BRUSSELS/LONDON: Today we are publishing the first ever ranking of the 40 most influential Britons on current EU policy-making. Rather than a Britain isolated from the continent, it highlights the influence wielded by the UK through a mix of well-known and ‘backroom’ figures.

The UK40 ranking, revealed today, is topped by Sharon Bowles MEP. Bowles chairs the European Parliament's economic and monetary affairs committee and is a member of the liberal (ALDE) Group. Jonathan Faull, the European Commission's director-general regulating financial services, is in the second spot. Completing the top three is Malcolm Harbour MEP, chair of the European Parliament's committee on the internal market and consumer protection and a member of the EP’s European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) Group. Foreign Secretary William Hague MP is eighth in the list, one slot above Prime Minister David Cameron MP.

The full list of the top 40 British ‘Influencers’ on EU policy, comprising a mix of well-known & ‘backroom’ figures, can now be downloaded on EurActiv.com/UK40.

Christophe Leclercq, EurActiv’s founder and publisher, said: “EurActiv has compiled its ‘UK40’ ranking at a time when Britain approaches 40 years of EU membership in 2013. Its relations with the EU are under intense media and political scrutiny. EurActiv.com Plc - the leading online media regarding EU policies - is keen to highlight the real actors in this debate.”

Sharon Bowles MEP, the leading figure in the ‘UK40’ list, said: “Engagement with Europe is important. Current circumstances and the fact that financial services are vital to the City and the UK no doubt lies behind my ranking in this list. Politicians rarely get thanked, so I am grateful for the extent to which I have been given recognition. I have to share this with my staff and many in the City and beyond - officials and industry - who provide a huge source of expertise.”

Sir Julian Priestley, the former secretary-general of the European Parliament and chair of the expert jury that determined the ranking, said: “This list puts a new light on Britain’s relations with Europe. It shows often unsung, sometimes unknown Britons at work exercising real influence in Europe, shaping policies, making a strong and constructive contribution to Europe's future. This is not the picture of 'Britain cut off from the continent' but the potential of a Britain really at the heart of Europe.”

Sir Stephen Wall, Britain’s former permanent representative to the EU, was deputy chair of EurActiv’s jury and spoke at the ranking’s launch event on 14 November. He said: “Carrying on about Europe is not the same as carrying influence in Europe. This ‘UK40’ lists the British men and women we don’t hear so much about at home (along with a few we hear all the time) but who are listened to and heeded across the EU. ‘Un-famous’ they may be, but they help make the European weather - and it’s our weather, too.”

The ‘UK40’ list was decided by an expert panel of 15 UK-EU affairs specialists located in London or Brussels, led by Sir Julian Priestley. A wide-ranging ‘longlist’ of more than 170 names was considered by the panel, including names sent in by EurActiv readers. The full list of senior journalists, politicians, consultants and lobbyists in the expert panel is available on EurActiv.com/UK40.

The ‘UK40’ ranking was revealed earlier today at Europe House, the European Commission’s and European Parliament’s London base in Westminster. EurActiv's ‘UK40’ project is organised by EurActiv.com, sponsored by public affairs consultancy Cicero Group, with Nucleus, the campaign group for British leadership in the EU, as event partner.

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NOTE TO THE EDITOR:

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