

2021.09.14

1 Deputy R.J. Ward of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding settled status (OQ.187/2021)

Will the Minister advise whether there have been any issues at the borders relating to the immigration status of people with settled status returning to the Island; and if so, will the Minister explain the cause and what is being done to prevent any further potential issues?

Deputy G.C. Guida of St. Lawrence (The Minister for Home Affairs):

There have been no local incidents but Jersey Customs and Immigration are aware of a small number of incidents at the U.K. border involving returning Jersey residents with E.U. (European Union) settled status. These have been resolved after a short delay. Jersey Customs and Immigration Service have been working with the U.K. authorities on a project that will integrate data in real time. It is anticipated that this project will go live in the next month and will address these issues going forward.

8.1.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:

There was a news report, which I have searched for and cannot find. There was an issue, as the Minister suggested, at the U.K. border. Is there a digital link to settled status compatible with U.K. Customs that feeds into our passport system? Because I think that is where the issue arose and is that the project that he is talking about being instigated? This is purely to help those people who may be travelling, so that they know what they will need to take with them; if they will need to take paper proof.

Deputy G.C. Guida:

Yes, sorry, I will try to answer those questions. As far as I know, there was one case where somebody was slightly delayed entering the U.K. and they were sent on their way but asked to prove that they had settled status. The plan from the beginning was for this to be completely electronic and indeed linked to their passport, so that Immigration in the U.K. would know the status of somebody. This is slightly late, however we have provided people with settled status with a piece of paper, which was my idea originally. Also, there is a Government of Jersey website where their status is recorded and to which they have, of course, the only access but they can use it to prove to the British authorities their status.

8.1.2 Deputy I. Gardiner:

We were aware about a backlog dealing with applications to settled status. How many outstanding applications are there currently?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

I apologise, I do not have that figure for today but, as I understand it, we do not have such a large waiting list as we had a couple of months ago, they are almost sorted.

8.1.3 Deputy I. Gardiner:

Would the Minister please advise what the timescale to dealing with the applications to allow these people to be able to travel because they currently cannot travel without approved application abroad?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

Yes, again, I apologise, I am not able to give figures today but I will check that this is being done.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

No, the question was about the timeline, within a month or 2 months the backlog will be addressed, what is the approximate timescale to dealing with the applications?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

I will give the Deputy that answer when I have it.

8.1.4 Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier:

Some individuals have been issued with physical letters for their settled status and others have been given P.D.F. (portable document format) versions via email. Can the Minister confirm that they are both valid, whether they are in P.D.F. form or physical form and if those who only have a physical form would be able to be issued one via email in the P.D.F. form as well?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

As I understand it, the actual proof is in the database, so if the U.K. borders are looking for an absolute proof they need to find that person in their database or call or somebody in Immigration will then confirm that this is the case. While the databases are not linked and this is not guaranteed to work, the piece of paper is a good indication that the person may be allowed to pass. It is not an absolute guarantee but it would certainly help somebody get through before the databases are completely synchronised.

8.1.5 Deputy C.S. Alves:

Can the Minister confirm whether those who only have the piece of paper but would like for security to have a P.D.F. version in case they misplace that piece of paper, whether they are able to request that or not?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

I apologise to the Deputy but I am not sure that they can request a P.D.F. version. However, as I said, they do have access to their data on the government website and this is actual proof of their status, so they can use that at the borders.

8.1.6 Deputy R.J. Ward:

I would like to ask the Minister what advice he would give to people who require settled status in terms of what action they should be taking if they are travelling off-Island? Is the advice that they should take a paper copy, that they take a link to a website in some way that is linked to their right? What is the actual physical advice to assure them that they will have smooth travel back to the Island, which is most important, and back to the Island with children who may be with them as well?

[11:45]

Deputy G.C. Guida:

In practice, we have had quite a few movements in and out of the Island in the last few months and there is only one occurrence of a short delay having been applied to somebody. I do not think it is a very, very important issue. However, if I were travelling I would look at the government website and ensure that my name is on it and that it shows settled status.