

24th September 2020

Statement by the Chief Minister: Keeping Jersey safe

Chief Minister's Statement: Keeping Jersey safe

Sir, I have asked to address the Assembly this morning to update Members on how the Government is continuing its work to keep Jersey in the favourable position we currently enjoy.

Over recent weeks, the Government has closely monitored the developing situation in Europe and the UK. Meanwhile we have capitalised on the summer months to enhance our preparations for COVID-19 during this winter.

We have looked at how we can protect the freedoms we have regained since April through our safe exit framework and planning how we avoid the sort of second lockdown currently being enforced in other countries. Another lockdown would damage the health of Islanders and the health of our economy. It would cost us lives in delayed healthcare for other conditions and would cost us livelihoods in loss of income and jobs.

As I said in my public statement on August 28th, we have been considering a package of preventative measures to keep cases low and stop clusters forming in the first place. It is important that we begin these preventative measures in the autumn, while cases are still low to stop these cases becoming clusters.

I know that for some Islanders this will seem premature. But we have got ourselves into the favourable position we are in now by following sound medical advice and we must continue to do this to keep ourselves in this favourable position. The measures we are proposing are small changes to the daily lives of most and I ask that Islanders take them in the perspective that there is a global pandemic beyond our shores. If we can all keep together, all support the community and the most high-risk, we will all get through this winter together.

I want to keep our lives, our livelihoods, and our economy on as clear and steady a course as possible through the winter. I want to keep our health services offering elective treatments, I want to keep businesses open and trading and I want for those who need to visit loved ones off-Island to be able to do so as long as possible.

To do this, the Government has dramatically increased our local testing capacity through the establishment of our dedicated on-Island facility. We have enhanced our test, track and trace system so that it will be ready for the deployment of a mobile app. We have prepared a new public awareness campaign for flu and COVID-19 to make sure that when vaccines become available, Islanders know how they can access them. And, where possible, we have broken down the UK into smaller regional classifications to give more granular detail of where cases are and how we can balance the risk at our ports while keeping our essential connectivity to the UK working.

Further on-Island mitigation measures were discussed by the Council of Ministers on Tuesday and will be publicly announced, in detail, next week. One such measure, which Members will have seen, is the wider use of masks in indoor public spaces (supermarkets, shops, the library), which the Health Minister is currently preparing the

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necessary legislation for. This will not include wearing masks in workplaces and will sit alongside further community testing and screening of frontline staff and more targeted enforcement activity in the night-time economy and for those who should be isolating.

States Members will receive a further briefing from Ministers and medical experts, next Tuesday before any public announcement.

Jersey is in a good position. We have not detected transmission within the community, and we have an excellent test, track and trace programme in place to find and isolate those cases should they be detected.

This strong position is in large part thanks to the ongoing cooperation of Islanders and I'd like to thank everyone who has followed the guidelines and done their part to keep the rates of transmission so low. Where guidelines have not been followed, we have intervened, and this has led to prosecutions. We will continue this approach throughout the winter to remind Islanders that we are not through the pandemic. The actions of the few will not be allowed to ruin the freedoms of the many.

Members will be aware that our new on-Island testing centre, that has now been operating for over a week, is reducing average turnaround time down to our ambition of just twelve hours. It is with this new capability Sir; that we can update our regional classification thresholds and bring us in line with the European Commission proposed levels.

Today, we will release new regional classifications, at a much more granular lower-tier authority level for England. These new classifications will be in effect from Tuesday morning and will require all arrivals from green regions to undertake a test both on arrival and after five days, if they are still in Jersey. For green arrivals there will still be no need to isolate until test results – though once our turnaround times do get below twelve hours, we will bring this in for the first negative result. This is how we will enhance our border protections.

A further announcement will be made in due course, to confirm when this will begin.

The option to undertake a verified PCR test before arriving in Jersey will remain as before - provided that a negative result is received within seventy-two hours prior to arriving in the Island. This will continue to ensure that regular business travellers can continue to frequent our Island – provided they take the necessary precautions.

As always, full advice, including a breakdown of regional classifications and the steps for in-bound travellers will be available on the Gov.je website and via our dedicated coronavirus hotline.

In the meantime, I want to emphasise that we must not be complacent as a community. Physical distancing, frequent hand washing, the use of masks where appropriate and consideration for others remain vital in our fight against COVID-19.

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Sir, I wish to express my gratitude to our medical professionals, officers across departments, colleagues in this Assembly, and to all Islanders for their collective efforts.

We are in a more fortunate position than most jurisdictions, **not only** because of our geographic disposition, but also because of our economic resources, our PPE stocks and our testing capacity.

But most of all, especially thanks to the cooperation of Islanders who continue to prove their resilience and determination to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 and to keep Jersey safe.

With that Sir, I will be happy to take questions from Members.