

BT generates £840m a year for economy of South West

BT is generating £840 million a year for the South West economy, according to a new report.

The report, by DTZ Consulting, shows the firm is responsible for 13,000 jobs in the region through direct employment and spending with contractors and suppliers.

Jon Reynolds, BT regional director for the South West, said: "The huge economic challenges faced by the South West and the UK as a whole make this report particularly timely. It demonstrates the vital role that BT and its employees play in the current success of the region."

"Every community and every part of society benefits from BT's operations as a provider of essential services, major investor and one of the South West's largest private sector employers. We are determined to be a driving force in the region's future success."

The Economic Impact of BT in the United Kingdom report analyses the contributions made by BT through the salaries and wages of employees and contractors.

It found that in 2008/9 in the South West, BT was responsible for the employment of 7,002 people – 6,736 direct employees and 266 contractors – with the spending power of BT and its staff providing work for a further 6,000.

During the same time, the company spent £107 million with South West suppliers and committed more than £2 million to community, charity and voluntary programmes.

Seminars for tourism and leisure firms

TORBAY is kick-starting the New Year with free seminars for professionals in the tourism and leisure industry.

Business owners, managers, team leaders, supervisors and chefs are invited to attend the event, organised by Torbay Council's regenerative arm, the Torbay Development Agency, in conjunction with Devon Tourism Skills Network.

The events will be chaired by Wendy Samuel, skills director at Tourism Skills Network South West, who will provide a regional perspective for the tourism industry.

Leadership and management expert, Pete Drewett – formerly director of rugby at Exeter Chiefs – will discuss how to develop an edge in the marketplace.

Kevin King, from Paignton-based website and marketing company, Createanet, will advise on marketing a website. Charles Trevor-Roper, from Ashburton motivational management consultancy, Coaching to Success, will be speaking to chefs.

The events take place at the Carlton Hotel on January 12 and January 19. To book, call 01392 383144 or e-mail carla.modley@devon.gov.uk

'One voice agenda' to influence policy

THE South West Chamber of Commerce (SWCC) is to begin work on a manifesto, through which its regional members can present a united front.

It has called on members to contribute their insight, as it develops a unilateral business plan, due for completion in May next year.

Chairman Chris Slocock said: "Chambers working together must and do have a louder voice to influence the policy and decision makers."

Mr Slocock said a "joined up approach" between regional chamber members would enable greater lobbying at national level.

Since becoming chairman of the South West chamber in May, Mr Slocock has been focused on developing a "one voice agenda" to identify regional business problems and find solutions through a unified response.

He said: "I want the manifesto for the South West to be a focal point for the region and the busi-

CATHERINE BARNES

ness issues. The South West region, in my view, has not joined together with one voice as much as it should have in the past and as a result has lost out on funding. I would like to help change that."

Mr Slocock, who was also recently appointed to the British Chambers of Commerce advisory council, said his new role would enable him to influence policy and speak on behalf of the region.

He said that through South West members prioritising their own issues to compile the first chamber manifesto for the region, the SWCC could act as a "catalyst" for change.

Mr Slocock said: "I am particularly keen to include how chambers see their role in the culture of enterprise, how we can influence the green economy and also, very importantly, how we see our role in the growing knowledge economy, so that we

can set specific goals for the South West and our chambers.

"The South West needs to develop a stronger voice and it must be our role at SWCC to help that process and develop that clear regional focus."

Mr Slocock said a return to confidence for many traders over spring and summer had "weakened" from late summer on, in response to mooted government spending cuts and tax rises. "Fuel increases and the forthcoming VAT rise have further added to fears," said Mr Slocock.

He warned that the looming general election could add "further difficult times ahead," as businesses, particularly SMEs, delay major decisions and investments until they can see a clearer picture.

Mr Slocock said: "However, managers are holding their nerve and refusing to panic as they assess how to manage through the current problems and find ways to adapt to the current economic circumstances."

He said a coming-together of the South West Chamber's local heads, would be a positive step forward to identify common regional issues and a unified strategy and response to economic hurdles.

Mr Slocock, who is based in Wimborne, Dorset, said: "My aim is to increase chamber-to-chamber activity. That has already begun with Dorset working with Somerset and Cornwall chambers."

Mr Slocock said support from high street banks was still a pressing issue for the region's small businesses.

"We need real competition in the banking world and a better relationship with more understanding and relevant bank support for SME's, linked to legislation that provides incentives that encourage longer term planning and investment decisions," he said.

He also described improved road and transport links within the region as a priority.



Newell's Travel staff, back row (from left): Zoe Warne, Adam Randall, Jenna Carveth, Helen Hawke. Front (from left): Victoria Yeo, Beverley Townsend, Kathie Ellis

Travel agent staff mark double anniversary

A TRURO travel agent has marked a double anniversary with a few festive treats.

Beverley Townsend celebrated her 20th anniversary with Newell's Travel yesterday at the same time as the business was celebrating the tenth anniversary of its move from Victoria Square to Lemon Street.

Beverley has been in the travel industry for 28 years, having first worked for ECC Travel alongside Roger Hawke, who is now Newell's managing partner. When Roger took on Newell's and the Truro branch, he quickly offered

Beverley a job. She said: "I still have customers that first came to me 20 years ago. Now their children come and make their travel arrangements with me."

Beverley remembers the floods of 1989, when most of Victoria Square was covered in water and staff had to be rescued from Newell's using a rubber dingy, supplied by the Malletts store opposite.

"There's a photograph of me in the top floor window, being rescued by a fireman with a ladder," she said. "I've seen Truro change dramatically.

The city centre has moved three times, from Victoria Square to High Cross and now Lemon Quay. I've seen a lot of shops come and go and businesses change."

Roger Hawke, managing partner of Newell's Travel, said: "Our staff are like family, so it's been an absolute pleasure to work alongside Beverley for all these years.

"She is a huge asset to our team and a friendly face that lots of people in Truro know and love." The firm now has 10 branches across Cornwall and Devon.

Talent contest for holiday jobs

A HOLIDAY company is to hold a talent-show style recruitment drive in the new year, to fill 40 seasonal job vacancies in the Westcountry. Hertfordshire-based Haven Holidays is to hold a search for what it describes as the "H-Factor" to find entertainment staff for its 35 regional holiday parks for the 2010 season – including its flagship resort near Exmouth, which is one of the biggest caravan parks in Europe. A Haven spokesman said the company is anticipating hundreds of singers, dancers and performers to attend the open-auditions being held at Bristol City FC on January 21. As well as performing on stage, the company's "FunStars" are also expected to help run the kids clubs, talent shows and interactive stage shows at the resorts.

Power deal

SECURE power firm Chloride has completed the acquisition of AEES, a French company focused on the energy and infrastructure markets. Chloride said the AEES management team will be staying with the business.

Society chairman

WEST Bromwich Building Society has appointed Mark Nicholls as its new chairman in succession to Dr Brian Woods-Scawen, who is retiring after almost six years' service on the board. Mr Nicholls has been a director at FTSE 100 company SG Warburg and managing director of the private equity arm of Royal Bank of Scotland.

TV trouble

FILM and television sales company ContentFilm slid to a £100,000 pre-tax loss in the six months to September 30 from a £600,000 profit previously. The firm, which owns the rights to more than 3,000 hours of television, said fewer broadcasters were using its library.

Tesco tie-up

TESCO'S banking arm has launched its life insurance business with insurer Friends Provident. Tesco customers can buy life insurance, critical illness cover and over-50s products. Tesco is the biggest supermarket bank with six million customers across 28 financial products.

Engine boost

AEROSPACE giant Rolls-Royce said its BR725 engine for the Gulfstream G650 business jet – the world's fastest civil aircraft – had been approved by US regulators. The jet can fly at 51,000 feet and reach speeds of Mach 0.93, close to the speed of sound.

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