

Surrey Advertiser

Business news *plus* motors and jobs

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On this highway, you go to work and stay at home

WHILE you sit in your car and fume at the months of delay caused by the A3 roadworks at Guildford, cheer yourself up with the thought that locally-based organisations are working to bring a new type of highway infrastructure to Surrey — one that could allow you to, in effect, commute from one side of the world to the other (or for that matter, from one side of Guildford to the other) without leaving your home or office.

This is the information superhighway — a global web of information, communication and consumer services being created by the convergence of computer and telecommunications technologies and services.

At one end we have the Internet, the existing worldwide network of networks, which connects some 23 million different computer networks, 3.5 million computers and some 35 million users in 164 countries across the globe. It is estimated that 21 million of them use the Internet every day and that over 60% of traffic on this network is now commercially oriented.

At the local end we have the network services, cable TV and telecommunications services provided by companies like CableTel, NYNEX and EuroBell. Bridging the two are the telecommunications networks of the national and international telecommunications companies such as BT, Mercury and Easynet.

The coming together of these global and local services means that we are entering, willy-nilly, a new world for business — one in which there are no physical, political or economic boundaries and where mere distance in business dealings is irrelevant. Deals are made

Where is the much-touted information superhighway leading to? Here, Richard Harris, a senior consultant with the Guildford-based information technology consultancy Hyperion, explains what it means to local businesses.

To provide the local business community with more information and the opportunities, services and benefits of the new electronic media, CableTel, Hyperion, Clyde & Co, the international commercial law firm and Artery Design, the Guildford-based graphic designers, are sponsoring, on behalf of Guildford Business Forum, an open meeting entitled Net Gains. This meeting will be held in Guildford on February 27.

For further information contact Guildford Business Forum, Parallel House, 32 London Road, Guildford GU1 2AB. Tel: 01483 574422. Fax: 01483 304604.

electronically, goods ordered, services and support provided and payment made without the participants ever having met in person.

Businesses in Guildford can (and a number already do) advertise their presence worldwide with the electronic equivalent of the glossy brochure, attract customers, deal with them by electronic mail and deliver or arrange delivery of their goods and services without a single face-to-face meeting taking place or piece of paper passing to or from.

In Surrey, we already have one of the best combinations of telecommunications infrastructure, business services and organisations to be found in Europe. The area is home to many professional and financial services companies and to high-technology businesses, many of whose products are intellectual goods (legal advice, software, business consultancy, financial services, etc) all of which can be delivered electronically.

We also suffer from some of the worst overload of the physical transport systems. If Surrey is to

advance its businesses and public services over the next few years, the exploitation of electronic services is the obvious way to go.

While individual companies can create their own presence on the global information highway, attracting business and investment to any region depends on its having and demonstrating a critical mass of local infrastructure, services and companies which provide all the support necessary to attract other business — the equivalent of the Silicon Valley effect.

For an area like Surrey to exploit its advantages of community, infrastructure and services to compete in such a world, without further clogging up our overused roads and railways, we don't need organisations to physically come here — once clients and customers have found the appropriate businesses and been attracted electronically, discussions and the actual work can take place by a variety of electronic means, effectively providing an inflow of investment without the consequent stresses to our transport and housing services.

Of course organisations that may then be attracted to open an office in or move to the area will be able to find the local information they need far more readily than by traditional means.

We all benefit from increased prosperity of our local area — by taking up the challenge of the Information Age, we can all gain a competitive edge in the global market. If we don't, others are already doing so and will happily relocate us to an also-ran in the business stakes.

Now that the communications service providers like CableTel, BT and Mercury have created the physical networks, Hyperion, the Guildford-based information and technology management consultancy, is working with Surrey's public and private sector organisations to create and provide information services which are relevant at both local and global levels.

Portsmouth office for Rojay as activity in area increases

THE Farnham-based international freight forwarders Rojay World Freight has initiated two major steps to cope with a turnover increase of almost 70% over the last 12 months.

On Monday it opened an office in Portsmouth, in response to an increasing level of business on the South coast. The new office is headed by sales director Philip Michael, who lives in Havant, and will provide a full range of IATA air and sea freight services to exporters and importers.

The second step is the establishment of a separate transport division at Farnham, to provide a comprehensive collection and delivery service in the UK to existing and new clients.

Taking over: Sales director Philip Michael, on the left, who will run Rojay World Freight's new freight forwarding office in Portsmouth, with managing director Roy Mayes.



Industry award for Vale Furnishers

THE furniture industry's coveted Furniture Retailer of the Year Award has gone to Vale Furnishers, of Wharf Road, Ash Vale. The award was presented at the Birmingham NEC Metropole Hotel when 850 guests gathered at a gala dance for the presentation of the industry's top awards.

Jan Leeming, former news reader and TV presenter, compered the presentation of the awards, which are competed for on a national basis and are open to all furniture retailers.

Vale Furnishers' senior partner Alan Chandler said: "We are obviously delighted to win this award in spite of fierce competition. It shows we have the best products, the best service, and the best prices."

Vale Furnishers' new 20,000sq ft showroom claims one of the biggest selections of quality furniture in Europe.

Going it alone



THESE three young men who have decided to go it alone and start their own businesses, have moved into the Self-Start Workshops in the old fire station in Queen Street, Godalming. The three, all under 25, are being assisted by Surrey County Council.

Steve Chilton, 22, on the left, has set up as Chilton's Joinery and Carpentry, specialising in hand-crafted joinery including furniture, doors, windows and fitted kitchens. He is currently making chairs and tables for a restaurant in Dorking, but enjoys adapting his skills to more unusual projects.

Dominic Saunders, 21, in the middle, is trading as Complex Light and Sound, a business which hires and sells lighting, sound and communication equipment to theatres, exhibitions and conferences. He specialises in complete event management.

The third, Dru Cook, 22, runs a picture frame business, D.C. Frames. A graduate of Surrey Institute, Dru's commercial and private service offers a choice of 700 interesting, attractive and inexpensive frames. He specialises in hand-stained frames and individually-designed mounts.

Anyone interested in work space and starting up their own business should contact the manager of Self-Start, Rita Kelly, on 0483 427247.

Agency moves

SURREY-based marketing agency Ferrier & Associates has moved from St Johns in Redhill to Castle Hill Farm, Castle Square, Bletchingley.

CableTel cuts phone charges

ON the day that BT raises its charges, CableTel, the local cable telephone company, reduces its standard monthly charge. CableTel has dropped its standard monthly charge to £5.95 — guaranteed for a year — as BT raises its line rental to over £7 a month. This means that subscribers across the board will pay the same and will not have to take a cable television subscription to qualify for the lower rate.

Coupled with billing-by-the-second, rather than by the unit, the charges mean an average saving for cable telephone

customers of 15% per household. Already, customers benefit from Last Number Redial and a choice of one other feature, like Call Waiting or Call Diversion, at no additional charge.

The lower rates are part of a new pricing structure that replaces previous charges and incentives. CableTel customers that take more than one service will pay even less — £1 a month saving for two services, and £2 a month for three, such as cable TV and two telephone lines or one of the other soon-to-be-available services.

KPMG SURREY SHARE INDEX

Prepared by the Surrey office of KPMG Peat Marwick



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