative services from three centres in Somerset and also provides an outreach and hospital visiting service.

The charity employs 16 staff including a senior manager and fundraiser helped by a large number of volunteers.

The Charity is funded by grants from the local authority and others and by its own fundraising activity

Set up as a company limited by guarantee the Board of Headway Somerset meets formally in the evening four times a year in Taunton.

Chairman, Martin Pettingell says " We are looking for people who are passionate about helping those who have suffered from brain injury and their families and who have some skills or experience in business, social work, medicine, local government or hospital management, finance or any combination thereof and who are looking to put those skills to good use".

Please contact Martin on 0845 209 1256 if you are interested and would like further details.

Headway Somerset



the brain injury association

## Member Update — Ashfords Solicitors

As you may be aware Ashfords solicitors is moving from its Taunton town centre office in St James Street to Blackbrook Business Park.

The move to the purpose-built office called Ashford Court will happen in March to give clients better service and access in a state-of-the-art building.

The firm will continue to offer the full range of legal services from Blackbrook under managing partner Tony Mason.

Currently, the office is well advanced with construction and is highly visible from the M5 with Ashfords branding.

# Ashfords



Croft Surveyors have taken over the business of Drew Pearce in Taunton and Plymouth and have opened a new office in Exeter.

The partners of Croft Surveyors have extensive experience in the core surveying skills of building assessment and design, plus valuation and commercial agency/development advice at the Plymouth office. The strength of the firm is that in addition to the core skills each surveyor has individual specialisms and can draw on the abilities of his colleagues to find a bespoke solution for your property problems.

The Taunton Partner, David Vestey, has particular expertise in dilapidations, capital valuations (embedded plant) for tax purposes, party walls, Fire Risk Assessments, expert witness reporting and mobile home assessment. Other surveyors' specialist skills include CDM-C (construction health and safety), Energy Performance Certification Accreditation, and Boundary Disputes.

Please do contact David on 01823 327029 for an informal chat about any property matter.

## Bank of England

Agents' summary of business conditions  
January 2009

BANK OF ENGLAND

- **Consumers' expenditure** had contracted further during late November and early December. For most retailers, sales over the Christmas period had been lower than in the previous year.
- **Exports** had slowed sharply. More industries were now experiencing shrinkage in export demand.
- **Output** had contracted more rapidly than earlier in the year. During 2008 Q4, the slowdown had been most marked in the **manufacturing** sector, as firms cut production in the wake of a mounting excess of stocks over planned levels.
- **Contacts' concerns over availability of working capital** remained elevated. This reflected both an ongoing tightening in availability of bank funding and trade credit and the pressures on corporate cash flow arising from the deteriorating macroeconomic outlook.
- **Employment intentions** had been scaled back further, with an increase in redundancies. Further redundancies were planned for 2009.
- Growth in per capita **labour costs** had slowed. Looking forward, there had been a material increase in the proportion of firms planning for a settlement freeze.
- **Annual input inflation** had fallen back sharply for many imported raw materials, as falling foreign currency prices more than offset the impact of sterling's recent depreciation.
- **Retail goods and service price inflation** had also fallen sharply. The VAT cut had been widely implemented and pre-Christmas discounting had been deep.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Members and Guests Welcome

### **FEBRUARY (Change of event)**

**Weds 25<sup>th</sup>** — Networking Lunch at Exchange House, The Crescent, Taunton  
Presentation by Neil Higginson on “The importance of upskilling your people in a difficult economic climate”

Booking form and further details attached

### **MARCH**

**Weds 25<sup>th</sup>** - Business Visit to McDonald's to include breakfast £10.50 per head

Booking Form to follow in March Chamber Chatter

### **APRIL**

**Weds 29<sup>th</sup>** - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING at King's College

Guest Speaker – tbc

Booking form and further details to follow

### TAUNTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE welcomes

New Members:-

Paper Busters, Creech St Michael

Children's Hospice SW (Corporate Fundraiser)

### **WELLINGTON**

For information about Wellington Chamber, contact:

**Emma Blake**

Email: [Emmablake21@yahoo.com](mailto:Emmablake21@yahoo.com)

## GWE Business West

Lifeline Snippets

### 'Real help' for small businesses available online

Accessing 'real help' and information at a time when small businesses need it most is vital to survival. During this economic downturn businesses need to access information about support quickly and easily. Business Link's - Real Help Now - online initiative does just that. At a time when running a business is tough, this website provides some practical advice and information for saving your business money. To find out more visit:

[www.businesslink.gov.uk/realhelp](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/realhelp) and for information on finance schemes and initial diagnosis of eligibility go to [www.businesslink.gov.uk/realhelp/finance](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/realhelp/finance)

### E-crime advice guide launched for small and medium-sized firms

Small and medium-sized businesses can now access a new guide on e-crime to help equip themselves against current threats. The Cybersecurity Knowledge Transfer Network, which is backed by the Government, and the Business Crime Reduction Centre (BCRC), have launched the 'E-crime: What Your Business Needs to Know' guide, which features tips on e-mail security and spam as well as phishing and hacking. The release comes after research from the BCRC showed that a third of small firms do not know whether they have anti-virus software installed and a further 28 per cent do not know whether they have a hardware firewall. For more information on this story and to access the e-crime guide, go to: [www.vnunet.com](http://www.vnunet.com)

### TAUNTON

For Membership, General Information and Events  
call **01823 353353**

For Business News or Promotion & Event Hosting:

Email: [office@taunton-chamber.co.uk](mailto:office@taunton-chamber.co.uk)

For Web Information or Amendments

Email: [webmaster@taunton-chamber.co.uk](mailto:webmaster@taunton-chamber.co.uk)

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## HOWARDS HONDA



### LOCAL BUSINESS SPECIALIST

If you are a local business, operate one or a number of company cars or are a company driver considering your next company car, who would you turn to locally for the best possible prices and advice ?

Leon Wilce operates from Howards Honda as their Business to Business specialist and is tasked to specifically assist and support local businesses and company car drivers, on behalf of Honda UK.

Based at Howards Honda dealerships covering Taunton and Weston super Mare, Leon specialises in supporting clients with their Honda products enquiries along with a varied range of finance solutions for business users, including personal leasing

If you would like to find out more, please contact Leon Wilce on 07834 191591 or email him at [leon.wilce@howardsgroup.co.uk](mailto:leon.wilce@howardsgroup.co.uk)

### SOMERSET

For details of Somerset Chamber contact:

**Katie Baines on 01823 444924**  
Email: [manager@somerset-chamber.co.uk](mailto:manager@somerset-chamber.co.uk)

For Somerset Chamber Events  
Contact & Booking

**Sue Higgins on 01823 444924**  
Email: [events@somerset-chamber.co.uk](mailto:events@somerset-chamber.co.uk)

### DATA PROTECTION

The Chamber has your details held in a database that has been compiled from volunteered information.

If you no longer wish to receive E- communications from the Chamber please email Jane Burden. We will continue to hold your remaining details unless you specifically indicate otherwise in writing.

If you would like a colleague to receive these e-mails direct, please let us have their details and we will add them to our database.