

20.11.17

**7 Deputy R. Labey of St. Helier of the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture regarding the affordability of flights to Jersey during the Coronavirus pandemic (OQ.327/2020):**

Given the impact of last-minute flight cancellations by airlines, will the Minister explain what action, if any, he is taking to ensure that flights remain affordable, particularly for students returning to the Island over the Christmas period?

**Senator L.J. Farnham (The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture):**

As the number of cases across the U.K. has increased and passengers arriving in Jersey have been required to isolate for up to 14 days or up to 10 days now, the demand for flights has reduced significantly. Airlines have suspended routes and reduced capacity for the period of the lockdown in the U.K. We have established a travel unit with cross-government Ports of Jersey representation to monitor the situation and to advise Ministers. Even with the current reduction in demand for prices for the reduced schedules to remain competitive, however, this forms part of the daily monitoring processes under way currently. We have already approved the use of Blue Islands to provide extra flights for returning students, if required, and we also have the security of the lifeline connectivity contract, also with Blue Islands for residents if our commercial connectivity reduces further. But I can also update Members, having spoken with officers this morning, that our lifeline connectivity contract is likely to be reactivated within the next 2 weeks.

**4.7.1 Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin:**

Could I ask the Minister about flights, obviously health requirements, education requirements, recreational and commercial requirements all need flights; could the Minister confirm which Minister, which department, have overall responsibility for making decisions about flights?

**Senator L.J. Farnham:**

Transport to and from the Island is within my portfolio but we work collectively. When we discuss exactly if we get to that situation how and why Islanders should not travel, those decisions are brought out either to the competent authority Ministers or to the full Council of Ministers, so we act collaboratively and collectively with these challenging issues when they do arise.

**4.7.2 Deputy R. Labey:**

What is the current Government advice to students wishing to return for Christmas?

**Senator L.J. Farnham:**

I would have to defer that question to the Minister for Education or Assistant Minister. But my advice to any Islander wishing to return to the Island for Christmas is to try and secure their transport arrangements in advance but also being mindful that there could be changes in the situation, both in the U.K. or wherever they are in Jersey.

[10:45]

I would like to reassure Members and Islanders that we will do whatever we can to ensure that our important lifeline transport links are maintained right throughout the pandemic.