

## Blacks Leisure saved by restructuring deal

THOUSANDS of jobs have been saved after a major retail chain was rescued from oblivion.

Blacks Leisure, which operates Millets, Blacks and O'Neill outlets and employs

dozens of people in Sussex, secured its future after thrashing out a deal with its creditors.

The group, which suffered pre-tax losses of £18.1 million in the six months to August

26, up from £6.7 million losses a year earlier, asked landlords of 89 closed or closing retail stores to accept lower financial claims on the firm.

The retailer also put aside a pot of £7.25 million to com-

pensate just over 100 landlords of retail stores and other sites, equivalent to around six months' rent each, in return for cancelling its long-term lease obligations.

Blacks said the restructur-

ing, known as a company voluntary arrangement (CVA), would safeguard 4,300 jobs across the UK.

It will now operate from 91 Blacks stores, 208 Millets outlets and 15 Freespirit shops.



BUZZ: Sasha

More than 20 firms have already signed up to alliance

# Tourism industry has a new voice

by SAM THOMSON  
Business Editor

A NEW group aims to give a voice to Brighton and Hove's tourism businesses.

The Tourism Alliance has been formed to replace the city's current Tourism Futures forum, whose Government funding runs out in March.

Unlike its predecessor, the alliance will be funded directly by the businesses themselves through a membership charge.

It will meet quarterly to discuss issues within the industry, explore ways members can work together and raise any concerns they may have with bodies such as Visit Brighton and the Hotels Association.

Claire Mitchell, of Brighton-based employment agency Engage, is coordinating the alliance.

She said: "With the Government funding stopping we wanted to make the forum sustainable, which is what tourism business wanted."

"Even though the industry contributes £400 million each year to the Brighton and Hove economy and employs 20% of its workforce, it has never had its own lobbying voice."

More than 20 business have already signed up, including the Brighton Sea Life Centre.

### Rewards

General manager Max Leviston said: "I have been a member of the tourism forum for a year and a half and received huge rewards through networking among other like-minded attractions."

One of the biggest benefits has been dealing with recruitment issues.

Mr Leviston said: "For example, I had to make someone redundant through no fault of their own. The individual was a fantastic member of staff and I was able to find them a new position at a similar attraction."

Other ways alliance members can work together, according to Mr Leviston, will be through marketing opportunities from sharing customer databases to special promotions to visitors to the city.

Nick Mosley, the publisher of Brighton Visitor, has also joined the alliance and said: "In addition to the core meetings of the alliance where members can network and benefit from presentations tailored to their specific needs, I can see working groups of relevant staff from member businesses developing projects and initiatives that will benefit both their own organisations and the wider city economy."

Membership charges range from £50 a year for sole traders, £100 for businesses with up to ten employees, £150 for up to 50 and up to £250 for businesses with more than 50 staff

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## Idea blooms for celebrity florists

TWO florists who include Graham Norton and fashion designer Paul Smith among their celebrity clients have opened their first shop.

Fi Koderisch, pictured left, who was previously the manager of the prestigious Harper & Tom's florist in Notting Hill, and freelance florist Emma Cabrera, right, have set up Kiki & Cole in High Street, Hurstpierpoint.

As well as selling fairtrade flowers from across the world

while using locally grown seasonal stock whenever possible, the shop will hold regular teaching sessions for customers.

Ms Koderisch said: "We are keen to be as interactive as possible both with the village and the wider surrounds of Sussex. We hope people will take the opportunity to join us at our events and experience first hand the passion we have for all things floral."

"We were delighted to open in Hurstpierpoint because it's a really vibrant village where people support the shops instead of travelling to the big supermarkets."

Kiki & Cole's first flower school session, where people can learn to make their own Christmas wreaths, will take place on Wednesday and Thursday.

For more information about the event, call the shop on 01273 832246.

## Building up economy

CUTTING VAT on property repairs would be a huge boost to the construction industry.

It is estimated 300,000 construction workers who have lost their jobs during the recession remain unemployed.

Now the industry has organised a campaign called Repair Britain to boost the UK economy by stimulating the

industry and encouraging the public and local authorities to take an interest in maintenance of their homes and community buildings.

It has called for VAT on property repairs to be cut to 5%.

The campaign is spearheaded by Rok, which has offices in Brighton, Crawley and Eastbourne.

## Cash will not be wasted

A UNIVERSITY has received thousands of pounds to look at ways of helping local authorities deal with waste issues.

The £38,000 funding is the University of Brighton's first "shorter" Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) grant.

Part of the money will be used to employ an associate over 40 weeks to help develop a strategy for

dealing with non-municipal waste for East and West Sussex county councils and Brighton and Hove City Council.

Shorter KTPs are an extension of a long-standing Government scheme.

The university has received 117 grants since the scheme started and is handling 17 KTP programmes with a total value of nearly £2 million.

## Fancy an angel for Christmas?

A FREELANCE PA is offering to be a "Christmas angel" this festive season.

Sasha Scott-Paul, from Brighton, set up HelpMeWork earlier this year after more than a decade working for top companies such as Morgan Stanley.

She has now introduced The Christmas Angel, a new service combining personal shopping and party planning.

The service is available seven days a week across Sussex right up to December 24.

Prices are charged on an hourly basis plus costs, which will vary with the scale of personal shopping lists and parties.

Customers will be required to provide payment for purchases made up-front - gifts will be returnable and venue bookings minus deposit refundable in most instances.

To book the service, available on a first-come, first-served basis, email [brightonchristmasangel@googlemail.com](mailto:brightonchristmasangel@googlemail.com) or call 01273 231595 or 07791 153918.

## Grants for bright car sparks

MILLIONS of pounds is available for cities to install electric charging bays for cars.

Brighton and Hove could be one of the first places to benefit from a £30 million grant scheme launched by the Government.

Transport Secretary Lord Adonis announced plans to promote up to six areas as Plugged-in Places that will act as trailblazers for electric car technology.

With three charging bays already installed courtesy of Elektromotive, based at the Sussex Innovation Centre at the University of Sussex Falmer campus, Brighton and Hove is already ahead of the game.

Lord Adonis called for public/private sector partnerships to compete for grants and a spokesman for the city council expressed an interest in the scheme.

The spokesman said: "We'd like to think our pioneering work on this will drive others to take advantage of this Government cash."

"We are likely to expand our scheme in the future so will be looking for funding wherever we can find it."