



# VOISINS VOICES

A BRITISH EMBASSY NEWSLETTER



## WELCOME

BY ED LLEWELLYN, BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE



Welcome to the second edition of Voisins Voices, the newsletter from the British Embassy. We've had great feedback on this initiative and so we plan to keep it going. When I look back on the months since April there's been a lot going on, not least elections in both the UK and France, but the memory that sticks in my mind is the solidarity shown by the French after the terrorist attacks in the UK. Standing in the Stade de France as the crowd sang God Save the Queen before the France-England friendly on 13 June was a truly moving moment and I'm sure you all have your own examples. So thank you again to our French friends.

## The UK and France: we mean business!

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, 190 million bottles were sold to France in 2016 – that's more per month than bottles of cognac sold in a year.

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## Happy Birthday, Your Majesty

On 15 June the Ambassador welcomed over 1300 people to his Residence for a garden party celebrating Her Majesty the Queen's official birthday. This year the theme was **Les Voisins**. Guests included French politician Ségolène Royal and British actress Kristin Scott Thomas.

This regular event has evolved over time and, as well as an occasion to celebrate the Queen and her close links to France, it is a real opportunity to showcase the best of Britain, not least in terms of food and drink. For example, for the last 20 years Neals Yard Dairy have provided delicious cheeses for every garden party and La Maison du Whisky have brought their own selection of malt whiskies. Every year a British Military band has provided entertainment – this year it was the excellent Band of the Parachute Regiment.



In energy, EDF is France's national power provider but is also one of the UK's most important energy suppliers. There are strong links in everything from innovative technology and financial services to fish, car tyres and communications equipment.

Here at the Embassy part of our role is to support this wide-ranging commercial partnership. If you know of a British business interested in exporting to France or a French company interested in investing in the UK contact [commercialeenquiries.paris@fco.gov.uk](mailto:commercialeenquiries.paris@fco.gov.uk)

## 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](http://www.britishcharitablefundparis.org). You can also contact us by email: [britishcharitablefund@orange.fr](mailto:britishcharitablefund@orange.fr) or phone us on +33 (0)1 47 59 07 69