



MEETING
DATES
2006

REVIEW

February
2006

Review of Chamber Meeting + News Update

HARROGATE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

- New Director Stuart Quin explains the economic benefits & constraints on HIC
- Business & leisure tourism support around 7,000 jobs in Harrogate District
- High level of long term conference bookings – particularly by Associations
- Over £40 million capital investment needed in HIC over the next ten years

HARROGATE DISTRICT NEWS

- Harrogate District Strategic Partnership re-focussed to include the Economy
- Harrogate Business Awards well supported - book your place for the Dinner
- County Council Rates to go up by 4.9% - the maximum permitted by Govt.
- Chamber makes a formal complaint about car parking policy and practice

SCAM WARNINGS

- Barclays Bank customers have been targeted by a new round of e-mail scams
- e-Bay e-mails are tempting members to reveal their personal banking details
- New VISA/MasterCard Credit Card Telephone scam sounds very genuine
- OFT Scam's Awareness Campaign estimates 28 million consumers targeted

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

- NEW Networking Dinners – starting on Friday 24th February at The Old Swan
- FINAL CALL for District-wide shared mailing to almost 4,000 local businesses
- Harrogate 2006 Business Market planned for Monday 8th May – book early!
- Membership Renewals due on 1st April. Please send POs and notify changes

Future Meetings

Monday 13th March, 18.00 – White Hart Hotel, Cold Bath Road, Harrogate
Business Networking Safari No 7 – members only

Monday 10th April, 18.15 – Cedar Court Hotel, Park Parade, Harrogate
Harrogate Integrated Traffic & Transport Study
Joint Presentation of issues and proposals by
North Yorkshire County Council and Atkins Consultants.

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 Website: harrogatechamber.org

13 March

10 April

8 May
Business
Market
& AGM

12 June

10 July

14 August

11 September

9 October

13 November

11 December

Harrogate International Centre

Stuart Quin, the new Director of Harrogate International Centre (HIC) gave a presentation on the impact of business and leisure tourism on the local economy, the role of HIC in the UK and European market and the Council's policy towards business and leisure tourism.

Local Economic Impact

Business tourism supports around 5,000 jobs out of a total of about 7,000 devoted to tourism as a whole. In the Harrogate District there are around 2,500 approved hotel bedrooms, with the majority in the town itself. The number of restaurants in Harrogate is above average, due to the number of visitors that the Conferences bring in. Other sectors involved are transport, media and PR. At one time during the Gift Fair there were around 1,000 exhibition contractors on site.

Harrogate is in a heritage environment and has around 200 listed buildings in the conservation area including hotels, guest houses and restaurants. This is part of Harrogate's key character along with the parks and gardens. Without the revenue brought in by visitors to the town it would be much more difficult for the District Council to maintain the high quality of these areas.

New Business Development

Harrogate shows a strong growth in new business formation and it is felt that a lot of this is business tourism related. It is estimated around 400 businesses owe their living to a greater or lesser extent to conferences and exhibitions in town.

Business Confidence

There is a high level of long term conference bookings, some as far ahead as 2011. This information is conveyed to the hotels, who can plan ahead with some confidence about the future of their businesses.

In 2004 the visitor numbers to the district were around 3.5 million, with just over 10% being business visitors to Harrogate. The business visitors are very important to the economy as they spend significantly more per capita more than the leisure visitors.

HIC's role in the UK/European Market

HIC is one of the UK's largest venues with a 2,000 seat auditorium, 13 breakout rooms, 16,500 square metres of dedicated exhibition space and 440 car parking spaces. The core business for the HIC is trade fairs, public shows and association conferences along with corporate events, entertainment, community and charity events.

The main competitors are in Edinburgh, Birmingham, Bournemouth, London and Manchester.

Council Policy on Tourism

Support for tourism has always been seen as a key policy issue by the Council with the conference business a core part of this. Holiday tourism across the District is also supported, with an increasing focus on the rural areas in Harrogate District.

Harrogate Borough Council is currently looking to develop a partnership with Craven District Council, Richmondshire District Council and the Dales National

Park to market '**Harrogate and the Dales**' as an entity. This partnership and 'brand' is likely to develop over the next two to three years.

The Council's policy is that any surplus generated by HIC annually is ploughed back into the Centre to maintain and update the buildings, with the Council only taking the capital charge.

What does the future hold?

There will certainly be more competition in the UK and European markets and HIC will have to deal with issues such as, labour shortages, transport problems, increasing leisure time and global influences, including an increasing policy framework on green issues.

HIC's emerging strategy

Sustain core business, increase marketing profile, secure necessary investment in facilities, increase turnover and improve surplus, work more closely with local partners, increase exposure to corporate market and increase entertainment.

Issues to be faced

Capital investment in excess of £40 million is likely to be needed over the next 10 years - –and at least £20 million will have to be found through grant or other national or regional funding support.

Need to build more on Harrogate's key strengths: heritage environment; social scene; friendly & helpful staff; value for money.

Contact the Secretariat for a copy of Stuart Quin's comprehensive PowerPoint presentation on HIC.

Question Time

Chamber President, Brian Haines, asked what progress had been made with the **Royal Hall**.

Stuart said the contract was about to be let for the restoration works on the Royal Hall. It is hoped the work will be completed by the summer of 2007. The venue will still be used for some conferences, but not for exhibitions due to the risk of damage to the fabric of the building. Stuart expects it will be attractive for corporate events and will be used increasingly for entertainment events. Importantly, the Hall will be available for community groups at a discounted rate and will be opened up for informal free visitor access.

Brian Haines also asked what Stuart felt was the **threat from Leeds** following publicity that they were expected to encroach on the conference business currently enjoyed by Harrogate.

Stuart's personal view was that he expected Leeds to build an Arena to compete with Sheffield or Manchester, etc. for large events, rather than a new Conference Centre.

HIC have made strong representations to Leeds City Council and Yorkshire Forward with the result that Yorkshire Forward have indicated they would not support any new venue in Leeds which competed with Harrogate, i.e. Harrogate's conference facilities would be Leeds City Region's 'Conference Centre'.

Ackrills Business Awards

Chamber President, Brian Haines, joined the judging panel for the **Best Small Company of the Year Award** which Harrogate Chamber is sponsoring. They have narrowed down the 33 companies entered to just six finalists who will each make a presentation to the panel before the winner is decided.

The **Gala Awards Dinner** when the winners will be announced is on **Thursday, 30th March at the Majestic Hotel**. It is hoped to arrange for a table of Chamber Members to sit together. If you are planning to join the table then please inform the Secretariat, but tickets should be booked (at £40 each) via the Ackrills Business Awards website: www.harrogatetoday.co.uk (follow the Business Awards link)

Harrogate District Strategic Partnership re-structuring

Harrogate Chamber acts as the representative of the Economic Development Forum on Harrogate District Strategic Partnership (HDSP). This involves representatives of many different bodies who provide services to the community of Harrogate & District.

The HDSP is a key route to obtain more government funding for the area. It is now being re-focused in the direction of **Local Area Agreements** for the whole of North Yorkshire, needed to achieve extra funding.

Chief Executive, Brian Dunsby, attended a meeting of the County Partnership for North Yorkshire, which will have teams of people looking after the following areas of interest or "themes":-

- Economy & Enterprise
- Children & Young People
- Health Improvement
- Vulnerable & Older People
- Safer & Stronger Communities

These five groups will bring together organisations like the care agencies, police and fire services, etc. with the aim of harnessing the resources of the participants of the Partnerships in the interests of the community.

Brian Dunsby was asked to lead the new HDSP theme group on **Economy & Enterprise**, which is an topic that the Chamber has emphasised the importance of for a long time. This means that the 'Voice of Business' will now be at the heart of the HDSP, which is what the Chamber set out to achieve after last year's AGM.

This is a great step forward for the business community in the area and a useful platform for the Chamber to voice the opinions of its members.

If you have any matters you would like to be raised at these meetings please pass on your ideas and feelings to the President or Secretariat.

Granville Simpson of The Rocking Horse said we should emphasise what Harrogate offers to Conference Delegates, as opposed to say, Manchester; for example the **unusual shops** and **variety of restaurants**. This is linked to the lack of good signage in the town centre.

Stuart agreed and said there was a leaflet publicising the array of shops in the town. However, signage was a concern from both the tourism side and business visitors' perspective and needed to be improved.

Paul Taylor of Spot On said there is no longer a sign in the Hall A lobby **advertising local businesses** and their services. It had been a useful way for companies to advertise their services to exhibitors.

Stuart said that various service directories were circulated to exhibitors prior to their arrival and also publications are available in the Centre. The final decision is with the organiser of each event, who dictates what should appear and where.

Sharon Phillips of Brook Street (UK) Ltd asked what arrangements there were for local businesses to come in to discuss **opportunities for forging partnerships**.

Stuart replied there had to be a formal and 'squeaky clean' method of procurement. He believed the Council had a local purchasing policy to ensure local firms are aware of what they can offer. He also believed that over the coming year tenders would be accessible on the Council website www.harrogate.gov.uk

He suggested the individual budget holders should have available information on what local businesses can do, and he could pass on their information to the relevant department. However, this would not guarantee the business - just make sure the information is available to the right people.

Simon Cotton of Cedar Court Hotel asked about self-promotion, why Centres like HIC do not **promote their own exhibition or show**, as done frequently in Europe, but not in the UK. He asked if there was a reason why, or was it a missed opportunity?

Stuart said he was currently considering some public self-promotion shows at times when it would not interfere with core business.

Chamber Chief Executive, Brian Dunsby said that the **lack of transport links** was a major stumbling block for conference buyers.

Stuart said he wasn't sure what more could be done above the lobbying that was already going on. He agreed it was a problem that had to be overcome. The rolling stock on the **York-Harrogate-Leeds** line needs to be improved and the frequency of the service to and from York needs to be increased. He felt there was no prospect of short-term improvements to local roads.

Brian said the Highways Agency currently had an ongoing public enquiry about completing the motorway between Bramham and Dishforth, but it has no connection to Harrogate. In fact **'Harrogate' has just been taken off the A1 northbound signposts at Wetherby**. People are now being signposted from the south, round to the A59 York-Knaresborough road, following some objections from Wetherby residents!!

North Yorkshire County rates up 4.9%

Chief Executive, Brian Dunsby, recently attended the North Yorkshire Area Committee meeting where the Leader of the Council put forward his medium-term financial strategy, which included a **4.9% increase on the County Council Rates**. This is the absolute maximum that is permitted by the Government without capping. More detailed information is available from the County Council web site: www.northyorks.gov.uk .

Car Parking Problems

Following a recent meeting of the Chamber's Executive Officers with the Economic Development Unit, it was concluded that the only way to make progress on the increasing number of complaints about the Council's current parking policy in Harrogate was to approach the elected Councillors to study the impact of car parking on the town.

The Chamber has now formally written to the Chair of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Commission (EOSC), Councillor Heather Adderley, asking her to consider adding to the Agenda of the EOSC the impact of current **car parking policy** and practice on the economy of Harrogate.

We stressed that the Council's policy was contrary to the best interests of the economic vibrancy of Harrogate Town Centre and the current implementation of the policy is considered to be **unnecessarily harsh and unsympathetic** in its implementation and consideration of appeals. This is giving Harrogate a bad name, resulting in a loss of leisure visitors to the town.

Councillor Adderley has agreed to consider our request, and she needs specific examples of problems encountered. **Please send your experience in writing - either by e-mail or post - to the Secretariat no later than Monday, 13th March**. It is important that this evidence is collected to illustrate our concerns.

Waste Disposal

Members with a particular waste disposal problem, or who have waste that could be recycled, or who have to pay to have re-usable waste removed, or have any suggestions for improvements in business waste removal - **please send examples to the Secretariat**.

The Chamber will incorporate this into a **Business Waste Disposal Action Plan**, which will outline what businesses should do and what the two Councils should do. The current NYCC consultations are focussing mainly on domestic waste and it is important that business waste is not forgotten - after all - businesses pay their rates too!

£6 million investment in Water Treatment

Yorkshire Water recently started work to upgrade the Harlow Hill Water Treatment Works in Harrogate, which is due to be completed by Spring 2007. The £6 million investment involves major improvements to the site's water treatment process.

This project includes a new filtration plant as well as the introduction of new processes to be used in the treatment of water arriving from the nearby reservoirs of Scargill, Beaver Dyke, Leighton and Roundhill.

Yorkshire Water says the work will enhance the quality of water reaching customers' taps and make it taste even better! The work will have little impact on local residents, but there will be some additional traffic movements from deliveries and construction vehicles.

Harlow Hill can produce up to 42 million litres of treated water each day and serves the populations of Harrogate, Knaresborough, Boroughbridge, Pateley Bridge, Ripon and Studforth, near Dishforth.

We have asked Yorkshire Water to arrange a visit for Chamber Members to see what is being done.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Business-to-Business Shared Mailing March 2006 - FINAL CALL!

Please get in touch with the Secretariat **URGENTLY** if you wish to be included in the next **Shared Business Mailing, due for despatch early March**.

This offers an ideal opportunity to promote your business very economically - with no labour cost - to almost 4,000 businesses of all types on our validated database covering Harrogate and District, for **less than half the cost of the postage alone!**

The mailing will carry a brochure and invitation to the **Harrogate 2006 Business Market on 8th May** (see next column) so it will be particularly opportune if you are intending to exhibit.

We have a couple of spaces for inserts left, so **please contact the Secretariat on 01423 879208 or e-mail secretariat@harrogatechamber.org straight away!**

Networking Dinners 2006

Following on from the success of the Chamber Dinner Parties in 2005, we have amended the format slightly and have arranged for **Chamber Networking Dinners** to take place each month on the Friday of the next week following Chamber Meetings.

Please see the enclosed information sheet with full details of the very generous **SPECIAL OFFERS** for Chamber members and their guests.

The Old Swan Hotel is offering a **three-course meal with coffee at £30 for two** in their newly re-furnished **Library Restaurant** on **Friday, 24th February**..

The White Hart Hotel's acclaimed **Hart's Restaurant** is offering a **free bottle of House Wine** per 4 meals on **Friday, 24th March**, with meals from about £14.95 per head.

Please contact the hotels direct - full details on the enclosed information sheet. If you would prefer a private dinner party, but would still like to sample the wonderful menus these restaurants offer, simply indicate this when you book.

Harrogate 2006 Business Market Monday, 8th May from 14.00 - 19.00

The new brochure for the Harrogate 2006 Business Market was previewed at the meeting. A copy is included in this issue of REVIEW; together with an Enquiry Form and a separate Exhibitor Booking Form. Please complete and return these forms to order free tickets to attend or to secure a space, as appropriate.

The brochure will be mailed to 4,000 businesses across the whole of Harrogate District. If you would like a supply of this brochure to send to your personal contacts please get in touch with the Secretariat.

A major feature article will be in the Harrogate Advertiser 'Business Pink' in late March, followed by a special feature supplement on the Business Market late April, with 110,000 copies of each publication going across the District. All exhibitors will be invited by Ackrills to join in this **discounted advertising feature**. Please support!

The event will again be held courtesy of **Pavilions of Harrogate** at the Great Yorkshire Showground. Three sizes of exhibition space will be available to members at the discounted rates of £60, £100 or £150 for the different sizes. Non-members will be permitted to exhibit if space is available at much higher rates.

The event is supported by Harrogate Borough Council Economic Development Unit and by the Harrogate International Centre. The Mayor of Harrogate Councillor Caroline Bayliss will open the event and other VIPs are being invited to visit during the day.

This is a very low-cost promotion opportunity and we need YOUR help to attract as many visitors as possible - the more visitors, the better for business! Please contact the Secretariat for a PDF file or bulk supplies of the brochure and tickets.

Business Networking Safari Monday, 13th March 2006

The seventh Business Networking Safari will take place next month on Monday, 13th March at the White Hart Hotel. Full details and a booking form are included with this REVIEW. **Book by 10th March.**

If you have never attended one of these Safaris, now is the time to start! The mix of companies usually changes at each event, and we hope that members who haven't ventured out on one of the Safaris before will come along this time. Limit of two per Company.

Not only can you make new contacts, but you can find solutions to business problems from other members. Bring a good supply of business cards with you!

The proposed themes for each table at this event are:

- Cash Flow & Credit Control
- Business Insurance issues
- Networking techniques that work
- Literature design and printing
- Novel ways of promoting a business
- Getting the most from the Business Market
- How to improve Business Safaris

This event offers the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with up to 50 other members in one night! PRE-BOOKING IS MANDATORY.

Membership Renewal & Fees 2006/07

Renewals will be sent out this month, as advised in January REVIEW, with subscriptions from 1st April 2006 as follows:

1-10 employees	£78
11-50 employees	£115
50+ employees	£150

For those members who have not returned the 'Updated details for Membership Renewal' form in last month's REVIEW, please return it as soon as possible to ensure your contact details are up-to-date.

We also recommend you check your own entry on the Chamber website at www.harrogatechamber.org to ensure that your company description is current and includes the relevant key words for searches.

MEMBERS' FORUM

Hotel du Vin

We would like to extend our thanks to Hotel du Vin Hotel & Bistro for providing a complimentary room for the February Chamber Meeting. They have a very comfortable lobby lounge and trademark Bistro. Any enquiries to their new Manager Grant Lowe on 01423 - 856800 or www.hotelduvin.com

Harrogate & District Travel

Blazefield Holdings, who own and run Harrogate & District Travel, amongst other transport companies, have recently been **taken over by Transdev plc**, part of the French transport group, Transdev SA.

Blazefield is an established transport operator who is proud to have an excellent record of innovation and top quality service for their customers. They say that it is this excellence which attracted Transdev and the maintenance of these standards will be at the heart of their strategy going forward. Tel: 01423 566061.

Davidson Webber - "a great place to work!"

Commercial law specialist, Davidson Webber LLP, has been hailed as a great place to work by independent assessors who have awarded the company the **Investors in People (IiP)** standard, which was recently presented to them by Phil Willis MP.

Russell Davidson said, "Achieving IiP reinforces our commitment to developing our staff to their full potential and to ensuring that every employee feels valued. As a growing business, it's tremendous that the team has bought into our shared vision as a small but highly experienced practice, which provides a viable alternative to large city firms."

Contact: 01423-727272 or www.davidsonwebber.com

Reduce your petrol costs

Gwen Puckrin of A Tactile Business sent us the details of a website that claims to save between 5p and 10p per litre on petrol and diesel. www.pipelinecard.org asks you to register free of charge to benefit. This is not a scam as it was featured on ITV's 5 o'clock show.

The Chamber has also discovered a good website www.petrolprices.com, which enables you to find your nearest petrol stations with the highest, lowest and average price in the area. Registration is required in order to access their exclusive database showing the cheapest fuel in your Postcode area.

SCAMS & SPAMS

Barclays Bank Phishing E-mail Scam

E-mails from "Barclays" are still doing the rounds, with a slightly amended text requesting you to update your details via a link they provide. As we have said before - **DO NOT CLICK ON THE LINK!** This only gives your information to the fraudsters and the key to your funds.

e-Bay e-mail Scam

There are several variations of "e-Bay" e-mail scams which, if you are an e-Bay member would be tempting to respond to. Usually they are trying to get you to divulge your bank account or PayPal account information. If you receive any of these - whether an e-Bay member or not, send them to spoof@ebay.co.uk

OFT Scams Awareness Month

The Office of Fair Trading's Scams Awareness campaign launched in February is part of an international initiative organised by the International Consumer Protection Enforcement network (ICPEN).

Recent research suggests that an estimated 28 million UK consumers are targeted every year by scams which exploit low-cost, mass-marketing techniques - that is e-mail, text message, post, telephone and internet - to con people out of their money - including deceptive prize draws and lotteries, misleading premium-rate prize promotions, advance fee frauds and bogus work-at-home schemes, amongst others.

Consumer Direct is a telephone and online consumer advice and information service. The **helpline 08454 040506** - offers clear, practical advice, including guidance on suspected scams and you can also report suspected scams. **Please inform the Secretariat if you receive any new scams we have not covered.**

Spanish E-mail Spam

Some members may have recently received a spam e-mail from Global Domains International in Spain. The sender, John Muyris, had selectively transcribed some e-mails from our website, to the concern of some members who brought it to our attention.

We promptly replied to him warning him that he had acted illegally and we would take action if this was repeated. It was not repeated!

Credit Card Phone Scam

Several members have brought to our attention a phone scam where the caller purports to be from your credit card company. They say there have been some unusual transactions on your credit card and then check your card number and other details - which they have - and end the call by asking you to confirm your **security number** (the 3 digit code on the back of your card) - so they can ensure the fraudulent transaction is refunded. This then gives them access to spend freely on your credit card! **Do not fall for it!!**

Premium Rate fraud reporting

If you wish to report problems you have had with any Premium Rate phone or fax scams you can do so to 0800 500 212 or fax 0207 940 7456. The organisation is ICSTIS - Independent Committee for Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services.

Fire Certificate Scam

It has come to the attention of North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service that a local 'fire extinguisher testing' company is threatening to **withdraw Fire Certificates** from premises. This appears to be a lever to get local businesses to spend extra money on unnecessary fire extinguisher provision and maintenance.

NY Fire & Rescue Service would like to clarify that Fire Certificates can only be issued or withdrawn by the local Fire Authority and not all premises require a Fire Certificate. If you are told that you need extra fire extinguishers or extra testing or have concerns contact your local Fire Safety Officer on 01423 504082.

EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

Fairtrade

Would your company consider serving Fairtrade tea and coffee in your staff canteen? (if you have one!)

This local not-for-profit group is being supported by Harrogate Council in its campaign for the district to gain Fairtrade Borough status in association with the Fairtrade Foundation, a registered charity. Fairtrade guarantees a better deal for Third World producers and benefits more than 5m people in 49 countries.

If you want to know more about Fairtrade, contact Malcolm Margolis of the Harrogate Fairtrade Steering Group by phone on 01423 870333 or e-mail harrogateftb@hotmail.co.uk

NHS Charitable Foundation Trust

Harrogate Chamber has been invited by the Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust to attend their inaugural steering group meeting in March.

Granville Simpson has agreed to represent the local business community, but if any member would like to put forward any views or suggestions on the Hospital services they would be most welcome. Please contact Granville direct on 01423 566718 or e-mail him on: tradtoys@therockinghorse.wanadoo.co.uk

FOCUS GROUP UPDATE

Four Focus Groups form the basis of Chamber policy:

Chamber Development
Promoting Harrogate
Town Centre Improvements
Traffic & Transport

The current remit for each group is summarised on our website www.harrogatechamber.org/focusgroups.html

Communication is either informally at our monthly meetings or by e-mail. If you wish to participate in one of the Focus Groups, please contact the Secretariat.

Town Centre Focus Group

Focus Group Leader, Granville Simpson, stressed the urgent need to arrange a meeting with Harrogate Borough Council to go through the finer points of the findings from his Group's detailed studies into what is needed to improve the town centre. Main points are:

1. Directional signage to Tourist Information Office at main visitor entry points
2. Better signposting to Conference complex
3. Indicate where town centre is from whatever entry point you arrive at.
4. Make centre more interesting by indicating "off centre" nooks and crannies where specialist shops will be found.
5. Review pedestrian safety in town centre.
6. Help visitors with limited mobility to understand how far key destinations are by indicating on street signs the distance in metres.
7. Look at current policy with regard to re-instatement of damaged signs.

Any more suggestions to Granville on 01423 566718.

Promoting Harrogate Focus Group

Focus Group Leader, Martin Wilks, reported that there had been two meetings of the **Harrogate District Tourism Forum**. They have been getting together with interested parties like Hotels, Restaurants, Bars, Taxi Companies, Visitor Attractions, etc. - anyone connected with the visitor experience in Harrogate.

They have started an Ambassador Scheme, where front of house staff in various business are trained to be **Ambassadors for Harrogate Tourism**. If you would like your staff to benefit from this unique training, or would like to attend the next Harrogate & District Tourism Forum meeting, please contact Martin Wilks for more information: Tel: 01423 530708 or e-mail: jmartinwilks@aol.com

Traffic & Transport Focus Group

Focus Group Leader, Brian Dunsby, was pleased to report that a major new investment in rolling stock has been announced for the **York-Harrogate-Leeds Line**. This will mean a great improvement on the current

vehicles and will initially carry 3 carriages and ultimately 4 carriages, along with lengthened platforms where needed at a few Stations along the line.

The next target is to have the frequency of the service increased, but this depends upon substantial investment in new signalling. If an additional signal was introduced at the proposed Bilton halt, the level crossing barrier at Starbeck would be down for much shorter periods, easing A59 traffic flow.

Brian commended **GNER's** new Advance Single fares in both First and Standard Classes which offer **great savings** on off-peak services to and from London and Edinburgh and also in between. See www.gner.co.uk

The new 767 **Leeds Bradford International Airport** (LBIA) bus service is now operating well and is a very economical way to get from Harrogate to the Airport, without having to pay the high car parking charges.

At a recent Consultative Committee Meeting at LBIA, Brian complained about the cost of the short term car **parking charges**, which should be greatly reduced as they were extortionate for just dropping or picking up passengers and for one day business travellers.

NEW MEMBERS

Marshall Wooldridge Ltd

(Independent financial advisers)

Mauro Arcidiacono, Financial Consultant
14/16 Ivegate, Yeadon, Leeds, LS19 7RE
Tel: 0113 250 6614 **Fax:** 0113 391 0263
E-mail: mauro@marswool.com
Web site: www.marshallwooldridge.com

One Systems Solutions Ltd *(IT Solutions)*

Laurie Pottage, Business Development Manager
Broadlands Lodge, Main Street,
Little Ouseburn, YO26 9TD
Tel: 08701 606120 **Fax:** 01423 339517
E-mail: lpottage@onesys.co.uk
Web site: www.onesys.co.uk

Premier Financial Solutions (Harrogate) Ltd

(Independent financial adviser)

Mark Homer, Managing Director
18a Mayfield Grove, Harrogate, HG1 5HB
Tel: 01423 565731 **Fax:** 01423 508402
E-mail: mark@premierfsltd.com
Web site: www.premierfsltd.com

Spot On (Disability Action Yorkshire)

(Packaging & fulfilment)

Paul Taylor, Manager
Unit 14A, Hornbeam Park Oval, Harrogate, HG2 8RB
Tel: 01423 855420 **Fax:** 01423 855421
E-mail: paul.taylor@da-y.org.uk
Web site: www.spoton-yorkshire.org.uk

Wordsmith Public Relations Ltd *(Public Relations)*

Amanda Hodges, Director
16 Beechwood Grove, Harrogate, HG2 8QP
Tel: 01423 873800 **Fax:** 01423 873800
E-mail: amanda@wordsmithpr.co.uk
Web site: No website at present

BUSINESS BRIEFINGS

Civil Partnerships Guidance for Firm

Acas has released guidance on how to comply with the Civil Partnership Act 2004, which came into force in the UK on 5 December 2005. The Act gives same sex couples the same rights as married heterosexual couples in terms of employment rights like pensions, parental leave and health insurance options.

Acas is calling for firms to review their current policies, forms and guidance to ensure that they are up to date. They should also inform staff of these changes and remind them **not to discriminate** directly or indirectly on the grounds of actual or perceived sexual orientation. The guidance claims the changes are easy to implement, but highlights the need for sensitivity and discretion when dealing with such matters.

Further details and guidance at:
www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1003

Health & Safety Good Practice

A website has been launched by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, which aims to provide businesses with practical information and examples of **good practice in occupational health** and safety in the workplace. The site has a section tailored for small businesses and offers details of sources of advice on health and safety issues.

Further details at: <http://osha.eu.int/business>

National Occupational Standards directory

The Skills for Business network of Sector Skills Councils has launched a new, **free online directory** which combines all existing National Occupational Standards (NOS) together in one place for the first time. The aim of this website is to enable businesses to improve their performance and develop their staff.

Further details at: www.ukstandards.org

Solution to recruitment problem?

Jobcentre Plus is encouraging small businesses in the process of recruitment to consider employing someone on a 'work trial' scheme. The scheme allows individuals currently receiving benefits to be given a **work trial for up to 15 days**, during which time businesses can assess their work and make a decision about whether to make an offer of employment.

During the trial the potential employee remains on benefits and there is no need to put them onto the payroll until a job offer is made at the end of the trial.

Further details about the scheme at:
www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/jcp/Employers/Helpwithyourrecruitment/Worktrial/index.html

Guide to raising private equity

Small business owners interested in understanding how to raise private equity can take advantage of a free guide published by accountants PKF. Their new '**Raising private equity for growing businesses**' guide provides advice about finding equity partners, successfully completing a financing deal, carrying out management buy-outs and creating an exit strategy.

Download the guide at:
www.pkf.co.uk/web/pkf800.nsf/pagesbyID/ID04BB78DEA3FD49D480256E1D0051F67F?opendocument

Firms urged to prepare for bird flu

Recent warnings have been issued by the United Nations regarding the spread of the human form of the bird flu virus, and businesses are being warned to **prepare for the potential consequences** of a UK pandemic of the bug.

Worst-case scenarios could see UK businesses losing up to half of their workforce through illness or absence, illustrating the importance of having a contingency plan to cope with staff shortages.

Further details at:
www.personneltoday.com/Articles/2006/01/12/33360/UK+employers+totally+unprepared+for+flu+pandemic.htm

E-commerce boom

On the back of positive e-commerce figures recently published, the Interactive Media in Retail Group (IMRG) has published its own findings about the boom in online shopping over Christmas.

IMRG's research shows that **online shopping in the UK has grown by 2,600% since April 2000**, climbing by 50% in the 10 weeks before Christmas last year alone. IMRG Managing Director said, "Consumers have spoken. They want the convenience and choice that online shopping provides."

Further details of IMRG's findings are at:
[www.imrg.org/IMRG/press.nsf/\(httpPressReleases\)6F1B1244681C971E802570FC002EC007](http://www.imrg.org/IMRG/press.nsf/(httpPressReleases)6F1B1244681C971E802570FC002EC007)

Start up support from the British Library

The British Library has launched several new services aimed at start up businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs.

Services include a product novelty service, which uses the Library's patent resources to establish whether a product idea is genuinely original, and a **company profile service**, which provides detailed profiles and lists of businesses by activity, location and size.

Further details in a British Library press release at:
www.bl.uk/news/2005/pressrelease20050627.html

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

Tel: 01423 879208 Fax: 01423 870025 E-mail: info@harrogatechamber.org Website: harrogatechamber.org

Printed by Enid Taylor Ltd, Harrogate Tel: 01423 567764 Fax: 01423 567765 E-mail: info@enidtaylor.co.uk