

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE CHIEF MINISTER  
ON THURSDAY 28th APRIL 2022**

**Response to Covid Pandemic**

From Friday the legal requirement for mandatory self-isolation for positive cases will end. However, we will continue to advise anyone who is positive to stay at home for a minimum of five days and test regularly, but the legal requirement will end. Last week we also announced further relaxations to the COVID-19 schools policy, which has seen the removal of masks and bubbles in education settings, and a reduction to the frequency of LFT testing for students and staff. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell – STAC – met for the last time last week as part of our de-escalation. Whilst the Cell will no longer be meeting weekly, they remain on standby, and a sub-group has been set up to continue to coordinate matters. STAC members have been fundamental to providing scientific and technical advice to Government throughout the pandemic response and I would like to thank each and every one of them. Their advice has been integral to the decisions we have taken as Competent Authority Ministers and the response we have marshalled as an Island.

In line with the rest of our de-escalation activity, we will also be changing the frequency of the COVID-19 data reporting from daily to once a week. The last daily update will be published on tomorrow (Friday), and from next week we will move to weekly reporting which will be published online every Thursday.

It has been a little over two years since the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic on the 11 March 2020. Members may recall those crucial months in March and April when Island life changed so rapidly. Within 24 hours of the WHO's announcement, the Emergencies Council had met and agreed a support package for businesses. Within days we had introduced social distancing for over 65s and opened an on-Island testing facility. In the weeks that followed we outlined a £180 million support package for Islanders, established a Community Task Force, introduced a border testing regime and constructed a Nightingale Hospital. And shortly before the end of 2020 we began our successful vaccine programme, delivering the first doses ahead of schedule.

Since those early days, almost every aspect of Island life has been affected to some degree and every Islander has had a part to play in our response. I am proud of how Jersey has acted as a community during the pandemic, and I want to thank all Islanders for their diligence, their care and for their patience over the last two years. It has been a difficult period for us all.

It is in large part thanks to the efforts of Islanders, in following the guidance and especially the majority who have gone out and got vaccinated that we are now in the position to make one final relaxation in our measures. As we learn to live with COVID-19, we will need to remain vigilant to any significant developments in the global response to the virus.

It is remarkable to think of just how far we have come as an Assembly, as a Government and as an Island during the course of the pandemic. We have worked at speed to bring together experts from across the Government and beyond in the face of this virus. We worked across Government to establish our excellent track and trace programme. We have worked with Microsoft to develop an internationally recognised border testing regime amongst other things. We worked with Mastercard to develop the very successful Spend Local Card. This was the first of its kind and was later replicated in Northern Ireland.

This Assembly, during the pandemic, has worked at pace as we have tabled urgent COVID-19 related legislation and became the first Parliament in the Commonwealth to meet entirely online. I would like to thank Members for their support and their challenge, respectively and I also want to thank you Sir, His Excellency and the States Greffe for all of your support and advice as we have adjusted to new ways of working.

Today, we remain in a strong place following the emergency phase of the pandemic. Throughout we have protected lives and livelihoods and we remain in a good financial position. COVID-19 has cost our Island over £300 million in both lost income and our wide range of measures to support lives and livelihoods over 2020 and 2021. However, the latest projections, are that COVID-19 borrowing will be vastly improved and we will completely repay the debt by the end of 2025.

Sir, yesterday I published a much fuller report providing an update on our response to the conflict in Ukraine; and which also reflects on the Government's work over the last four years and where I extend my thanks to a number of Members including Scrutiny.

In concluding however I would like to pay tribute to the Council of Ministers and to our Assistant Ministers who have ably supported our portfolios.

I have been told on a number of occasions, that I was unlucky to be Chief Minister during this time. Actually Sir, I do not regard it that way. It has been an absolute privilege to lead the Government during this time, with the team that I have had. That is what the role of Chief Minister means, and we have stepped up to the mark. I have been very fortunate to have had the love and support of my family, in particular my wife and my children, without whom this role would have been immeasurably harder. Sir, it is often easier for the negative voice to sound the loudest, but that is when one needs to stand back and look at the bigger picture.

I look for solutions, to implement change. There is one phrase that I think does sum up what we should be about as States Members – it is better to light a candle, than to curse the darkness - to make a positive contribution in our role in this Assembly. If there is one lasting impression that I would like to leave behind, it would be that we have worked determinedly to take those long term, generational decisions which will ultimately only be to the significant benefit of Islanders now, and those Islanders of the future.

We have saved lives, we have protected livelihoods and we leave the Island in a strong financial position after some of the biggest challenges we have seen in our lifetimes. As custodians, we hand over to the next Assembly, and the next Council of Ministers to build on what we have done.