

STATES OF JERSEY



A SAFER TRAVEL PERIOD: STATES ASSEMBLY APPROVAL (P.84/2020) – SECOND AMENDMENT

Lodged au Greffe on 30th June 2020
by the Scrutiny Liaison Committee

STATES GREFFE

A SAFER TRAVEL PERIOD: STATES ASSEMBLY APPROVAL (P.84/2020) –
SECOND AMENDMENT

1 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (a) –

For the words “3rd July 2020” substitute the words “10th July 2020.

2 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (b) –

After the words “latest medical advice” insert the words “, with passengers participating in the border testing programme to self-isolate until a negative result is received and with a dedicated sanitised transport service to be provided for passengers entering Jersey without onward means of transport”.

3 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (d) –

For the words “and to present a report to the States prior to any changes being made to the safer travel policy” substitute the words “and to ensure that any changes made to the safer travel policy receive prior approval by the States, with any proposition to that effect lodged at least one week before the Council intends such a proposition to be debated”.

4 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (d) –

After paragraph (d), insert the following paragraph and re-designate the subsequent paragraphs accordingly –

“(e) to request the Council of Ministers to publish and maintain a list of countries designated as safe for travel with the list to indicate the prevalence of COVID-19, the reproduction (‘R’) number and the testing regime of each country on the list; and”.

SCRUTINY LIAISON COMMITTEE

Note: After this amendment, the proposition would read as follows –

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

- (a) that a safer travel period, as set out in the policy statement attached as Appendix 1 to the report, should commence from Friday **10th July 2020;**

- (b) that during the safer travel period, anyone entering Jersey must either participate in and comply with the requirements of the border testing programme, developed in accordance with medical advice in order to identify and contain cases of COVID-19, or self-isolate for the timeframe specified by the latest medical advice, with passengers participating in the border testing programme to self-isolate until a negative result is received and with a dedicated sanitised transport service to be provided for passengers entering Jersey without onward means of transport;
- (c) that, the options for pre-travel testing should be co-ordinated with other relevant jurisdictions, in accordance with medical advice
- (d) to request the Council of Ministers to give effect to the safer travel period, as set out in this proposition, and to ensure that any changes made to the safer travel policy receive prior approval by the States, with any proposition to that effect lodged at least one week before the Council intends such a proposition to be debated; and
- (e) to request the Council of Ministers to publish and maintain a list of countries designated as safe for travel with the list to indicate the prevalence of COVID-19, the reproduction ('R') number and the testing regime of each country on the list; and
- (f) to request the Council of Ministers to provide regular and timely information to States Members on the operation of the safer travel period, including the border testing and contact tracing programmes.

REPORT

Introduction

A Safer Travel Period ([P.84/2020](#)) was lodged on 26th June by the Council of Ministers. It asks the States Assembly to approve the implementation of a Safer Travel Period by 3rd July 2020. Regrettably, the extremely short timeframe and lack of inclusivity and openness by the Government in the process of the lodging of this important and far reaching Proposition has placed the Scrutiny function, and indeed the wider Assembly, in an extremely compromised position. Despite these circumstances, all Panels and the Scrutiny Liaison Committee “(SLC)” remain committed to discharging our responsibilities in a constructive manner. In this case it has been necessary, given the speed of turnaround and co-ordination required, for the SLC to take the exceptional step of operating necessarily beyond its typical remit to directly engage with and report on a matter of Government policy. We are grateful to all Panel members involved for their support and input.

It has been all but impossible in the time available to undertake the consultation that underpins the work of scrutiny. However, we have drawn upon the knowledge and information built up by members over the pandemic period to inform the amendments that we are proposing, and have attended two briefings specific to the Government’s plans and the controls regarding the opening of borders and safe travel.

Context of the Amendments

The States Assembly has been warned that easing lockdown would be harder than imposing it. In proposing these amendments, SLC is not advocating that our border remains closed, but that the borders open in a more orderly fashion and in a manner that can gain the confidence of a greater number of islanders and tourists alike. We believe that it is important that the matter is debated fully and in order to do so, alternative options should be considered.

Currently, Jersey is in a good place with the levels of infection present on the island. The public seems to have responded responsibly and positively to the move to Level 2 of the Safe Exit Framework. We acknowledge that Jersey is a popular and convenient destination for holidays. By opening the borders, Jersey could offer a safe environment in which to enjoy a relaxing holiday and could encourage more people to explore our beautiful island.

After months of being advised by Government to stay at home to help reduce the spread of Covid-19, P.84/2020 marks a rapid step change from the Government. We understand that the response from the public will be divided. Many will say that it is a welcome change, but there will be some who will be anxious about the move. Throughout this crisis, we note that Jersey’s business community has craved clarity on the recovery strategy and to be given an opportunity to introduce a greater level of commercial activity, albeit limited in relation to previous years.

Yet, as we prepare for debate, the UK has a total of 311,151 people infected with the disease (901 cases daily). Cities such as Leicester have witnessed a spike in infections, and, in response to the flare-up in cases, current lockdown restrictions could remain in place for two weeks in order to try to control the outbreak. This would mean bars, pubs

and restaurants in the city do not open in line with the rest of England on 4th July. We would not want the same scenario in Jersey.

The Government of Jersey has identified that a return to a safer travel period will see a rise in cases. P.84/2020 explains that there is an acceptance and understanding that there is some inevitability of the virus increasing in prevalence on the island due to travel and that there is a need to balance the risk of increased Covid-19 cases and the negative impact of losing air and sea links. To facilitate a safe opening of the borders there are critical processes that need to be in place. However, the advice from the Deputy Medical Officer assures islanders that the risk of infection from asymptomatic people traveling to the island is “very low.”

In the UK, scientists have advised that the R value could return to 1.7 in a reasonable worst-case scenario of restrictions being eased without a proven test and trace system in place. We also note that the Director of The Wellcome Trust, Sir Jeremy Farrar said “Expect to see an increase in cases at the end of June, beginning of July.”

The Amendments

In considering the above factors, the Scrutiny Liaison Committee proposes the following amendments:

- (a) that a safer travel period, as set out in the policy statement attached as Appendix 1 to the report, should commence from Friday **10th July 2020**;

The Committee considers that a delay of one week would enable the medical advice to be reconsidered once the effects of easing lockdown in other countries, the UK in particular, are better understood. According to the UK’s [Office for National Statistics](#), during the 14 days period (8th June – 21st June) there was an estimated 22,000 new cases per week.

The Committee also noted that there has been a considerable number of vulnerable islanders shielding throughout this crisis. Delaying the implementation of this move will enable them to gain confidence to circulate in the community, given the very low number of cases present in the island.

P.84/2020 states that, currently, the day 0 swab can take between 48 hours and 4 days to return a result and on island testing capacity is limited. There are also anticipated limitations within the supply chain of testing equipment in larger volumes. During one of the briefing sessions, the Committee was advised that it could take 6-8 weeks before on-island testing is available (which would be a 12-hour turnaround). In that regard, the Committee believes that a delay will give the Government the time to agree a quicker testing regime for travellers and make it operational.

- (b) that during the safer travel period, anyone entering Jersey must either participate in and comply with the requirements of the border testing programme, developed in accordance with medical advice in order to identify and contain cases of COVID-19, or self-isolate for the timeframe specified by the latest medical advice, **with passengers participating in the border testing programme to self-isolate until a negative result is received and with a dedicated sanitised transport**

service to be provided for passengers entering Jersey without onward means of transport;

P.84/2020 explains that the requirement to self-isolate on arrival will be retained during the Safer Travel Period but will be waived for anyone that agrees to the terms of an enhanced and expanded border testing programme. The specific requirements of this programme will change over time in response to the COVID-19 risk profile and other considerations.

In considering this, the Committee notes that the Economic and International Affairs Panel wrote to the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture asking a number of questions about the Safer Travel Period. Regarding the testing regime, the Minister responded:

Ministers have accepted the recommendation made by STAC on 23 June, which is that the proportionate testing regime in the present context is for a single PCR test (on arrival or 72 hours prior to departure) without the need to quarantine until results are available.

On 23 June, Ministers received the advice from STAC that: Given the current estimated prevalence of the virus in travellers coming from the UK and the current levels of virus on the island, the current practice of all travellers being isolated, even for the short period waiting for test results, is not proportionate.

The guidance for travellers is published as Appendix 2 of P.84.2020 and states:

Passengers do not need to self-isolate while waiting for their test result but are strongly advised to limit the time they spend away from their residence and to limit their social contact during this time. Steps to achieve this would include:

- Working from home
- Avoiding public transport
- Avoiding indoor gatherings, including bars and restaurants

The Committee believes that by offering clear rules to isolate until a negative result is given, rather than requests for compliance that can be set aside, the public will have a greater confidence in the policy. During one of the briefing sessions, the Medical Officer of Health accepted that having recent arrivals from other countries circulating in the community could potentially increase the fear of our vulnerable islanders. This fear could cause them to isolate once again, which has widely acknowledged health and emotional consequences.

We believe that the provision of a specific and sanitised transport service will also reduce concern within the local community and equally contain transmission if there are any undiagnosed carriers arriving in the island.

- (d) to request the Council of Ministers to give effect to the safer travel period, as set out in this proposition, and to ensure that any changes made to the safer travel policy receive prior approval by the States, with any proposition to that effect lodged at least one week before the Council intends such a proposition to be debated; and

It is noted that opening borders elsewhere has been a contentious issue. For example, the various nations of the European Union have not been able to agree a uniform approach to managing their borders with other nations. This amendment would ensure that a watching brief of the situation is maintained and gives the States Assembly the opportunity to debate any change in the Safer Travel Period. A timeframe would also give adequate notice to members and the public that such a debate will take place.

- (e) to request the Council of Ministers to publish and maintain a list of countries designated as safe for travel with the list to indicate the prevalence of COVID-19, the reproduction ('R') number and the testing regime of each country on the list;

The Committee notes that, in the UK, foreign holidays will be possible after ministers confirmed the requirement to self-isolate for 14 days upon returning to the UK will be revised. In place of the quarantine arrangements will be a traffic light system, with officials placing countries into green, amber and red categories based on the prevalence of coronavirus within each nation's borders. The Committee believes that the Government of Jersey should publish and maintain a list of countries designated as safe for travel with the list to indicate the prevalence of COVID-19, the reproduction ('R') number and the testing regime of each country on the list. Consideration should be given to a publishing the list which is aligned to the traffic light systems being adopted by other countries. This would be easy to understand and provide reassurance to islanders, thus building their confidence.

Financial and manpower implications

The Committee believes that these actions can be accommodated within the resources earmarked by the Government for its own proposals.