

## City welcomes French ambassador and trade delegation

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A VIP business delegation, led by the French ambassador to the UK and the President of the French Chamber of Commerce, is visiting Aberdeen.

Lord Provost of Aberdeen George Adam will welcome Ambassador HE Bernard Emie and Arnaud Bamberger, President of the French Chamber of Commerce and Executive Chairman of Cartier UK, to the Town House later today.

Deputy Lord Provost John Reynolds and Aberdeen City Council's director of Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Gordon McIntosh will meet with the delegation at the Town House, where they will take a brief tour of the historic building.

Mr McIntosh and Bob Collier, chief executive of Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce, will lead a session introducing the delegates to Aberdeen's economy.

Today's visit is the first of this level of importance by a French delegation to Aberdeen for many years. It was initiated by the Consul General of France in Edinburgh, who approached the city council earlier this year.

The prestigious delegation includes: Renaud Digoïn Danzin, director of SPIE; Patrice de Vivies, chairman of Total UK; Nigel Holmes, corporate affairs manager of GDF Suez; Olivier Bret, CEO of Veolia Water UK; and Arnaud Vaissie, chairman and CEO of International SOS.

The visit signals a clear interest from French companies in investigating potential investment in the city, not just in the energy sector.

The Lord Provost said: "I am delighted to welcome the Ambassador and Mr Bamberger to Aberdeen, who have brought with them such a high-profile delegation of French business representatives. This visit reflects the international interest being shown in Aberdeen at a time when the city's economy continues to boom.

"Aberdeen city has strong links with France, particularly with our twin city Clermont-Ferrand, and through our two universities which both have exchange programmes with French higher education institutions.

"A number of French companies, particularly TOTAL with its French school, have a strong presence in Aberdeen. GDF Suez is also making a magnificent contribution to the city's economy and the fast-moving construction of their new offices at North Esplanade West is helping to regenerate that part of the city.

"I am very pleased to see such senior representatives of a number of high-profile firms showing such interest in Aberdeen and am sure that this visit is a very positive step towards improved trade links between Aberdeen and France."

Mr Collier said: "More than 60 French companies are active in Scotland, making France the second largest investor after the US. With many of these located in the North-east, we are keen to help forge links for mutual commercial benefit.

"International trade is crucial to our region, and continued economic growth will keep our exceptional region at the heart of a prosperous country."

The visit was organised by the French British Chamber of Commerce, working with the Consul General, the city council's International Trade team, and the Aberdeen Grampian Chamber of Commerce.

It will conclude with a civic reception, hosted by Aberdeen City Council leader Councillor Barney Crockett, at Aberdeen Art Gallery.

A number of important French businesses are already based in Aberdeen and the North-east, working in a range of industries including energy, environmental, luxury goods, services, and food.