

President Chirac: State Visit

We now have a draft programme, discussed with Buckingham Palace, for President Chirac's forthcoming visit. I enclose a copy. We have attempted to accommodate the President's desire for a minimum of pomp and ceremony, and have aimed to show him a modern, dynamic Britain. The traditional Guildhall dinner has, for example, been replaced by discussions with business leaders followed by a lunch given by the Lord Mayor.

We are approaching the point where we will have to begin to firm up the programme. I should be grateful for your comments on it. We will take discussion further with the Palace and the French who will be sending a team to London to prepare the final details on 25-27 March. We plan to announce the dates of Chirac's visit at noon on 6 February. Soon after that, we would hope to be in a position to discuss the programme with the Elysee in detail.

THE PRESIDENT'S PROGRAMME

ARRIVAL

We assume Chirac will arrive by Eurostar, but this has not yet been confirmed. The times given relate to a scheduled service; he may come by special train.

TEA WITH HM THE QUEEN MOTHER

This is at French request.

STATE BANQUET

We hope a wide range of people might be invited, including some younger people, although numbers will be limited.

RESTRICTED