



Moving with the times

Gary Burke reflects on the impact of Brexit and Covid-19 on the removals industry and how they are shaping the moving to France market

The Brexit deadline has been set as 31 December 2020. The UK is presently in a transition period and during this time, British people will retain most of their rights, including the freedom to move to France. After 31 December 2020, British citizens will still be able to make the move but it is anticipated that the process will become more complicated and incur more expense. And now with the coronavirus pandemic causing additional difficulties and delays, how is this shaping the moving to France market?

INCREASED DEMAND

The closing of the housing market created a bottleneck effect for many people who were already at some point in the moving process; whether this was within the UK, across Europe or worldwide. As we restarted our international moving services once the

lockdown restrictions began to lift, there was a notable influx of enquiries from Brits moving their household effects to France. In fact, we booked 24 moves from the UK to France within the first three days of our offices reopening.

During June alone, we saw a 40% increase in visitors to our website interested in our moving services, compared with the same period last year, and our volume of enquiries for the month was over and above what we have seen for June during the last two years. Coupled with the stamp duty holiday for the UK introduced by the Chancellor in July, we are fully expecting a similar trend to continue for the next few months.

Our international shipping department is also experiencing shipping volumes returning to pre-pandemic levels. Meanwhile, our commercial moving department and corporate

moving team are quieter, as we anticipate that the pandemic will alter working arrangements for some companies and cause redundancies for some.

When the quarantine rules were enforced for France, we were notified by the British Association of Removers that as drivers of goods vehicles for the international carriage of goods, our drivers and crew are exempt from the new quarantine rules. Our services to and from France continue as normal, unaltered by the recent change in quarantine rules.

BREXIT EFFECT

As a company specialising in removals to Europe, we have moved families to and from the Continent throughout economic highs, lows and different political landscapes and we can appreciate that moving before the Brexit deadline offers greater stability.

For example, some of our

customers want to start their own business after they have moved but anticipate that they will have a period of time where they are relying on savings and not immediately generating an income. The possibility of having to negotiate the obstacles posed by the need to obtain a visa after the deadline, could make this type of move more difficult as visa applications are often linked to employment.

Equally, pensioners may be required to provide proof of their ability to be financially independent and not likely to be relying on the French state. It may also be the case that there will be additional healthcare costs or that pensions may not be uprated.

For those making the move after the deadline, they will of course still be able to purchase a French property and our services will still be running on a weekly basis to France. The exact details of how

MOVING DURING COVID-19

Guidelines from the British Association of Removers (BAR)

BEFORE MOVING DAY

- Packing by the remover is currently limited to china, glass and breakable items
- If possible, allow 72 hours between a householder moving out and a new owner moving in
- Dismantle any furniture that needs to be dismantled
- Where possible clean your belongings with standard domestic cleaning products before they are handled by the removals company

ON MOVING DAY

- Open windows to allow for ventilation
- Open loft hatches and set up ladders
- Clean hard surfaces, door handles and handrails
- Where possible have a designated bathroom for the crew to use, which should be cleaned
- Ideally you should leave the property while the removers are working, either by staying outside or keeping to one room
- It will not be possible for crew members to keep a two-metre distance between each other but you should ensure you maintain a two-metre distance from them at all times to observe social distancing rules

complicated moving to France after Brexit will be aren't yet known and are to be negotiated during the remainder of the year. Any speculations about how the landscape will look for moving to France are just that - speculations - but we can guess that the odds are looking high for the rules being along the same lines as those currently



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“We booked 24 moves from the UK to France within the first three days of reopening”

applied to third country nationals moving to France.

MOVING FORWARD

This year has seen us all faced with unprecedented events. While we were already gearing up for a new post-Brexit world, we now find ourselves also having to adapt to the new normal that has been brought about by the coronavirus pandemic. We have adopted the technology for virtual surveys whereby our surveyors can supply customers with a quotation after viewing the volume of goods to be moved via a video. This type of innovation has become very useful to us at the present time, and while some customers

have been wary of these advances in technology, others have fully embraced them. We can help those who aren't tech-savvy through every step of the process and can also still offer home (or office) visits to the property while following Covid-19 protocol.

Professional and experienced removals companies will have implemented changes to their working practices in line with the Covid-19 guidelines that have been put in place. Those belonging to the British Association of Removers (BAR), the official trade association representing removals companies, will have benefitted from the guidance and documentation that it has

provided to its members. This has been endorsed by other professional organisations and associations in the property industry, providing clear guidance on risk mitigation procedures for removals companies and their clients. As a company we will only carry out removals where full Covid-19 compliance is in place to ensure it is safe for our customers and safe for us.

Part of our safe working practices involves us issuing external communication to our customers in advance of home or office visits (when required), as well as instructions to clients on moving day. The safety and wellbeing of customers, their families and our employees is more important than ever; it is vital that our customers work with us and follow all of the instructions that we give them.

On the rare occasion that a customer has enquired about our services but hasn't been willing to work with us, we have had to explain that we aren't able to move them. We won't compromise their safety or that of our staff and have, of course, found that the overwhelming majority of our customers have fully supported us in this and have adhered to everything that we have asked of them. ■

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Demand for removals services to France increased as lockdown began to ease