

## IMPORTANT CLARIFICATION

### Claims made by the Unite union

4<sup>th</sup> May 2011



The Unite union has made numerous claims regarding alleged malpractice at Thanet Earth. The allegations relate to people working at our site, employed by the agencies we use.

At our instigation a full investigation is underway, with the results expected during May. This investigation is being conducted by the Gangmasters Licensing Authority, the independent regulator tasked with safeguarding the rights of agency workers in our industry.

There is, however, one particular claim that we're seeing repeated online and in print that we feel very strongly we must rebuff without delay. There are assertions that Thanet Earth refuses to recognise the unions. This is categorically untrue. Our customers are signatories to the Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code <http://www.ethicaltrade.org/eti-base-code> and Thanet Earth Marketing Ltd fully recognises that workers have the right to freedom of association and to 'join or form trade unions of their own choosing and to bargain collectively'<sup>1</sup>. An independent audit has confirmed that we are fully compliant with the Base Code requirements.

Our directly-employed workers are perfectly at liberty to join any union they wish and we will ensure that due legal process is followed. Agency workers are equally entitled to union membership of their choosing and to request similar recognition from their employer, the agency.

We have observed little enthusiasm amongst our staff for them to become members of any union – Unite or otherwise. This is despite Unite publicity material being freely available. Our own system of worker representation (the Thanet Consultative Committee – or TCC) is proving to be the effective forum we expect it to be. The TCC is a formally constituted body consisting of worker representatives elected freely and fairly by their peers. Workers can raise any workplace issue with management from Thanet Earth Marketing and our labour agencies through this forum. Beyond its primary objective of facilitating effective representation of workers to management, the staff have chosen to extend the role of their TCC. It now plays a very important part in making Thanet Earth a great place to work, with responsibility for arranging staff social events and for our charity fundraising falling within its remit. Staff and management treat the TCC with respect and value its function on a site with so many workers and diverse interests.

We await the results of the GLA investigation with interest and thank you for reading this important clarification that we feel compelled to issue.



Members of our Thanet Consultative Committee recently presented a cheque for more than £2500 to the Kent Air Ambulance Trust, their nominated charity of the year for 2010/11.

<sup>1</sup> Section 2.1 ETI Base Code (Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are respected)