

The Lion and the Rooster: Winners of the 2023 Franco- British Business Awards announced

The French Chamber of Great Britain has announced the winners of the 2023 Franco-British Business Awards, rewarding innovation within the Franco-British business community.

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The Entente Cordiale, literally French for "Cordial Agreement", is the name referring to a series of agreement signed in 1904 between France and the United Kingdom.

Even if sometimes forgotten in the dusty pages of History books, the Entente Cordiale, paved the way to the fruitful friendship between the Kingdom and the Republic. Rivals before God, many thought them to be irreconcilable. Their relationship has, since the Middle Ages, been scarred by bloody battles, wars and conquests.

But these agreements have done the impossible: reconcile and unify these two rivals. This Cordial Agreement has now turned into a friendly alliance. Sturdy as the tunnel under the English Channel, the partnership between these two countries has been nothing but beneficial, not only for themselves but for Europe.

Albion and the Hexagon, the Lion and the Rooster, are now lands of opportunities. By working hand in hand, the two countries form a strong and fertile duo, where people and companies can thrive.

French and British Alliance

The French Chamber of Great Britain has announced the winners of the 2023 Franco-British Business Awards, a showcase of unparalleled innovation and unwavering determination within the Franco-British business community.

Now in their 24th year, these awards recognise the exceptional achievements of French and British companies that have exceeded expectations in supporting their people and communities, fostering future talent, making strides in climate action, and, of course, nurturing the Franco-British relationship. This year's ceremony, hosted at One Great George Street, witnessed Decathlon UK, Blick Rothenberg, HSL Technologies (HySiLabs), Make Me Feel Ltd (The French Pharmacy), and OVHcloud being honoured across six categories. In celebration of the French Chamber's 140th anniversary, Hotel Café Royal, Pascal Boris CBE, and Peter Alfandary received special awards, acknowledging their longstanding collaboration with the Chamber.

“The Franco- British Business Awards, a highlight in our calendar, recognises the determination and passion displayed by businesses navigating challenges, exemplifying the best of our Franco-British partnership. As we mark the 140th anniversary of the Chamber, we reflect on the enduring relationship between our two nations, a relationship that has only grown stronger over the years. The success stories celebrated tonight underscore the innovation, resilience, and positive

energy that define our vibrant community.” says Fabienne Viala, President of the French Chamber of Great Britain.

The awards are open to all French or British businesses active in the UK, and businesses from all sectors can apply, regardless of their size or their resources. Companies can apply in as many categories as they would like to, but those which have won a Franco-British Business Award in the past three years are excluded from applying.

And the winners are...

- The Community Impact Award recognises a company which has demonstrated commitment to supporting local or national communities, either in France or in the UK. Its work must have had a significant, meaningful and sustainable impact on the community it supports, addressing current social challenges.

Winner: Decathlon UK

Through its Health and Wellbeing Community Fund, Decathlon UK has made a positive impact in the community surrounding its flagship store. The aim is to provide access to sports and physical activity for everyone, regardless of their economic level. Thanks to the Community Fund, Decathlon has contributed to the construction of a local gym and provided approximately 40 children with 1140 hours of free tennis.

- The Fostering Future Talents Award recognises an organisation that must be able to demonstrate it has put in place quantifiable, significant and verifiable steps to identify and support the career advancement of ‘future leaders’ – individuals with the potential to become C-level leaders.

Winner: *Blick Rothenberg*

Dedicated to developing future leaders, Blick Rothenberg has launched initiatives like the Inclusive Leadership Development Programme for their Board and Partners, along with the 2019 Future Leaders Programme to foster leadership skills. The firm's strategy emphasises a strong mentoring and coaching culture at all levels for sustained, long-term growth while promoting diversity through initiatives like reverse mentoring and unconscious bias learning.

- The Circularity Champion Award recognises an organisation that must be able to demonstrate it has put in place a quantifiable, significant and verifiable transformation plan to develop circularity within its own business and its value chain.

Winner: *OVHcloud*

With the aim to achieve zero waste to landfill by 2025, OVHcloud prioritises sustainability by cultivating a partner network for component recycling and investing in innovative technologies, such as hybrid immersion cooling. Additionally, the company empowers customers and partners to monitor their carbon footprint with an upcoming release of a cloud computing usage carbon calculator.

- The SME of the Year Award recognises an SME (defined as an organisation which has been trading for a minimum of 2 years, has under 250 employees and an annual turnover under £50M) which has demonstrated outstanding achievements in the past year.

Winner: *HSL Technologies (HySiLabs)*

Founded in 2015, HSL Technologies has developed and patented an innovative hydrogen carrier called HydroSil, that maintains the advantages of an energy-dense hydrogen vector without any storage

issues. The French start-up also plans to install pilot charging and release reactors in Europe by 2025 and move on to scaling up the pilots by 2027.

- The Franco-British Collaboration Award recognises a successful and meaningful collaboration with concrete results. The organisation must be able to demonstrate a commitment to cooperative work and a clear and measurable impact on the economic relationship between our two countries.

Winner: *Make Me Feel Ltd / The French Pharmacy*

The French Pharmacy, a part of Make Me Feel Ltd, entered the UK market with the ambition to showcase French Pharmacies' savoir-faire, promoting their expertise and excellence in French skincare. Their goal is to strengthen their values and presence in the UK, marked by a new store opening in 2024.

- Throughout the year, the French Chamber will invite its members to nominate an individual that the Franco-British business community considers to be a champion of Franco-British Collaboration.

Winners: *Pascal Boris CBE* and *Peter Alfandary*

Pascal Boris C.B.E. is the joint founding President of *Le Cercle d'Outre-Manche* and the honorary President of the French Chamber of Great Britain. He dedicated 22 years to the Chamber.

Peter Alfandary advises large professional firms and international corporations on the importance of Cross-Cultural issues in building successful business relationships. He dedicated 37 years to the Chamber.

- *Hotel Café Royal* received a special 140th Anniversary Award to celebrate the 140 years of membership and bilateral camaraderie of the establishment, which is but a cornerstone of the Franco-British

business community.

Article by Paul Ferretti