

## Survey shows town centres perform 'poorly'

THE Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) says half of independent retailers think their town centres are performing poorly and is backing calls for closer ties between small firms and local authorities to boost spending on the High Street.

The FSB is calling for decision-makers to have closer relationships with small firms, to boost the economy of our local high streets.

Research by the business body shows half (53%) of small firms in England think their town centre is currently performing 'poorly'. Seventy per cent believe better links between themselves and their local authorities would have a positive impact on their high street.

These small firms believe that initiatives such as businesses relocating to town centres (60%), flexible opening hours (38%) and more pop-up stores (37%) should also be part of key plans to revitalise high streets.

It comes as the FSB backs Local Business Week, calling on UK shoppers to buy three things from their high street.

The FSB has also relaunched its Keep Trade Local campaign to highlight the need to save local stores.

Neil Eames, development manager for the FSB Wessex region, said: "Reviving town centres from decline is possible with the right measures from councils and local authorities."

"We want improved dialogue and co-operation between independent retailers and their local decision-makers, so they can work jointly on improving their town centres."

"Attracting new businesses and shoppers is one way to ensure the survival of small businesses, which is why we are supporting Local Business Week and its pledge for shoppers to buy three things on their local high street."

## Luxury, local the buzzwords

LUXURY home interior specialist India Jane has opened a new store in Farnham's Lion & Lamb Yard.

India Jane, which has sold classic furniture and interior accessories from stores in Chelsea for more than 20 years, has boosted the local economy by hiring staff from in and around Farnham, according to a company spokesman.

The premises were previously used by sporting and outdoor goods store Orvis, which has moved to a bigger premises in Lion and Lamb Yard.

Paul Gunnion, owner of India Jane in Farnham, said: "We absolutely love Farnham. It's got a really strong art society and we already work with a number of interior designers

who have clients in the area.

"We think that people in Farnham will appreciate our brand and we're really look forward to helping them with all their furnishing requirements over the coming years."

Mr Gunnion added: "As well as being able to buy unique, one-off items straight from the showroom floor, products can be delivered within a week from our warehouses in north London."

Store manager Fatima Deria added: "I have worked and lived in Farnham for more than six years now.

"I've got many local contacts who are really excited about this new store, and all of the new staff live locally."



Mandy Harrison, Paul Gunnion, Fiona Gunnion, Fatima Deria, Michaela Yates, Hollie Langan and Monica Leeson-Earle at India Jane. Picture order no: FD20-166-13 (petersfieldherald.com)

## Experts at the Maltings

THE Farnham Maltings will host a free Ask the Expert event for prospective business owners on July 1, co-organised by Waverley Borough Council and Enterprise First.

Anyone attending the event, between 6pm and 8pm, will have the chance to get free advice on all aspects of starting or expanding a business, including marketing, web-

site design, legal advice, tax and accessing finance.

Businesses will also get the chance to network in an informal setting.

Patricia Ellis, mayor of Waverley, said: "Waverley Borough Council is committed to supporting local businesses and making Waverley a place where local businesses can thrive. "In these difficult economic times, we want to

send a clear message that we're open for business."

John Mitchell, Enterprise First chief executive, added: "New and small businesses should be able to access as much free advice as possible. Setting up a business in the right way from the beginning will help ensure it survives."

To book, visit enterprise-first.co.uk or call 0845 4587535.

## Cash boost for hospice

BASEPOINT Basingstoke has presented a cheque for £10,673 to its chosen charity, St Michael's Hospice, a palliative care service for patients across north Hampshire.

The money was fundraised throughout 2012 from hosting events such as a sunflower fete, golf day, a car wash and a Christmas draw.

St Michael's Hospice provide an invaluable service and has a huge impact on the lives of people with life-limiting illnesses as well as supporting their families.

Anne Willis, Basepoint Basingstoke's centre manager, said: "We hope that this donation enables St Michael's Hospice to continue their amazing work."

Nikki Acton, corporate fundraiser for St Michael's Hospice, said: "We are grateful to Basepoint Basingstoke for choosing to support us throughout 2012.

"In our 20th anniversary year, the demands for our services are forever growing and support from the business community is paramount to our success."



Celebrity wine buff Olly Smith (left) and Jenkyn Place owner Simon Bladon

## Jenkyn Place is top of the crop

ENGLISH sparkling wines are at last being taken seriously, not only in this country but overseas – and Hampshire's wine producers are among the most respected vineyards, with Jenkyn Place in Bentley top of the crop.

In a tasting of 55 English sparkling wines, conducted by Britain's leading wine magazine, Decanter, three of Hampshire's vineyards were recognised and awarded top scores. The wines were tasted by a panel of experienced and respected judges, including two Masters of Wine.

The panel placed two wines from Jenkyn Place in the 'Recommended' category. The judges thought that the Sparkling Rose 2008 from Jenkyn Place was bursting with flavour and that the vineyard's Brut 2009

was "elegant, with a lovely balance".

Jenkyn Place is a member of county food group Hampshire Fare and bosses were delighted that this latest recognition by some of the country's leading wine experts confirms the quality of Hampshire's wine and firmly places the county on the map as one of the UK's leading wine regions.

Simon Bladon, of Jenkyn Place Vineyard, near Alton, said: "We are delighted with how well our wines have performed in this prestigious tasting as we were up against some of the top producers.

"After the success of last year's diamond jubilee and Olympics, it seems that English sparkling wines are finally being taken seriously both by consumers and wine experts."

# 'Bold strategies' needed by Govt

By Daniel Gee  
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A SURREY business chief based in Farnham has called on central government to follow Surrey County Council's example and back bold new strategies to kick-start the nation's economy.

David Seall, chairman of the Surrey Institute of Directors (IoD), has welcomed the council's policy to buy 60 per cent of its services in the county, as well as its strategy to relieve bottlenecks in Surrey's road network, such as Hickleys Corner in Farnham, and invest in the Surrey Research park.

He said the Government could learn from such strategies and has called on it to invest in new infrastructure such as the Heathrow expansion and the High Speed 2 railway to increase business confidence nationwide.

Mr Seall, who as chairman of the Surrey IoD signed a pledge with Surrey County Council leader David Hodge last year to boost business in the county, said: "People need an underlying confidence that things are picking up and the Government needs to be



David Seall

more strategic and make some key decisions on policy that will work together to boost confidence.

"If the Government set its strategy to invest heavily in these things for the next 20 years, big businesses would know they can rely on that support and small businesses would have the confidence to invest in technology.

"The Heathrow expansion has been kicked into the grass until the next election – but why? Currently people are travelling to places like China via Amsterdam from small provincial airports like Norwich because it's cheaper than going direct from London.

"Yes, it's cheaper to buy

services abroad and allow other countries to relieve the strain on our infrastructure, but the total cost to UK PLC in terms of jobs and lost revenue is huge."

Mr Seall added that if the Government set out a bold strategy to boost rail and air infrastructure this would carry benefits for other industries such as manufacturing and community services, as well as advancing technology for other services.

However, he said it is not all down to the Government to spark Britain's economic recovery and believes small business owners must also be bold.

He continued: "The problem is not banks' reluctance to lend any more, but instead businesses having the confidence to borrow. Banks come to me all the time asking if I know anyone who wants to borrow, but if the economic climate is uncertain why would you mortgage the future of your business?"

"The economic climate is in a static situation and people need to gain confidence again. But my message to small business owners is to maintain positive energy and try to keep confidence high. It's not all doom and gloom.

"You have to be careful on the terms of borrowing and it's not as easy it used to be, but there are a lot of sources of money now, such as equity finance and business growth funds. There are also a lot of venture capitalism and private equity firms if you're willing to be brave.

"But it does depend on what type of business you run. Some people are battenning down the hatches and doing well, offering valuable services. But with interest rates so low, there has never been a better time to borrow than now. People just have to be bold and do it with confidence."

Mr Seall's three-year stint as chairman of the Surrey IoD will come to an end next year, and the local man said he has enjoyed the opportunity to get to know some of Surrey's "fantastic" local businesses.

"My work over the years was always at a national, international and regional level. I didn't know about local businesses and have learned so much and met some interesting people running some great businesses. It costs up to 20 per cent more to run a business here than in the north of England, so you have to be good to survive."

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