

Workington Times & Star

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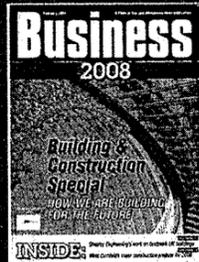
www.timesandstar.co.uk 60p



MOTORS:
New reg
16-page
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The man with all the answers on lingerie - Page 3



INSIDE:
Business
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Inside



WIN A LUXURY BREAK:
Win a two-night stay at the Hillthwaite House Hotel, Windermere, including a five-course dinner. Worth £480. Enter at www.timesandstar.co.uk - P52

SPORTS CAMPAIGN ON TRACK:
A campaign has been launched for an all-weather running track in Workington - Back Page



QUO COME ROCKING:
Rockers Status Quo will play West Cumbria in August in an outdoor concert - Weekend West

MEET THE SILVER SURFERS:

A new project to get people on-line in Allerdale has been launched. Meet the silver surfers on - P9

FAST FOOD:
Parents at a village school near Aspatria have been driving to a school 10 minutes away to make sure children have hot dinners. - P16

ROTARY VISITS WEST AFRICA:
Laughter rang out and tears flowed when Workington Rotarians visited Mali. - P13

DRUGS DISMAY:
The wife of a Workington cancer victim who fought for a new drug to be available on the NHS is dismayed it may now be withdrawn. - P7

BUSINESS CHAMP:
A 60-year-old bodybuilding champion and his new bride have bought the former Bodywise gym in Aspatria. - P18

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Nuclear clean-up plant gets licence for Lillyhall

By John Fuller
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A CONTROVERSIAL £6 million nuclear decontamination plant planned for Workington can go ahead.

Studs vik UK was granted a nuclear site licence by the Health and Safety Executive on Wednesday.

The plant will decontaminate low-level radioactive metal from the nuclear industry and sell it on to be reused. Radioactive residue will be sent for disposal at the low-level repository at Drigg.

The company's plans to open at Lillyhall provoked outrage from the business community on the nearby industrial estate, who said it would damage them and make them lose cash.

Studs vik was granted planning permission by Cumbria County Council for the facility last year.

Objectors complained to the local government ombudsman about that decision, but their complaint was thrown out. Objectors said the decision was flawed and the council had not followed proper processes.

Keith Thomas, a Dean parish councillor and Alan Brown, contracts and supply manager for Igesund Paperboard, which has a distribution centre at Lillyhall, led the challenge.

Mr Thomas said that although he and several others had asked to address planners, they only found out a meeting was being held from press reports. As a result, just three out of 77 objectors could put their case.

He also claimed letters of objection were not handed out. Instead, councillors received a summary.

But the ombudsman threw out the complaints, saying there was no evidence of maladministration.

The firm says the process is safe, environmentally friendly and would contribute to the local economy but because of a rule change, was then required to apply for a licence

under the terms of the Nuclear Installations Act.

Last night, Mr Thomas said: "I am very disappointed that Studsvik was given the green light. Lillyhall Industrial Estate was never designed for the kind of processes that Studsvik want to do.

"It would be much more sensible to have this kind of treatment done at a site near Sellafield instead of clogging up the road with the trucks that they will bring.

"When Studsvik announced the plans, contaminated goods were never mentioned. In the planning application we were told that it was a metal recycling firm.

"It was a county council decision, which is based in Kendal. It just shows how out of touch the people making the decisions are."

No-one from Igesund Paperboard or Alcan, which were also against the plans, was available to comment.

The Studsvik application was the first application of its kind in the UK for 20 years.

Studs vik chief executive Magnus Groth said: "The licence is a confirmation that Studsvik has satisfied the regulatory authorities as to the safety and environmental performance of the facility."

"We are in the forefront of technologies that can be applied to the safe and environmentally responsible treatment and volume reduction of the vast quantities of low level nuclear waste in the country."

The first phase of building at the Joseph Noble Road site is scheduled for completion later this year. More than 300 people have applied for jobs.

Studs vik estimates that there are 500,000 tonnes of slightly contaminated scrap metal in the UK that can be safely treated, recycled and reused.

The company has pledged to protect flowers, insects and birds on the site. A viewing gallery for schoolchildren to learn more about metal recycling will also be built.

Studs vik UK says the process has been operating in Sweden for decades without incident.



Louise Lyon will make the pony...

Louise uses horse sense to help kids

HORSE enthusiast Louise Lyon is planning to open a trekking school in Flimby.

"We can trek the bridleways and get into the woods to do some really nice riding away from the roads."

"There are a lot of visitors that come to Maryport now, with the aquarium and such like."

Louise intends to submit a planning application to Allerdale council next month.

She hopes to win approval for a couple of stables and an all-weather training school.

Louise, who has been a big fan of all things equestrian since she was a little girl, currently has eight horses.

They include a prized showjumper and two horses which she uses for a horse-drawn carriage wedding business set up three years ago.

She added: "Whether people are returning to riding or wanting to take it up for the first time, we've got some really nice horses for them to ride."

"We also hope to go into equine psychotherapy for troubled kids or those with drug problems."

"There are a lot of courses where they learn to look after the horses. They realise the horses rely on them to look after them and it helps them to progress."

High rents and rates crippling town shops

SHOPS in Workington's £35 million town centre are being crippled by extra rates and charges, traders claim.

National chains Autonomy ladieswear and shoe shop Shoe Express will go soon and Civvy Street Man and Woman, run by local woman Caroline Hughes, shut their doors suddenly last week.

Tracey McCourt owns Dresses and Dreams on Jane Street. She said she believed independent retailers in the town had been given a raw deal, subsidising the national stores in the town.

She pays out more than £20,000 a year to keep her shop open. Her rent is £1,000 and she also has to pay a £167 monthly charge for services including staffing, marketing, cleaning of canopies, Christmas decorations and a management fee.

The service charge, at £15,500 a year is split between the Washington Square shops. Last year, the charge was £11,500. She said she looked into moving onto Ivison Lane but was quoted £27,500.

She said: "Town centre manager David Fletcher said it was up to the shops to produce a business plan. I did produce a business plan. However, the nature of a business plan is that most figures are estimated."

"I was not able to find out the cost of the business rates when I was preparing my plan. The only cost I was sure of was the rent, and to be honest, it is extremely high."

"The independent retailers on the new development on Jane Street collectively appealed against the cost of the business rates for our properties after they increased dramatically once the



RAW DEAL: Tracey McCourt

multi-storey car park opened."

"The dramatic increase in the cost of parking also does not help matters, in fact, I believe that it has hindered them. Not only potentially putting off people visiting, it has also increased the costs which we as businesses have to pay."

"This is my first business and I have worked hard to get it off the ground," she added.

A spokeswoman for Exquisite, also on Jane Street, said: "I pay £1,000 a month in rent. "This fee does not include the business rates of £300 a month as well as the service charges which include electricity, water and my telephone bill."

"On top of that I have to earn a living. We do not take £1,000 a month over the counter and that is because the town is just not busy enough."

Shelley Milligan, assistant manager of the Body Shop on Ivison Lane, said: "The rates in Workington are too much and businesses will not be able to stay open. It is worrying for the rest of the shops in the town centre that so many have pulled out."

"If shops are closing down then people won't come into the town centre and we will all suffer."

Mr Fletcher, town centre development manager, said there was an incentive given to Debenhams to get it into the town.

He added: "Having a shop like that will help trade. Smaller businesses were also given incentives though. Shop fronts were fitted out which can cost more than £100,000."

"Unfortunately, shop owners were not able to find out the service charges before they moved in because they were not set. They were worked out once the town centre was up and running."

Shops that have opened and closed in the town centre since it opened two-and-a-half years ago include Tryzone, Jay's Coffee Shop and the Cumbrian Classic Cafe.

Civvy Street's stock is being sold off tomorrow and Sunday by Ian Davies & Company auctioneers.

Opinion P10

Inquiry decision gives green light to Tesco

A GOVERNMENT decision not to call in plans for a huge new Tesco superstore in Workington has cleared the way for building work to start soon.

The Government Office North West this week said there was no need for a public inquiry, following Allerdale council's planning approval for a Tesco Extra store on The Cloffocks.

Allerdale councillor Margaret Jackson, executive member with responsibility for regeneration, said she was delighted there was not going to be a public inquiry.

"The development panel had a tough job considering the application, but they reached a decision in a transparent way," she said.

Tesco has said its superstore could be open within nine months.

The Government decision has angered campaigners fighting to stop the development.

Campaign group Socs (Save our Cloffocks) claimed it was not consulted by the Government office.

Socs stalwart and borough councillor Jean Macleod, of Northside, said she was disgusted but not surprised.

She said: "We have stepped back into Mediaeval times. The rich and powerful, Tesco and Allerdale council, are riding roughshod over the wishes of the people."

Socs member Alan Abraham said that his formal application to get the whole of The Cloffocks designated as a town green, to prevent development, was still under active consideration by Cumbria County Council.

Mr Abraham, of Burrow Walls, Northside, said: "How can anything happen while our application is not only undetermined but has still to be considered in full by the county council?"

"To say that things can now go ahead is a total disgrace."

Three previous applications for town green status have been turned down, but new legislation (The Commons Act 2006) brought in protection for areas where 20 years of continuous leisure use could be proved.

The Socs group says that the use of The Cloffocks for centuries by the Uppies and Downies should qualify it for protection.

The game is still played every Easter and Tesco has said that the new development will not stop it being played.

Allerdale council will gain £18 million from the site sale.

The council wants to use that cash to create a leisure and sports complex on the banks of the River Derwent.

Budget hotel plan for Jailhouse

A WORKINGTON pub is set to become a budget hotel.

Plans have been lodged to turn the Jailhouse on Washington Street into an annex of Washington Central Hotel.

Owner Dobies, run by local businessman Bill Dobie, has applied for planning permission for the change of use.

The company's agent Allan Watson says: "This will mean basic bedroom plus en-suite bathroom accommodation and a small foyer. The existing bars, restaurant and toilets will be removed along with the drinks licence."

Bookings would be made at the Washington Central Hotel and guests would have 24-hour swipe-card access.

Guests will be recommended to use the town's multi-storey car park, which is only 100 yards away.

Mr Dobie started his business from a small Dearham garage in 1967, and has ex-

Hearthstone Homes

WE wish to make it clear that Mr David Hill, of Hearthstone Homes, does not live in a French chateau, as wrongly stated in the Times & Star of October 12, 2007. We apologise to Mr Hill for this mistake.

We also wish to make it clear that sports facilities on land owned by Hearthstone Homes at Moss Bay, Workington, are not under threat of closure as reported in the same article.

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Independent's Day screening
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Subtitled screenings: Sun 17th at 12pm, Mon 18th at 5.20pm & Tue 19th at 8.05pm

JUNO 12A (F)
Every day at 3.15pm, 5.45pm & 8.15pm
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Please note: Contains strong language & moderate sex references

DEFINITELY, MAYBE 12A
Every day at 3.20pm, 5.45pm & 8.30pm
Please note: Contains moderate language & sex references

THE WATER HORSE PG (F)
Every day at 3.00pm & 5.30pm
Plus Fri, Sat & Sun at 12.30pm

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* No 8.20pm show on Wed 20th

SWEENEY TODD 18
Every day at 8.00pm

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