

Press Release

Federation of Small Businesses

Watching the Politicos

In Russia, politicians are used to the FSB (the renamed KGB) keeping an eye on them. Here in the Thames Valley, Britain's own FSB has been watching your local Members of Parliament very closely, and – soon – all will be revealed.

All five Branches of the Thames Valley Federation of Small Businesses have been actively building up their relationships with their MPs in an effort to ensure that the needs and concerns of small businesses in the area are properly understood and voiced in Westminster.

Since the onset to of the economic downturn, hardly a day goes by without one MP or another extolling the importance of small businesses. This is a clear measure of how well the FSB has been able to push the case and explain the importance of the small business economy.

Small businesses really are flavour of the month. Everyone is talking about them.

And those who have the power to concoct the flavour of each month – the politicians, opinion formers, the media and others – have done a good job of raising the key issues that the FSB was created to promote.

How many times have we heard that there are more than 4.7 million small businesses in the UK, with more than 13.5 million people working in small firms across the country? Does anyone not know by now that small businesses truly are the backbone of the economy?

But even before the downturn, some MPs have always been championing the small business community – and the Thames Valley FSB has chosen to recognise those MPs who have intervened in parliamentary discussions on behalf of small businesses.

Over the year 2007 to 2008, the Thames Valley Region of the FSB has logged the activities of the local MPs to assess how much support has been given to small businesses in debates in the House of Commons by each of the members. By using the www.theyworkforyou.com website, the FSB has been able to register how many interventions were made on behalf of small businesses and who made them.

Of the 21 MPs in the Thames Valley, nine stand out as having made speeches supporting small businesses in one way or another. These nine MPs are being recognised by the Thames Valley FSB for their work as champions of the Small Business Community and will be awarded trophies.

Barry Wheatley Regional Policy Chair said *“Given the economic situation, most MP’s have jumped on the small business bandwagon, but the MPs we plan to honour have a long track record of standing up for us and voicing our concerns. When you read some of the speeches made by our MPs on behalf of local small businesses its is clear that they understand the importance of those businesses not only to the local economy but also the community.”*

At the top of the ‘League Table’ is Tony Baldry, MP for Banbury and Bicester, who made interventions on behalf of small businesses in at least twice as many debates as any other MP in the Thames Valley.



The other eight MPs to be awarded trophies are:

Richard Benyon, Newbury
Andrew Smith, Oxford East
Cheryl Gillan, Chesham & Amersham
David Cameron, Witney
Andrew Mackay, Bracknell
John Bercow, Buckingham
John Redwood, Wokingham
Phyllis Starkey, Milton Keynes SW

It should be noted that, in addition to this list, many of the other MPs have intervened directly with ministries on behalf of their local businesses or the FSB.

Robin Lawrence, Thames Valley Regional Chair said *"We are fortunate in the Thames Valley to have so many MPs who are prepared to fight the case of their local businesses. They recognise that the recovery from our present financial situation will, to a large extent, be thanks to the hard work and perseverance of the small business sector. The banks got us into this mess but only businesses will get us out."*