



REVIEW

July
2008

FUTURE MEETINGS

17.30 for
18.00 start

11 August
Queen's Suite
Harrogate
International
Centre

8 September
Cedar Court
Hotel

13 October
St George Hotel

10 November
Crown Hotel

8 December
Holiday Inn

Review of Chamber Meeting + News Update

HARROGATE-LONDON RAIL SERVICES?

- National Express investing in East Coast Main Line services for real growth
- Proposing 12 direct trains per day Harrogate-London via Leeds and Garforth
- First Group operating Hull Trains identify Harrogate & Knaresborough for growth
- Proposing 8 direct trains per day Harrogate-London via Knaresborough & York
- Both are competing with Grand Central from Bradford for same trains and slots

HARROGATE DISTRICT BUS & RAIL NEWS

- £2.5million investment in No 36 Bus Service brings significant growth – 1.6m/yr
- Real Time Passenger Info on “Next Bus” now on mobile phone and web site
- Northern Rail see substantial growth & improved punctuality on Harrogate Line
- Plans to improve quality and quantity of rolling stock, stations and timetables

MEMBERS' NEWS & EVENTS

- Chamber Officers recently introduced to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
- Promoting Harrogate Group supporting Christmas Lights and new Town Map
- Town Centre Retailers Forum now actively led by David Horth, Victoria Centre.
- Harrogate College merging with Hull College. Do you wish to be consulted?
- Yorkshire Business Market 27th April 2009 – advance booking opens soon

Future Meetings

Monday, 11th August at the Queen's Suite, Harrogate International Centre

Business Networking Safari + Buffet

Chamber members only - limited capacity – pre-booking essential

Attendance FREE for one representative per company; £10 for second representative.

Monday, 8th September, Cedar Court Hotel, Park Parade, Harrogate

Charity Evening - benefits for local businesses

Presentations by four Chamber Members on how being involved with local Charities can bring benefits to your company and your employees - as well as to the Charity

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

HARROGATE TRANSPORT FUTURE BUS & RAIL LINKS

Transdev Blazefield Ltd - Harrogate & District Travel

David Alexander, Managing Director of Transdev Blazefield Ltd, parent company of Harrogate & District Travel outlined the worldwide services offered by the Group and the local services in and around Harrogate.

The Transdev Group is the fourth largest private operator of local public transport systems in Europe with operations in nine countries in Europe and worldwide, offering multimodal public transport carrying more than 1.2 billion passengers every year on their 20,000 vehicles. They have a reputation for forming very strong partnerships with local authorities.

Transdev is a specialist and world leader in light rail, operating more than 100 metro vehicles across two networks and 1000 trams across 12 different networks.

In the UK Transdev operates a wide range of services including buses and trams - about £200million turnover.

TRANSDEV HARROGATE

Statistics:

- Vehicles - 73 (all fully accessible)
- Staff - 186 (cleaning/engineer 20)
- Average Fleet Age 5.5 years (inc 15 school buses)
- Turnover - £8.5 million (£116,439 per bus)

Staff:

- 90% Drivers - Institute of Advanced Motorist
- 100% CRB Checks / Drivers Licence Screening
- Staff Training Initiatives
- Staff Turnover 8%
- Staff Absence 4.8%

Investment:

Since 1999 Transdev Blazefield have invested £12.5 million to improve their services including £2 million on improving Harrogate and Knaresborough Bus stations and £0.4 million on the Real-Time Passenger Information service. Each year, an average of £225 per £1,000 of turnover is reinvested into the business.

Local Authority Support:

- Bus Stop / Shelter upgrade programs
- Bus Station development grant
- Appreciation of 'bus' importance
- 'Quality' without the contract
- Consistent, Informed Proactive Relationship

Annual Customer Journeys:

Since 1999 there has been significant growth in customers using buses in Harrogate and Knaresborough, with 400,000 extra journeys a year with a notable increase in leisure travel at weekends.

The No.36 Ripon - Harrogate - Leeds route has seen significant growth from 800,000 to 1.6 million journeys a year. This follows £2.5 million investment in the buses on this route including improving the travelling environment by introducing comfortable leather seats and real time passenger information.

This was the first service of its kind in the UK and is now being copied by other bus companies around the country.

Real Time Passenger Information:

The Real Time Passenger Information system is essentially a satellite tracking system which helps with service management and reliability monitoring. Most importantly customers can easily find when the next bus will arrive either by SMS text message, from signage at key bus stops and stations and from their website.

Another important new element that has been successfully piloted in Harrogate is Traffic Signal Priority. This will change traffic lights to green for buses running late. It is hoped to expand this on the A59 route in around six months' time.

David concluded by saying Harrogate & District Travel still needs more priorities, which they are working on. A greater 'Political Will' is required to help manage traffic on the roads to avoid congestion. Fuel is also an enormous issue, but also an enormous opportunity, because more people are now thinking of using a bus as an alternative to the car. New routes into new housing estates are being investigated to encourage residents to think of using a bus rather than a car.

To find out more about Harrogate & District Travel's services visit www.harrogateanddistrict.co.uk

Northern Rail - Leeds-Harrogate-Knaresborough-York line

Richard Allan, Head of Communications at Northern Rail outlined the company's background and their future plans for the Harrogate Line linking to Leeds and York.

Who are we?

- Northern operates 2,500 trains every day, manage 471 stations, 285 trains and carries nearly 80 million passengers every year, on local and regional services in the North. We have 4,600 employees
- Our nine-year franchise started in December 2004; we are owned by Serco Group plc and NedRailways
- The DfT and five Passenger Transport Executives are co-signatories to our franchise and they specify the service we operate

Vision and Mission:

- Our vision describes what we are striving to achieve: ***Realising the true potential of local rail as the most sustainable means of connecting people to opportunities.***
- Our mission describes Northern's core purpose: ***Delivering local railway services that really work for everyone.***

Achievements:

- Attracted 23% more passengers to 80 million pa
- Improved proportion of trains on time - 83% to 89%
- Improved by 22% the reliability of our fleet of trains - one of the biggest, oldest and most diverse in UK
- Invested more than £80m into the franchise

Harrogate Line Developments:

- 21% growth since 2005 in journeys to Leeds from Harrogate, Knaresborough, Hornbeam Park, Starbeck and Pannal
- 7% growth since 2005 in journeys Harrogate to York
- Punctuality consistently above 90% on Leeds-Harrogate-Knaresborough, risen from 79% to 85% on Leeds-Harrogate-York

- £100,000 makeover for Harrogate station last autumn, improved customer satisfaction
- Peak capacity - £20m deal for six extra trains and longer platforms with Yorkshire Forward, WYPTE, North Yorkshire County Council
- New rolling stock through HLOS, and will we see a new station for Harrogate?
- Timetable changes linked to infrastructure work to provide more semi-fast services
- Tram-trains?

Challenges:

- Providing more capacity to meet growing demand
- Improving punctuality to 90% plus
- Increasing employee satisfaction and engagement
- Revenue protection
- Improving and more consistent customer service

To find out more about Northern Rail's services visit: www.northernrail.org

Questions & Answers - Part 1 Local Bus & Rail Services

Councillor Don Mackenzie, Harrogate Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Planning & Transport said firstly that he was very pleased with the way Transdev work closely with the Council. In fact the following day he was due to approve the extension of the Traffic Signal Priority scheme for buses, which means if the 101 Service to Knaresborough is running late, it will set traffic lights from Harrogate Bus Station to the Starbeck level crossing to green, to speed the buses along.

Don asked about the **National Concessionary Bus Fare** Scheme which started in April, which will cost our Council about £770,000 this year, and what effects it was having on Harrogate District Travel's business.

David Alexander said it was too early to ascertain the effects, and although they are seeing an increased use in services it doesn't necessarily bring the same revenues that an increase in fare paying commercial passengers brings. He said that it is a national concern which local authorities and the Department for Transport are working through.

Brian Dunsby thanked **Northern Rail** for what they had done so far to improve services between Harrogate and Leeds. He went on to ask what could be done to reduce the fares. When can Harrogate passengers benefit from the **reduced Metro fares?** Harrogate Borough Council has been lobbying hard to have the reduced fares expanded onto the Harrogate Line.

Richard Allan responded this was one for the politicians to resolve as it all depended on the local authorities.

Brian further asked what Northern Rail would do in the future to encourage people from York and Leeds to travel into Harrogate, instead of the current trend to encourage visitors to Leeds in particular.

Richard Allan said that Harrogate was being looked at to be featured in **'two travel for the price of one'** offers.

Ron Healy of Transport 2000 asked about Harrogate & District Travel's recently introduced **York to Harrogate** service which appeared to be taking people to York, rather than encouraging travel from York to Harrogate.

David Alexander responded that he did not believe the **X54 service** was focused on taking people out of Harrogate to York. Current usage shows around 2,000 journeys a week with equal flows of passengers each way. Extra early morning journeys are being introduced at the end of July specifically for commuters.

Ron also asked about the success of the **No 36 Route**, and what effect had it had in helping to keep some of the other services more viable and reducing the subsidy from the local authority.

David Alexander said that very few journeys and no full services are completely funded by the local authority. Evening and Sunday services in Harrogate are commercially operated, which is unique to Harrogate. Better used services do subsidise lesser-used routes.

Amanda Hodges of Wordsmith PR asked what the main reasons were for **trains being late or cancelled**.

Richard Allan said there were various reasons why problems arose some were Northern Rail's fault, some Network Rail. Often the complexity of operations at Leeds when coupling extra carriages for peak times caused delays. Overall punctuality is very good at 93%.

Nigel Charlesworth of The Smart Agency asked if the **increase in passenger usage** was actually the same people making more journeys, or was it new customers.

Richard Allen answered that for Northern Rail it was a mixture of both, particularly in recent weeks more journeys were being made at peak times, which could be related to recent rises in petrol.

David Alexander said for Harrogate & District Travel it was similarly a mixture of both, but the **growth in the leisure market** has increased dramatically.

National Express - Harrogate - Leeds - Kings Cross ??

Alan Hyde, Head of Communications and Richard McClean, Production Director, National Express East Coast, summarised current services nationwide and their bid to run more trains from Harrogate to London.

East Coast Highlights:

- Successful launch on 9 December 2007
- 7 year, 4 month franchise
- £44m investment to deliver a bigger and better railway
- 80% of investment in first 18 months
- £1.4bn contribution to Government
- Passenger numbers expect to rise from 17m to 28m
- Aim to be Britain's best and greenest railway

Franchise Highlights:

- Making travel simpler
- Better information
- Improved journey experience

Planned December 2009 timetable:

- Weekday services increased from 136 to 161
- Five trains in each off-peak hour from King's Cross
- More balanced spread of fast and frequent services
- Optimises available track capacity, improves punctuality and delivers better connections
- Later departure from King's Cross on Saturday nights, earlier departure on Sunday mornings
- Biggest improvement to East Coast timetable since electrification in 1991

More direct services for Harrogate:

- Major international conference centre
- Deserves more direct services to/from London
- Application submitted to ORR for track access rights to run two-hourly Harrogate-London service via Pannal, Horsforth, Leeds and Garforth (12 per day)
- New East Leeds parkway station could open up new long-distance rail market
- Harrogate-London journey time around 3 hours
- Refurbished HSTs & 125mph Class 180s

Benefits:

- Improved frequency, better connections, increased custom for Harrogate;
- Attract Continental customers with Eurostar partnership
- Supports HLOS – Government's growth plan
- Supports East Coast Route Utilisation Study
- Delivers extra premiums for Government for reinvestment in the railway
- Routing does not inhibit further growth at Leeds
- High on-board service standards, inc free Wi-Fi, restaurants etc
- New jobs
- Compensation for passengers if delayed

New Markets, New Services, Faster Journeys:

- Harrogate-London every two hours
- London-Lincoln every two hours (12 a day), plus Grimsby & Cleethorpes once a day
- Extra service every hour between Bradford and London (by extending alternate Leeds services, without need for extra path on ECML) – 30 a day
- Faster average journey times:
 - Leeds 2 hours
 - York 1 hrs 51 minutes
 - Newcastle 2 hrs 50 minutes

An early priority - a reliable railway:

- On-time record has improved from 81.7% in December 2007 to 85% now
- 100-day performance plan
- Punctuality continues to improve
- Reinvigorated partnership with Network Rail
- 75% of delays outside direct control
- 90.1% on-time target by January 2010

Investing in East Coast:

- £14.2m in stations (inc new First Class lounge at York)
- £24m in refurbished trains, new engines and improved fleet reliability
- £40m on improved overhead line equipment
- £1.6m on environmental benefits
- £4.2m on technological advances
- Intercity Express Project pre-series trains to run from 2012 on East Coast

Find out more about National Express services at www.nationalexpress.com

First Harrogate Trains - Harrogate-York-Kings Cross ??

Jim Morgan, Director, Passenger Development, First Group outlined the worldwide nature of their services.

Following the recent success of First Hull Trains' services to London they undertook extensive research

and decided on the option of a new Harrogate - London service via York, called **First Harrogate Trains**.

Strong case for Harrogate identified:

- Affluent hinterland surrounding Harrogate & Knaresborough.
- Phenomenon especially relevant for new growth from park and ride journey generation and development.
- Harrogate is a major destination in its own right.
- Harrogate Borough immediate population estimated 158,000, growth rate 4.3% since 2001
- Dispersed but large population poorly served by public transport, but within 10-30 minute drive time for access

Harrogate Golden triangle has:

- Major International Conference and exhibition centre – 2nd /3rd largest in the UK. 2005-6 over 350k visitors at over 3000 conferences and 24 trade fairs.
- Great Yorkshire showground attracts 500,000 visitors per annum.
- Significant investment in conference centre planned.
- Major tourist location, spa town, Harlow Carr RHS, Great Yorkshire Show, Ripley Castle, Ridding Park, Harewood House etc. located on the edge of the Yorkshire dales.
- Improved connectivity to the region is expected to stimulate employment in Harrogate in the tourism and conferencing industry.

Harrogate Golden triangle BUT:

- One district ward is in the most deprived 40% of wards nationally
- Two others are in the 50% most deprived
- Three of the District's wards are ranked in the poorest 50% of English wards for child poverty.
- One ward is in the poorest 25% of wards nationally (CHRD PCT Health Profile 2003).
- Seventeen District wards are ranked in the 25% of wards nationally with the poorest access to services.
- Eight district wards are in the poorest 10% of wards nationally
- 17.8% of households do not have access to a car

Operational scenarios: service, fleet, staffing etc.

- Revenue growth and financial results
- Served by one franchised direct London service (South bound only), which takes 2 hours 57 minutes.
- NX had no public plans to improve service frequency – disappointment amongst stakeholders – and nature of franchise agreement means that this is unlikely to change.
- Conference centre is second largest venue in the UK and has plans for a further £45m expansion.
- Conference and trade fairs market is c.330,000 visitors per annum, with 40% visiting from London and SE.
- In a recent survey only 18% of visitors travelled by rail. Poor rail connectivity has frustrated attraction of some major conferences.
- BMI are believed to be contemplating withdrawal of its Leeds/Bradford-Heathrow services.

Proposed New Harrogate Trains Services:

- Harrogate-London:
 - Fastest start-up journey time 2hrs 49 minutes. Iterative improvements will be pursued
 - Approx. timing of services aimed at conference market: Monday-Saturday:-
 - 0630, 1030, 1530 & 1830 southbound departures from Harrogate
 - 1010, 1320, 1700 & 2200 northbound arrivals at Harrogate.
 - Similar Sunday service from approx 1000

Other Risks:

- Ability to secure regulatory approval.
- Ability to secure optimal train paths.
- Impact of ECML remodelling works e.g.. Peterborough or upgrade work on GN/GE Joint Line
- Impact of IEP service introduction in 2014/15.
- Further service expansion by Grand Central.
- Growth in SE-Leeds/Bradford air market.

Find out more about the proposed First Harrogate Train bid at: www.harrogatetrains.co.uk

Questions & Answers - Part 2

Lynn Costelloe of the Little Red Bus Company asked if any of the operators were interested in working with other organisations in order to **improve connectivity**.

Richard McClean of National Express and Jim Morgan of the First Group both agreed that connectivity was a very important issue and both companies expect to develop this making it easier all round for passengers.

Councillor Mike Gardner, Leader of Harrogate Borough Council, said the two tenders for new Harrogate to London rail services were **very welcome news**. Mike urged members to write to the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) to express their views. We need to ensure that Harrogate is a priority for the rolling stock and it is important for all aspects of business in the town.

Richard McClean of National Express responded saying the big issue was **track capacity** and there was an urgent need to get on with the tendering and planning process. Jim Morgan agreed with Richard and added that the ORR would not make a decision until the timetable analysis has been reviewed, which has yet to be started by Network Rail. The most congested area on the ECML is between Doncaster and Peterborough.

Richard McClean clarified that Harrogate was not competing with Bradford, in terms of their proposals, he said it was a 'win, win' situation for both communities.

Brian Dunsby confirmed the third operator was **Grand Central Trains**, who are proposing operating out of Bradford, which would take away slots and rolling stock. He endorsed the **ideal model** of National Express sending some HSC trains from Harrogate to Leeds, whilst the First Group put on a new Harrogate train service using their rolling stock via York - which would be the best of both worlds – *"but maybe that's a dream!"*

Paul Wade of Black & Wade asked if there were plans to extend a train service **beyond London to the Channel**.

Alan Hyde of National Express said 70% of their services begin or end at Kings Cross, and with Eurostar

now having moved to the neighbouring St Pancras station, journey times are cut by 20 minutes with no need to connect across London. National Express are working closely with Eurostar and currently promoting £79 return fares from York to Paris, Lille and Brussels.

Stuart Pearson of The Trinity Foundation said following the CIPD recently pulling their conference out of Harrogate citing the **poor public transport connections**, the recent Gift Fair had encountered problems over the weekend when there was only one train to London from York, which caused a near riot at York Station. He asked what would be done before Harrogate lost another important event.

Jim Morgan of First Group said operators were working together and it is something the Association of Train Operating Companies was keen to take forward. Recognising this, the ORR has allowed £160 million one off cost and a further £60 million ongoing cost, to develop the **'Seven Day Railway'**. This aims to greatly reduce engineering possessions on Sundays and will enable operators to run trains virtually all weekend.

Although this is a long term aim, the move has already started to reduce the length of engineering possessions and enable people to travel more freely on a weekend.

Richard McClean of National Express said the East Coast Main Line was going to be the pilot scheme for getting a Seven Day Railway. As more people travel on a Sunday than any other day of the week, Richard said keeping the route open at this time should be a priority.

Derek Wellington, President of Wetherby Business Association, asked what ideas the bus companies might have for **smaller towns, such as Wetherby**.

David Alexander of Transdev said there already was a half hourly service from Wetherby to Harrogate. Referring to **Park & Ride**, David said because of current congestion on the roads, he didn't see this as being an attractive possibility.

Jim Morgan of First Group said they were planning to have a **dedicated bus service between Wetherby and Cattal**, meeting every train to and from London. Richard McClean of National Express said they had similar plans, focussing on a new Parkway at M1/A1 junction.

President, Robert Whiteley concluded by saying that Harrogate has some of the finest conference and exhibition facilities in the country which are currently badly let down by the transport system into Harrogate. He hopes a great improvement can be made over the next few years, as it would be a great shame to see events going to competitor towns. He thanked all the transport companies for their presentations.

Express YOUR opinion

Both National Express and the First Group have submitted their proposals to the Office of Rail Regulation for new Harrogate to London Rail Services. We hope our outline of their proposals has sufficiently enlightened you to write in support of either one or both proposals to:

Brian Hopkinson, Track Access Manager,
Office of Rail Regulation, One Kemble Street, London, WC2B 4AN. E-mail: Brian.Hopkinson@orr.gsi.gov.uk
Website: <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk>

HARROGATE DISTRICT NEWS

President and Chief Executive meet HRH Queen Elizabeth II

During the week preceding the July meeting, both the President and Chief Executive were honoured to meet HM Queen Elizabeth II for two very different reasons.

President, Robert Whiteley, was introduced to the Queen during her visit to the Great Yorkshire Show and Brian Dunsby attended a Reception at Buckingham Palace hosted by the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh.

See enclosed News Release and photograph. See also Business Pink, 25th July 2008, pages 1 and 8.

Local Development Framework

The Local Development Framework is out for public consultation until 22nd August. The draft document sets out the preferred alternative locations for future housing and employment sites across Harrogate.

It can be viewed on Harrogate Borough Council website www.harrogate.gov.uk/LDF

Enhanced Two Tier Working

North Yorkshire County Council and District Councils are making an effort to work together more closely and a newsletter has been circulated on Enhanced Two Tier Working. Brian Dunsby welcomed the initiative.

Changes at Harrogate College

Harrogate Chamber officers took part in a meeting recently with the Principal of Harrogate College and representatives of the Learning & Skills Council, to discuss imminent merger of Harrogate and Hull College.

Any members who have a close interest in both student education and workforce development should contact Chief Executive, Brian Dunsby, with a view to being on the consultation panel or joining the advisory committee.

Harrogate International Centre Planning Proposal Consultation

HIC's proposals for major extensions have now been published and are currently out for consultation. See www.harrogateinternationalcentre.co.uk

Major Road Signage

Following lobbying by the Chamber and others we are pleased that Harrogate Borough Council has endorsed the need for road signage and policing of both commercial and community events, to be handled in a manner that is sympathetic to the voluntary efforts of the groups concerned. They have provided a list of forthcoming events that will be signed, together with road closure orders at a minimum cost, so voluntary groups are not impacted as was otherwise proposed.

Harrogate Borough Council New Chief Executive

Harrogate Borough Council's Chief Executive, Mick Walsh will be retiring at the end of July, to be replaced by Wallace Sampson on 1st August. Chamber Officers are arranging to meet the new Chief Executive shortly.

YORKSHIRE BUSINESS MARKET 27th APRIL 2009

The fee structure has been agreed for the 2009 Yorkshire Business Market, which will offer Harrogate Chamber Members a substantial discount for those who book and pay promptly. Advance booking forms will be circulated to members in the August issue of REVIEW.

MEMBERS' FORUM

Jespers Showroom Stock Clearance

Members wishing to upgrade their office furniture at knockdown prices, should go to www.jespers.co.uk Peter Jesper told members that The Jespers OFFICE are clearing out their showroom stock at sale prices.

Get involved with local Education

Stuart Pearson of The Trinity Foundation encouraged members to get involved with education in the area. He said there were many opportunities to mentor students in **young enterprise**, which is valuable to the participants and very rewarding to the mentors.

Members who would like to know more should contact Stuart on 01423 566522 or 07966 371919 or e-mail stuart@thetrinityfoundation.co.uk

Robert Whiteley echoed Stuart's words, saying he was pleased to be a judge for Young Enterprise last year and the wealth of talent and enthusiasm amongst students in Harrogate was fantastic.

David Horth of Victoria Shopping Centre said he was attending a meeting with representatives from Harrogate College about Train to Gain and apprenticeships, and will report back to a future meeting.

Catalyst at House of Commons

Joanne Murphy of Catalyst Coaching was delighted to hear from members after the last Chamber meeting about their views on Innovation, and would like to thank all who responded.

Joanne's trip to the House of Commons was interesting and constructive. She attended a White Paper presentation and debate hosted by Andy Love MP on the topic 'Innovation - Evolution or Revolution?'. Joanne was also delighted to meet with Phil Willis MP whilst she was in London and learn about his views on innovation.

The findings of the National Business Awards White Paper were worrying. It found that whilst there are some great case studies of businesses showing tremendous creativity and innovation, the UK is falling behind other countries in terms of innovation. Joanne asked the panel what business leaders should do to encourage innovation in their organisations - their main tips were:

1. put and keep 'Innovation' on the management agenda
2. incentivize people to innovate - reward success
3. encourage a positive attitude to risk
4. allow failure
5. focus on the long term

More in Joanne's July newsletter '**Secrets for Managers**'. Email jo@catalyst-pm.co.uk or register online at www.catalyst-pm.co.uk to get a free copy.

Major development at Old Swan Hotel

The Old Swan Hotel has unveiled ambitious plans to develop a 3.2 acre site to the side and rear of the hotel, after completing £5m refurbishment of the hotel. Plans have been submitted to the Council for six separate office units and it is expected the development would provide around 210 jobs.

FUTURE MEETINGS

11th August - Business Networking Safari

The new Queen's Suite at Harrogate International Centre is the venue for this popular Members' only event, kindly hosted by HIC. Don't delay in sending an e-mail to secure places to: info@harrogatechamber.org. At time of going to press **only 5 places remain!**

Safari places are limited to one representative per Company, with a second representative only attending on request and subject to small charge of £10 - but both must remain as a pair throughout the evening and only one can speak at each table session.

8th September - Charity Evening

Cedar Court Hotel on Park Parade is the venue for a new style Charity Evening, with presentations by four Chamber Members on how being involved with local Charities can bring benefits to your company and your employees - as well as to the Charity. Open to all.

FOCUS GROUPS

Promoting Harrogate

The quarterly Promoting Harrogate Group meeting took place on 18th July and was attended for the first time by representatives from local transport companies. We are pleased that both Airport and Jet2.com executives have agreed to attend future meetings to Promote Harrogate.

The electrical contractor behind the town centre's **Christmas Lights**, Rob Molloy of Tetley's Electrical, also attended and said he was prepared to erect and maintain the lights again. However, a local voluntary organisation is still sought to take on the administration of the funding and promotion of the lights.

Following Harrogate Borough Council's pledge to provide £7,500 and Harrogate Chamber's donation of £1,000, several businesses have agreed to make substantial donations so just £3,000 is left to be raised.

Contact the Secretariat if you know of a person or organisation who would take up the mantle of administering the Christmas Lights fund, or if you wish to make a donation to have your company's name in lights.

Plans for a new **tourist map for Harrogate** are also moving forward with the design of a two-sided map in the early stages created in a joint venture by Destination Harrogate and Harrogate International Centre. The Chamber has offered to contribute to the printing costs.

Business Waste & Recycling

Members interested in the pros and cons of plastic bags should contact the Secretariat, as Harrogate Chamber has been asked for their views on Harrogate becoming a 'Plastic Bag Free Town'.

Town Centre Improvements

David Horth confirmed that the Harrogate Farmers' Markets will be held in the town centre on the second Friday of the month from August through to December.

David reported the Retailers' Forum was gaining momentum, with the General Manager of Debenhams, Frank Di Lorenzo now chairing the meetings joined by representatives from Marks & Spencer, Hooper's and British Home Stores, amongst others.

At a recent meeting they discussed how they could work together to co-ordinate late night trading hours in the lead up to Christmas, what entertainment could be provided and how this could be publicised via Stray FM and the local newspaper.

EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

Community & Police Group

Robert Whiteley reported that North Yorkshire Police Chief Constable is now re-considering the policy on policing of parades and major events in view of the strong reaction from the public and voluntary groups.

Harrogate Alcohol & Drugs Agency

Past Chamber President Barbara Coultas said that Harrogate Alcohol & Drugs Agency (HADA) is looking for 2 people from the business world to strengthen their Management Committee. One should take on the role of Hon. Treasurer and the other should have experience in business management and/or legal expertise.

Anyone interested in these opportunities to volunteer their time and expertise should contact Elizabeth Gardiner at the Harrogate office at 47 East Parade or telephone 01423 525999 for further information.

International Car Free Day

Robert Whiteley encouraged all Chamber Members to participate in the International Car Free Day on 24th September and persuade their employees to find alternative ways to get into work. Lynn Costelloe added this might be a good opportunity for people to find out more about the Harrogate Car Share scheme.

Institute of Directors

Stuart Pearson advised that the Institute of Directors were moving the venue for future meetings for both Harrogate and York to Pavilions of Harrogate.

NEW MEMBER

YMCA Training (*Work based learning provider*)

Steve Pepper, Centre Manager

1 North Park Road, Harrogate, HG1 5PD

Tel: 01423 705494

E-mail: s.pepper@ymcatraining.org.uk

Web site: www.ymcatraining.org.uk

THANKS TO WHITE HART HOTEL

Many thanks to Robert Warren and his team for the use of their excellent facilities for the popular July Meeting. For more information on the White Hart Hotel phone 01423 505681 or go to: www.whitehart.net

Older workers plug skills shortages

Small business owners worried about skills shortages are increasingly asking older workers to plug the skills gaps left by younger people who aren't up to the job. That's according to think-tank the Tenon Forum, which reports that a third of small businesses think that graduates and college leavers are not work-ready and lack basic skills such as literacy and numeracy. Smaller firms are using older workers to fill the skills gaps and also provide mentoring and coaching services to younger recruits. A fifth of businesses said they would hire older workers over college leavers as a solution to staffing problems. More at:

www.tenongroup.com/Press/2008/Press080506.asp

Machinery maintenance warning

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has sounded a warning to employers reminding them of their duties to maintain machinery, as set out in the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. An employer in Tyne and Wear was fined £10,500 after an incident which left a worker blind in one eye. The worker was using a grinder when the grinding disc shattered and injured his eye, leaving him with no sight in the affected eye. An HSE inspector said that all work equipment must be suitable for use, maintained and inspected regularly, and used only by people who are adequately trained to do so.

More at: www.hse.gov.uk/press/2008/hsene17208.htm

Risk assessments for different sectors

The HSE has produced a range of risk assessment factsheets for different business sectors. It says they aim to show businesses that risk assessments are about identifying practical actions to prevent injury, rather than simply another layer of red tape. Business types already covered include an office, an estate agency and contract bricklayers. Further examples will be added to the website from time to time. Read more and access factsheets at: www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies/index.htm

E-skills website for small businesses

The Business IT guide has been developed by the IT sector skills council, e-skills UK, and is aimed at small businesses and start ups to help them assess their IT needs. Go to: www.businessitguide.com/self-help/home

IPO launches patent database

The UK Intellectual Property Office (UK-IPO) launched its online patents journal service recently, which is a database that enables customers to search and download published patents data free of charge. The database includes the latest patents filed, applications which have been published, UK applications which have been granted and UK patents which have ceased, expired or terminated. The service was developed following an internal review and external consultation exercise. More at: www.ipo.gov.uk/press/press-release/press-release-2008/press-release-20080402.htm

Parking costs affect town centre business

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) says that local authorities should re-think their town centre car park charging policies as the high fees people have to pay to park are having a detrimental effect on business. The business organisation is concerned that council plans to raise revenue through excessive town centre parking policies will backfire as high street shops close and employment is lost. The FSB's Small Business Manifesto calls for parking policies that encourage consumers to shop at independent retailers. More at: www.fsb.org.uk/news.asp?REC=4587

Warning over trademark scam

Businesses are being warned about a scam requesting payment to register their trademarks. Firms across Europe have been receiving invoices asking for around £500 to put them on a trademark register. The letters from Europe and the US are targeting businesses currently in the process of registering a trademark, making people more likely to fall for the trick. Firms are advised to stick to the official bodies - the UK Intellectual Property Office (UKIPO), the Community Trade mark Office and the World Intellectual Property Organisation.

SFLG to increase

The Small Firms Loan Guarantee scheme (SFLG) was increased by £60 million in May, a 20% increase in funding. The scheme is available to businesses which have viable business plans but would otherwise struggle to raise the finance needed because of lack of a track record. This year's Budget also revealed that businesses eligible to apply for SFLB funding include those over five years old and those which have changed ownership. More at:

www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/businessnews/Government-funds-provide-lifeline-for.3967215.jp

Wiseup2Work website

Aimed at employers working with young people, this website provides information to help employers get their young workers up to speed with workplace health and safety issues. There is also the opportunity to sign up for a free workplace hazard awareness course.

Visit website at: www.wiseup2work.co.uk

Yorkshire rural funding approved

Rural businesses in Yorkshire and Humberside look set to benefit from £63 million in funding. The money will be made available through the Rural Development Programme for England, which is managed by regional development agency Yorkshire Forward. The funding will make grants available to farmers and other rural business people who help grow existing business and support new rural start ups. The funding is worth £9.5 million a year. More at:

www.yorkshire-forward.com/www/view.asp?content_id=7989&parent_id=7918

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