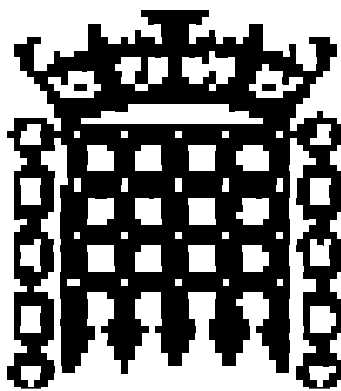


# Var Village Voice

Circulating by Subscription to English speaking readers all over the Var –

## All the Var News & Events



**REGISTER TO  
VOTE!**

**USE YOUR VOTE!**

**ARTICLE FROM THE  
NOVEMBER ISSUE OF VAR  
VILLAGE VOICE 2009**

If anything was needed to impress UK citizens with the need to vote in the upcoming General Election it was the BBC's "Question Time" programme at the end of October, featuring the BNP leader Nick Griffin!

Debate has roiled ever since in all the media and blog columns, many commentators remarking accurately that had the main political parties not totally skirted their responsibilities, avoiding at all costs the contentious issue, and debate over immigration, the door might not have been opened to the BNP which now holds two seats in the European Parliament.

After the BBC programme, many viewers (one in four) when polled, said they could indeed vote for the BNP!

The Barbarians are at the gate, the Goths and Visigoths will destroy whatever is left of the UK.

**Don't you think now is the time to  
REGISTER TO VOTE.**

Yes, it is cumbersome, Yes, it is a bother! But don't you think you owe it yourself, your children, and most particularly to your children's children – many VVV readers rush to and fro the UK to help

out their grandchildren at the drop of a plea for help. If you have been here less than 15 years, you still are eligible to vote. I feel passionately about my home country the UK, where I was born, brought up and worked most of my life. However, I and others have been disenfranchised by this present administration, under the 15 year rule, a rule brought in quite deliberately, and cynically to defeat what 'New Labour' and their Spin Meisters felt were old guard 'Toffs' and 'Tories'. They brought in the ruling that if you have been resident elsewhere for 15 years you are no longer eligible to vote in the UK.

No matter that thousands of Expats who have taken their retirement elsewhere in Europe, were ordinary hard working people, who had realized the opportunities that the opening up of Europe offered.

Our ancestors fought for Universal Suffrage, the underpinning of any democratic society, most particularly the women, who had to fight harder than most.

If you are disgusted by the current Expenses scandal both in the House of Commons and House of Lords, don't just moan about it to your friends, do something about it, VOTE!

### **FRENCH RESIDENTS IN THE UK TO HAVE THEIR OWN MP**

In the exclusive streets of South Kensington, a battle will shortly be looming over who will be chosen as, in effect, Britain's first elected representative to the next French parliament.

Legislation has been passed to give French citizens who live abroad their own MPs in the 2012 national elections. The law creates 11 constituencies for expatriates – a move that officials say is without international precedent.

The third constituency covers the UK, Irish Republic, Scandinavia and the Baltic states. But 102,470 French voters are registered in the UK, compared with 22,071 in all the other countries that make up the seat, and authorities believe that

the real number of French residents in Britain is at least double the official figure. The winning candidate will therefore effectively be an MP for Britain, say French officials.

The post will be prestigious, with constituents including some of France's most successful figures, such as Arsène Wenger, the football manager, Marc Lévy, the country's bestselling author, and Renaud, a pop star.

The campaign will centre around South Kensington – the bastion of the French community – where les candidats are looking to establish offices. Polling stations will be set up in the Charles de Gaulle lycée in London, as well as other places frequented by the French – which could include cafés, according to Hervé Fabre-Aubrespy, the government adviser overseeing the move. Postal and electronic voting will also be allowed.

British citizens who live overseas, for example, vote in the constituency that was their last address before leaving the country. After 15 years abroad, they lose their right to vote. Similar rules have applied in France until now.

The initiative stems from a promise by President Sarkozy to "reinforce the link between the Republic and its expatriates" – estimated at up to 2.5 million worldwide. Axelle Lemaire, of the opposition French Socialist Party in London, said: "French people who live abroad must be represented to defend their living conditions . . . Their current representatives do not have the political weight to do that. It is a democratic anomaly."

This is in very marked contrast to how British expat citizens are treated by the present UK government

### **NUMBER OF EXPATS REGISTERED TO VOTE - PITIFUL**

"The number of expats registered to vote in the next general election, is pretty pitiful, they represent only 20 expats per constituency!"

As a recent press article pointed out: "Millions will forfeit the chance to vote if they fail to join the electoral register.

**Yearly Subscription rates: 20€ -- Internet 35€ French address, 42€ euros European address**

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A recent Electoral Commission report indicated that fewer than **13,000 of the 5.5 million Britons living abroad** are on the British electoral register.

With an election due next spring – an estimated 2.5 million expats are eligible to join the register, the remainder having lived abroad for longer than 15 years.

It is now fairly certain that the UK General Election will indeed happen **Thursday May 6**, Labour Party Activists have already been issued with their General Election Instruction Booklet, a countdown week by week, to Thursday May 6!

However:

**“Here's one theory doing the rounds at Westminster: if Labour's poll ratings continue to decline and the Tory lead widens and the mood of rebellion over expenses and other issues continues to grow on the Labour back benches, might Gordon Brown call an election before the expected date of May 6 next year, say in February?”**

**In which case don't get caught out.**

**Register to vote now!**

Anyone who has been registered to vote in Britain within the past 15 years can sign up and expats who were below voting age when they left the UK can register at the last place their parent or guardian was registered.

British expat voters could have a critical impact on the next general election if they register to vote in sufficient numbers.

It's no good being apathetic, and saying to oneself, “I can't, won't make any difference!” You can, you could!

People and parties are working hard to try to raise awareness explaining how expat voters can register. They are urging all MPs, candidates, councillors and associations, to encourage expats to vote. As one politician said “I think few local authorities inform people when they leave Britain that they retain the right to vote.

A couple of VVV readers told me, they wrote to the parties in their Bristol constituency before they left the UK to

settle in this region, asking how to vote by proxy, and got NIL replies. Not good, But hopefully, not all constituencies are so dead from the neck up.

### **15 year rule**

The issue preventing most longstanding expats from voting from overseas is the “15 year rule”, which excludes over half of expats living overseas.

When the Conservative government re-enfranchised expats in the late 1980s they did not imagine a situation where more expats would be disenfranchised than enfranchised.

When the Labour government proposed the “15 year rule”, Conservatives opposed it, and have continued to do so. This opposition has most recently seen Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbots introduce an amendment from the back benches of the House of Lords proposing that the legislation should be changed.

### **Can expats make a difference?**

With so few expats currently on the electoral register, it is fair to say that overseas votes made little difference in the last election.

But looking forward to the coming general election, several seats are held by narrow majorities, where expat votes could make the difference between winning and losing. For example, there are currently 42 seats where the incumbent has a majority of less than 2,000 votes. Expats *could* make a difference to the results in these seats and if sufficient expats were registered and able to vote, they could be influential in many more.

### **Registration**

Embassies and Consulates can and do have a role in encouraging voter registration. The Marseille Consulate has recently issued a notice informing Expat residents exactly how they can go about registering to vote.

Expats can find more information and download a registration form at [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk)

The Electoral Commission recommends that voters register as soon as possible.

Overseas voters can either vote by post or arrange for a proxy to vote for them.

Jenny Watson, chair of the Electoral Commission, said: “British citizens living abroad come from a wide variety of backgrounds, but we know that most maintain strong links with the UK and many will want to have their say in elections.”

To help expats who no longer know anyone in the relevant constituency who could vote on their behalf Conservatives Abroad has a database of people in each constituency willing to be appointed proxy voters on behalf of British citizens living overseas. Please contact [Conservatives Abroad](#) if you would like help in identifying a proxy.

Plus The [Conservatives Abroad homepage](#) has a pop-up link to a registration form. The two other main parties do not appear to be interested in expat voters.

### **Taxation**

Many readers pay British tax on income (including pensions), property and inheritance. If you want to have any influence over tax or other policies affecting you or your family you should make sure that you are on the register and vote when the election comes to have your say.

**Keep your vote - expats can make a difference in the next general election.**

Go to:

[www.dontleaveyourvoteathome.com](http://www.dontleaveyourvoteathome.com)

**If you would like a copy of this article to circulate to your friends and contacts, together with information on how to go about registering to vote, just email me at: [anita@varvillagevoice.com](mailto:anita@varvillagevoice.com)**

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