

Vineyards open up

VINEYARDS are gearing up to celebrate English Wine Week from Saturday.

Family-run Carr Taylor, based in Westfield, near Hastings, will be running free tours and a rare chance to taste its award-winning wines.

Visitors will be able to see how the grapes are hand picked and the juice fermented and bottled.

The event takes place on Saturday, June 6 at 3pm. To book, visit www.carr-taylor.co.uk.

Bookers Vineyard in the Bolney Wine Estate, Bolney, near Haywards Heath, will also be offering tours.

Visitors can learn about the art of English wine-making, be able to taste the new 2009 vintages and sample a special wine before it is released.

Visit www.bookersvineyard.co.uk or call 01444 881894.

Still growing

A TELECOMS company has achieved the remarkable feat of recording 100 months of continuous growth.

Unicom, which has an office in Crawley, is recognised as the fastest growing in its sector, appearing in the Sunday Times Profit Track 100 in 2006 and 2007.

It has supplied more than 80,000 customers since launching in 1998 and is aiming for 100,000 by the end of 2011.

Staff to stay after trusts move

Investment jobs 'safe'

by SAM THOMSON
Business Editor

STAFF at a fund management firm have been assured their jobs are safe despite one of their largest sources of revenue being scrapped.

The government yesterday announced it was abolishing Child Trust Funds (CTFs) to save £520 million.

Family Investments (FI), which employs more than 350 people at its offices in West Street, Brighton, is the UK's leading CTF provider, handling about a million of the five million that have been set up since they were launched in 2002.

Under the scheme, vouchers worth £250 were given to every UK child and parents had to find a provider to set up an account. Children could receive a tax-free lump sum when they turned 18.

All payments will now be scrapped by January while, from August, CTF payments

will be reduced from £250 to £50, with children from lower income households receiving £100, down from £500.

FI chief executive John Reeves admitted CTFs generated about 50% of its revenue, with the rest coming from other savings products such as ISAs.

But he added that the company had been given time to prepare for the change because they had been in talks with the Conservatives about their plans for CTFs.

Mr Reeves said: "We knew they were going to be reduced but it was surprising they have been abolished. I'm not going to pretend it is a good thing for us. It is a setback."

Despite this, Mr Reeves is confident there will be no job losses at FI.

He said: "No one will be

asked to leave the company for the foreseeable future. This is because we have more than one million CTF customers already on our books and they will remain with us for the next ten to 15 years.

"Also, we saw the potential for CTFs to be an easy target so we ensured our fund business was profitable and looked at providing alternative savings products for children and the over 50s."

FI became the UK's leading provider of CTFs last year after signing a deal with Abbey, now rebranded as Santander.

Mr Reeves said: "We deal with one million out of the five million CTFs that have been issued. Some of our competitors may look to leave the market and then we could acquire their books of business, as we did with the Abbey."

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Longleat Safari Park

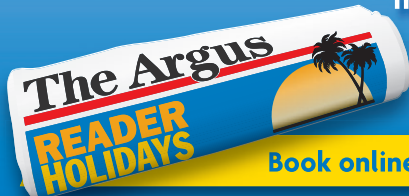
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