

**Speech by H.E. Sylvie Bermann,
French Ambassador to the United Kingdom
at a Brittany Ferries event
Portsmouth, 8 June 2016**

Ladies and gentlemen,

I'm very happy to be with you today for the thirtieth anniversary of the link between Portsmouth and Ouistreham-Caen, and the port of Portsmouth's fortieth birthday! I'd like to thank Brittany Ferries very much for their invitation.

My speech will be very brief; I'd like to take the opportunity of being with you today to send you three messages:

Firstly, the promotion of tourism to France is one of the very top priorities of my work in the United Kingdom, as part of the global strategy driven by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development.

As you know, nearly twelve million Britons already visit France every year – and I'm always amazed how well they know our country: sometimes better than we do! –, but we must maintain our position, and we can always do better. Spain is fine, but what France has to offer is rich and varied too. It's up to us, collectively, to sell and promote it together, in a coordinated way.

Twenty-sixteen is packed with events we can draw on. I'm thinking in particular of those in Brittany, the Normandy Impressionist Festival twenty-sixteen, the nine-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Hastings, the Grand Départ of the Tour de France at Mont Saint Michel, in which Brittany Ferries is a partner, and of course Euro Twenty-Sixteen, for which we're expecting two-point-five million spectators from next week onwards.

Secondly, in this context, Brittany Ferries is a crucial player in our economic and tourism diplomacy. Brittany Ferries has an English brand name, but it's a French business true to its roots. It's a distinct, high-performance collaborative model that benefits the region's development. It ensures a direct link between two spaces, two peoples, fostering

exchanges, which include tourism. I and my Embassy team, together with Atout France in the UK – whose Director is also here today – can assure you of our support.

M. Roue, we're ready to encourage the maximum number of partnerships with your company. I'm fully at the disposal of you and the other transport operators to discuss your strategy and projects, so that we can provide you with the help the UK needs.

We'll lend you the necessary support so you can continue providing an offer that complements the cross-Channel traffic of the Pas-de-Calais. The central Channel area must have the means to absorb some of the growth in passenger and freight flows by planning to develop its infrastructure.

Thirdly, cross-border development is one of the subjects the Embassy is working on. I would like to initiate a high-level strategic meeting to bring the British and French maritime regions together to focus on a few sectors, including tourism development.

We're ready, with Atout France, to encourage as many British tourists as possible to use your services and make use of French tourism products in general.

With your help, our offer and services must hold their own in a highly competitive European and global environment. I thank you, too, for the commitment you've shown alongside tourism industry players as part of the twenty-fifteen to twenty-seventeen *Grand Ouest* contract.

Despite complicated global geopolitics, we remain positive about the development of trade between France and the UK.

This is an ambition we all share – we, you and all the institutional and private players, be they at national, regional, departmental or local level.

You can be sure of our support.

Thank you.