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Economy on upturn as jobless numbers drop

Businesses optimistic as district has lowest figures since 2008

By **Dean Kilpatrick**

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THE number of people unemployed in Shepway is at its lowest since the economic downturn started in 2008, according to new figures.

Statistics released by the Office of National Statistics last week revealed there were 1,995 Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA) claimants in the district in March, compared with 2,144 in February.

And with the district experiencing the biggest monthly drop in the county - as well as recording its lowest claimant count since December 2008 - optimism has been expressed about the Shepway economy.

MP Damian Collins said: "It's a very big monthly fall. It's at its lowest in the past four years, which is a very good thing.

"Sometimes, you get periods of the year when the job market slows down and you hope to see a bounce, and this year had been especially good.

"I think it goes with what a lot of businesses in the district have been telling me.

Money

"There are a lot more people spending money, interest in businesses, and therefore more people are employed.

"I think we have every reason to believe we are on the right course."

Unemployment in Shepway rose for



PRAISE: Robert Richardson

the first time in 11 months last December, and Robert Richardson, general manager of The Grand, says Job

Centre Plus staff should get a share of the praise.

He said: "There's a lot more caveats now, and that's a good thing because 95 per cent of people really want a job and that makes it a lot harder for those who don't want to work.

"Whatever the politicians and businesses are doing, without the foundations laid by the Job Centre Plus, the fall in unemployment would not have happened."

Mr Richardson added that skills such as interview technique provided by job centre staff were also a "major factor" in finding new jobs.

■ Do you agree? Have you found a job in the last month? E-mail dean.kilpatrick@KRNmedia.co.uk