

PROMOTING HARROGATE FOR BUSINESS!

The Harrogate Chamber of Trade & Commerce has re-elected **Simon Cotton, General Manager of the Cedar Court Hotel**, as **President** with Ian Bergel, Sandra Doherty and Peter Jesper as Vice-Presidents.

In his President's Report Simon Cotton said that despite continued difficult economic times, the Harrogate Chamber of Trade and Commerce can yet again proudly report that it is stronger still. The Chamber's level of membership has continued to grow over the past year with over 50 new members, and whilst many Chambers across the country have reported financial difficulties, you will hear tonight that our financial position is of a very healthy one. Our standing in the community and status as the only true voice for business in Harrogate are better than they have ever been, and we continue to forge ever closer working relationships with our local councils and politicians who regularly turn to the Chamber for advice on business matters. Our ever increasing attendance at our monthly meetings is, I believe, due to the interesting topics we lay on, and for the quality of speakers we provide, including in the past year, Andrew Jones MP who made his first public address to the business community as the new Member of Parliament for Harrogate & Knaresborough at a sell out open house Chamber meeting last November. Additionally, I am grateful to Harrogate Borough Council's Chief Exec Wallace Sampson for making time to speak with us for the second time in 6 months. We have also enjoyed a presentation from Paul Fullerton, Y&H Agent for the Bank of England, which again attracted a full house at an open meeting.

I would just like to summarise some of the key highlights of our achievements and activities in the 2010/11 calendar. Firstly, I can report that our most recent event, and the largest that we currently undertake, the 7th Yorkshire Business Market, was once again a sell out event earlier this month with initial feedback from exhibitors and visitors alike being highly complementary of the day's organisation and of the results people have gained from it. I opened the Business Market stating that the Chamber was again reviewing how, when and even where we hold this successful event in the future so we ensure it continues its meteoric rise in just seven short years to being 'the' largest business-to-business event in the region; and we do not stop in ensuring this continues. We are listening to the feedback and considering options for the introduction of a second annual business market in the autumn; the introduction of a possible lunch or dinner to coincide with the event, and many other ideas.

The Chamber has continued to use most of the modest surpluses raised by YBM to support other town initiatives and awards such as the Ackrills Media Group Business Awards, Harrogate International Festival, Harrogate at Christmas and the Hospitality & Tourism Awards. Last year we added Harrogate in Bloom to our list for financial support. The Chamber however does not only offer financial support, we have also been instrumental in driving the co-ordination of projects like the Harrogate at Christmas initiative which I am delighted to say reported its best ever year in 'lighting up the town' in 2010.

Harrogate Chamber of Trade and Commerce has long had an association with the traffic and transport needs of the town and this year has seen some pretty impressive results. When we heard that the airport bus service was going to be cancelled due to budget cuts, meetings were convened with County Councillors and bus operators alike. Not only has the service been saved, but actually improved to offer a far more frequent service than before, all of which is important in delivering international visitors to our town for conferences and exhibitions. However, by far our biggest success of the year has to be the

results of our 'Why Harrogate Trains' project, which brought together the many reasons for having a daily direct train service from London. This case was taken to the highest levels and the Harrogate Chamber of Trade and Commerce was publicly thanked by the Minister for Transport in the House of Commons.. This however is only one step of what we truly desire, which is to have a more than once a day service, and also improved local trains for the future. So I would urge you all to support these new direct London services, as unless this town makes good use of such services we will not get what we need in future.

The year ahead will again be a busy one for this Chamber as we seek out new opportunities to improve daily life for the business community of the town. Current initiatives that we are working on which we hope to bring to fruition include the improvements to motorway signage to Harrogate from the A1(M); and also, pedestrian signage within the town to assist our thousands of business and leisure tourists who come to Harrogate each year and help drive our local economy. We are constantly lobbying and working with Leeds/Bradford Airport to try and find ways of re-introducing direct LBA to London flights. We will continue our ongoing battle over the planning consent of the proposed new Tesco store.

One of the other major focuses of effort in the last 12 months has been that to try and establish a Harrogate Convention Bureau, which has unfortunately hit a number of frustrations in not being able to move forward. However I am very grateful to Mark Lancaster in particular who has led this project for the enormous amount of time and effort put into it. I do hope that following recent meetings, and now with a new leader of the council and the local elections out of the way, that this important project can once again be picked up and that it may soon be realised – perhaps as a key element in a DMO.

In conclusion the President said his most sincere thanks go to a man, without whom the Harrogate Chamber of Trade & Commerce would not be what it is today. The majority of the successes and projects I have talked about tonight are largely down to the sheer hard work and commitment of Brian Dunsby, our Chief Executive who has a determination to make things happen and get results like no other person I know. Thank you Brian, Beryl, Maggie and the rest of the Perlex Team..

AGM ELECTION RESULTS

The AGM elected two new Vice-Presidents **Ian Bergel** of Auditel and **Sandra Doherty** of Alexa House. Also re-elected as a Vice-President was **Peter Jesper** of The Jespers Office. **Neil Goodrum** of McCormicks Solicitors was re-elected as Hon Legal Adviser, **Michael Best** of David Newton & Co was re-elected as Hon Treasurer and **Brian Dunsby** continues as Chief Executive and Hon Secretary. *(Personal profiles overleaf)*

The AGM elected the following five members to fill vacancies on the Chamber Management Group:-

Marian Farrar	St Aidan's C of E High School	11-18 Comprehensive Education
Steve Pepper	Steve Pepper Training Associates	H& S Training
Melissa Watson	Ashdale Hotels	Hotel Group
Martin Wilks	Purple Sage Hospitality Consultancy	Consultant
Dave Williams	Blue Line Taxis Ltd	Taxis & Private Hire

They join the four current members who are continuing the remainder of their terms of office:-

Brian Coghlan	RBS NatWest Bank	Banking & financial support
Christine Norton	Saint Michael's Hospice	Care Home
Davinder Pabial	Evans Easyspace	Business Centre
Steve Phillip	Linked2Success	Consultant

A Certificates of Appreciation was presented to former Vice-President Stuart Pearson, who was standing down for family reasons after five years' service to Harrogate Chamber.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES TO: - Simon Cotton, President (01423-533709 or 07702 548937)
or to: **Brian Dunsby**, Chief Executive (01423-879208 or 07836 537512) *(Photos on request)*

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

Harrogate Chamber of Trade & Commerce has been established for over 100 years to promote business activity in the area. The Chamber keeps members informed of significant local issues and developments, lobbies national and local government and other local service providers for improved conditions and services and thus represents and furthers the interests of the business community.

Simon Cotton, the elected President, has been General Manager of Cedar Court Hotel since 2004, having previously spent almost 17 years working for Holiday Inn and Queens Moat Houses in a number of locations, mostly within the sales and marketing element of the business. Simon is an active member and Past Chairman of Destination Harrogate, the association of the Town's leading hotels, for whom he created and organised the Harrogate Hospitality & Tourism Awards.

Ian Bergel, elected as a new Vice-President, qualified as a Chartered Management Accountant in 1975 (ACMA) and spent 30 years in a variety of senior financial roles in industry with Waddington's, Norton Opax, McCorquodale, Bowater/Rexam and latterly Scientific Games International. Experience gained in businesses with turnover of £2m and 20 staff to businesses with £100m turnover and 800 staff. Self-employed (with Auditel) for the last four years working with a variety of clients in helping to save money by reducing their overhead costs. Ian is also Treasurer/Trustee of Disability Action Yorkshire.

Sandra Doherty, elected as a new Vice President, has been the owner of Alexa House Guesthouse on Ripon Road since 2006, having previously run a Building Services Consultancy Partnership and then worked as a business manager for over 30 years in several small businesses in both South and West Yorkshire. Sandra is also Chair of Accommodation Harrogate, the association of small hotels and Guesthouses in Harrogate and a Private Sector Board Member for Welcome to Yorkshire.

Peter Jesper, re-elected as a Vice President, is Managing Director of the Jespers Group, a 4th generation family concern running The Jespers OFFICE, a B2B office products and business furniture specialist distributing to over 1,400 regular Yorkshire customers from their warehouse and showroom on Ripon Road, plus Jespers of Harrogate, the quality retail stationers in Oxford Street. Peter's ethos is to provide exceptional service and value to customers and to support local business at every opportunity.

Michael Best, Hon. Treasurer, is a chartered certified accountant working work for David Newton & Co., who work proactively with business owners to develop their businesses whilst keeping tax to a minimum. Part of Michael's responsibility is to develop the Harrogate side of the practice. He was born, educated and accountancy-trained in Harrogate, and was President of Harrogate Junior Chamber in 2002-2003.

Neil Goodrum, Hon Legal Adviser, is a solicitor and partner at McCormicks of 37 East Parade, Harrogate. Neil has worked in most areas of commercial litigation including contract, copyright and professional negligence disputes. His main area of work is employment lawyer within his firm's commercial team. He is active as a mediator in business related disputes.

Brian Dunsby, Chief Executive & Hon Secretary, is Principal of Perlex Associates, who specialise in the management and marketing of trade associations, professional institutes and conferences. Having built up and successfully sold out the Silvaperl horticultural manufacturing business, he was an Adviser for the Small Firms Service and then Chief Executive of the Institute of Business Advisers for 10 years. He has been a Board Member of JIMA, GIMA, ICSB, ISBE & WASME. Perlex have been organising National and International Conferences on Entrepreneurship & Small Business for many years. Brian was honoured with The Queen's Award for Enterprise Promotion in 2008 and with the Ackrill Media Group Lifetime Achievement Award in 2010.