

## Vichy Val d'Allier Community of Local Communes : working towards a sustainable future

The Community's policy for sustainable development is part of a strategy to increase the attractiveness of the urban area in spite of a difficult social and economic context. The major objectives of the Community Plan for 2001-2014, reactualised half way through the plan by the new executive formed after the elections in 2008, are geared towards helping promote the numerous positive attractions the area has to offer.

### Community of Local Communes (CLC) - key figures :



#### Population : Nearly 80,000 inhabitants

➤ Positive demographic change for the second largest CLC in the Auvergne Region

A 1% increase in the population from 1999 to 2006: 700 extra inhabitants

#### Geographic Area : 327.5 km<sup>2</sup>

➤ Situated at the top of the Auvergne Region's ridge of increasing population growth

#### Population Density : 228 habitants per km<sup>2</sup>

➤ More than half of the inhabitants concentrated in Vichy, Cusset and Bellerive/Allier

23 Communes make up the VICHY VAL D'ALLIER (VVA) CLC:

Abrest, Bellerive-sur-Allier, Billy, Bost, Brugheas, Busset, Charmeil, Cognat-Lyonne, Creuzier-le-Neuf, Creuzier-le-Vieux, Cusset, Espinasse-Vozelle, Hauterive, Le Vernet, Magnet, Mariol, Saint-Germain-des-Fossés, Saint-Rémy-en-Rollat, Saint-Yorre, Serbannes, Seuillet, Vendat and Vichy.

8 Communes with more than 2,000 inhabitants :

- Vichy (26,500)
- Cusset (13,900)
- Bellerive-sur-Allier (8,700)
- Saint-Germain-des-Fossés (3,700)
- Creuzier-le-Vieux (3,200)
- Saint-Yorre (2,800)
- Abrest (2,600)
- Vendat (2,100)



VVA is located at the heart of Vichy's employment catchment area of 110,000 inhabitants, in 81 Communes, 40 of which have less than 500 inhabitants and 65 are in predominantly rural areas.

### Opening up and reaching out is a priority

▪ VVA has developed a privileged **two-way relationship with the economic region of Clermont-Ferrand** through the *Clermont-Auvergne-Metropolitan Network* which comprises the CLC's and individual Communes of Vichy, Aurillac, Le Puy and Clermont-Ferrand, as well as the Greater Clermont region. The *Clermont-Auvergne-Metropolitan Network* with a population of nearly 600,000, generates a **communal metropolitan dynamic** which creates high-end, value added employment opportunities.

▪ **Cooperation with the Greater Roanne region** is being actively pursued. The two CLC's collaborate on a number of important projects, such as the arrival of a high speed TGV rail service which will positively affect both of their catchment areas. Regular meetings are held to exchange information and opinions on individual areas of experience and competence.

These privileged relationships with the urban Clermont hub between Clermont-Ferrand and Vichy, and the Rhône Alpes region, are bound together by VVA into one unit, to reinforce its attractiveness.

VVA intends to **develop the necessary infrastructure** to maximise benefits from the increased economic and demographic advantages of their strategic position. One of the main « combats » in this policy of opening up and reaching out locally, nationally and internationally, is to improve road and rail transport by becoming part of the major motorway and high speed train networks.

**Why is the strategy of opening up and reaching out an « indispensable prerequisite » to successfully developing the territory? How do you intend to « get the State to respect its engagements » ?**

*« The development of the territory depends very much on the growth and expansion of our local businesses. The companies, their employees and the local councils, all have a vested interest in making our territory more dynamic. The most important priority, in this time of economic and social difficulty, is to create new jobs. It is essential that council members and local government services work closely with local businesses, listen to their needs and problems, and react accordingly. The support we give has got to be specific and made to measure, rather than general and broad brush. The Community of Local Communes uses the Community Plan as a springboard to attract and welcome new businesses, essential for local development. This is why it is very important that we open up and reach out and make the territory more accessible and easier to get to. So, because the State has once again put off making decisions about the projected North-West bypass, VVA has to keep up the pressure, mobilise the local population and force the Government to fulfil its obligations, which it made over seven years ago now.»*

**What has VVA done so far, and what are the major projects you have planned for the future?**

*Improving local transport, improving access, developing the local economy, particularly the companies already based here and the SME's, developing our higher education facilities, increasing the activities geared towards the youth of our territory: these are all important challenges we will face in the coming years. If we succeed, we will not only have a better chance of attracting new companies, which means new jobs, but we will also have made a better living environment for our local population. We can only achieve this if we work closely with other local partners such as the Regional and Departmental Councils and we have number of joint projects programmed with them over the next few years, up to 2014.*

Jean-Michel Guerre

President of Vichy Val d'Allier Community of Local Communes and Mayor of Bellerive/Allier



▪ **New projects, new urban area developments:** VVA in partnership with the EU, the French State, the Regional Council, the Departmental Council and the Communes concerned, is developing the structural framework of the local area and introducing new projects and tools to attract and consolidate new populations. As part of the project run by the Auvergne Region, VVA is investing in **ADSL Broadband** internet access. All of the local Business Parks will be connected by 2015 in response to the digital requirements of the companies located there.



- With 800,000 voyagers each year, **Vichy's Railway Station** has undergone a complete renovation for an estimated cost of €11 million. The project also included; the Bus & Coach Station which caters for local bus services, TER road links, and services to other destinations in the Allier Department; a new taxi rank; car parks; and bicycle parks. This **intermodal transport centre** also benefits from a new, high quality living, working and social environment. The renovation took into consideration the architectural heritage of the buildings, improvements to open spaces and a general modernisation of the site. The Railway Station at Vichy successfully brings together an aesthetic environment with quality functionality.

- VVA has invested €13 million in the Eastern Boulevard through-road project. The first tranche should be finished by 2013. This major road link between Vichy and Cusset, will relieve traffic congestion around the areas of the Railway Station and the Hospital, and make it easier for the 11,000 vehicles passing through on a daily basis.

- For a number of years the CLC has been reorganising and diversifying its activities with the emphasis on developing the service industries in the area. Other skills, competences and abilities have also developed alongside. Various SME's have positioned themselves in niche markets or in very specialised sectors of activity. This polyvalence and versatility should **help them survive the shocks** of the international financial crisis.

The employment situation, however, remains paradoxical. Although the rate of unemployment is the highest in the Department, it has remained stable whereas other areas have seen unemployment increase. The diversity of the territory's economic fabric has absorbed the shock. In one year, the number of jobseekers in the VVA employment catchment area rose by 19.4%: the total number of local people unemployed passed the 11% figure (compared with 9.8% for the Allier Department as a whole; 8.7% for the Auvergne Region; and 9.6% for the whole of France at the beginning of 2010).



The Atrium's website [www.atrium-vichy.com](http://www.atrium-vichy.com)

- The new **Atrium centre for the services industry** has participated in the reanimation of the area around Railway Station. 8 000m<sup>2</sup> of flexible office space in the heart of Vichy built on the derelict site of the old bottling plant. The Atrium proposes « à la carte » solutions, adapted to each company's requirements, whether at the creation or development stage, or simply requiring more office space.

In September 2010, the telesales and services group Satel, will move into 2x1,000m<sup>2</sup> units, specially fitted for their requirements.

#### ▪ High quality installations to improve the population's quality of life

- More than €60 million of investments are being made in the local Hospital at Vichy, to respond efficiently to the area's healthcare needs. The services are being reorganised with new ones being created, such as the Cancer Day Care Centre, the Technical Platform for Digestive and Pneumology Endoscopy, the Geriatric Psychiatric Ward building and the Adolescent Unit. Add to this the construction of an inter-hospital laundry, then in total, eight major projects are scheduled to be completed by the end of 2012. With a staff of 1,740 the Hospital is the largest employer in Vichy. Consultations increase every year with over 100,000 last year.

- From this winter the new **Rive Gauche Children's' Centre (Pôle Enfance Rive Gauche-PERG)** will offer a complete range of services to families in the commune of Bellerive-sur-Allier. Supported by the VVA CLC, the 1,050m<sup>2</sup> site has High Quality Environmental Site certification. It will provide a full day-care mini creche, a flexible-hours family creche, a one off or part time creche, a family advice service with nursery assistants, a non-residential nursery leisure centre and a parents-children day centre.

- The improvement in public services is a direct result of the community's strategy for a sustainable future. **VVA is the only Community of Local Communes in France to receive both level 1 and level 2 QualiTri and Qualiplus certifications at the same time**, for their waste collection and disposal services. Organised by ADEME (the French Agency for the Environment and Energy Management) and Eco- Emballages, these certification labels promote optimising the collecting and sorting of waste products. Attributed for a period of 3 years, they guarantee the territory a quality waste collection service with controlled costs.

More and more students are attracted by the new facilities on offer in the area. In fact they form one of the largest new population categories.

## Lardy University Technology College **Higher education that works well.**

### **Interview with Claude Malhuret, Vice-President of the Community of Local Communes with particular responsibility for Higher Education and Mayor of Vichy.**



**Question: Higher education in Vichy has changed considerably over the last few years. Where are we now? Claude Malhuret:** « For a number of decades now Vichy has been very lucky to be the home of the CAVILAM language school, which provides very high quality services and has a global reputation. The school has the capacity to welcome several hundred foreign students at the same time. The Town has benefited tremendously from the Government's policy of education decentralisation and now offers 15 Degree subjects from Bac+2 to Bac+5. Lardy College also has a restaurant, mediatheque and student centre. It has become a **real urban campus** in a privileged setting, right in the middle of Vichy's famous parks.

#### **Q.: And the number of students?**

**C.M.:** Last year we welcomed over 400 new students with the arrival of three new degree subjects (Degree-Licence in Economics and Management - bilingual French and English, a Professional Degree-Licence in Sound Design, and a preparatory year for a Degree in Masso-Kinesitherapy). They were integrated into the College without any problems. In fact, the number of students at the College has doubled, which is a sign of the success of the substantial human and material investments that have been made over the years.

#### **Q.: But you have also had to make changes to the actual buildings?**

**C.M.:** That is correct. Vichy's University and Technical College was created in 2001 by the Community of Local Communes, and now has a campus of 9,000m<sup>2</sup>. For the beginning of the 2010 academic year, two extra 80 seat lecture rooms were fitted out, which means the College can now accommodate nearly one thousand students.

#### **Q.: Will higher education in Vichy continue to grow and develop?**

**C.M.:** Absolutely! The recent agreements and partnerships signed with the Universities in Clermont-Ferrand and the Radford University in Virginia, USA, make the Lardy College, which will celebrate its 10th anniversary in 2011, one of the **top higher education establishments in the Auvergne Region.**

#### **Q.: And what would you say are the challenges going forward?**

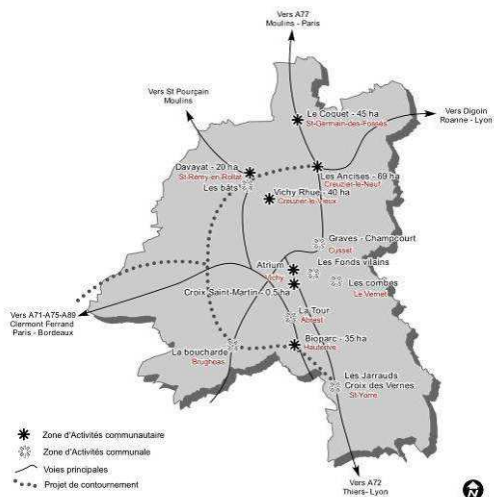
**C.M.:** Without a doubt twofold. Making sure that the CAVILAM continues to provide top quality services, and maintaining student numbers in the other courses by keeping standards high, whether at the student reception level, the human relationship level, the materials and resources employed, the teaching staff and numbers, or the techniques used. We want to **stabilise the future**, not only for the College, but more importantly the future of its students, who are at the centre of our preoccupations.

#### **Q.: In retrospect, what does Lardy College represent for you?**

**C.M.:** First of all the College is a major asset. Although the costs involved have been substantial, it has been one of the key elements in our economic renewal policy, a prime example of diversification, and an investment in the future. Furthermore, everyone involved locally and in the region has been mobilised to help us organise the best environment for our students while they are here. For example, the Accommodation Forum we organised last July. We brought together real estate professionals, those responsible for public and private sector rented accommodation, and private individuals who propose board and lodgings. We are now in the process of organising an agreement for a « Student Accommodation Label ». The impetus is there, and we are moving forward. Now it's just a question of organising the logistics. We are witnessing the development of a higher education platform based around the Lardy College, which not only includes local and international Universities but also the local economic fabric of Vichy and its urban area. »

- One of the College's many partners, which contribute to the richness of its environment, is the **CAVILAM** language school, situated in the heart of the campus buildings: 4,600 students per year from 115 countries come primarily to learn French. They benefit from modern facilities on site including computer rooms, WIFI internet connections, language laboratories, and the Orangerie mediatheque. These students form part of the « mosaic of peoples and cultures » that animates the campus on a daily basis and reinforces its reputation.
- The **Qualidev Resources Centre**, located next to the campus, is a place where students, teachers, companies and communities can meet and exchange ideas and opinions on new and innovative methods concerning quality assurance, security and the environment, in terms of sustainable development. The centre is located in the restored and converted convent of the Célestins, and run by the Moulins-Vichy Chamber of Commerce (web site [www.qualidev.fr](http://www.qualidev.fr)). Qualidev has developed a programme of activities in collaboration with other regional specialists in quality assurance, particularly the I.E.Q.T. in Vichy (European Institute for Total Quality Assurance), the Association Qualité Auvergne Performance, Plateforme 21, the Espaces Auvergne Performance of the CRCIA (Chambre Régionale de Commerce de Commerce et d'Industrie d'Auvergne-the Auvergne Regional Chamber of Commerce), and AFNOR Rhône-Alpes Auvergne (Association Francaise de Normalisation-French Association for Norms and Standards).

## Local industry reorganises to remain competitive



For a long time the region of Vichy has suffered due to the specificity of its industrial base. Recently, major changes are taking place. The difficulties faced by certain traditional sectors have, paradoxically, at the same time, favoured the expansion of new activities with substantial future potential. **Vichy Val d'Allier counts more than 400 industrial companies** covering a whole range of different activities, **and forms the second largest industrial base in the region: Plastics** (CTL Packaging; Wavin France SAS; etc.), **Electronics** (Nizerolles Systèmes Électroniques; Labinal;...), **Metalworking** (Les Profilés du Centre and Galva Eclair part of the Galva Union Group, one of the European leaders in metal hot-dip galvanisation; Valmont at Charmeil, N°2 in France for metal lampposts and mast ts...) and also the **Automobile** industry.

### Ligier: competitiveness as a driving force for enterprise

Created in 1971 by the Formula 1 driver, Guy Ligier, to design and produce competition cars, Ligier Automobiles is today present in thirteen countries across Europe.

In 1980 the company diversified into the production, marketing and sale of light Quad Bikes (**VSP's**, Véhicules Sans Permis-Vehicules, not needing a drivers licence).

Since leaving Formula 1 racing in 1996, the group has concentrated on the light and heavy VSP and Quad market, but without giving up their initial commitment to high performance: from 2003 to 2007, €15 million were invested in new production and assembly lines and buildings at the plant in Abrest just outside of Vichy, with a further €11 million invested from 2008 to 2010.

Two years ago Microcar was integrated into the Ligier Group Holding Company, **DRIVEPLANET**, managed by Philippe Ligier, making them the **world leader in VSP production**, with practically 48% of the market.

« Even though 2009 was a particularly difficult year for everybody, and the economy was in the doldrums, **our sector, developing light and heavy quad bikes, stayed buoyant.** The slight fall in the last quarter was due to the market entering its mature phase, after seeing growth of 13% each year from 2004 to 2008.

The inclusion of **Microcar in 2008** has strengthened the Group and helped us to maintain sales, with a Total Turnover of €124 million for 12,850 vehicles sold in Europe, of which €68 million was for the 6,470 vehicles sold in France by Automobiles Ligier.

The synergy of the skills and experience of our 2 brands has made it easier to work on non polluting engines which meet the requirements for preserving the environment, and at the same time provide eco-citizens with the vehicles of the future.

During the 1990's Philippe Ligier worked on a project to **build and sell a completely electric vehicle, which was successfully brought to its conclusion in 2009** with the Be Sun Proline. Our first customer was the French Post Office "La Poste" who use it for their Postmen/women under the name « Quadéo ».

Today the Be Sun Proline is available in all of our showrooms and sales networks. Considered as an electric micro-utility vehicle with zero emissions, clean and an original design, it offers an alternative means of transport, halfway between a scooter and an electric car, and is ideal for urban and peri-urban travel.

**For 2010** Automobiles Ligier is concentrating on promoting its range of vehicles with either a traditional diesel engine or electric motor. The latest model, the IXO, presented at the Paris Motor Show, is destined to eventually replace the existing model range. Its arrival means that we have to invest in new and more efficient robots in order to maintain the quality standards demanded by our customers. The official launch with 150 distributors invited, was made in June at our site in Abrest. It was a major commercial event for the Vichy area, and we worked closely together with the local hotels, restaurants etc. to make it a success.

**Automobiles Ligier actively contributes to the local economy.** The company has nearly 150 employees on site, and regularly receives outplacement students from local and regional schools, colleges and universities. There are now three generations of the Ligier family working in the Group, and we are all working hard to develop an international business, but our roots remain here. »

François Ligier, Manager of Automobiles Ligier



- The **Agro-Food Industry** in the area is the 2nd largest in the region and employs 17% of the workforce, equating to 12.5% for the sector in the Auvergne. The 16 different companies in the area produce a variety of products: the famous Vichy Pastilles (69 employees), the bottled water industry (246) and also the meat and poultry industry (240 employees for the company Arrivé Auvergne) etc.

*The local management bought SARL Capryl, a manufacturer of powdered desserts and instant powder drinks, in 1997 and brought a change of strategy and a new start. Over the last 10 years Turnover has increased from € 107,000 to € 7.000.000, and the number of employees from 4 to 32. With such an impressive production facility and a desire to see sales increase even further, there are a number of reasons to be positive about the company's future.*

### **Capryl : the Vichy Flan finds a new enthusiasm and expands its market**

**Created in 1934 using the spa town's image for healthy living and well being, the « FLAN DE VICHY » brand caught the trend with consumers for health food powder desserts. After becoming a SARL limited company during the 90's, business increased and expanded.**

*« When we took over the company in 1997 it was based on one site and was investing in new production lines to consolidate its position in its different distribution markets, from the small corner shop to large national supermarket chains. We are now in a process of continuous innovation and have increased our range of products from the standard desserts, to include organic and slimming products as well as savory products. We have close commercial relationships with major supermarket groups and hard-discount groups.*

*In order to cope with this expansion we built a new 6,000m<sup>2</sup> production facility in 2006 in the Coquet Industrial Zone at Saint-Germain-des-Fossés. With the addition of a production tower, which is specific to our type of business, as well as new automated production systems, we now have one of the most efficient and safe production units in France (certified IFS superior quality), producing over 150 different preparation formulas. The HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) system we now have in place guarantees zero product defects. This ultra modern production unit provides us with real flexibility. We can now produce small or large quantities for our own brands or for private label products (PLP), for the domestic market or for export.*



*Capryl is the uncontested leader in the domestic PLP market with an 80% market share, but also works with the sector's hard-discount market and organic product producers. The company is the third largest French manufacturer in its sector, behind the ALSA and ANCEL groups.*

*Today our expertise working with powders and formulation is recognised by distributors and manufacturers alike. We rely on our research and development activities for innovative products or systems, developed in a total quality assurance environment. Capryl was awarded the Prize for Innovation in the Auvergne at the International Agro-Foods Trade Fair, for their new range of instant powder drinks (SOIF DE THÉ-Thirsty for Tea). Capryl's real added value comes from its expertise and potential in formulation, the ability to create new products in its own laboratories, personalise them according to consumer demands, then launch them successfully on the market. »*

Gérard Maldant, Managing Director, Capryl

## Health-Beauty-Fitness : Vichy looks after its image

Vichy's reputation as a Spa Town started in Roman times. It now has an added value brand image largely due to its dynamic « health-beauty-fitness » sector.

**CAP** (Cosmétique Active Production), a subsidiary of the **L'Oréal** Group, is one of the largest local privately owned companies. Created in 2006 (ex LIDV, Laboratoires Industriels De Vichy-Vichy Industrial Laboratories) CAP distributes 2,300 product ranges to the four corners of the world from its warehouse in the Ancises Business Park at Creuzier-le-Neuf. The company principally supplies pharmacy products under the 5 major brand names Vichy, La Roche Posay, Sanoflore, Innéov and SkinCeuticals, which account for 8% of the l'Oréal Group businesses. The factory in Vichy concentrates production on skincare products, hair care products and makeup.

### The Bioparc ([www.bioparc.com](http://www.bioparc.com))



Awarded the « Qualiparc » label by the Allier Regional Council (Conseil Général de l'Allier) in 2000, the business park specialises in Health-Beauty-Fitness and is a shop window for the historic skills and know-how of local industry and service companies in the Vichy area. Offices, laboratories, production workshops and storage warehouses all benefit from local economic, technical and scientific networks. The Bioparc has the support of local government, the Allier Department, the Auvergne Region and even the European Union. In time the 35 hectare site at Hauterive will provide a secure and privileged environment for developing the bio-tech industry and related service providers. Presently there are twenty companies on site with nearly 200 employees.

## Business tourism and thermalism, potential growth markets



- The renaissance of **active thermalism**, oriented towards prevention and follow-up care, combining a healthy diet with practising sports and traditional spa water treatments.

The Nutritional Centre is the operational base for the « Vichy slimming coaching-Coaching minceur à Vichy » programme. This is where the slimming programmes are elaborated and the latest scientific information exchanged with their partner Medical Schools and Research Centres.

The « Slim in Vichy-Maigrir à Vichy » programme launched in cooperation with local partners, has reinforced the attractiveness of Vichy as a Spa resort.

The strategy « *good health for everybody* » provides a centre for research and different applications using nutrition as a means not only to lose weight, but also to prevent illnesses, particularly certain forms of cancer.

The Callou Spa has the latest technology in terms of hygiene and individualised care. It concentrates on therapeutic care, with treatment being mostly for rheumatology, digestive and metabolism problems (excess weight).

The Dômes Spa has been entirely renovated in « Art Deco » style and offers the traditional spa treatments which help young seniors stay fit.

In association with the Laboratoires Vichy, the Compagnie de Vichy proposes a range of world exclusive care treatments at the Vichy Thermal SPA Les Célestins.

## The Compagnie de Vichy, always more active

As one of main privately owned employers in Vichy and its surrounding communes (Abrest, Saint-Yorre, Bellerive-sur-Allier, Hauterive...), the Compagnie de Vichy is mainly involved in thermalism, cosmetics, mineral water and the hotel industry.

Created in the middle of the 19th Century, the company has a certain number of concessions from the French State, which gave it the name of Compagnie Fermière until 2009. It continues to actively contribute to Vichy's international reputation.

« The Compagnie de Vichy is a major force in the local economy and contributes actively to the dynamism of the region with 24,000 patients taking the waters each year in our different establishments. In terms of the hotel industry, for example, it is important to note that with 143,000 overnight stays generated in 2009, thermalism is their first source of commercial room bookings.

Also, more and more people are coming to Vichy to take advantage of the excellent sporting facilities in the area. They also appreciate having the services of a healthcare centre near to where they are playing or training.

The key for us at the Compagnie de Vichy, all is to make sure the spa goers and patients keep coming back to Vichy. Of course this is the same for the restaurant owners, the shopkeepers and even the taxi drivers!



The spa patients receiving prescription treatment are the historical base of our thermalism activity. But in recent years we have diversified with new activities and services. Thermalism is becoming more popular, but what is different is that the spa goers make their own decisions about the care and treatments they receive.

Priority is given to new and innovative treatments, incorporating beauty, health and fitness as a means of prevention, and using the latest methods for therapeutic education, follow-up care, dietetics and cosmetics. If the spa goer is not a patient with a recognised pathology to treat, then this presents a formidable potential for new avenues of care and treatment.

With this in mind, for 2010 we reorganised the care and treatment we offer around 3 specific themes: Vichy Health, Vichy Well-being and Vichy Beauty. Finally, Vichy Thermal Spa is in the process of modernising its equipment base in order to provide clients with the latest technology and machines.

The **active thermalism developed by the Compagnie de Vichy** is also, for us, another way of recognising the importance and essential nature of sustainable development, particularly in terms of geothermics. The environment is our most important asset. Because we use a natural resource as our raw material, we understand and acknowledge that preserving the environment is fundamental to our future.»



Jérôme Phelipeau-President and Chief Executive of the Compagnie de Vichy

### **The Compagnie de Vichy, always more active**

**40 million** : the number of bottles of « Vichy Célestins » sparkling mineral water sold in 2009.

**€30 million** : company Turnover for 2009, with, on average, 300 fulltime employees and a varying number of seasonal employees.

**24,000** : the average number of people coming to Vichy each year to take the waters.

**120,000** : the number of days of spa treatment in Compagnie de Vichy establishments with, on average, 80,000 overnight stays.

**400** : the number of hotel rooms specifically reserved for spa goers and patients at the Callou Spa, the Dômes Spa and the Thermal spa les Célestins at the company's 3 hotels: the \*\*Hotel Ibis, the \*\*\*Vichy Thermalia, the \*\*\*\*Vichy Spa Hotel & Resort Les Célestins.

- Business tourism represents 50% of total local tourism, and continues to increase its market share. Since its opening in 1997, the **Palais des Congrès-Opéra de Vichy** exhibition and conference centre has continued to expand its business, not only due to the increased activity in conferences and congresses, but also because of their constant diversification. 2008 saw a record number of 125 events being held, with a corresponding increase in Turnover by more than 17%. *The Palais des Congrès has the advantages of a 18,000m<sup>2</sup> town centre site, in the heart of more than 6 hectares of riverside parks along the Allier waterfront with quality hotel accommodation close by, 1,400 hotel rooms in 2, 3, and 4 star establishments.*



*This success means that Vichy can follow in the steps of Deauville and confirm its position as one of the leading business tourism, congress and conference destinations in France. Add to this the numerous professional and themed events which add to the bookings schedule.*



- Vichy and the surrounding areas provide the opportunity to practise most major sports and at all levels. The 50 different sports which make up this offer form an exceptionally high quality technical platform which makes an important contribution to the local economy.

- The **Omnisports Sports Complex** is an international standard sports campus with football and rugby pitches, tennis courts, a top level bouldrome and a fencing salle d'armes. Its Pierre-Coulon Sports Centre is also home to the JAV 1st division basketball team, with nearly 3,000 supporters at each game.

Other attractions include two eighteen hole golf courses, a race course, which is being expanded, and a show jumping stadium which hosts a major international competition each year.

- **The Vichy-Bellerive Racecourse**, running alongside the Allier River, is presently in the middle of its busy 2010 programme, with 39 PMU (Paris Mutuel Urbain betting) meetings organised from May to September this year, compared to 36 last season. The Société des courses de Vichy-Auvergne organised three hundred races in 2009 and broke all attendance records with more than 120,000 race goers. This success not only increases the profitability and reputation of the racecourse, but also has a major impact on the local economy.

*Vichy is the only racecourse outside of Paris to hold a Grand Prix. The racing programme is rich and varied, including Trotting and Harness racing, Flat racing and Jump racing. The highlights of the season are the Trotting Festival and the Grand Flat Racing Week during July, which regularly attract the best trainers, drivers and jockeys.*

- The **latest generation swimming centre**, located on the site of the old Clay Pigeon Shooting Range at Bellerive-sur-Allier, opened in March 2008 and had more than 232,000 visitors during its first year, of which 190,000 were paying users (entry costs have been kept low). This made it the 2nd most visited sports centre in the region. It also has an indoor sports and games hall, offering various exercises supervised by qualified instructors, including cardio training, weightlifting and fitness training.

*Sauna, hammam, spa, restaurant and artificial outside beaches, artificial river, hydromassage benches, a 25x21m indoor pool and an Olympic size outdoor pool, both made of coated stainless steel: nothing is missing from this leisure centre set in a pleasant park setting. Whether simple swimmers enjoying themselves, or serious competitors, the aficionados are arriving en masse.*



*NB : In July 2010, the American Swimming Champion Michael Phelps and a team of around fifteen, came to discover and check out the facilities in Vichy and the surrounding area.*

- The **widened river Allier** is used for rowing, sailing, water skiing, jet skiing, motorised water sports and canoe-kayak, with major competitions being organised every year.

A round of the **canoe-kayak World Cup** took place on the river at during 7th, 8th and 9th **May 2010**.



More than 600 entrants with over 1,500 athletes participating from 45 countries, competed over the three days and made the first round a success.

The **Centre d'Education Populaire et de Sport - General and Sports Education Centre - Vichy-Auvergne** (CREPS) sits in over 9 ha of grounds adjacent to the sports complex. The CREPS provides a new cursus each year for students in Sports and Sport Management, adapted to the real world of professional sporting activities, with a mix of coursework and practical work-related experience.

• **Training and preparation courses for high-level athletes :**

- **4 centres of excellence** with places for 64 athletes : Athletics - Rowing - Basket Ball - Football
- **Organises training courses for the FFSCDA-** Fédération des sports de contact et disciplines associées, the French Federation of Contact Sports and Associated Disciplines
- **Training Centre for the** Jeanne d'Arc Vichy Val d'Allier Auvergne Basketball Team – JAV

• **Organising training camps and courses sponsored by local councils, sporting associations and youth groups, supported by various Government Ministries**

- A **National Centre of Excellence for Sports and Health** is in the process of being created at Vichy. Amongst other activities, it will allocate a sizeable area, including meeting and documentation rooms, to specialising in subjects such as fighting obesity, the relapse of certain pathologies, addictions in sport, etc.. It will also include a proper **Medical Sports Centre** service, supported by Vichy and VVA.

**With more than 550 hectares dedicated to sports activities, VVA's Sports Economy Platform offers the best range of sports activities concentrated in one place in the whole of France and is the third best sports location in Europe.**



- A range of different cultural activities, with the **Vichy Opera-Theatre** taking front stage.



With Summer and Winter seasons offering a rich year round programme of theatre, music and dance.

Well known artists come to perform in the magnificent *Art Nouveau* theatre, built in 1903, recently restored and with excellent acoustics.

The cultural programme is as diverse and varied as the public that comes to see it. Local citizens, athletes, spa goers, retired people, but also more and more students coming to see shows and concerts organised throughout the area.

There are a number of venues which provide an entertaining night out, including:

The 183 seat **Geyser Theatre** in Bellerive, inaugurated in September 2008, producing cultural events organised by the municipality, local performing arts associations and visiting companies.

In Cusset, the **Espace Chambon** and the Theatre in the Heart of the Town, which opened in 2008.

The **Centre Culturel Valéry Larbaud** in Vichy, with its 447 seat Italian style theatre.



**Increasingly opening up and reaching out for new partners, services and ideas, making the local environment more attractive, the Vichy Val d'Allier Community of Local Communes is working to sustain and protect the well being and improved lifestyle of its inhabitants.**



## The Allier : opens up and reaches out with confidence

The Department of the Allier has three main entrance points, which are also used as windows on its three neighbouring Regions, the Centre, the Bourgogne and the Rhône-Alpes.

The three Communities of Local Communes of Vichy, Moulins and Montluçon count for most of the economic activity in the Department.

### Department of the Allier - key figures :

**Population : 354,200 inhabitants**

➤ *Demographic stability after decades of erosion*

**Geographic Area : 7,340 km<sup>2</sup>** equating to nearly 1.4% of the national land mass

➤ *A strategic European crossroad with a modern and developing infrastructure*

**Population Density : 47 habitants per km<sup>2</sup>**

➤ *Rural land counts for 70% of the surface of the Department*



▪ The previous demographic erosion of nearly 3% seems to have been reversed and is now at less than 1%. The Department is getting stronger. Only the western side around Montluçon is still seeing a decrease in population. The northern part of the Department with Moulins, remains stable and Vichy in the South sees its population increasing.

▪ The Allier is at the crossroads of a number of major European transport links, and fully intends to take advantage of this central position to develop its local economy. Improving the infrastructure in the Department remains a priority: opening up the road transport access means making the RN 7 (Route Nationale) and the RCEA (Route Centre-Europe Atlantique - Atlantic-Central Europe Highway) into 4 lane highways, which unfortunately is taking a long time to finalise.

#### East-West Link:

The RCEA links La Rochelle on the Atlantic Coast with Germany, Switzerland and Italy. Of the 130km that cut through the Allier, only around 30km are in four lanes. It was officially announced in March 2009 that the link would become part of the Motorway System and that the remaining 4 lane sections should be finished by 2017.

#### North-South Link:

The RN7 is an essential artery for the Departments for the Nièvre, the Allier and the Loire, as it services a number of important employment catchment areas. Local and Departmental Government are still pressuring Central Government to get the full 243 kilometres converted to 2x2 lanes. For the part that cuts through the Allier, only 24 of the total 78km have been converted. The bypasses around Lapalisse and Varennes will be completed in 2011. The project to extend the A719 motorway to Vichy (Gannat/Bellerive-sur-Allier) has still not been finalised. The public enquiry opened in 2010, but the finalisation of the 13.8km extension has constantly been delayed.

Concerning improved **rail access**, the Department fully supports the Association Astro, which is lobbying for 3 TGV services for the Allier; North to Paris from Clermont-Ferrand; East towards Lyon; and West towards Nantes and Bordeaux.

▪ **The service sector continues to expand and now counts for more than 50% of the employment market**, the Allier distinguishes itself by the importance of commerce in its economy.

▪ **One in four new companies in the Region is based in the Allier**, principally SME's. Vichy and its local area are the major beneficiaries of this trend, followed by Montluçon and Moulins. Industry and Construction combined count for nearly a quarter of the economic activity in the Department. **The Industrial Sector maintains employment levels at 20% of total employment in the Department**, which is higher than the National French average. Employment is mainly concentrated in the chemicals industry, rubber, plastics, metal working and electric and electronic components sectors.

▪ As innovative as it is productive, **the agro-foods industry continues to expand**. The estimated global Turnover for the sector is €1.5 billion in the Allier, with 4,200 employees in 84 companies. The largest contributor is the meat and poultry trade, counting for 29% of the companies in the Department and 54% of the sector's workforce.



▪ Forests cover 22% of the Allier's surface and the timber industry is very active in the Department. The Forest of Tronçais is one of the most beautiful in France, and covers nearly 11,000 hectares.

In the Allier 40% of the employment in the **timber sector** is in timber transformation. The dynamism of this historic sector is evidenced by the Canard Group, which makes coffins, and the company Berry Wood which manufactures wooden parquet flooring.

▪ **Agriculture, the third most important contributor to the Department's economy, covers two thirds of the land.**

Average farm size is 82 hectares. The Allier is the biggest producer of organic products and foodstuffs in France, and counts 7 Red Label awards. AOC attributions are also increasing.

75% of farms have dairy herds, which makes the Allier the second largest dairy livestock producer in France. Wheat is the principle cereal produced.

Around 200 agricultural farms are put up for sale every year in the Department. The new Departmental Plan for Agriculture 2009-2013 intends to make such farms more autonomous, with new methods of production.

▪ The Allier is the leading Department in the Auvergne for **organic agriculture** and the sector is supported by the Departmental Council. A sizeable amount of agricultural land is dedicated to this type of production which respects the environment. It has been adopted by nearly 150 local producers. The Total Turnover for the organic sector continues to rise.



**The Allier's central geographic position is an essential asset for the development of the Department's economy. Although its industrial skills and experience and the richness of its agriculture form the base of the economy, there are also a number of high performance sectors with international groups and innovative SME-SMI's organised in networks and clusters to better confront and develop their external markets.**

## The Auvergne : confirming the « volcano » effect

Just like their rugby team, which finally won the first division championship and the Bouclier de Brennus Trophy in 2010, after many years of obstinate effort, the Auvergne continues to assert itself in a quiet but confident manner.

### Auvergne Region - key figures :

**Population : 1,340,000 inhabitants**

➤ A confirmed increase due to the influx of employed workers in the 30-59 age bracket

**Geographic Area : 26,000 km<sup>2</sup>** equating to approx. 5% of the national land mass

➤ Situated at the heart of Europe and the Centre of France near to the Rhône valley

**Population Density : 51 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>**

➤ Less than half the national average of 110 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>



▪ The fact that the **population had grown** by 27,300 since 1999, being nearly 3,900, **+0.3%**, per year was made evident by the 2006 population census. After two decades of diminution, this confirmed progression benefited 75% of the communes in the Auvergne and showed that urban expansion continues. Most of the new migrants came from other regions in France, with the Rhône-Alpes and Ile de France heading the list. The majority are working families with an urban culture which they do not want to change. This explains why they choose to live in peri-urban areas.

The regional capital Clermont-Ferrand makes a substantial contribution to the region's attractiveness. The last classification of the 50 biggest towns and cities in France (See Article in L'Express N°3074) showed Clermont amongst the first in terms of quality of life and the dynamism of its Universities.

▪ Since March 2009, the programme Auvergne Broadband ADSL with added satellite solutions, has allowed the Auvergne to become **the 1st Region in France to have 100% broadband cover**. A Public/Private Sector partnership signed in 2007 between the Region, its 4 Departments, the French State, the European Union and France Telecom, has meant that the Auvergne has gotten rid of all the « internet coverage black spots » in its territory.

▪ Confirming the Region's privileged relationship with the **Rhône-Alpes Region**, the growing economy of the Brioude-Issoire-Clermont-Ferrand-Vichy axis is now transacting 50% of its commerce is with this neighbouring region, along the strategic link connecting Geneva to the Auvergne. There are numerous examples of this successful collaboration, such as the Viaméca Centre of Excellence, concerning automobile and aeronautic equipment, or the Cancerpole CLARA (Canceropole Lyon-Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes).

▪ The **Elastopole** business and research cluster, was created in 2008 to bring together the « rubber and polymers » sectors in the Auvergne with those in the Centre, Île-de-France and Pays de la Loire Regions. With **Cereals Valley (Céréales Vallée)** specialising in innovation in cereals, the Auvergne now has **three** state recognised **business and research clusters (pôles de compétitivité)** which combine public and private sector skills and experience in a partnership geared towards creating extra added value.

**Agriculture and industry still remain stronger in the Auvergne than in other regions. Substantial advances have been made in the regional economy and with population growth. In promoting the richness of its natural and human resources, the region of the volcanoes allies its sustainable heritage with technological innovation.**

Redaction : VD Redaction

## A winning and dynamic Auvergne !

2010 has been a particularly good year for the region in terms of dynamism and rewards :

### The spirit of enterprise : the Auvergne, European Champion

On 31st March 2010 in Madrid, the Auvergne Region, through its Regional Development Agency (Agence régionale de développement des territoires-ARDT) was awarded the Special Jury Prize at the European Enterprise Awards for its « Entrepreneur Residency » programme, which offers financial support and personalised project support for anyone creating or buying a company in the Auvergne.

See Web site: [www.auvergnelife.tv](http://www.auvergnelife.tv)



### ASM crowned French Rugby Champions

Saturday 29th May 2010 will be etched in the memories and history of rugby in the Auvergne as an unforgettable day.

The blue and yellow dream had finally come true. The ASM were the Champions of France ! After waiting for such a long time, the whole region was overjoyed !!

### Digital Development: the Auvergne rewarded by the European Commission

On 20th May the Auvergne received one of the prestigious RegioStars 2010 Awards for being the 1st Region in France to have 100% Broadband/ADSL coverage. The project excelled in the Category «Broadband Coverage in Less Developed Regions or Rural Areas». In 2007 the Region showed its capacity for innovation by putting in place France's first **Public/Private Partnership (PPP)** in the telecommunications sector, between the Region, its 4 Departments, the French State, the European Union and France Telecom. Less than two years after the project was launched, 99.6% of telephone lines in the Auvergne could have Broadband/ADSL internet connection, and the remaining 0.4% could use a satellite connection.

### The companies and laboratories in the Auvergne Region combine their energies for collective excellence

The Auvergne Regional Council provides substantial support to those sectors with strong economic development potential. In October 2009, the State launched an appeal for projects to establish « Clusters of Excellence » which they hoped would stimulate innovation by having companies work together in groups.

**7 Clusters of Excellence projects** were accepted for the Region.

- **MÉMO MÉCATRONIQUE** (Mechanical and mechatronics engineering)
- **JCEP** (Plastics - Plastic Extrusion)
- **NUTRAVITA** (Food, Nutrition and Health),
- **INSTITUT DE RECHERCHE PHARMABIOTIQUE (IRP)** (Probiotics Pharmaceuticals)
- **ANALGESIA PARTNERSHIP** (Healthcare - Pain Management)
- **AUVERGNE TIC** (IT and Communications Technologies)
- **E2IA** (Eco-activities and Eco-technologies).

The originality of the Auvergne's approach is to promote and develop the attractiveness of the economy in the region by simultaneously supporting 7 Clusters of Excellence in different strategic sectors.

