

Yachtswoman heads Business Week speakers

DAME Ellen MacArthur has been confirmed as the opening speaker at this year's Chambers of Commerce Business Week (formerly Five Counties).

The five-day event, organised by ngb2b, is taking place in venues across south-east Wales on October 20-24.

The world champion yachtswoman, who has been kindly supplied by ngb2b patron member E.ON, will speak at the launch breakfast on October 20 at Glen-Yr-Afon House hotel in Usk. She will talk about her team-building experiences and her own personal mission to encourage people to live and work in a more sustainable way.

Dame Ellen is the first in a strong line-up of speakers for the business week, sponsored for the second consecutive year by local accountants and tax advisers, Ashmole & Co.

Another speaker, Richard Richardson, will be introducing his Marketing Judo concept for firms with limited budgets, which helped take Harry Ramsden's from one fish and chip shop in Yorkshire to a successful international brand.



Patrick Long, head of ngb2b, said: "This year's Business Week promises to deliver an exciting series of events. In these tough times the overriding focus is to add value and support small businesses – that's why we're looking at a marketing and sustainability theme."

Agency wins Crown Estate contract

THE Crown Estate has appointed property advisers Cooke & Arkwright to manage its marine interests in Wales for the next five years. This covers the foreshore area between mean high and low water, and estuaries and tidal rivers around a substantial part of the Welsh coastline.

The Crown Estate's team of coastal, environmental and offshore specialists and support staff manage the entire Marine Estates interests. Cooke & Arkwright will act as The Crown Estate's representative in Wales, managing the land through leases and providing advice and reports to the Marine Estates on future developments.

Neil Jacobson, head of coastal operations, said: "We are confident that Cooke & Arkwright assisted by Jones Peckover will represent the interests of The Crown Estate and contribute positively to the overall management of the coastal and broader Marine Estate in Wales, delivering the associated benefits to the Principality."

Green business gears up for growth

A COMPANY that helps businesses save energy and reduce their impact on the environment is expecting to triple its turnover following some major corporate deals.

Hengoed-based utility and environmental services consultancy Utility and Environmental Solutions Limited (UES) has signed preliminary contracts with National Grid and HSBC and is discussing the provision of specialist services to a number of FTSE100 companies.

The company has strengthened its senior management team and unveiled a new corporate identity following the new business wins that are expected to drive annual turnover from £850,000 to £2.4m in two years.

Established in 2003 by Andrew Padmore and Andrew Diplock, both previously senior managers of Hyder plc, UES works on a shared benefit basis. The team advises on utility and environmental solutions without risking the profitability of its clients' businesses.

Core markets include energy, water, waste and telecoms.

Administrations down in early 2008

LATEST figures from Deloitte, the business advisory firm, has shown significant drops in the number of administrations in Wales compared to the early part of 2007.

Richard Hawes of the Cardiff office believes companies remained adamant they going to come out of the credit crunch the other side. Figures for Wales were down from 16 in early 2007 to 11 in early 2008, a drop of 31.3%.

But Mr Hawes said: "We are beginning to see a change in direction. My team alone has taken on nine administrations during the last six weeks in businesses ranging from retail, contracting, financial services, property development and the leisure sector.

"Companies are running out of cash due to losses or changes in their market and aren't being able to raise investment in time."



JOHN CULLEN

Partner, Harris Lipman

How much??!

I HAVE just received my electricity bill. 'Dear Mr Cullen, we currently owe you £184.62. In view of the increasing costs of energy, your monthly standing order must increase by a further £12 per month'.

"Ring them", my wife said. "They must have made a mistake..."; but they hadn't.

The oil prices are to blame. Is it OPEC, speculators or war zones that are to blame for the oil prices? I think we can take our pick.

Ultimately, we are currently faced with a situation where it costs us more to do almost anything. Heating our homes, eating, running our factories, filling our cars – all more expensive.

Particularly hard hit are the weaker economies. Third world countries, already struggling to put food on everyone's table, are finding it much harder. Food shortages are rife and the cost of production and transportation have increased.

Here in Wales, we have been losing businesses because of it for some time. A couple of years ago, I saw a factory hit hard times because of fuel bills. Profits had been completely extinguished and the competition from China meant that the cost rise could not be passed on to customers. Now, even China is feeling the pinch of rising transportation costs, despite the tax breaks on offer.

These costs have to be met. Customers have to pay more or else businesses have to suffer the losses and generally, those are the two options available.

In the meantime, the government is urging restraint on pay settlements so as not to drive up inflation any further and MPs even went so far as only awarding themselves 2.25% (while keeping their 'John Lewis list' and additional cost allowance).

Times are hard, especially for those in debt before the onset of these price increases. I have read that some are predicting change and that now is the time to wean ourselves off oil.

I think this is easier said than done. In the meantime, it may be more of the same for some time to come.

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