



# REVIEW November 2004

## MEETING DATES

2004  
Wednesday  
1 December

2005  
(Second  
Monday)

10 January

14 February

14 March

11 April

9 May

13 June

## Review of the Chamber Meeting - 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2004

### BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN HARROGATE

- Twelve reasons why it is good to do business in Harrogate
- Eleven key issues that inhibit business growth in Harrogate
- Need for more focussed education and training courses on skills gaps
- Suggested "Business Forum" for Harrogate with wide representation

### TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT UPDATE

- Concern with ATKINS Consultants' methodology and conclusions
- Urgent action needed to address the traffic problems of Harrogate
- More people using buses would relieve congestion at peak times
- Harrogate businesses should be encouraged to devise travel plans

### OTHER NEWS FOR MEMBERS

- Town Centre directional signage under scrutiny from a visitor's viewpoint
- Chamber Group visit to Menwith Hill was very popular. Repeat in January
- New "money laundering scam" warning – do not pay £75 per employee!
- Business Safari 4 – booking is essential for this very popular evening

## Future Meetings 2004 & 2005

**Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> December: The Harrogate Club, Victoria Avenue**

***Business Networking Safari 4*** – a chance to promote your products or services.

Members talk freely about their own business activities in small informal groups  
- with FREE Christmas Buffet (*Pre-booked Chamber Members and invited guests only*)

**Monday, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2005 - Cedar Court Hotel, York Place**

**First meeting on the new day of the month. Technical Presentation to be advised.**

**Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> February 2005 - White Hart Hotel, Cold Bath Road**

**Members' Update - Topic to be advised**

## PROMOTING HARROGATE BUSINESS

Harrogate Chamber of Trade & Commerce, PO Box 8, Harrogate, HG2 8XB

Tel: 01423 879208 Fax: 01423 870025 E-mail: [info@harrogatechamber.org](mailto:info@harrogatechamber.org) Website: [harrogatechamber.org](http://harrogatechamber.org)

## CHAMBER NEWS

### Thanks to Brian Haines !

President, Peter Armitage and the Secretariat would like to thank Vice-President, Brian Haines, for stepping in at the last minute to Chair the meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> November due to the unavoidable absence of the President and Secretariat for this month's meeting.

Peter, unfortunately, had a heavy workload and the Secretariat (Perlex Associates) were managing the ISBA (Institute for Small Business Affairs) National Conference in Newcastle-Gateshead. Several Chamber members assisted with many aspects of the Conference's organisation - more next month.

### Chamber Visit to Menwith Hill

On a windy October evening a party of over 25 Chamber members and their guests gathered at the main entrance of Menwith Hill Base, unperturbed by the gale force wind, driving rain and armed Police!

Once all present had been accounted for, RAF Menwith Hill's Community Relations Adviser, Angela Marquis, led the cars in convoy across the base to one of the Radome operation rooms. Members were split into two groups; one group made an assault on the adjoining Radome - climbing up to inspect the enclosed satellite dish, whilst the other group remained in the operations room to have the masses of computer equipment explained in detail.

Once fully "enlightened" the groups swapped so everyone then had a very clear (!) idea of how the equipment was operated and what it does!! Did you know that the satellite station from which the signal is received is 24,000 miles away in space?

Following this intense briefing, the Chamber party was escorted across the base to the Club, where a delicious three course hot and cold buffet was laid on and several Menwith Hill personnel joined us.

The dinner was hosted by the Commanding Officer of Menwith Hill Station, Colonel Charles Gill, US Air Force and Squadron Leader, Alf Garnett the RAF Commander, who both gave short presentations after dinner and answered questions from members.

The second visit to Menwith will take place in January. Members who have already sent in their booking will be contacted by e-mail shortly with more details.

### Money Laundering Scam

Trading Standards are warning businesses to be aware of a new scam relating to the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and the Money Laundering Regulations 2003. A number of businesses in North Yorkshire have received what purports to be an official letter from the **Anti-Money Laundering Support Team**, Lyme House, 98 Plane Tree Drive, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1E 4ES. The letter implies that if businesses do not register they may face investigation into laundering of money and the scheme asks businesses to register at

the rate of £75 an employee. The package also includes a reference to the National Crime Intelligence Service, which implies that NCIS is somehow involved in the scheme, which is not the case. **Businesses are warned not to respond and members should fax or post to the Chamber any such letters received.**

## FOCUS GROUPS

### Business Development + Promoting Harrogate

These two focus groups were merged at this meeting for optimum effect and they "brainstormed" several issues detailed below:-

Why it's **good** to do business in Harrogate:

- Wealthy area
- Tourist trade
- Conference Centre
- Diversity of business ("CHAMPIONS" for the Town/District)
- Availability of facilities
- Strong Harrogate "brand"
- Quality of life
- Broadband availability
- Healthy competition
- Good schools (and choice)
- "Golden Triangle" (Leeds-York-Harrogate) Leeds particularly booming
- Specialist local shops and good mix

**Key issues** relating to doing business in Harrogate:

- Perception of wealth limits availability of grants & other support
- Availability of labour force is limited
- Shortage of (some) skills, e.g.  
Chefs; Apple Macintosh IT specialists;  
Accountants at entry level; Apprentices
- Lack of affordable housing (= commuting)
- Fragmentation of business support bodies:  
Chamber; BNI; IoD; Business Link

Hence **no collective voice** for the town's businesses

- Insularity re sharing best practice
- Transport infrastructure (ref other focus group)
- High rents for business premises
- Major national companies driving out independents (esp. retailers)
- Council not fully supportive
- Difficulty in understanding funding options

**Resolution/Ideas:**

- More focused courses (schools & colleges) to address skills gaps locally and regionally
- "Business Forum for Harrogate", with representation from Chamber, IoD, BNI and Business Link (if appropriate).

Use relationship between Leeds Chamber and Leeds Business Link as benchmark.

## **Traffic & Transport**

Robert Whiteley chaired the Traffic & Transport Focus Group's breakout table where the following discussions ensued:-

The recent report by Atkins Transport Consultants to the NYCC Transport Committee decided not to take forward to public consultation some of the solutions proposed by the Chamber's Traffic & Transport Study Group, namely:

- The delaying of school opening hours
- Inner gyratory system
- Outer gyratory system

Disappointment with the consultants' methodology and conclusions had been expressed at the NYCC Area Committee Meeting by Brian Dunsby, and a meeting was planned with Jon Tindall from the consultants to discuss the concerns that had been raised.

However, there was recognition amongst the attendees that some urgent action was needed to address the traffic problems of Harrogate. Whilst recommendations about medium and long term measures were welcome, there needed to be some immediate action before the town's streets ground to a halt.

David Alexander of Harrogate & District Travel posed the question "What can be done in to improve things within 12 months?" which then became the focus of discussions.

David felt that attitudes towards using the car needed to be looked at and that a culture change was required. A substantial proportion of car journeys made in and around Harrogate were short, and could be considered non-essential. Getting people undertaking these journeys out of their cars and onto alternative modes of transport would relieve pressure for essential and business travel.

The introduction of Yellow buses by Harrogate & District Travel had already led to a significant increase in usage of school buses, and this was a scheme which ought to be encouraged and further expanded.

The "36" bus route had been successful in generating extra passengers on the Ripon to Leeds route thanks to a large extent to its successful marketing as a "quality" product. (12% increase during the first 6 months). There needed to be every inducement to get people back on the buses.

It not only had to be easy for people to use buses: well publicised timetables and fares / sheltered stops / quality, easily accessible buses, but the message had to be got across that people who did not see them as user friendly or right for them should give them a go.

A possible role for the Chamber was to encourage the Harrogate business community to conduct travel surveys amongst their employees and devise travel plans as schools were being encouraged to do.

Robert Whiteley asked whether David Alexander felt that the proliferation of traffic lights was a hindrance to the bus service. David felt that wherever there were pedestrians and traffic together there were inevitable conflicts between pedestrian safety and traffic flow. Traffic lights had become a necessary evil.

Robert Whiteley found it ironic that the measures taken for the protection of pedestrians now seemed to be turning full circle as an experiment in Kensington involved the removal of street furniture, signage, and other traffic calming measures.

## **A novel idea?**

Norman Abbott who was attending the Chamber meeting as a guest, had some novel ideas to improve traffic flow, which involve the conversion of under-used railway lines to pedestrian free transport routes.

He said that heavy duty road vehicles exist in many specialised types, not matched by rolling stock. As the Harrogate rail route passes through several business areas as well as the centre, Norman proposed that rail track should be upgraded to accommodate drive-on/drive-off road vehicles. This would give a no overtaking, pedestrian free, highway through the town.

He suggested that a range of off-line pick up sites would add passenger convenience and reduce congestion in the town centre.

Norman has also written several letters about the unnecessary wasteful spending, for example:

- Seven control lights on the Grimbald Bridge, Knaresborough, adjacent to the Lido
- Station Parade/Victoria Avenue Junction barrier
- Excess number of hazard/ traffic calming signs
- Duchy mini roundabouts which can be dangerous on a dark wet night. The headlights of oncoming cars make it difficult to see the roundabout ahead.

## **Town Centre**

Group Leader, Granville Simpson, reported on the current position on improving the signage in the town centre.

He said despite much improved town centre directional signage over the past two years or so, there are a number of areas that could do with looking at again.

A town centre survey has been carried out and sites have been identified that would benefit from either updating existing signage, or from new signs.

The approach in identifying these areas was to look at the main points of entry for visitors, i.e. Bus/Railway Stations and Main Car Parks.

A detailed analysis will be presented to Chamber members for comment prior to approaching the local authorities.

Any suggestions to Granville Simpson on Tel: 566718.

# DISABILITY ACT

## Do you comply?

From 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004, service providers became obliged to make reasonable physical adjustments to their premises in order to comply with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). You are a service provider if you or your business is concerned with the provision of goods, services or facilities to the public or a section of the public.

There is no hard and fast answer to the question, "What constitutes 'reasonable' physical adjustments?" However, the DDC does provide a **list of factors** to be taken into consideration:-

- How effective will making a particular change be in overcoming the difficulty that disabled customers face when accessing your services?
- How practical is it for the service provider to make the change?
- How expensive would it be to make the change?
- How much would making the change disrupt the business?
- What are the financial and other resources of the service provider?
- Is it possible for the service provider to get financial or other assistance in regards to making a change?

While you may need to consult an access auditor and/or solicitor in order to gain a definitive answer to what may be reasonably required under the DDA, there are nonetheless **many practical steps** that you can take in order to comply with the DDA. These include:

- Clear paths and other routes to your premises of obstacles and consider making them more even and less slippery.
- Consider having better external lighting to your premises so that customers can find their way more easily.
- Try to improve car parking for disabled customers either through wider parking bays, specific disabled bays or allowing disabled customers to use staff car parks.
- Preferably install a permanent ramp, either externally or just inside your premises. If this is impractical then consider using a good quality temporary ramp.
- Consider installing some form of entry system. Call bells or entry phones can be relatively inexpensive to install and can provide a useful method of allowing your staff to assist disabled customers to gain access.

- If the side or rear access has a more level access, consider making this the main entrance for everyone, or an alternative accessible entrance for wheelchair users and others with a mobility disability.
- **If it proves not feasible to make physical alternations to your premises, then there are still ways of assisting disabled customers.** These include instructing staff to politely enquire if a disabled customer needs assistance to get into the premises and such initiatives as a home delivery service. It should always be made easy and staff should always be encouraged to communicate effectively with disabled customers.
- Consider making signs easier to read, use different colours effectively, don't use glazed panels. Offer staff assistance to escort visually impaired customers around your premises.

Some service providers will find that they have already implemented some of these ideas and, if they have not, they may be able to do so at little or no cost.

Above all, when considering these practical pointers the overriding principle to bear in mind is that disabled customers should be able to receive goods and services in just the same way as customers that are not disabled.

At the end of the day, failure to comply with the law will not lead to prosecution by the authorities. However, **you will open yourself up to cases being brought against you by individuals or action groups** often supported by the Disability Rights Commission for break of statutory duty, for which damages have been awarded for injury to feelings and/or the Courts have insisted the required adjustments are made.

This and the adverse publicity is not something you want to court and the Disability Rights Commission is already looking into cases where people with disabilities have not had access to services.

*(Courtesy: Philippa Aldrich & Ali Dewji, Fox Williams Solicitors, London.)*

**Editor's Note:** This Chamber has previously published details of various websites with useful information on this subject. **If you feel it would be helpful to have a future Members' Update meeting on this theme please contact the Secretariat.** Several of our members have expertise in the various aspects of DDA compliance and would be pleased to share this with you either publicly or privately.

Harrogate Chamber of Trade & Commerce, PO Box 8, Harrogate, HG2 8XB

Tel: 01423 879208 Fax: 01423 870025 E-mail: [info@harrogatechamber.org](mailto:info@harrogatechamber.org) Website: [harrogatechamber.org](http://harrogatechamber.org)

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