



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Foreign Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Evidence from HE Lord Llewellyn of Steep on his appointment as HM Ambassador to Paris, HC 901](#)

Tuesday 10 January 2017

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Members present: Crispin Blunt (Chair); Ann Clwyd; Mike Gapes; Mr Mark Hendrick; Mr Adam Holloway; Daniel Kawczynski; Ian Murray; Andrew Rosindell; Nadhim Zahawi.

Questions 1-46

Witnesses

[I](#): HE Lord Llewellyn of Steep, HM Ambassador to Paris.

Examination of Witness

Lord Llewellyn of Steep.

- Q1 **Chair:** Welcome to this afternoon's session of the Foreign Affairs Committee. We are taking evidence from our new ambassador to Paris, Lord Llewellyn of Steep. Lord Llewellyn, my apologies for the fact that our private session overran and we are starting a little later than anticipated. Thank you very much for your patience. I wonder if we could begin by inviting you to give the Committee the background to the process of your appointment. What led you to your position today?

Lord Llewellyn: Thank you for the opportunity to appear today. The background is as follows. First, as you and many of the Committee members know, Chairman, my career has had to do with foreign policy over the past nearly 30 years. Before I took up my appointment as chief of staff to David Cameron, I was abroad for 13 years, working for five years for our last Governor of Hong Kong until we handed over at midnight on 30 June 1997. I spent time in Brussels, and I also did two separate stints in Sarajevo. I spent five years of my life working in the mission helping to rebuild that war-torn country.

Before I went to Hong Kong, I was the head of the Conservative Research Department's small foreign policy and defence team, at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Of course, most recently, in Downing Street, for six years I dealt with foreign policy every day. It was always my ambition to return to the foreign policy world when I left Downing Street. I think it was quite an open secret that that was my hope.

With respect to Paris, the vacancy there arose because of the appointment of Sir Julian King as a European Commissioner, which was confirmed on 19 September, and he took up his appointment on 21 September. The current Prime Minister approved my appointment on 19 September.

- Q2 **Chair:** Right, thank you. So there was not an application process, as such?

Lord Llewellyn: No. I should perhaps have made clear that this is a political appointment. It is an appointment made under the relevant provision of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010. As the Committee will know, there have been political appointments made by Prime Ministers in the past, including in respect of Paris. Our last Governor of Hong Kong, whom I worked for, was also himself a political appointment. For political appointments, there is not that process.

- Q3 **Chair:** Your CV plainly speaks for itself. Anyone who has worked at the right hand of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom as his principal personal foreign policy adviser for the length of time you have—and your previous qualifying experience is obviously hugely substantial, in widely different theatres: Hong Kong, Bosnia and Europe. It is a rather impressive curriculum vitae to present, in terms of foreign policy



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experience. Almost any ambassadorial role would have been open to you.

There are peculiar circumstances to the role in Paris, in terms of timing. Would you have had a discussion about any other potential roles that you could have taken, given that you appear to be of an age to do more than one appointment? Are there others that have been discussed, or do you see yourself finishing your public service as ambassador to Paris?

Lord Llewellyn: In answer to your first question, Chairman, this was something that I hoped to do over a number of years when eventually I came to leaving Downing Street. Over a period of years, a number of different ideas were discussed, but they didn't come to anything because I ended up staying at Downing Street, for whatever reason. Paris was a vacancy that appeared for the reasons I have described. As you know, diplomatic appointments tend to be a matter of rotation of time and place and so on.

In respect of the future, I feel I have just started this job, which, let me place on the record, I am incredibly honoured to be doing; it is a huge privilege and I feel this is an extremely important time for relations between Britain and France. I feel I have something to contribute. I want to serve my country. I am very focused. I have been in this job for just over eight weeks now, and I want to make a success of it. I am very focused on that. One step at a time is my view.

Q4 **Chair:** Given that you were a political appointee from outside the Foreign Office at the time of your appointment, what training and induction have you had for your new role?

Lord Llewellyn: I used the six or so weeks between the announcement of my appointment on 23 September and my taking up the appointment—I arrived in Paris on 8 November and presented my credentials to President Hollande on 9 November, the 27th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, as it happened—to do the training courses that the permanent secretary at the Foreign Office had suggested I do.

I did a heads of mission course with a number of fellow heads of mission who were heading out to take up their posts, which was an extremely useful course with a number of now colleagues. As part of that, I also did a finance course. I did an excellent crisis management course. I did the consular course and I did a couple of media courses. I also did some intensive language training; I speak French, and my degree was in French, but obviously it was important to get up on that. I also did a brief period of immersion training in France.

Q5 **Ann Clwyd:** I was going to say, you've obviously got the language skills. I wonder what you think your biggest challenge will be in the role.

Lord Llewellyn: I think there are a number of challenges. Obviously, my overriding priority is Brexit and the Government's making a success of that. I think the relationship between Britain and France is an extremely strong and deep one. We are countries that have had, dare I say it, our rivalries and differences, but fundamentally this a very strong relationship. We are two countries that are today facing a very serious security



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challenge, so I would put that right up there. I have spent a good deal of time on it in my first eight weeks in post.

When I was working for David Cameron, I saw at first hand how we respond to terrorist situations overseas, including, sadly, with respect to France. I have sat many times in that Cobra room, as the Prime Minister and senior Ministers were dealing with incidents. Now I am the person at the other end of the VTC, and I feel very strongly that I need to make sure I can deliver on the requirement that our embassy has to provide a first-class consular service for British citizens who are living and working in, or travelling through, France.

My final point with respect to your question is that I have spent, in the eight weeks I have been in post, a lot of time on the consular side. I have spent half a day at our consulate in Paris—where, by the way, I used to work; 27 years ago, I spent a summer as a student working in our consular and visa section. It is a great privilege to be working again with some of the people who were there when I was there as a young student. I have also been to visit the consulates in Marseilles and in Bordeaux, and I have made sure we have held two crisis exercises in the time I have been in post.

Q6 **Ann Clwyd:** Do you feel, then, that you have skills over and above those that a career diplomat might have?

Lord Llewellyn: I would not put it like that. I think I have some skills that are similar to theirs, not least because of my long overlap with the Foreign Office. I have worked with my now colleagues in the Foreign Office throughout my career. Many of the people in my mission in Paris I have worked with before in different places. So I would not say that I have skills that are over and above; I have some different skills and qualifications, I guess by dint of having worked at the heart of the Government for quite a period, and also from having a political background—although a political background, as I say, that has come and gone. I think it helps that my recent experience means I know a lot of my French counterparts. I have worked with colleagues in the Elysée, but also I know the Government back here and how it works.

Mike Gapes: It is quite interesting that you and I were doing the same job in the late '80s and early '90s. I was doing the job for the Labour party's international department when the Berlin Wall collapsed. It is an interesting connection.

Lord Llewellyn: We can swap some stories sometime.

Q7 **Mike Gapes:** Yes, we could. How would you describe your experience of eight weeks of working for the FCO so far?

Lord Llewellyn: First of all, I am very clear that I have a very good team in Paris, Mr Gapes. I am not surprised by that, because I have worked with the embassy in Paris throughout my career, including in recent years. It is a great team, and I am very pleased to be working with them.



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Secondly, I have tried to hit the ground running. It has been a busy eight weeks. In my first week, I presented my credentials, but I also went to the French equivalent of Remembrance Sunday on the Friday. I went to the first anniversary of the attacks on the Bataclan on the Sunday. The next week, I took part in and represented the United Kingdom at the closing ceremony of the offensive at the Somme. All of that bore in on me in my first seven days how much we have been through together as countries and how we are watching out for each other today.

I have also focused, obviously, on Brexit and on making contact with not only the French Government but the Opposition parties. The primary on the centre-right took place in my first three weeks in post. That obviously was a dominant factor in my first few weeks. I have described what I have done on the consular side, which has been important. I have also made a point of spending time with the Border Force. As you know, we have many hundreds of Border Force staff serving in France. I have visited them at Lille, the Gare du Nord and at Calais.

The prosperity agenda is very important. For example, I held a big event at the residence to mark the final investment decision on Hinkley. There was some signing of supply chain contracts in respect of that. Finally—sorry; I'll shut up in a second—I've obviously got on with the normal business of the embassy. We have had eight Ministers through in my time there, including the Foreign Secretary to attend the Syria conference. I think we have had 1,000 people through the ambassador's residence.

Q8 Mike Gapes: You have come from outside the FCO. What do you see as the key strengths and weaknesses of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, coming into it?

Lord Llewellyn: I think I will perhaps focus on its strengths, having just joined it. I think its strengths are that it has some incredibly good people who are incredibly committed. They serve in some very tough situations around the world. I wouldn't over-claim that Bosnia was a tough situation—I was there after the war—but I know how good they are in those situations. It is an institution for which I have a very high regard.

I think some of the issues on which it could do even better have started to be fixed in the last few years. For example, for language training, which is very important, the language school has been re-established. The diplomatic academy has been established; I remember the former Foreign Secretary setting that up. I've now been through a bit of it and I think it's very good. I think the Foreign Office would be the first to say that that is a work in progress and needs to be further developed. I found my time using its training very helpful.

Q9 Mike Gapes: But you haven't really highlighted any weaknesses.

Lord Llewellyn: I have tried to put them as strengths that can be further improved.

Q10 Mike Gapes: But so far you haven't noticed anything that you really think should be done in a different way.



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Lord Llewellyn: There are some things I am changing in the way the embassy in Paris is running. They tend to be the sort of things I guess an incoming ambassador would change—the way the day is run and that kind of stuff. Perhaps we can have this conversation again when I have been in my post a little bit longer; eight weeks is not very long.

- Q11 **Mike Gapes:** Alright. Does the fact that you are a political appointee make any difference to the reporting lines that you have, compared with other ambassadors—or even your autonomy, in a sense?

Lord Llewellyn: No is the short answer to that. I am now a British ambassador. I report as other British ambassadors do. I report through the Europe directorate in the Foreign Office; that is my day-to-day reporting line through the permanent secretary to the Foreign Secretary. I obviously also work for the whole of Whitehall—I work for No. 10, for DExEU, for the Ministry of Defence, for the Home Office and for all Departments with which I am in regular contact.

Perhaps going back to Ms Clwyd's earlier question, the fact that I come from recent experience at the centre of Government means that I have contacts I can use. I am not alone in that; other senior ambassadors have that, too.

- Q12 **Mike Gapes:** Can I just expand on that a little bit? You weren't just at the centre of Government; you were in a senior position for five years as the Leader of the Opposition's chief of staff, and then six years as his chief of staff within No. 10. It is not just that you have contacts—you are actually somebody who was right at the centre of No. 10 Downing Street.

Although the personality of the Prime Minister has changed, and some of the key people have also changed, it is just a few months ago. Surely you are in an almost unique position as ambassadors go and can have reporting or communicating lines far greater than any other ambassador in post.

Lord Llewellyn: As I said, I do have those contacts by dint of my recent experience at the centre of Government, and obviously I am in touch with them. I don't want to claim any special reporting arrangement, because I don't have that and I wouldn't want that. I am a British ambassador who reports to the Foreign Secretary through the chain I described. Obviously, I have worked closely with Ministers across the Government. I worked closely with the Prime Minister for nearly 11 years and with other Ministers. I think that the fact that I have done so is helpful in my current role at this time.

- Q13 **Mike Gapes:** So how would you describe your relationship with No. 10?

Lord Llewellyn: I have a very good relationship with No. 10—an extremely good relationship. I have a good relationship with the Prime Minister and colleagues in No. 10, including my successors.

- Q14 **Nadhim Zahawi:** Welcome, Lord Llewellyn. Can I move on to the Brexit negotiations? Obviously, the UK Government, at the beginning of the process of leaving the EU, have undertaken those negotiations. What do



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you think your role would be within that, as you became ambassador to France? Can you explain the embassy link to UKRep? What involvement does your embassy have with the Department for Exiting the European Union vis-à-vis the FCO?

Lord Llewellyn: In answer to the first part of your question, I am very clear about my role, as other British ambassadors are. My role is to do everything I can to help this country secure the best possible deal when we leave the European Union. That is my goal; that is what I focus on all the time. The particular role of the embassy in Paris, like other embassies, is to report on the context in the country, to report accurately on the situation as we see it, and to argue for the British position as powerfully and persuasively as we can. That is how I see that part of the role.

Obviously, we work closely with UKRep, and we will work very closely with UKRep. UKRep has a particular reporting structure, which is not the same as the embassy in Paris. We are like other embassies around the world. We are not formally dual accountable in the way that UKRep or UKDel NATO are with respect to the Ministry of Defence, but we work very closely with UKRep and DExEU.

- Q15 **Nadhim Zahawi:** In terms of the narrative playing out in each of the member countries, presumably that is going to be quite important towards the negotiations. For example, there will be particular industries in France that will be lobbying for a good deal with the United Kingdom. Would you be playing a role in the analysis of the politics in each—in your own country, but also with the other ambassadors?

Lord Llewellyn: Yes, I certainly would see that as a big part of our role. We are at quite an early stage in this process—as you know, the negotiation has not yet started. Certainly, I would see that as an important part of our role.

- Q16 **Mr Hendrick:** Lord Llewellyn, clearly, as you said yourself, it is a very political appointment. Do you feel that the appointment of Sir Tim Barrow as our EU ambassador, your predecessor moving to become a commissioner and subsequently your own appointment perhaps reflect the fact that the Government feel that the Foreign Office has too many career diplomats who are very pro-European and remain-oriented? Introducing you as a political appointee perhaps means, given your previous work, that you are more likely to follow the wishes of the Government than the Foreign Office.

Lord Llewellyn: I would hope there wouldn't be a large gap between the wishes of the Government and the Foreign Office. It is the job of the Foreign Office to carry out the policy of the elected Government, as we all know.

The thread that I would hope runs through the three appointments you have described is: the right people for the right jobs. As I said—well, maybe I didn't say it—Sir Julian King is very well qualified for the particular job he is doing. The fact that he was allocated the security portfolio, which is an important portfolio in Britain's national interest,



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demonstrated that. Sir Tim Barrow is a seasoned and tough negotiator. I have worked with him over the years. He is highly qualified for the post. And I don't want to sound immodest, but for the reasons I have described, I think I have the right experience to be a British ambassador, but also I have particular experience with respect to France, which obviously is an important country generally but perhaps particularly at the moment.

- Q17 **Mr Hendrick:** From your credentials, it is clear that you are very Francophile: you have studied France and the French. That security relationship with France is so important. With Britain outside the European Union, and Britain and France playing the major defence and security roles historically, do you feel that your appointment is as much about keeping the French on side as it is about making sure that Brexit goes smoothly in a more general way?

Lord Llewellyn: I certainly hope that my appointment reflects the importance that the Government attach to relations with France, including that security and defence relationship. That is a very important relationship, in the interests of both our countries. The Lancaster House accords, which were negotiated while I was in Downing Street, are, if anything, even more valid today, as the bilateral relationship takes more of the strain, than they were when they were negotiated in 2010. That part of the relationship sort of speaks for itself at the moment, but I think it is very important that we remind our French colleagues how important it is and that they understand that. French Ministers do understand it, but perhaps it needs to be more widely understood in France.

In relation to the defence relationship, we now have, for example, the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force, which we have been working up together and which is progressing well. It is not a standing force, but it involves training arrangements. Its proof of concept was validated last April in Operation Griffin Strike.

We have day-to-day co-operation, with our forces working together in Syria and Iraq. We have had four naval personnel on the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier. We have a French pilot flying a Voyager refuelling aircraft in the Gulf at the moment. We have a British pilot flying a Rafale in February. This is a very workmanlike, close and important relationship, and I hope I can contribute to keeping it strong.

- Q18 **Mr Hendrick:** Clearly, there is no doubting your commitment and wish to make Britain's relationship with France that much better, but do you share the views of David Cameron, who wanted to remain? He obviously fought a very tough referendum campaign to try to remain and, I am sure, would have been happier for the UK to remain. Do you feel that you shared his views and, if you did share his views, that that will make your job any more difficult than it is, or any different?

Lord Llewellyn: Like everybody in this room, I'm a democrat. We've held a referendum. We had a very vigorous debate in that referendum, to use a bit of old-fashioned British understatement, and the British people have taken a decision. So, I'm a democrat and I feel that it's our duty now to



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carry out that decision. Secondly, I'm a patriot; I want to do the best for my country and I will carry on serving my country. So, that's my view. Obviously, my former boss—the Prime Minister—is a patriot too, but that's how I approach my wish to continue in public service.

- Q19 **Daniel Kawczynski:** One of your predecessors, Sir Nicholas Henderson, wrote a very interesting book about his time in post from 1975 to 1979. It is a book in the House of Commons Library that I have just finished, and if you haven't already read it I can highly recommend it. Can I just press you on the French view of Brexit, from your time in post already? Could you tell us a little bit about the major differences that you have identified between the different political parties in France with regard to Brexit, and perhaps also the differences between Government and business with regard to Brexit?

Lord Llewellyn: First of all, as you know, Mr Kawczynski, there is an election campaign under way in France and it is dominating the political debate, so I think it is fair to say that Brexit is not dominating as a subject, although obviously it is mentioned. The French Government have set out their view, which is similar to that of other European Governments frankly, that they won't negotiate before article 50 has been triggered and they talk about the indivisibility of the four freedoms.

The other opposition parties have also spoken about it to some extent, although perhaps without a great deal of emphasis. I think that Monsieur Macron is making a speech about Europe this week. Monsieur Fillon has talked about Europe focusing on core tasks. Obviously the Front National has taken a different view on Brexit.

Daniel Kawczynski: I know that obviously their views will be somewhat curtailed until we finally instigate the negotiating process, but what opportunities would the French Government see from a Brexit? What opportunities, and what concerns do they have at this moment in time, from Brexit?

Lord Llewellyn: As I say, it is important to caveat all of this with the fact that negotiations have not started. So Governments are setting out, as it were, their opening positions. I have described what the French Government have said so far, i.e. "No negotiation until you've triggered", and secondly, underlining the indivisibility, as they see it, of the four freedoms.

In terms of concerns, any French Government will be determined to defend French interests, as they see them. We shouldn't be under any illusions about that. They will want to do everything they can to enhance the prospects for their own economy. I do not think that is surprising. It is the job of the British Government to vigorously defend British interests. Perhaps I should have—

- Q20 **Chair:** Do they see that as an opportunity or a concern?

Lord Llewellyn: I guess you could say that potentially it is both. It is for them; I do not want to put words into their mouth.



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Q21 **Chair:** You report back to the Government. You are our ambassador in Paris. We are inviting you to assist us by giving us the detail—

Lord Llewellyn: I think it is important that the French Government speaks for itself, but I am trying to describe what they have said so far. They want to make sure that France does not lose out in any negotiation and, indeed, benefits from it economically. They have, as you probably know, set up an initiative to try to entice businesses across the channel from London. Perhaps that is the answer to the part of your question about opportunity. I should say, while pointing out that fact, that our economy is a very strong economy. We have enormous strengths as a country and as an economy, and those remain.

Q22 **Daniel Kawczynski:** I am sure you have all the figures to hand on the bilateral trade that exists between the two countries and the number of jobs that have been created by both entities within the opposite country, whether that is Britain or France. You mentioned Hinkley Point, which is obviously an extremely important project. Do you get the sense that French business, chambers of commerce and the people involved in wealth creation are keen to have the best possible trading terms with the United Kingdom in order to safeguard these achievements?

Lord Llewellyn: Since the referendum, French companies have made some significant investments in the United Kingdom and announced those decisions. Thales, for example, has announced a couple of important decisions. There was an announcement last week of a French cloud data company that has made an investment in London. There have been a number of announcements that in a way speak for themselves.

In terms of the general view of French business, I would not want to get into describing what the general view is, because first of all French business is not saying a huge amount publicly at the moment. Secondly, it might be unhelpful as the British ambassador if I started highlighting things that had or had not been said. Thirdly, I would hope that this very deep, strong commercial and trading relationship between our countries ultimately is about self-interest. It is about the interests of our two economies. I hope that that will be an important factor in the months and years to come.

Q23 **Andrew Rosindell:** Good afternoon, ambassador. What do you understand the concept of the “Global Britain” strategy to be, and how are you implementing that in your post?

Lord Llewellyn: I understand it to be as was described in the excellent speech by the Foreign Secretary before Christmas. It embodies the view and the reality that this is a country that has its eyes set firmly on the horizon. We are a global nation. We have a global footprint. We have more of our citizens living overseas than almost any other nation. We are connected right across the world. I know that from my own career. I know that from the time I spent all those years ago in Hong Kong. I know that from my recent experience. “Global Britain” is about reminding the world of that, going out there and seizing the opportunities and perhaps reminding ourselves of that.



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In relation to France, I take it to mean looking for opportunities to underline to our French counterparts how much we do together in the world and working out where we can work more closely together on, for example, foreign policy in general as two sovereign nations. I see that in my work every day, as I have described in some detail, on the defence side, but also on the foreign policy side. We are working together all the time as two members of the Security Council. I think that is what it is all about.

- Q24 **Andrew Rosindell:** How do you reconcile the Prime Minister's call to "look beyond the continent of Europe" and compare that with what the Foreign Secretary said: that the UK "will want to be closer than ever" to European allies such as France? How do you marry the two together? What is the lie of the land there?

Lord Llewellyn: I do not think those statements are inconsistent. Yes, we must look beyond Europe. We are a global power. We are a member of the Security Council. We are a nuclear power, one of two nuclear military powers in Europe. But France, too, is a world power and a nuclear power. The statement that we are leaving the European Union but we are not leaving Europe is not a slogan; it is the practical reality of the matter. We are going to stay deeply engaged in Europe in pursuit of our national interests, but we are also going to stay deeply engaged in the world.

- Q25 **Andrew Rosindell:** What specific steps are you able to take in your role to strengthen the bilateral co-operation between, as you said, two sovereign nations: France and the United Kingdom?

Lord Llewellyn: We can do a number of things. We are doing a number of things. A lot of it comes back to the defence and security side, on which I am placing a lot of weight because that is perhaps one of the biggest challenges we face as nations today. If you look at Britain and France, what do you see? You see two countries of similar size with similar capabilities, with two world-class and formidable militaries—two nuclear powers, as I have described—two countries facing a terrorist threat, but also two countries grappling with globalisation and the need to compete in the modern world. On all those items, we can work very closely together, not in a starry-eyed way, but in pursuit of our respective national interests. That is what I am committed to doing.

It is important as we approach these negotiations to keep our eye on the horizon, which is that leaving the European Union does not mean not remaining closely engaged in the affairs of the European continent, but doing it intergovernmentally.

- Q26 **Andrew Rosindell:** Of course, the closest part of British territory to France are the Channel Islands and they are not part of the European Union. In your role as Her Majesty's ambassador, will you also undertake to ensure that relations with the Channel Islands are strong and that their interests are looked after, bearing in mind their closeness to France and the important bilateral contacts that have already been established?



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Lord Llewellyn: In so far as France and the French Government have a bearing on that matter, of course.

- Q27 **Andrew Rosindell:** Also—a point of clarification—in your role as Her Majesty's ambassador to France, are you also looking after relations with French overseas territories and departments?

Lord Llewellyn: Yes.

- Q28 **Andrew Rosindell:** You are. Would you also perhaps undertake, during your time in Paris, to look at how the French deal with their territories, and to see if there is anything we can learn, in terms of how we treat ours, bearing in mind they have a single Minister who deals with their territories, but also have elected representation in the National Assembly and also in the Senate?

Lord Llewellyn: I am very happy to look at that and to report to my bosses in the Foreign Office.

- Q29 **Andrew Rosindell:** Thank you very much. If I could just come to the final questions: how many people work for you in the embassy in Paris; how many are UK-based; and how many, or what proportion, are locally engaged?

Lord Llewellyn: 221 people work for me in the embassy in Paris. Of those, 58 are UK-based. Could you remind me of the last question?

- Q30 **Andrew Rosindell:** How many are UK-based, and how many, or what proportion, are locally engaged?

Lord Llewellyn: As I say, 221 work for me; 163 are local staff and 58 are UK-based. Sorry—remind me one last time.

Chair: That appears to add up.

Lord Llewellyn: Good.

- Q31 **Andrew Rosindell:** There is one final point: in the light of the importance of the British-French relationship post-Brexit, are you going to get more staff? Do you need more support and to enhance the size of your operation in Paris to strengthen this relationship?

Lord Llewellyn: As you just heard, Paris is a relatively large post; we have many much, much smaller posts across Europe. Obviously, the Foreign Office is looking at staffing levels in all of our European posts. We are going to get a couple of extra staff—one senior; one more junior. As I say, we have quite a lot of people, and I see it as my job to make sure that they are best deployed in pursuit of what are now our national priorities.

Andrew Rosindell: Thank you very much.

- Q32 **Mr Holloway:** First, congratulations on your new job, and for not going off and earning gazillions of dollars with an American investment bank. I have got quite a few friends in the Foreign Office, and most of them—not



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all, but most—think that the British people are completely mad to vote for Brexit. Are you satisfied that, unlike our last UKRep, that the majority of people working in the Foreign Office are properly behind the programme, as you are?

Lord Llewellyn: I am, and I think my colleagues absolutely are. As I say, I have now been working with the team in Paris for a couple of months, and I can tell you that they are absolutely behind getting the very best deal for Britain, as you would expect. I think that is absolutely the case with the Foreign Office; that is certainly what I have experienced, both in the last eight weeks and also in my training period.

Q33 **Mr Holloway:** Obviously, they are going to be professional and everything, but do you have a sense that most of them think that Brexit was a mistake?

Lord Llewellyn: I think they are very professional people. They see their job as representing their country—that is their job—and implementing the decisions of the elected Government and, in this case, the will of the British people. That is the important thing. Their personal opinions on individual policies, including on this one, do not really matter. What matters is their professionalism and their determination to get the right deal for Britain.

Mr Holloway: That would be a yes then.

Q34 **Mike Gapes:** Briefly on the future relationship with France: obviously, our defence co-operation has been very important since the Saint-Malo agreement. Have you picked up any desire from the French to actually go very strongly with that, rather than moving towards a European army and what the Germans might want?

Lord Llewellyn: Since I have been in post, as I say, there is great enthusiasm across the political spectrum in France for the co-operation that began with Saint-Malo and continued under Lancaster House. I find almost universal support for that, recognising the fact that Britain and France are Europe's two foremost military powers. I do not detect enthusiasm in Paris for setting up a European army, but it is true that there have been discussions—as you know, Mr Gapes—about setting up operational headquarters, and I think you know the British position on the need to avoid duplication with the NATO structure.

Q35 **Mike Gapes:** But once we are out, we are not in a position to block those developments in the way that we have done, and the pressure will then mount. My question is, would France resist that and be wanting to have greater military co-operation with us?

Lord Llewellyn: We will have to see what happens. All I can say is that the day-to-day co-operation between our militaries and on defence policy is very strong and, frankly, is growing stronger with every month that goes by. That I know.

Daniel Kawczynski: Related to that—[*Interruption.*]

Chair: There is a Division.

Sitting suspended for Divisions in the House.

On resuming—

Chair: Let us resume the meeting. We are nearly at the end of our inquiry with you, Lord Llewellyn.

- Q36 **Nadhim Zahawi:** Thank you for your patience, Lord Llewellyn. What relationships have you and the embassy built with the candidates vying to become the next President?

Lord Llewellyn: As an embassy, we have good relationships on the left and the right. Obviously, it has been a focus since I have been in post to make sure that I meet individuals involved in the campaign on the centre right. With respect to the left, the current Government are in office and we deal with them all the time.

- Q37 **Nadhim Zahawi:** The front-runner in the election wants to renegotiate the Le Touquet agreement. Are you concerned about that? If you are, what steps are you taking to prevent or prepare for it?

Lord Llewellyn: With respect to the Le Touquet agreement, you are correct that the candidates on the centre right talked in the primary about their desire to see that agreement renegotiated. The current Government have defended the agreement. I think that reflects the fact, which is certainly the British view, that the principles underpinning that agreement and the rationale for it are as valid today as they were 13 years ago when the accords were signed. As I described earlier, we are working very closely with our French counterparts on the situation around Calais. I would like to pay tribute to their efforts, particularly the effort to dismantle the camp a couple of months ago. As I say, the rationale for those agreements, from a flow-of-business point of view, but, above all, from the border security point of view, remains completely valid today. It is worth noting the improved situation around Calais, which we are working hard as Governments to maintain: the port of Calais, as I understand it, has reported a 10% increase in trade volume, which is encouraging.

- Q38 **Mr Holloway:** Some years ago, I lived under cover in the Sangatte camp in Calais for three weeks. My conclusion was that the only way we could stop people arriving in Calais was if you stopped people getting successfully into Britain. What is your take on that as a solution? And given that you are a political appointee, do you think that there is an argument for the Member for Shrewsbury to one day become the ambassador to Poland?

Chair: Order. Lord Llewellyn, take the Sangatte point.

Lord Llewellyn: The security of the British border is obviously of paramount importance. Steps have been taken in recent years to strengthen that border further, but as I say, the Le Touquet agreement and the juxtaposed controls are part of the effort to make that border as secure as possible. This is important, and it underpins the rationale for the



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Le Touquet agreement. Any reopening of those agreements risks acting as a pull factor encouraging people to come to Calais. I think that would be counterproductive from everyone's point of view.

- Q39 **Daniel Kawczynski:** We have spoken about Mr Fillon, who could—and is likely to, hopefully—become the next President of France. He has spoken very openly about his wishes to get rid of sanctions against Russia. He feels that they are not effective, and he wants to get back to a trading relationship with Russia. Also, there are clearly some people who say that we have no right to try to intervene or lobby about the possibility of a single European army when we are ourselves pulling out. How are you going to cope with those differences?

Lord Llewellyn: I have seen what M. Fillon has said about relations with Russia, and I hear what you say on the defence issue. This election is under way. There are still four months to go, so it is a relatively early stage. We all know that there are many twists and turns in election campaigns, if I can put it like that, but we will put our arguments to the opposition parties. Whoever is elected President, the British Government will obviously want to work closely with them, but we will put our arguments and our positions strongly, including on the Russia issue.

- Q40 **Chair:** I did not hear clearly your answer to Nadhim Zahawi's question about the relationships you have with the presidential campaigns. In the United States, there is quite an established process where the embassy gets people close to whoever is campaigning for the presidency. What arrangements do you have in place for your relationships with the presidential candidates who are now established in the field, and if you do not have them in place now, what will you put in place, in terms of your liaison with the candidates? Will that be with all the front-runners?

Lord Llewellyn: On the centre right, we know who the candidate is. The candidate is M. Fillon, and obviously we have contacts with him and his team. On the left, we do not yet know who the candidate is going to be. We will know the answer to that question on 29 January, after the second round of the primary on the left. We are making sure that we—

- Q41 **Chair:** That is the Socialist party primary, is it?

Lord Llewellyn: Correct.

- Q42 **Chair:** But there are rather more candidates on the left than simply the Socialist one.

Lord Llewellyn: That is also correct. My team are in touch with people across the picture on the left. With respect to the Front National, we have a policy of not engaging.

- Q43 **Chair:** There is a policy of not engaging.

Lord Llewellyn: There is a long-standing policy.

Mr Holloway: Why?

Mike Gapes: Because they're fascists.



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Q44 **Chair:** So what happens if Marine Le Pen wins the presidency?

Lord Llewellyn: That is the policy. That has been the policy for many years.

Q45 **Chair:** If it is clear that she is polling in second place, so will make the run-off, shouldn't we—

Lord Llewellyn: That is a matter for Ministers. The policy is a matter for Ministers.

Q46 **Chair:** Lord Llewellyn, thank you very much indeed for answering our questions. I know there was some discussion about an opening statement, so is there anything about your position that our questions have not elicited that you would have liked to get on the record and put either to us or to the public through us?

Lord Llewellyn: That is very kind. I think I have covered everything, but I would like to thank you, Chairman and Committee, for the opportunity to talk to you today.

Chair: It is my personal view that I doubt there has been a better-qualified political appointee to a senior ambassadorial post. On behalf of the Committee, I wish you the very best of luck with your tour of duty. Thank you very much indeed for coming to give us evidence today.

Lord Llewellyn: Thank you.