

3rd August 2011



**Thanet Earth fully exonerated by impartial investigation.
Accusations of worker abuse unfounded.**

- Gangmasters Licensing Authority finds no case to answer.
- None of the substantive complaints submitted by Unite upheld.
- A full and thorough independent investigation took more than 4 months and interviews with over 70 workers (past and present) were held.

Since early 2010, the Unite union has made claims to Thanet Earth Marketing, to our retail customers, to the media and to the local community that our labour providers are in breach of various governing codes of conduct with regard to the use of agency workers at our site.

Although confident in our systems and procedures, and those of our labour providers, we referred the matter to the Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA) for a full enquiry and definitive, impartial response.

On completion of their detailed investigation and follow up work, the GLA accepts there is no case to answer for any of the four labour providers who supply workers to the Thanet Earth site. Each retains a full, clean licence from the GLA.

The Unite union has also accused Thanet Earth of failing to allow workers freedom of association in alleged contravention of the Base Code of the Ethical Trading Initiative. An independent audit has confirmed our compliance with the Base Code; we have never refused our workers the right to join any union they wish to join. Further, we understand the GLA (who also investigated this issue) found absolutely no evidence to support the union's allegations.

Our labour providers ensure that they offer their workers flexibility, training and opportunities, along with every required legal protection and employment benefit. Again, they work hard to build a good reputation in our Kent community. These accusations are extremely damaging to the goodwill they have built over years of successful trading, not just with Thanet Earth but with their many other client businesses in the area.

We remind those querying our claims of providing employment for 500 people locally that our site is currently less than 50% constructed and we are confident of reaching and possibly exceeding that target once the development is complete. A recent survey showed that for the permanent members of staff at Thanet Earth Marketing, over 95% live in Kent, with the overwhelming majority of staff being from the Thanet, Birchington, Herne Bay and Westgate areas. Thanet Earth Marketing is but one of four employers at the Thanet Earth site.

We wish to thank all those who work at Thanet Earth, our labour providers and our retail customers for their continuing faith in our business.

Full details of the investigation and any resulting reports are held only between the Gangmasters Licensing Authority and the labour providers concerned. Thanet Earth Marketing Ltd is not in a legal position to release any further details of the investigation. This release has been prepared on the basis of a briefing given to Thanet Earth Marketing by the GLA.

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For further information about Thanet Earth, please visit www.thanetearth.com

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For further information about the Gangmasters Licensing Authority, see www.gla.defra.gov.uk

For further information about the Ethical Trading Initiative, see www.ethicaltrade.org