



**British Embassy  
Berne**

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Dear

You may be aware, following the announcement made to members of the British community on 22 June by Peter Steimle, our Honorary Consul in Lugano, that the British Embassy is about to introduce some changes to the operation of our consular activities in Ticino. I am writing now to confirm these changes and to outline how we will deliver consular services in future.

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 our global and regional policy priorities and the financial and staff resources we have available to devote to meeting those priorities. For this reason, and in view of Mary Palmesino's impending retirement as Pro-Consul, as well as those of other consular staff in Berne and Zurich, we have taken the opportunity to review the consular network in Switzerland and have concluded that we need to 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.

The Vice-Consulate in Lugano has provided an excellent service both to its customers in the Ticino, and to the Embassy. I would pay particular tribute to Mary Palmesino's hard work, efficiency and tireless service over many years, most recently under Peter Steimle's distinguished tenure as Honorary Consul. Through their combined efforts, we have delivered a high quality consular service to local British residents and to visitors. However, we have now 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 arrangements 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 Peter Steimle will remain in position as Honorary Consul and will continue to have a crucial role in representing the UK in Ticino 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, as a businessman with other responsibilities and various demands on his time, our consular services in Ticino will be co-ordinated by the Consular Section in Berne, with effect from 1st 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 7701

Email: [info@britishembassy.ch](mailto: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 2570). 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, email or post, or, if appropriate, by doing so when, from time to time, we are visiting Lugano. 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 Peter Steimle to take action himself or we will visit Ticino to assist him, as appropriate. However, I would emphasise that the first point of contact should always be with the embassy in Berne, please: Peter Steimle will not have the staff resources to deal with day to day consular business nor will you be able to visit the current 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 Ticino by consular staff to attend British community events, during which they will hold periodic consular “surgeries” to address any consular cases or enquiries that may arise in the lead up to or during their visits. In this way, we remain committed to continuing to deliver a high quality service to British nationals who are resident in or visiting Ticino, within fixed and clearly defined timescales dictated by the Foreign Office in London.



We fully recognise that this significant change in our consular coverage of the Ticino 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  
H M Consul-General