

Chamber NEWS

The Monthly Newsletter to Somerset Chamber of Commerce & Industry Members and Associates

THE MARCH DIARY

"Tourism"

15th March 2006 (7.30 a.m.)
Bridgwater Rugby Club

"The Anne Frank Story"

29th March 2006 (12.30 p.m.)
The Brewhouse Theatre

* * *

Don't forget!

THE FEBRUARY DIARY

(as previously published)

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CHAMBER TO GROW

The Chamber needs to grow if we are to have a sustainable future, ensuring we provide the services Members need. Subscriptions currently account for less than 50% of our operating costs so we must work hard to make up the balance from other sources. A larger subscription income would, therefore, give more security but, more than that, larger numbers will give us greater strength in representing and serving the business community.

Please help by recommending us to your business colleagues. We are more confident about our website, newsletter, developing CRM database and range of events, however, some of you have never attended an event. Can we encourage you to try one or two as first hand experience of our "family" atmosphere will almost certainly raise your enthusiasm? In addition to gaining useful information and advice from our speakers, you will have the opportunity to network and "feed off each other."

Some people have complained they

are not fully aware of the benefits the Chamber offers. In addition to the networking events, newsletter and website we offer inter-member discount and promotional opportunities (see inside for details). You can also take free initial advice from Members such as Clarke Willmott Solicitors. We believe these services can be extended and we would be especially interested to hear from Members who can help. If you believe additional services are required but not offered by us we will try to introduce them.

A large part of our work is influencing what the County Council and Regional Bodies do in relation to the Somerset economy and business interests. You might call it lobbying but the influence comes in various ways. We manage "Somerset4Business" by bringing together other business organisations thereby having wide access to business opinion. We represent business on the Somerset Strategic Partnership and several sub groups to steer the strategy for economic

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For details call
0870 400 9080
Holiday Inn Taunton
holiday-inn.co.uk

Preferential Law Society rates.

If you're accredited by the Law Society, why not take advantage of our preferential rates, including bed and breakfast, and find out what Taunton has to offer?



Inter-Member Discount Scheme

To join the following 'Discount Scheme' Members - Email your Company name, discount/offer, telephone number and/or Website address to manager@somerset-chamber.co.uk

- Action International Business Coaching
- Amberley Management Recruitment
- Annette Hennessy Translations Ltd
- Coastguard Cottage
- Dial Associates Ltd
- Holiday Inn Taunton
- IBS Vehicle Leasing
- Swain IPS Ltd
- Synergy
- Taunton School Enterprises

.....and for further information on the Members above please visit www.somerset-chamber.co.uk

Leadership & Management

"The South West has a particular skills gap in Leadership & Management"

(Skills in the 21st Century - 07/03)

We offer you an organisational development opportunity worth up to £800 if you have between 10-250 employees within Somerset.

- An opportunity to improve your organisation's leadership & management skills by addressing organisational needs
- Funding to support learning opportunities for your leaders and managers
- Courses, coaching, seminars and professional qualifications
- Organisational development opportunities through:
 - Investors in People Standard Commitment
 - Leadership & Management against The Investors in People Model
 - Beacon Status

Benefits to organisations

- Organisation action plan drawn up with an advisor or an intermediary
- Build leaders and managers from within your organisation
- Targeted leadership and management development to match your business priorities



Eligibility

Organisations:

- Must have between 10 and 250 employees (inclusive)
- Must be autonomous, based in the South West Region
- Must not be a subsidiary of a large company, a franchise or a public sector firm (registered charities and companies limited by guarantee are eligible)
- Only one application per company, although can be combined with other leadership and management initiatives

How Business Link can help

An advisor will guide you on how to:

- Develop an organisational action plan
- Identify appropriate learning solutions for your leaders and managers
- Provide ongoing support to implement the action plan
- Provide an opportunity to assess progress against the planned developments

For further information/application form contact: John Gibson 01823-287642 john.gibson@blsl.co.uk

Environmentally Friendly Computer Recycling

Community Computers..... are a non-profit making organisation, recycling donated computers for community use - saving them from landfill sites.

Do you have a computer you no longer require?

Community Computers is a Microsoft Authorised Refurbisher and all machines are supplied with a fully licensed Windows 98 SE Operating System. Our trained technicians clean and re-program the computers to the high standards required by Microsoft.

Do you need a computer?

They supply these refurbished computers to charities, schools, youth clubs, playgroups and other non-profit organisations for a small charge to cover their operating costs. They are also made available to those on state benefits, pensioners, the disabled and children with learning difficulties.

Monetary donations are gratefully received along with any computer equipment you wish to dispose of.

For further information please call: 01823 442665 or visit www.communitycomputers.org

NEW MEMBERS



It is a happy coincidence that in the last issue of Chamber News, Ken Burrows included a press release entitled "Getting Old" as I write to introduce a new member to the Chamber, **Age Concern Somerset**.

Ken quite rightly highlighted the enormous potential older people offer and the need ensure that this is taken advantage of in the workplace.

Age Concern Somerset is the largest independent charity working for, and with, older people across the whole of Somerset and North Somerset. We have been providing services in Somerset for some 30+ years and, having enlarged our area of benefit in August 2003 to include North Somerset, are in the process of service development in this area.

These areas are, as you know, largely rural with an increasing elderly population which is a real challenge for our organisation. Those aged 60 and over make up 25% of the population and very nearly 15% of the population in Somerset and North Somerset are aged 70+.

The services we provide are wide ranging and are largely sustained by our team of over 360 volunteers. It would be impossible to meet the needs of the many older people in our local communities without their commitment and dedication.

The work of community fundraising is new and is only just beginning to make new partnerships, especially with businesses and with educational institutes to help us raise money for this important work and to enable us to extend our work further in Somerset.

Age Concern Somerset hopes that

through membership of the Somerset Chamber, closer links with businesses will be established to our mutual benefit.

Graham Davies
Age Concern Somerset
www.ageconcernsomerset.org.uk

DAIDO INDUSTRIAL BEARINGS EUROPE LTD

Some of you may know about our previous name "Glacier Metal" which transformed into **Daido** when the Japanese owned shareholder "Daido Metal Japan," within the Federal Mogul group, bought most of the controlling shares three years ago.

One of our speciality product lines is Diesel Engine Bearings and Bushes for the medium speed diesel engine market - which is global, with 50% of our products sent to Europe and 20% to the Far East.

I was lucky enough to visit Japan, earlier in December 2005, and I was struck by the long-term planning and strategy that the mother company provides. The appropriate strategy coupled to proper investment and market niche exploitation lie at the heart of any manufacturing business planning to build successfully for long-term gain.

Belonging to a strong and vibrant network business community is a good way to build on that success and I am really thrilled about developing good working relationships with surrounding businesses inside the Somerset Chamber of Commerce.

Mike Tucker
Factory Manager
www.daidoeurope.com

THE FEBRUARY DIARY

(as previously published)

"Energy" - 8th
"Focus on I.T. Training" - 16th
"Ageism/Disabilities" - 21st

If you have mislaid the information for any of the above events please email:

manager@somerset-chamber.co.uk

Member Features

We would be pleased to feature existing Members from time-to-time especially if you have been doing something special or have won an award.

Perhaps we should also start a website feature called "**Company of the Month**" particularly if you can advise us of any special achievements - for example:

- launching a significant product or service
- winning a substantial new order
- acquiring another company (or being acquired by another company!)
- or, for example, supporting young people in enterprise or character development
- perhaps an employee has done something amazing such as fighting crocodiles or climbing Mount Everest!

.....and don't forget.....

if you're a new or existing Member and haven't yet emailed a

Please send your details to kenburrows@somerset-chamber.co.uk and we shall endeavour to include them in our next edition of the Newsletter.

Somerset Achieves Record Recycling Rate

Somerset is getting greener than ever, with news out this week that the County's recycling rate for



Over 87,000 tonnes of waste was sent off for recycling rather than landfill, resulting in a recycling level of 31.57%, well up on last years figure of 27% and significantly higher than the national average of 19%.

Commenting on the good news, Cllr Nigel Woollcombe-Adams, Chair of the Somerset Waste Partnership said: "This is a fabulous achievement and it shows that we are heading in the right direction. Our recycling rate has been going up and up over the past few years and we are amongst the best in the country, thanks to the support that we have received from the Somerset public who have really got behind us by separating and recycling their household waste. We are not resting on our laurels though and we have been introducing new services across Somerset in order to push our level of recycling even further."

As well as thanking the public, Steve Palfrey, Waste Services Group Manager at Somerset County Council paid tribute to the way that the public, the Councils and the waste contractors have worked together in partnership to increase the level of

recycling. "We are experiencing an unprecedented change in waste and recycling, with significant new legislation on waste meaning that we all have to change and recycle more. I am proud to see that Somerset is embracing this change and is at the forefront of providing recycling services that achieve excellent results – as the latest figures prove".

For more information log-on to www.recyclesomerset.info or contact your local council



By 2015 corner shops could be extinct

Traditional corner shops will disappear from the UK by 2015 if Asda, J Sainsbury, Tesco and Morrison's continue to grow at the current rate, a recent MP's report claimed.

A leaked All Party Parliamentary Small Shops Group report said that as the BIG 4 continue to dominate the grocery market, independent wholesalers will have no alternative but to close, in turn, pushing the smaller shops out of business.



According to draft findings the corner shop supply chain collapse would create "food deserts" with "a devastating effect on the health of low earners and the elderly."

Whilst independent stores are currently closing at a rate of 2,000 per annum, Tesco apparently plans to double its own small high street shops to 1,200 over the next 10 years.

Labour MP Jim Dowd, Chairman of the All Party Group, played down the claim that corner shops would disappear completely by 2015 but said the "future prospects for the independent operator is very, very bleak indeed."

The Group's full report (end of January) is likely to receive calls for a renewed Office of Trade Trading investigation of the grocery market.

Energy and the Planet

We hear a lot about energy and the environment on television. We know there are lots of problems but do we feel they are too big for most of us to understand or be able to influence? I went to an 'Energy' conference in Somerset recently and it was very well attended but the vast majority of delegates were from the public sector. Is it only government and their well intentioned quangos that are taking the matter seriously? What is the impact on business and how can we help?

There are two main problems relating to energy, namely cost and impact on the environment. Costs, as we know, have been rising steeply and show no signs of steadying. The effects on the environment are multiple but are mainly due to

emissions causing global warming but there are other worries too.

We do not know the full implications of our impact on the planet and, in fact, we get confusing signals from those who believe that global warming is just a natural cycle and those who believe we are already too late to reverse the man-made trend. The environmental problems relate to emissions such as carbon dioxide and various particulates so the need is to reduce emissions, not simply energy consumption. The well known results of global warming are more extreme weather patterns which can result in flooding and wind damage but there is also an impact on wildlife and vegetation which, in turn, will affect the way we live. It is also suspected that the 50% increase in asthma cases and other allergic diseases every ten years, is largely due to pollution.

The solution to date has been to improve insulation and system efficiencies in order to reduce energy demand, but we clearly need to reduce emissions in other ways too. We also need to reduce our dependence on traditional fossil fuels and diversify to several alternatives. This may include nuclear power generation, wind power, tidal power and bio-fuels.

Somerset appears to be taking the issue seriously with several local companies offering expertise in alternative forms of energy and sustainable construction and the County Council is taking a lead in promoting bio-fuels for vehicles and for property heating. If you want to know more about progress locally and what options are realistically available to you, Somerset4Business will be holding an evening seminar in Bridgwater on 8th February 2006. Somerset4Business is an organisation, which brings together

business groups like the FSB, NFU, CBI & IoD and is managed by Somerset Chamber of Commerce.

For information about this event, Somerset4Business or Somerset Chamber of Commerce please visit www.somerset-chamber.co.uk or www.somerset4business.co.uk or call Ken Burrows on 01823 321231.

Somerset Strategic Partnership

Things happen slowly in the public sector but several issues have progressed recently.

Regional Spatial Strategy – this develops strategy for managing growth and includes aspects such as housing and transport infrastructure and we have felt for some time that the Regional Assembly (SWRA) does not give sufficient recognition to specific issues within Somerset:

Affordable Housing – we now largely agree on required numbers across Somerset but District Councils claim they can only deliver about a quarter of requirements under current planning constraints. This means that Councils cannot meet the government's target to halve homeless numbers and many businesses will continue to have difficulty recruiting certain types of staff, especially younger people, due to a lack of affordable homes.

Roads – procrastination by government and squabbles within the region mean that decisions on projects such as upgrading various sections of the A303 and the A358 between Ilminster and Taunton are being deferred. This is because the Stonehenge section is under review (tunnel solution too expensive) and overall budget across the whole

of the South West is too small. Are we getting our fair share?

Rail – the Great Western franchise (Penzance to Paddington plus South Wales etc.) has just been awarded to First Group and the new South Western franchise (Exeter to Waterloo etc.) will be awarded next year. The line from Bristol to Waterloo via Westbury is under threat of closure and services on the Exeter to Waterloo line (Crewkerne, Yeovil etc.) are likely to be reduced because of contract work in London. We hope to improve the situation by playing the "Olympic" card – links to Weymouth and Bath etc.

Local Transport Plan (roads and public transport in Somerset) – recent performance has moved Somerset up the rankings from "weak" to "fair" and proposals for the next few years appear to have been well-received. However, government rules are complex and it does not necessarily mean more money!

Regional Economic Strategy – we have had difficulty in getting the Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) to understand and accommodate our dispersed small business economy in Somerset. We could lose out because government assumptions are that most development will come from large urban concentrations. We have also had difficulty in getting sufficient recognition for Taunton and Yeovil but we believe that is now resolved.

Broadband – "Connecting Somerset" is progressing well with 98% access and an encouraging 30% take-up by business. We are now planning a longer-term strategy for intelligent business and community applications and thinking about how to raise connection speed using a wireless network.

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Image and Influence – this group was formed to change people's awareness of Somerset:

Promotion of Somerset at CBI conference – this went well.

A library of new Somerset images was launched and these are available via our web site.

Study to assess perceptions of Somerset as a place to do business confirmed several misconceptions mainly due to inadequate knowledge. A plan is now being drawn up to address these issues, including developing a series of case studies to illustrate our diversity and strengths. It is recognised that even local people do not know what we have.

A proposal to sponsor a leg of the Round Britain Cycle Race has been given approval in principal to start in 2007. Some funding will be sought from SWRDA and international media attention will result.

Somerset Economic Strategy – this document is complete and we will focus on limited priority areas to get effective and early results. An Economic Leaders group is being formed to implement strategy and provide a consistent response to business development enquiries.

Planning Response – Following our meeting last year the District Councils are now encouraging Planning Officers to adopt a more positive approach and work in partnership with their respective Economic Development Officers. They are also being encouraged to suggest an informal discussion with business people before they embark on a long and expensive application that may be heading in the wrong direction.

*Ken Burrows
Chairman/Chief Executive*

Chamber to Grow

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development & business support in Somerset. We also work closely with regional organisations such as the Regional Development Agency to reinforce our position in the South West.

A brief outline of some of the things that we have achieved whilst working with the SSP is given in an article on page (?). Some people, especially smaller businesses, have suggested that this work has little impact on them. Well, I think they are wrong. It might not be immediate or obvious in many cases but I can assure you that the Somerset business environment will suffer if we do not command attention at regional level and do not do more to actively promote Somerset as a good place in which to do business.

“I find that Somerset has a surprisingly wide range of interesting businesses that have too low a profile”

Can you tell us about some leading edge companies that would reinforce Somerset's image?

If you can make a positive referral to us on new Members we would be happy to deduct 20% of the new Member's subscription off your subscription at next renewal - Just call us on 01823-321231.

Ken Burrows

“The Forum”

What is it?

The Chamber Forum is just like an Email programme with the exception that you can join in discussions, ask for advice, air your views, customise your Company Profile and even **promote your organisation's activities**. You simply access the Forum via the Internet - 24/7 - and see who else is on-line at any time.

The Business Forum is essentially designed for Somerset businesses to share information and to aid our understanding of the issues and successes they all face. By achieving these objectives we will be able to create a stronger and clearer representation of businesses in Somerset, culminating to a secure future.

With your involvement we will be offering a variety of set discussions within the Forum so each Member can freely discuss and air their views, when it's convenient for them, without the discomfort that public meetings so often breed.

If you wish to learn more about the Forum and its function you can visit the information page on our Website at: www.somerset-chamber.co.uk/forum.htm

Alternatively, you can visit the actual Forum at: <http://somerset-chamber.invisionzone.com>

However, the Forum is not populated with much information at present and will obviously grow as our Members join.

If you wish to join please Email:

- The name of the Forum User;
- Their Email address;
- Their position.

to:

manager@somerset-chamber.co.uk

* * *

Company “Profile Page”

If you wish to consider purchasing a Company Profile Page visit www.somerset-chamber.co.uk/profile_purchase.htm and view a sample by clicking on the link provided on this page.

In order to purchase a Profile Page please send an Email to the above Email address or call: 01823 321231.

Legislative and Regulatory Reform Bill

Commentating on the publication of the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Bill today, David Frost, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce said:

"This Bill could be a major step forward in the drive to reduce the burden of regulation on British business. Complicated and costly regulations are one of the main barriers to business growth, especially for smaller companies. The new measures in this Bill are long overdue.

Businesses will welcome the new risk based approach to regulatory inspections, the reduction in the number inspections and in the number of regulatory agencies. However, it is essential that the new structure does not create bureaucratic super agencies but actually leads to less burdens being placed on employers.

This Bill needs to make a real difference that employers will notice in the day-to-day operation of their business. Our figures show the cost of complying with regulation is still rapidly rising with an extra £38.9bn of regulatory costs added on business since 1998.

Employers will now be looking for the Government to implement its full programme. The Government must set specific targets across all Departments to achieve a NET reduction in the cost of complying with regulation."

Jo Tanner

Tel: 020 7654 5812

Email: j.tanner@britishchambers.org.uk

Cross-Border Tax Reform

The European Commission (EC) is introducing new proposals (via a pilot scheme for 5 years commencing 1st January 2007), with regard

to trade across Europe for small businesses, with simplified corporate tax calculations for all profits according to the tax rules of the home country in which the parent company is incorporated.

The plan was apparently devised after results from the EC's 2004 European tax survey showed that firms engaging in cross-border activity often face higher company tax and VAT costs – for smaller firms in particular.

Director of Economic and Fiscal Policy, Gerhard Huemer from The European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME) said "With the costs of complying with cross-border taxation systems as high as they are, it is little wonder that only 3% of SMEs have operations in states other than their country of origin. Cross-border compliance costs can be up to 2.5% of turnover for small businesses, as opposed to just 0.02% for larger corporations; no small firm can absorb that type of cost."

Huemer said current compliance costs distort the internal market and put small businesses at a major competitive disadvantage. Unlike large firms, he said, SMEs cannot engage in "tax shopping" or locating part of their operations in different jurisdictions that offer more favourable tax conditions.

The scheme would be available to companies with less than 250 members of staff, a turnover of €50 million or less and/or with a balance sheet of €43 million or less.

Eligible firms would volunteer scheme participation by notifying tax administrators within their residence states, who would then inform tax authorities in the home state; it is also dependent on member states agreeing to respect each other's tax systems.

Bank of England

Agent's Summary of Business Conditions

- **Consumer spending** may have picked up a little, but the underlying picture remained subdued.
- Activity continued to edge up in the **housing market**, however, prices were flat across most regions. The market is expected to remain relatively quiet until the usual upturn in interest in the Spring.
- Growth in **exports** continued especially in the Middle East & Eastern Europe. **Imports** also rose, despite weaker demand for consumer goods.
- **Construction** output growth remained lower than a year ago. Some builders slowed the pace of new starts, private demand was mixed and public sector demand remained strong.
- **Business services** growth was robust, particularly in the financial & professional sector.
- The **labour market** softened again with manufacturing firms continuing to lay-off staff and employment unchanged in consumer service firms.
- **Capacity pressures** in manufacturing and service sectors eased. Companies continued adjusting capacity with service sectors possibly increasing capacity quickly in the short-term to deal with increased demand.
- **Pay** showed little signs of upward pressure. Settlements looked likely to be either linked to RPI inflation or set around 3%. The recent increase in the National Minimum Wage had some effect on pay differentials with negligible impact overall.
- Overall, **price inflation** edged lower because intense competition forced manufacturers to contain prices by absorbing cost increases.

December 2005

"Another Award for Blueloop!"

Canadian business integration software specialists, Omni has announced the winners of their "Web Challenge". The competition awarded the three Omni Resellers, Partners or Distributors globally that were most successful at profiling Omni's portfolio of GroupWise, eDirectory, NetWare and Novell Linux Desktop software solutions on their web site. "It is critical for customers to be able to quickly find information on-line about products that can help them successfully leverage their technology investments," said Trevor Poapst, Channel Manager for Omni (www.omni-ts.com/partners/). "We are pleased to work with partners like Blueloop who understand the importance of providing timely information via their web site. As the winner of our Web Challenge, Blueloop continues to demonstrate leadership in using advanced web strategies to support our mutual customers."

Congratulations were offered to the following Web Challenge winners:

- 1st Place: Blueloop, Omni Authorised Partner, UK (www.blueloop.net) and awarded on the following basis:

Mobility promotion and Omni logo featured on home page;

Dedicated Omni product pages, graphics, PPT and brochure downloads;

Link to Omni's site on each Omni product page;

Omni profiled in right margin

(cycles through partner products);

3 Omni related press releases; Authorised Partner logo and write-up in "Partners" section.

- 2nd Place: Protech International, Omni Authorised Partner, Mexico (www.protechlabs.net)
- 3rd Place: Frontéri Network Consulting, Omni Authorised Reseller, Norway (www.fronter.com)

The prizes were awarded 1st place, \$5,000 in Omni software; 2nd place, \$2,500 in Omni software; 3rd place, \$500 in Omni software

"We are delighted and thrilled with the recognition and response received as UK Preferred Resellers for Omni. Blueloop has an engineering talent to support customers with any networking challenges and Omni has the products that customers are looking for" said Jon Gerdes, Managing Director of Blueloop. "We are very keen to provide a strong presence for Omni here in the UK to help leverage the power of GroupWise, NetWare and beyond." See www.blueloop.net

"We would also like to recognise Blueloop in the UK for achieving the Top Mobility Sales in Omni's "Get Mobile!" global promotion" said Trevor Poapst.

Chamber Newsletter Monthly Advertising for Members

- Single column x 5cm (h)
 - £20 (colour - front)
 - £15 (colour - back)
 - £10 (b/w - inside)
- Double column x 5cm (h) or
- Single column x 10cm (h) or
- Banner 18cm x 3cm (h)
 - £30 (colour - front)
 - £22.50 (colour - back)
 - £15 (b/w - inside)
- All prices shown are subject to the addition of VAT
- 10% discount for 12 months
- Other arrangements can be quoted on request

Newsletter Distribution

Email saves time, money and the ENVIRONMENT!

The list of Members opting to receive their Newsletter by Email (instead of by Post) is increasing. If this is your preference and you also wish to help the environment please Email your request to: manager@somerset-chamber.co.uk NOW!

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