

## **TEXT OF CONSUL GENERAL'S LETTER TO MEMBERS OF THE BRITISH COMMUNITY IN ZURICH AND NEIGHBOURING CANTONS**

You may be aware, following the announcement made to members of the British community by HM Ambassador at our Queen's Birthday Party on 10th June, that the British Embassy is about to introduce some changes to the operation of our consular activities in Zurich and the surrounding consular area. This coincides with the retirement of Antony McCammon and Yvonne Wespi, and the closure of the current Zurich consulate office at the end of this month.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office as a whole, and the European network in particular, is going through a period of significant change in terms of its global and regional policy priorities and the staff and financial resources it has available to devote to meeting those priorities.

For this reason, and in view of Antony McCammon's impending retirement, we have taken the opportunity to review the consular network in Switzerland, and change the structure and modus operandi of the consular operation, in order to continue to provide an efficient and cost-effective service to our customers.

It has been concluded that the vast majority of our consular services can be delivered effectively from the consular section of the Embassy in Berne.

You will want to know how the new arrangement will work in practice and what you will need to do when you require any of our consular services. I am delighted to confirm that the name of a successor to Antony McCammon will be announced shortly. The new Honorary Consul will continue to have a crucial role in representing the UK in the Zurich consular area, and leading the consular operation locally for emergency and/or high profile cases, working closely with the consular section in Berne, led by me. However, Antony's successor is a businessman with other responsibilities and various demands on his time, and our consular services in Zurich will in future be coordinated by the consular section in Berne, with effect from 15<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

As a result, if you require any of our consular services, routine or urgent, you will need first to contact the Consular Section in Berne to discuss or explain the consular service you require. The contact details you will need are as follows:

Tel: +41 31 359 7700

Fax: +41 31 359 77 01

Email: info @britishembassy.ch

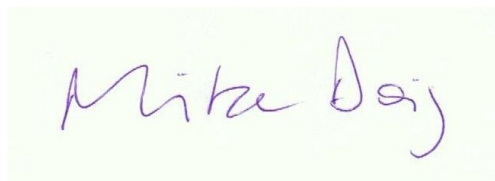
Unlike the current hours of business at the Vice-Consulate, you will be able to contact us at any time during the working week between 0900-1200 and 1400-1600. In a genuine emergency, for example in the case of bereavement in the family, you will be able, as at present, to speak to an Embassy Duty Officer during the hours when the Embassy is closed (Tel: +41 79 607 25 70). The Duty Officer will either deal directly with your enquiry or will refer your case to the Consular Section on the next working day.

Having received your enquiry, Consular staff in Berne will decide how best to deal with it. For routine consular services or advice, we will often be able to deal with your enquiry remotely from the embassy, for example by telephone, e-mail or post, or, if appropriate, by doing so when, from time to time, we are visiting Zurich. However, in some cases, you will need to visit the consular section in Berne personally but the reasons for this and the documentation you will be required to produce will be fully explained. You will also be given a firm appointment time at which your enquiry will be dealt with. In genuinely urgent cases, we may also ask the new Honorary Consul to take action himself or we will visit Zurich to assist him, as appropriate. However, I would emphasize that the first point of contact should always be with the Embassy in Berne, please: the new Honorary Consul will not have the staff resources to deal with day to day consular business nor will you be able to visit the Vice-Consulate premises except in extreme circumstances by prior arrangement with the Consular Section in Berne.

These arrangements will be augmented by regular visits to Zurich by consular staff to attend British community and other events. In this way, we remain committed to continuing to deliver high quality service and advice to British nationals who are resident in or visiting Zurich, within fixed and clearly defined timescales dictated by the Foreign Office in London.

We fully recognize that this significant change in our consular coverage of the Zurich consular area may result in some inconvenience to you, our customers, not least because, instead of being able to visit the Vice-Consulate to obtain a service, you may now need to travel to Berne for this. However, with commitment and close management from Berne we believe it is wholly workable. Certainly, Embassy senior management will work to ensure that the new arrangements prove effective and that any inconvenience to customers is kept to a bare minimum. However, if you feel that we are not getting the new arrangements right or have a specific complaint about the quality of service you have received, please do not hesitate to let us know. As at present, any complaints we receive will be fully investigated and a full response will be provided.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Mike Doig". The signature is written in a cursive style and is set against a light green rectangular background.

M D Doig