In June the big Le Bourget airshow took place near Paris and the UK again had a huge presence, with three Ministers and 110 exporters. This reminds us how important the commercial links between the UK and France in the aerospace sectors are for both our economies. For example, Airbus' headquarters is based in Toulouse, yet the famous Airbus A350 wings are manufactured and produced in Bristol employing almost a third of the UK's aerospace workforce.

But this is only one part of the story of the close business partnership between our two countries. In 2016, trade across the Channel amounted to £69bn - making us amongst each other's most important trading partners.

It's hardly surprising that the UK is one of the top export markets for Burgundy, Bordeaux and Champagne - overall £835 million's worth of French wine made its way across the Channel in 2016. Perhaps less well known is that the UK also exports a remarkable amount of food and drink products to France. Last year, £69.5 million of cheese; £72 million of beer; and £47 million of wine! As for whisky, 180 million bottles were sold to France in 2016 - that's more per month than bottles of cognac sold in a year.
Brexit: Citizens’ rights

The Brexit negotiations formally began on 19 June, in a constructive atmosphere. One of the first areas to be discussed is citizens’ rights, and you may have seen that Prime Minister Theresa May has set out to the UK Parliament details of the UK’s position on this.

This was an important step - we want to give certainty to the three million EU citizens living in Britain, and to agree with the EU a reciprocal deal which gives guarantees to British citizens living in the European Union. We know how important this is for the hundreds of thousands of British and French citizens living on the other side of the Channel who bring so much to both countries. The Prime Minister has said that guaranteeing the rights of expatriates is a top priority in the negotiations, and it’s been very welcome to see that the EU agrees on its importance.

The Prime Minister made clear that we do not want anyone lawfully living in Britain to have to leave, and that families should not be split up. So any EU citizen who has lived in the UK for five years at a specified date can apply for UK settled status, and those who have been there for less time (at that point) will be given the time to meet the requirement. In effect they will all enjoy the same rights to healthcare, education, benefits and pensions as a UK citizen.

The PM also provided clarity on some questions we are often asked by British citizens living in France. For example, that the UK intends to export and uprate the UK State Pension and provide associated health cover within the EU. You can see the full detail of the UK offer on the Government’s.gov.uk website.

Meet the British Embassy!

Since our last newsletter in April, the Ambassador and team have hosted the British Community Committee’s AGM in Paris, and have continued to meet British citizens around France. On 2 June the Ambassador attended an event in Perigueux organised by the Franco-British Chamber of Commerce and Industry, where he had the chance to speak to 150 Brits, to hear their concerns and to learn about the rich contribution of the approximately 10,000 Brits living in the Dordogne. Further trips are planned for the Autumn.

Guest article: The British Charitable Fund

By Chair, Julia Kett

For most Brits life in France is comfortable and satisfying, energising and fun. But for some, it can go badly wrong: elderly people living alone, existing on dwindling pensions; others laid low by illness or personal tragedy. Families torn apart by the daily grind of poverty, when jobs are lost, the language is a struggle and work is hard to find. Relying on food banks, charity shops and jumble sales, shutting off the heating, neglecting important health issues. Trapped, frightened and completely isolated in often damp and crumbling homes they cannot sell. Established by the British Ambassador Lord Granville in 1823, the BCF is still giving people the chance to turn their lives around. In 2017, we expect to distribute almost €250,000 to British people of all ages and walks of life, throughout France.

For details on how to apply for help or to make a donation, please visit our website: www.britishcharitablefundparis.org. You can also contact us by email: britishcharitablefund@orange.fr or phone us on +33 (0)1 47 59 07 69

To subscribe to this newsletter, sign up here. To unsubscribe email UNSUBSCRIBE to voisinsvoices@gmail.com