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Stag and Hen parties – nightmare or bonanza?

Is your business dependant on stag and hen parties, or is it blighted by them? Do your local police have the problem well under control? If so how?

A cry for help to the SW Crime forum prompts this question. Parts of the SW are suffering from the drunken antics of large groups of merrymakers, usually Stag and Hen parties. It is damaging other businesses.

Is your area one of these? Can you offer advice or comments on what should be done – or should they be left to the normal processes?

Comments to Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk

Identity fraud campaign coming up

The FSB's very own Rosina Robson, Policy Development Officer covering small business crime, will be working on National Identity Fraud Prevention Week again this year. The campaign, which will run between the 8th and 14th October, aims to raise awareness of the dangers to small businesses of identity fraud. To that end, Rosina is looking for examples of small businesses that have been affected by identity fraud. She can be contacted at rosina.robson@fsb.org.uk.

Train to Gain – T2G

The FSB's message over train to gain seems finally to be penetrating!

But Train to Gain's problem seems to be that some of their sub contractors (some FE Colleges) are send out leaflets saying what they are offering is 'Train to Gain' but they are just selling a particular course to get 'bums on seats'

The message is, if you want the whole package, you need to contact Train to Gain themselves. They should help you work out what training will benefit your business and where it is available. If it is a first full

Level 2 (jargon for GCSE equivalent), then there should be some funding for the course and for you for allowing your staff to attend. If there is a real problem in releasing staff, there are some funds to put on courses at non standard times.

I am now having quarterly meetings with the 2 SW Partnership managers to discuss and hopefully solve any problems. So if you are having problem in your business with T2G, please let me have the details, as I now have a direct route to get things sorted.

If any FSB branches want speakers on Business Development and Train to Gain (T2G), both I and your ROs have the contact details.

So brickbats, and bouquets as well please on Train to Gain to Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk

Research and Development of interest? – the EU could help

If your business is research and development or you have a business which might prove a useful test bed for research, then read on -

The third largest area of EU spending is on Research and Development. Thanks to the FSB and our European allies, they now recognise the importance of small businesses and as a result are very keen to get SMEs involved in the projects.

They are running a roadshow on **Wednesday 17 October, in Bristol.**

One of the workshops will focus entirely on SMEs and how they can get involved. It will include a case study of an eHealth project run by small businesses. Naturally there will be time for questions and discussion of possible projects.

Full details available at the website <http://www.southwestuk.eu/pages/key-events/funding-roadshows/view.html> or email Emily Palmer (epalmer@southwestuk.be) if you have any specific queries.

This is of particular interest to those in the ICT or health sectors.

Planning changes so businesses can be greener and make changes easier

We know from your comments that it is not as easy as it sounds and planning is getting more expensive for businesses to install 'green' technologies like solar panels and wind turbines and for them to make changes to their buildings. And our lobbying seems to be starting to pay off!

New planning rules that will ensure the system is doing more to encourage the use of renewable energy are being drawn up. The research will specifically look at removing barriers to installing small-scale renewable and low carbon technology equipment that can currently lead to increased costs and lengthy delays.

At present businesses must go through the planning system when they, for example, want to install a solar panel or a small wind turbine. A planning application can cost about £1,500 and take up to eight to sixteen weeks to be considered by councils, with no guarantee it will be approved.

UK Green Building Council has also been asked to set out a route map for improving the overall energy efficiency of non-domestic buildings with the aim of delivering substantial reductions in carbon emissions from new buildings over the next decade.

Meanwhile White Young Green Planning (WYGP) are to carry out a wider investigation into what planning reforms are needed to make it easier for businesses to build extensions or make improvements to their premises.

The research will consider whether the need for planning permission can be removed for minor developments - such as small scale extensions and changes to shop fronts - where it is clear they have little or no impact on neighbouring properties or the local environment.

More news as it comes – watch this space!

Have you backed up your data this week? In Sheffield more than 40% of those firms employing 5 or fewer people who were flooded have ceased trading.

In many cases it was the lack of cash flow that crippled the business. But for many, it was the lack of data which prevented them restarting. Too many businesses had not backed up their data or had stored the back up in their main business premises. As a result, when they came to restart they had no idea who owed them what or what they owed.

Was your business damaged by the floods even though you were not flooded?

The FSB recognises that many businesses, which were not flooded, have been hit by the lack of water, the media coverage or other consequences. We have tried to get extra support for these businesses from the RDA. However their funds are only sufficient for the 'Open for Business' campaign which is just getting underway.

So we are now lobbying national Government.

Anyone whose business was affected by the flooding, even though they were not flooded, and is willing to provide information for a case study, please let Vivienne Rayner know at vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk

We are particularly interested in businesses that can provide comparison figures with previous periods. Affected businesses include those affected by road closures, such as the A 46.

Recycling Advice

Many members have been in touch with questions about how they as business can do more recycling. Now there is a 'Recycling Advisor for small businesses in the SW.

His name is David Rogers and his contact details are:- tel 07809 091484 or David.rodgers@wrap.org.uk.

Funded under the WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme) Recycle at Work Advisory Programme, David will be able to give you one to one support to help you recycle more materials by finding appropriate local recycling services, assessing what can be recycled, developing in-house recycling schemes and providing training to encourage staff to use them.

He will also work with local recycling service providers to develop an on-line searchable database of their services and help get additional services into new areas, making it easier and more convenient for SMEs in the South West to recycle their waste.

Sounds like a tall order for one person, but if you need help, he is the guy to talk to. Again, please let me know how you get on. Bouquets and brickbats to Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk

The SW Skills for Life Unit would like to know what you think about their services.

If anyone has used the 'Skills for Life' it would be really helpful if you could complete their questionnaire by **14 September 2007**.

To access the survey, please click on <http://www.smart-survey.co.uk/v.asp?i=2567usxbh>

FSB Forum – have your say or get advice from fellow members

The FSB website hosts the FSB's own on line discussion forum at <http://www.fsb.org.uk/discuss/>

Members use the forum to raise matters which are causing them problems – and get advice and support from other members. Others post items which become quite in depth policy discussions.

Check it out. Topics covered include things to beware of, late payers, how to find out how many fire extinguishers you need.....

And finallyRetail Regeneration Policy for the SW – hot off the press – on the website

Vivienne Rayner

3rd September 2007