

ISSUE
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RURAL Round-up



*Keep your faith in beautiful things, in the sunshine
when it is hidden, in the spring when it is gone. -*

Roy R. Gibson

Let us know what you think, email us at edu@swale.gov.uk



SWALE BOROUGH COUNCIL LAUNCHES A BUSINESS-DEDICATED SITE – AND WE MEAN BUSINESS!

As part of our 'Open for Business' strategy, we have launched a new website - 'Swale Means Business'. The website makes the case for the Borough as an investment location, and also promotes the support that the Council can offer business. The site also provides a platform for us to communicate with business communities, be they start-ups, existing businesses, or investors.

The site will remain a 'work-in-progress' over the coming months as we continue to collect and format content, but we would welcome your feedback on the site in the meantime. It may be that you have a suggestion for information that is not presently included, or perhaps there is a specific audience who you think we should target that would benefit.

Beyond ensuring that the 'core' content is fully uploaded over the next few months, we will be looking to continually update the site with relevant news, articles and images, so any ideas will be most welcome.

Why not take a look today. Visit www.swalemeansbusiness.co.uk as well as our sister site www.visit-swale.co.uk

HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF YOUR RURAL AREA

Kent Downs and Marshes Leader and the East Kent Leader are looking for new members to join their Local Action Groups (LAGs). The LEADER approach is a way of spending money on local rural issues, identified by people living in the area. This bottom-up approach to local issues leads to locally tailored solutions based on the economic, social and environmental based needs of the Leader area.

The money is locally controlled with decisions about which projects are funded being made by the LAG. Each LAG is made up of representatives from organisations across that Leader area which includes the relevant parts of rural Swale.

Kent Downs & Marshes Leader has been in existence since 2007 and delivered a £1.65m funding programme which ended in 2013. It is about to start a new funding Programme (subject to a successful bid to Defra) which will run up to 2020 and will be joined by the NEW East Kent Leader. As a consequence the LAG for both areas are looking to attract new members from business, social and environmental backgrounds (individuals or groups) to help deliver and shape the new Programme which will be worth £3.28m collectively and will start in early 2015.

This is a voluntary role with no liabilities on membership and will include attendance at up to two meetings a year.

Cllr Andrew Bowles says:

‘Swale is keen to ensure that its rural communities have every opportunity to deliver projects that respond to very specific priorities for its local communities and we will continue to work through the programmes to ensure we build on the success of previous programmes’.

Funding for Leader comes from The Rural Development Programme for England 2014 - 2020 and is administered through Defra. Kent County Council is the accountable body for the Leader group. If you feel you could help shape the new Programme for your area by becoming a member of the Kent Downs and Marshes Leader or want to learn more about getting involved, then please contact Huw Jarvis, Programme Manager, on 01622 696940 or email huw.jarvis@kent.gov.uk

TIME FOR ALTERNATIVE POWER TO HELP YOUR RURAL BUSINESS?

The case for commercial rooftop solar photovoltaics (PV) has so far rested primarily on the green credentials of the technology. The lack of a definitive case for short-term return on investment on the capital costs of installing rooftop PV has been a barrier to widespread uptake.

However, a report published recently suggests that there is now a clear and compelling economic case for its adoption - the cost of solar panels has plummeted so that the potential savings versus rising grid-based electricity bills have increased. The study uncovers that "British businesses could save over £5bn per year in electricity bills, at current price and consumption levels, by installing fully-funded rooftop solar PV systems on south-facing commercial roofs."

With this in mind, it could be worth reading this study on the potential cost savings commercial rooftop solar PV offers and see if it could help you.

To access the report, please visit www.swalemeansbusiness.co.uk/news

TASTE OF KENT AWARDS

The most venerated 'Taste of Kent' awards are upon us again. The awards, run by Produced in Kent have demonstrated increased popularity year on year and nominations for all categories have reached record numbers.

Stephanie Durling, business development manager at Produced in Kent, who run the awards, said: "This year has again seen people voting in their thousands with the number of votes we received up by around 50%.

From all across the county, the people of Kent have chosen the tastes, flavours, products, produce and venues that they have enjoyed the most over the last 12 months".

The Swale businesses nominated for the Taste of Kent awards (for your rural bulletin) are:

Best Kentish Beer, sponsored by Rix and Kay Solicitors

Nominated: Whitstable Bay - Shepherd Neame, Faversham Brewery

Kent Local Food Retailer of the Year, sponsored by Bennett Opie Ltd

Nominated: Macknade Fine Foods, Faversham

Best Kentish Cider or Perry, sponsored by Wilkins Kennedy FKC

Nominated: Cerry Old Dudda - Pine Trees Farms, Doddington

Best Kent Juice Provider, sponsored by Kent County Council

Nominated: Pine Trees Farm, Doddington

There is also more information at the KM webpage at:

<http://www.kentonline.co.uk/kent-business/county-news/public-vote-on-fine-food-30045/>

BUSINESS SURVEY – RURAL COMMUNITIES OUTCOMES

The results of our Business Survey are in and we are working through the responses as this goes to press. The survey was sent to 3270 Swale businesses by post. There was also the opportunity to for any business based in Swale to respond online through Survey Monkey (the survey was promoted through our e-bulletin, local business networks and SERP). Of those, 294 businesses in Swale responded to the survey.

A total of 731 Rural Businesses were sent a business survey by post and 30 responded (4% of the rural companies approached). All outcomes provide us a baseline for future surveys.

The purpose of the survey was to determine the demographics and health of local business, to determine how they have fared during the recession and of potential for growth in the coming months.

The general consensus amongst these rural businesses is that they are surviving, with business improving/staying the same. We want to help to increase the number of businesses 'improving' in the borough and we continue to look for ways to support rural business.

We can offer a robust Business Support Programme to help new and existing businesses and our '**Swale Means Business**' website is a great resource tool for locating general business advice, funding and info on networking in your area. Can't find what you're looking for? No problem, get in touch by calling (01795)417194.