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On the threshold of historic alliance

Members urged to vote in favour of chamber merger



Andrew Denniff: Coming weeks are a key period

OVER the following days, members of both Barnsley and Rotherham Chambers of Commerce will be receiving their Merger Information packs and are being asked to consider carefully the choice they will have to make.

Andrew Denniff, policy and representation manager at Rotherham Chamber, outlined the reasons for members to support the recommendations of their respective boards and vote for change.

"The next few weeks will be a key period in determining the future of both organisations. We are asking all our members to be proactive by coming along to our consultation events and finally to give their approval to the merger," he said.

"Together as a unified, larger chamber we can provide busi-



Gordon Bridge: 'Stronger'

nesses within South Yorkshire a welcome opportunity to move closer and begin a process which we know will bring together the best that business has to offer.

"A new merged organisation

will provide ample opportunities to enable us to respond in an appropriate and positive manner to the increasing demands of regionally-orientated economic policy," said Andrew.

Gordon Bridge, chief executive of AESSEAL plc in Rotherham and the likely next Master Cutler, said: "I have enjoyed close working relationships with Rotherham Chamber of Commerce over the last 10 years and have been most impressed with the team of people there.

"I fully support the merger of the Barnsley and Rotherham chambers and believe that a stronger combined unit will add even more value to the businesses in this region."

Dr David Towler, chief executive of YEA Knowledge Wealth and an active member of

Barnsley Chamber added: "This is arguably one of the most crucial decisions in our chamber's long history.

"We must make sure we take full advantage of the opportunity that merger offers.

"I would urge all members to consider the issues carefully and vote. This is our future, let's embrace it and make the most of it."

In conclusion, Andrew commented: "I firmly believe that together we can provide a better offer to members within the two Chamber areas rather than one."

If the 75 per cent threshold in both chambers is achieved at their respective EGMs on July 12, then the two chambers will take the first step towards creating the largest Chamber of Commerce across the region.

THE county's business economy is on the up, according to a leading Sheffield businessman.

Trevor Kelly, chief executive of Pro-South Yorkshire, who has worked in the professional sector in the region for 25 years, says the economy in the county is doing very well with a lot of deals going through in terms of acquisitions, mainly of small to medium-sized businesses.

Trevor, who previously formed and developed the TEK Group of companies before selling to PriceWaterhouseCoopers, and who subsequently developed TEK M&A in the corporate finance and mergers and acquisition sector, says more and more companies in the region are also realising they play a part in the world economy - which means more competition.

"This has been happening over a period of time and is now coming to fruition," explained Trevor. "Businesses in South Yorkshire are more successful now because over the last few years have been developing and realising they have to compete internationally. This is very important."

Sheffield has moved on from its mainly manufacturing base and its professional services sector is now the fastest-growing business division in South Yorkshire.

And 22,000 jobs are set to be generated in the business, professional and financial sector over the next six years, making it one of the fastest-growing segments in the county.

This number, sourced by Renaissance 2006, is significant by any standard and the testing challenge for the region - and Pro-SY in particular - will be to ensure the additional accompanying business is satisfied by local expertise wherever possible. South Yorkshire has a wealth of businesses in this sector, ranging from

Economy firmly on up says Trevor

Loads of deals are going through successfully

internationally-recognised professional firms through to extremely competent local specialist companies.

In fact Pro-South Yorkshire was formed initially as a pilot project led by South Yorkshire Investment Fund with the support of Business Link

'Business have realised they have to compete internationally'

South Yorkshire, Renaissance South Yorkshire and Objective One to test the viability of a group to act in the interests of the professional sector.

Since Pro-South Yorkshire's conception, the organisation has become an essential tool in promoting and stimulating the sector in the region.

One area of growth in the professional sector is in the legal profession.

Trevor explains: "A number of solicitors in the area are increasing staff numbers. This is because of the buoyant economy.

"A year ago in Leeds, similar companies didn't really do much business in South Yorkshire. But now they are coming down here wanting a slice of the action."

Trevor says Leeds-based businesses dealing in property are also coming to South Yorkshire.

He added: "Pro-South Yorkshire has been really successful over the last six months because many businesses in the county are saying they would rather use South Yorkshire companies for professional services, than those further afield. And that is our aim - to stimulate more business for the fastest-growing sector in the South Yorkshire region.

"How do we continue growing this area further? I think this can only be achieved by the sector raising its profile and having a stronger voice in the economic regeneration of the region.

"Pro-SY's objective is to focus on the positives in order to raise the sector's profile," added Trevor. "Hopefully this will lead to increased opportunities and fee income for the South Yorkshire businesses working within it."



Trevor Kelly: Raising the profile

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