

# STATES OF JERSEY



## ADJUSTMENT OF GREEN TRAVEL AND REGIONAL CATERGORISATION AHEAD OF REINTRODUCTION OF SAFER TRAVEL POLICY

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Lodged au Greffe on 16th April 2021  
by the Safe Travel Guidelines Review Panel  
Earliest date for debate: 8th June 2021.

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STATES GREFFE

## **PROPOSITION**

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

to request the Council of Ministers, prior to the reintroduction of the Safer Travel Policy on 26th April 2021 to –

- (a) change the categorisation of green travel areas to below 25 cases per 100,000 and change the categorisation of amber travel areas to 25 to 120 per 100,000 from their current levels of 50 per 100,000 and 50 to 120 per 100,000 respectively, to be monitored and adjusted using the most recent 14-day period of official transmission rates data which is available;
- (b) use the upper tier local authority level (counties, metropolitan districts, inner and outer London and unitary authorities) for categorisation of the United Kingdom's RAG (red, amber and green) regions as the basis for the regional approach adopted in the Safer Travel Policy; and
- (c) ensure that Scrutiny and States Members are briefed ahead of any changes to the Safer Travel Policy.

**SAFE TRAVEL GUIDELINES REVIEW PANEL**

## REPORT

The daily case data of COVID-19 cases has been established over the course of the pandemic as a way to calculate a 14 day case notification rate per 100,000 population which is then used to apply the common use of red, amber and green categorisations for travel. The following categorisations are currently in place in Jersey:

- Green if a jurisdiction's rate is below 50 per 100,000
- Amber if the rate is between 50 per 100,000 and 120 per 100,000
- Red if the rate is 120 per 100,000

On 26 April 2021 the Government's reconnection roadmap will reintroduce the Safer Travel Policy. On this date the inbound travel classifications will resume from the UK and Crown Dependencies. This reintroduction is happening at a time when the Government has also taken a number of steps to relax the restrictions which had been imposed on citizens. On or after the 17 May 2021, inbound travel from all other destinations resumes (excluding UK list of banned countries).

The Panel is of the opinion that while it is right that the Government seeks to pursue a policy of staggered reconnection, both internally and externally, in the prevailing global circumstances and in the context of relaxed restrictions on the Island, we must be fully mindful of the impact that inbound travel could have on the spread of the coronavirus.

The success of the ongoing vaccination programme does mean that we are now in a very different position to that which prevailed last year, however, as a community we must also remember that this does not mean that the pandemic is now over. While increasing numbers of Islanders have now been afforded a greater level of protection through vaccination this coronavirus, in its number of variant forms, still poses a threat.

The changes to the Safer Travel Policy suggested by the Panel aim to enhance the measures that have been put in place already by Government and to ensure that there is a counter-balance to the relaxation of restrictions taking place both here and in the UK and a recognition that we are allowing greater levels of travel at a time when the virus remains prevalent in a number of jurisdictions. The Panel are also seeking to ensure that the Island avoids any situation similar to that in December 2020 when inbound travel combined with a relaxation of restrictions resulted in a spike in cases.

It is also clear from STAC (Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell) minutes at relevant junctures in 2020 that the decision to change the green categorisation from 25 per 100,000 to 50 per 100,000 was not in line with the medical advice provided by the Cell. The view of the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (Dr Ivan Muscat) at a meeting of 7th September 2020 was that Jersey was performing well in comparison to neighbouring jurisdictions and that the change would not be helpful. The move to change the thresholds is described as 'a political decision' in the STAC minutes and one which appears to have been based on the desire to protect the economy through balanced risk. The Panel is of the view that at this point, a strategy of balanced risk entails stringent, but open, travel policy.

It was further minuted on 5th October that: "The Medical Officer of Health reminded the Cell that when she, the Consultant in Communicable Disease Control and the Chair had attended the meeting of the Competent Authority Ministers, at which the Ministers had decided to increase the threshold for Amber to 50, the members of the Cell had

indicated that there should be measures implemented to counterbalance that change, but she had not seen evidence of them being introduced.”

While the Panel appreciates that the vaccination programme has altered the landscape in which Dr Muscat, the then Medical Officer of Health, Susan Turnbull and STAC chairman Patrick Armstrong voiced their concerns about the risks posed, it would be prudent to take measures now which would reduce any likelihood of inbound travel again causing a re-seeding of the virus and potential rapid rise in cases as experienced late last year.

It is also worth remembering Mr Armstrong’s statement to STAC in early September last year that one outbreak of COVID-19 in Jersey would have a significant impact, whereas a larger country could more easily absorb the implications of the same.

As at 15 April 2021, daily cases in the UK stood at 2,672, 6.9% lower over 7 days. While figures in the UK do appear to be decreasing overall as we near April 26, it is also the case that restrictions have been greatly relaxed in recent weeks and the impact of this domestic relaxation has yet to be measured.

For this reason the Panel also feels that the safer regional categorisation to use in determining the RAG status for the UK would be the upper tier local authority (counties, metropolitan districts, inner and outer London and unitary authorities) rather than the lower tier or council areas. The upper tier is the larger of the regional classifications and the Panel’s rationale for proposing it as the preferred option is that it provides a better level of protection given the likely movement of potentially COVID-19 positive individuals between smaller regional areas following the relaxation of movement restrictions in the UK where the stay at home order has now been removed.

The number of cases in other jurisdictions remains high with a number of countries, including France, which currently has active cases at over 1.079 million having faced the grip of a third wave coupled with slower vaccine uptake than the UK.

In all these circumstances, while it is right that the Government takes a proactive and optimistic approach to travel it should also do so with an appropriate level of caution in what remains an uncertain global situation.

The pandemic is an evolving global situation and requires fast but considered decision-making. However, there also needs to be a transparency to that decision-making to ensure that the public can be confident that the policies developed are fully considered, properly scrutinised and the best interests of the whole community. It is, therefore, that States Members and Scrutiny are aware of changes to the policies with enough notice to fulfil their role on behalf of the public.

### **Financial and manpower implications**

No financial and manpower implications are anticipated as a result of this proposition.

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**Re-issue Note**

This Project is re-issued because a date in the main report was incorrect when originally published.