

# HDC

HARROGATE DISTRICT  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

# Business Review

*Promoting Harrogate business —The latest news from your chamber*

July 2017

## **How to start and grow a successful business**

At our July meeting, we heard from Chris Spakouskas who, along with his wife Gillian, founded Yorkshire Heart Vineyard. The company won the Best Small Business award, sponsored by the chamber, at the Harrogate Advertiser Business Awards in April.

Yorkshire Heart Vineyard had its roots in a decision made by the couple in 1998 to buy some vines to put in their back garden to make wine as a hobby. Over the years, they steadily acquired more vines, and more land, and now have 10.5 acres of vineyard at Nun Monkton.



Their biggest challenge is meeting demand: often, by the end of the year, they have run out of many of their wines. They have been offered deals with the likes of M&S but had to turn them down because they would not have anything left to sell.

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Despite their casual beginnings, Chris and Gillian now have a thorough business plan in place and have a team of eight people working for them.

Following them was Michelle Mook of Pro-Development. She spoke about the importance of building a team and communicating your values and vision to them in a way that ensures everyone is committed to the same aim for the business. Something as simple as a vision board which the whole team creates and posts in the office can make a difference.

Employee engagement is key to any business's success, but is often overlooked by managers. It gives a significant reduction in staff turnover, which can be costly and time-consuming.

Finally, Michelle reminded everyone to have fun, to get out of the office and to do something active together. Studies show we do our best thinking at 1.8mph, so getting away from the desk helps us to be more creative and productive.

## **Christmas Lights campaign starts here!**

John Fox and the Harrogate at Christmas team are on the hunt for sponsors for this year's Christmas lights. Pledge forms are available now, and anyone who donates will have the opportunity to be part of the How Big Is Your Bauble day on Stray FM on Friday 8th September.

Sponsoring this year's Christmas lights brings more benefits than ever, with a TV documentary being made about the process of preparing Harrogate for the festive season. For more details, turn to page 2.



**Harrogate District Chamber of Commerce**

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The festive period in Harrogate is going to be on Channel 5 this year, after an approach from Daisybeck Studios (makers of The Yorkshire Vet). Anyone who donates can take part in the annual festive shop window competition and may be featured on the programme, which will cover the preparation for Christmas through the eyes of local businesses and volunteers. As well as the Christmas lights and shop window, the production team will be

looking at the pantomime at Harrogate Theatre and the annual sculpture competition run for students at Harrogate College.

This is a fantastic chance to have your business featured on national TV, as well as to boost Harrogate's profile as a great destination for festive shopping, eating, drinking and more.

To find out more, visit [www.harrogateatchristmas.org](http://www.harrogateatchristmas.org) or email [johnmfox93@gmail.com](mailto:johnmfox93@gmail.com).

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## Chamber news

### Congratulations

Former chamber chief executive **Brian Dunsby** was made an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours, for services to business and to the community in Harrogate. As well as 14 years' voluntary service in running the chamber, he leads the committees for both Yorkshire Business Market and Harrogate Christmas Market, the latter bringing thousands of visitors into the town centre at a vital time of year for local shops, hotels and restaurants. Brian is supported by his wife Beryl and the team at Perlex Associates, Maggie and Chris.

More than 30 brave local people completed a skydive in aid of Saint

Michael's Hospice this month, including Simon Cotton, manager of the Cedar Court Hotel. He put on hospitality before and after the event, too, and together they raised around £15,000.

### Work experience

Many chamber businesses currently have a student from St Aidan's School with them, gaining valuable real-life experience of the work environment. Marian Farrar is keen to work with more chamber members in future, so if you could offer an opportunity to a student—and benefit from their enthusiasm and abilities—please contact her (details in the directory on our website).

### Final reminder

If you have not yet paid your membership fees for 2017-18, please do so by 31st July at the latest. Fees have been kept at the same level as last year to make membership as affordable as possible to local businesses.

From August, the membership list will be reset and if you have not paid up, you will no longer be entitled to attend meetings as a member—there is a £15 charge for attending as a guest if you have been to meetings before.

If you have any queries, please contact Sandra (details below or on the website).

### August meeting

Next month's 'safari' meeting will be a return of the team games activities that went down well with attendees last August. The format has been developed to give you a chance to get to know other chamber members well, developing strong contacts for the future.

In teams, you'll be challenged to solve puzzles and complete tasks against other teams in the room.

The meeting takes place on Monday 7th August from 5.30pm at the Queen's Suite of Harrogate Convention Centre. Attendance is free and a buffet is provided. Please register on the website.