

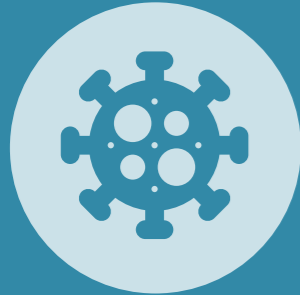
COVID-19 Strategy

July 2021 Onwards

As progression through both the Pandemic and the Bailiwick Exit from Lockdown Framework (The Bailiwick Blueprint)¹ continues, the approach to COVID-19 needs to be continually reviewed. This includes a review of the strategic aims as we progress to wider external connectivity. The balance between relaxing border restrictions and the health and wellbeing of islanders is key, as is ensuring any measures in place continue to be proportionate.



The proposed strategy from 1st July 2021 is:



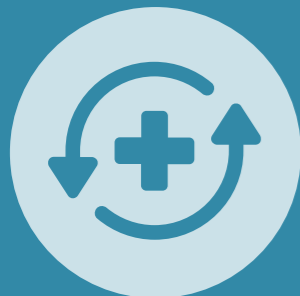
Learning to live responsibly with COVID-19

Over the coming months it is anticipated that this will see a shift to a focus on shared community responsibility, with the retention of emergency legislation, as required and proportionate. This includes working together to promote healthy habits, promoting awareness on how the virus is transmitted and how to avoid becoming infected.



Returning to less restrictive travel

This includes a proposed free travel zone in the Common Travel Area (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Isle of Man and Jersey) with international travel aligned to the UK traffic light system.



Developing a long term, sustainable recovery plan

This should balance mental and physical health and wellbeing, alongside sustainable economic development and align with the Government Work Plan.



Acknowledging uncertainty

Of paramount importance here is the need to be flexible with the emergence of Variants of Concern, most recently B.1.617.2 which originated in India. Of concern is the transmissibility and virulence of, and vaccine efficacy against, these emerging Variants of Concern.



Introduction

As of 1st July 2021, all adults over 18 years of age in the Bailiwick of Guernsey will have been offered COVID-19 vaccination and all will have had the opportunity to receive at least one dose of vaccine. More specifically, Phase 1 of the vaccination programme will have been completed, including all of the over 50s and those at a specific clinical risk.

The roll out of the COVID-19 vaccination programme in the Bailiwick has already had a significant impact, as evidenced by the effect on islanders of the first and second waves of COVID-19. In the first wave of infection there were 252 confirmed infections and 13 confirmed deaths, at a time when no islanders were vaccinated. In the second wave there were 511 confirmed cases with one confirmed death. At the time of the second wave, the top three priority groups had been vaccinated. This included health and care workers and those islanders who were most likely to become severely ill and die from COVID-19.

As levels of population protection through vaccination increases in the Bailiwick, UK, Jersey and the Isle of Man, the focus needs to shift from keeping the Bailiwick COVID-19-free to learning to live responsibly with the virus. There is community division in the

way this should be approached, with some wanting to retain our unique position with no internal restrictions and others wanting greater freedom to travel. What is apparent is that we will, at some point in time, need to move to greater external connectivity.

Locally, the absence of internal restrictions differs from the situation in Jersey and England where non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs), for example a limit on gathering sizes, restrictions on the serving of food in restaurants to seated people only and the use of face coverings in some circumstances, are still in place. The only NPIs currently in place in the Bailiwick are our border controls. Due to the Bailiwick's lack of internal NPIs, any circulating virus within the community, without the protective effect of vaccination, will make the community vulnerable to a third wave.

This is why it is proposed that unrestricted travel will be linked to the progress of vaccination programmes within the Bailiwick, and in the jurisdictions people are travelling from. This will mitigate against uncontrolled spread of the virus should a reintroduction occur.



Proposed future border controls

On the 30th March 2021, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell (STAC) considered various mitigations that could be put in place to avoid overwhelming the local health and care systems as an increasing number of islanders became vaccinated. Central to this was aligning the risk of infection with the vaccination status of an individual and a population, as well as taking into account the UK system of border control.

On the 9th April 2021, the UK's Global Travel Taskforce set out a framework to safely reopen international travel to and from the UK from 17 May 2021 at the earliest. The recommendations include the launch of a new traffic light system and the introduction of travel certification.

The UK traffic light system, which will categorise countries based on risk, will be set up to protect the public and the vaccine rollout from international COVID-19 variants. Key factors in the assessment will include:

- ▶ the percentage of a country's population that have been vaccinated;
- ▶ the rate of infection;
- ▶ the prevalence of variants of concern;
- ▶ the country's access to reliable scientific data and genomic sequencing.

The UK categories are proposed as follows:

GREEN

- ▶ Arrivals will need to take a pre-departure test
- ▶ Arrivals will need to take a PCR test on or before day 2 of their arrival back into the UK
- ▶ No quarantine on return (unless in receipt of a positive test result)
- ▶ No additional tests

AMBER

- ▶ Arrivals will need to take a pre-departure test
- ▶ Arrivals will need to take a PCR test on day 2 and day 8 after arrival back into the UK
- ▶ Optional Test to Release² on day 5 to end self-isolation early
- ▶ Arrivals will need to quarantine for a period of 10 days if not testing to release on day 5

RED

- ▶ Arrivals will need to take a pre-departure test
- ▶ Arrivals will need to take a PCR test on day 2 and day 8 after arrival back into the UK
- ▶ 10 day stay in a managed quarantine hotel³

On 22nd April 2021 a high level document was presented to the Civil Contingencies Authority on the medium-term considerations (July – December 2021) in relation to border controls in the face of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

At this meeting the CCA:

- Noted the links of the wider border opening post-July to vaccination status and other key public health indicators as central to the intermediate term border policy;
- Agreed to keep under careful review;
- Agreed to broadly align with the UK traffic light system for international travel, subject to such modifications recommended by Public Health, particularly in respect of variants of concern;
- Agreed to focus on making travel less restrictive in the UK and Crown Dependencies;
- Noted the implementation of the less restrictive border measures is critically dependent on the successful roll out of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the vaccination programme in the Bailiwick; and
- Agreed to progress a system of COVID-19 status certification, involving a digital application specific to personal history of vaccination, COVID-19 infection or recent COVID-19 testing.

After approval from the CCA, a July Project taskforce was established to refine strategic details, operational aspects and communication of the details of this project. Consideration was also given to any implications with regards to external relations

of the Bailiwick with other jurisdictions. The Taskforce consists of States of Guernsey representatives from different departments including Public Health, Operations, Communications and External Relations.

On 12th May 2021 External Relations proposed that the free travel zone be extended to the Common Travel Area (CTA), which would include the Republic of Ireland. Such an approach would recognise the long-standing arrangement that allows British and Irish citizens to move freely and reside in the jurisdictions of the CTA.

On the 18th May 2021 this proposed approach to border control from 1st July 2021 was reviewed by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell and the July Project Taskforce. The approach outlined in this paper was endorsed by both groups, whilst noting the current uncertainties with the emergence of the Variant of Concern, B.1.617.2.

So in summary the following is the proposed border policy for the remainder of 2021:

▶ 14th May 2021:

- Return to country categorisation.

▶ 1st July 2021:

- Unrestricted travel in the Common Travel Area;
- Alignment of international travel with the UK traffic light system with regards to country classification.

Alignment with Common Travel Area

The table below illustrates the requirements for individual members of the Common Travel Area as of 13th May 2021.

| Current Travel requirements in the Common Travel Area | |
|---|--|
| Common Travel Area Region | Travel between CTA Areas |
| England | No testing or quarantine for CTA members at the moment as long as have been in the CTA for the last 10 days |
| Scotland | Unrestricted travel between the UK and the Crown Dependencies (CDs) from 17 May. This does not include the Republic Of Ireland (RoI) at present but this will be kept under review |
| Wales | No testing or quarantine for CTA members at the moment as long as have been in the CTA for the last 10 days |
| Northern Ireland | TBC |
| Republic of Ireland (RoI) | Current policy only refers to travel in the island of Ireland (includes Northern Ireland). It is advised that there will be announcements on international travel at the end of June for later in the year, so it will be some time until we know more about their policies. |
| Isle of Man | Current plans are that no testing or quarantine for CTA member from 28th June. Timing not specific with regard to period of time in CTA |
| Jersey | Current plans are that no testing or quarantine for CTA member from 28th May. Timing not specific with regard to period of time in CTA |



Detailed proposal for Border control from 1st July 2021

The graphic overleaf illustrates the proposed border control from 1st July which aligns vaccination status of the country of origin, with the UK risk rating with an override for Public Health matters of concern. This includes any concerns relating to the spread of a Variant of Concern in a particular jurisdiction.

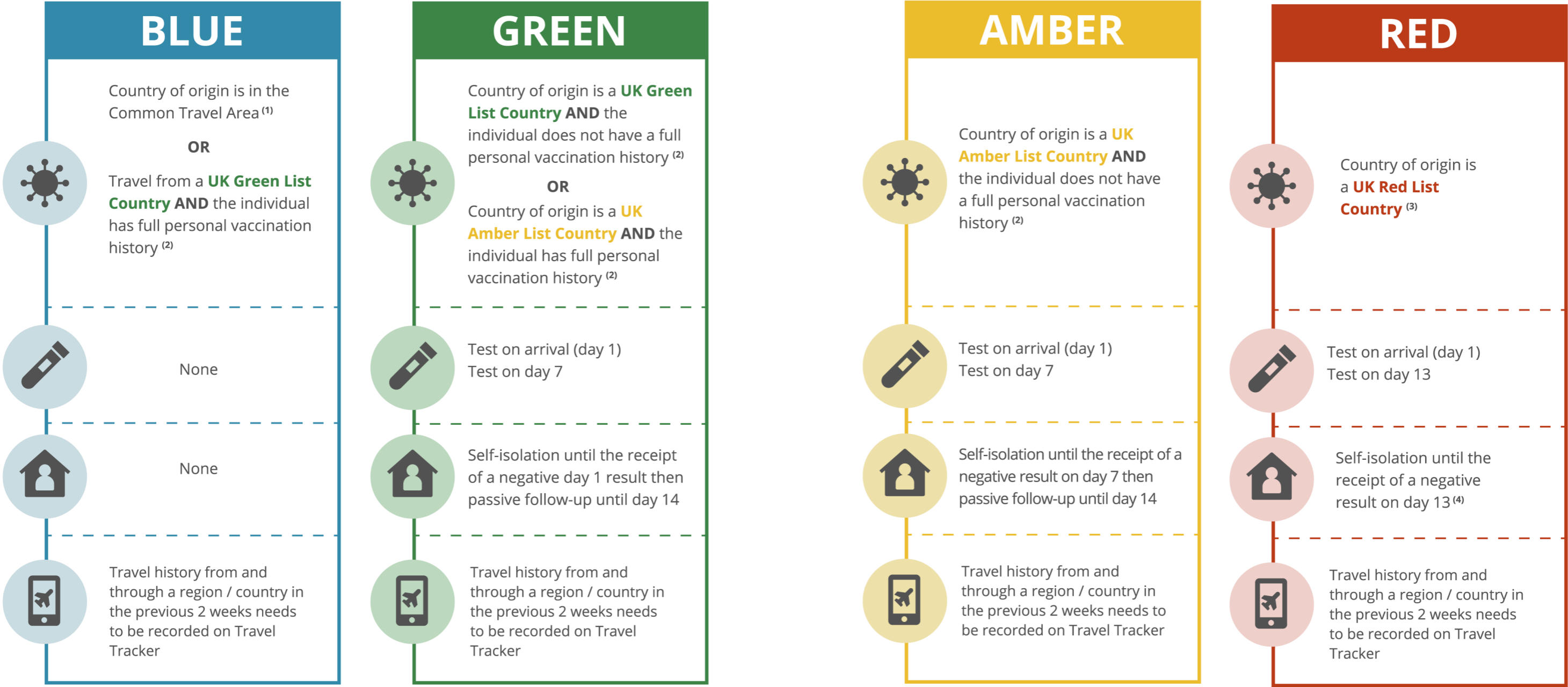
Critically, this programme allows for unrestricted travel in the Common Travel Area (CTA) with no testing and self-isolation requirements. This is because the majority of our population will be protected by vaccination, with all islanders over 18 years of age who wish to be vaccinated having received at least one dose of vaccine.

Decreasing border restrictions align with enhanced economic and social connectivity. However, this also needs to be balanced with appropriate mitigations to prevent an uncontrolled outbreak of SARS-CoV-2. It is therefore important to consider how the community is protected as passenger volumes increase. Linking this to vaccination status (either population-based in the country of origin or individual vaccination status) provides an approach that attempts to balance safety and proportionality. The proposed border control strategy from 1st July 2021 is illustrated in The graphic overleaf.

The role of an individual's vaccination status has also been considered in the proposal for border controls. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) states that requirements for the testing and quarantine of travellers can be waived or modified for fully vaccinated individuals as long as there is no or very low level circulation of immune escape variants (in the community in the country of origin, in the case of travellers).⁴ This forms the basis for a reduction of testing and self-isolation for travellers travelling into the Bailiwick from UK Green and Amber areas. Here, travellers with a full vaccination with a vaccine accepted by the UK vaccination certification, will mean that a traveller can reduce their categorisation (for example from Green to Blue), as illustrated in The graphic overleaf.

The ECDC also states that 'Examples from countries where vaccination coverage is higher and severe COVID-related outcomes and SARS-CoV-2 incidence have subsequently declined, such as the United Kingdom (UK) and Israel, provide an indication of how population-level transmission can be reduced with the careful application and slow release of public health prevention measures while vaccination rollout is scaled up as quickly as possible throughout the EU/EEA.⁵ This aligns to our measures for the release of border controls aligning to the CTA and the implementation of a traffic light system, aligned to that of the UK, for travellers from outside of the CTA.

Proposed border control strategy



Notes

- 1. Common Travel Area includes the UK, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Bailiwick of Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man.
- 2. Full personal vaccination history must be a 1) full course of a UK certified vaccine with 2) more than two weeks since second vaccine dose.
- 3. Vaccination has no impact on COVID status if travelling from a UK Red List Country.
- 4. If 10 days of managed isolation has been done in a UK quarantine hotel, this time may be deducted from any period of self-isolation required in the Bailiwick.

- 5. All COVID-19 status is reliant on there being no other matters of Public Health concern, and Guernsey's Public Health Service reserves the right to re-categorise based on issues of concern which are perceived to pose an additional risk to the local population.
- 6. Children under 18 are assessed as the same risk as their parent/guardian/carer unless they have their own vaccination status.
- 7. Past infection with COVID-19 has been excluded as a criteria for categorisation due to concerns over verification. This will be kept under review.
- 8. The role of pre-departure tests will be kept under review. There are currently no plans to introduce a pre departure test for travellers travelling into the Bailiwick.

International travel and the UK traffic light system

As illustrated in previous graphic, the proposal for international travel from outside of the CTA, is for the alignment with UK Traffic Light System to categorise countries. However, the UK Traffic Light System will be monitored by Public Health Services who will have the ability to override a country categorisation, if there are particular concerns that are relevant to our local situation.

There are also several differences from the UK Traffic Light System that need to be highlighted. On 18th March 2021, the local Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell recommended, by a majority vote, that the travel history from and through a region / country in the previous two weeks needs to be considered (as opposed to 10 days required for the UK traffic Light System).⁶ Furthermore it was agreed to include local testing and self-isolation requirements, as outlined in The previous graphic.

The protective effect of COVID-19 vaccination is also acknowledged with international travellers able to reduce their self-isolation requirements if they are fully vaccinated. This excludes travellers from 'red' areas.

Legislation, Proportionality and Review

It is important to note that we continue to deal with a situation that has far from plateaued but we can be optimistic about the protective efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccination programme and the fact that this provides us with the opportunity to be more flexible. All border measures need to be proportionate and responsive to changing circumstances. As

such, a monthly review by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell is proposed to include the following:

- ▶ A review of the testing and self-isolation requirements, in the context of the current risk profile, both in the Common Travel Area and internationally.
- ▶ An evaluation of new and emerging data on new risk factors, in particular the evolving risk proposed by Variants of Concern.
- ▶ A consideration of the current restrictions in the context of the mental health of islanders, acknowledging the tension between those that wish to progress to greater external connectivity and those that would prefer for the borders to remain more restrictive for longer.

These measures will be reviewed and evaluated in conjunction with the wider strategic objectives of the emergency. These are to avoid a further lockdown unless there are exceptional and high risk circumstances which we cannot mitigate against, in particular the risk of breaching our local hospital capacity.

There is also an acknowledgment of the specific logistical challenges of Sark and Alderney which may present a different risk profile that must be given due consideration as part of the Bailiwick strategy.

There is also a need to consider the legislative implications of these changes.

Lessons learnt from COVID-19

Moving forward into our 'new normal', lessons learnt from the pandemic need to remain whilst we continue to embrace change and progress.

Some key points are:

- ▶ Continued focus on respiratory etiquette (catch it, bin it, kill it).
- ▶ Continued focus on hand hygiene.
- ▶ Encouraging employees to stay at home if they are unwell and employers to support staff to do so.
- ▶ The wearing of a face covering if requested or based on personal choice.
- ▶ Promoting personal responsibility and the three Cs (crowds, close and closed) - Respiratory viruses spread more in crowded, confined spaces where people are close to each other.
- ▶ Encouraging a message of 'Hands, Face, Space and Fresh Air' to make a personal choice about your individual circumstances. Ventilation is important.

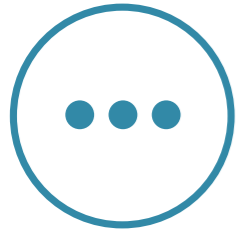
- ▶ Encouraging businesses to ensure that staff and customers retain good habits, for example:

- maintaining hygiene (e.g. availability of hand sanitisers);
- respecting personal space (e.g. the use of floor markers); and,
- supporting personal choice (e.g. for those who wish to wear a face covering).

- ▶ Promoting personal responsibility in relation to travel, particularly outside the Bailiwick:

- ensuring individuals know what the requirements are for the places they intend to travel to, through and from before starting their journey; and
- ensuring they consider their behaviour in relation to the three Cs while travelling.

- ▶ The States of Guernsey will have a responsibility to maintain and develop robust policies and processes that support this approach.



Conclusion

This paper presents a proposal of progression towards a greater external connectivity though a further relaxation of the border controls. This is against a background of an increasingly protected Bailiwick population through the roll out of the largest vaccination programme in the islands' history.

The proposal is for an area of unrestricted travel in the Common Travel Area. For international travel from outside of the CTA, the proposal is for an alignment with UK Traffic Light System to categorise countries. However, the UK Traffic Light System will be monitored by Public Health Services who will have the ability to override a country categorisation if there are particular concerns that are relevant to our local situation. With regards to international travel from outside of the CTA, the recommendation is for the implementation of local testing and self-isolation requirements for the management of arriving travellers.

The protective effect of COVID-19 vaccination is also acknowledged with international travellers able to reduce their self-isolation requirements if they are fully vaccinated. This excludes travellers from 'red' areas.

The uncertainty of the current situation is recognised with, for example, the emergence of a new Variant of Concern B.1.617.2 originating from India. This means that measures may need to be modified if there is a risk to the health and wellbeing of islanders.

Finally, living responsibly with COVID-19 as an endemic virus is considered and how the messaging of the 'new normal' needs to be promoted so that islanders can integrate the positive messages that we have learned from the pandemic into our daily lives.

References

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- 3 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/global-travel-taskforce-sets-out-framework-to-safely-reopen-international-travel> [Accessed 12th April 2021].
- 4 <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/interim-guidance-benefits-full-vaccination-against-covid-19-transmission>. Accessed 18th May 2021.
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- 6 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england#green-list>. Accessed 19th May 2021.



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Public Health Services

gov.gg/coronavirus