

**UQ2. Latest lockdown announcement in the UK –
Impact on Manx residents**

The Hon. Member for Onchan (Mr Callister) to ask the Chief Minister:

If he will make a statement on the impact on Manx residents of the latest lockdown announcement in the United Kingdom?

The Speaker: We turn now to the UK lockdown and its effects on the Isle of Man. I call on Mr Callister to ask his Urgent Question.

Mr Callister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Can I ask the Chief Minister if he will make a statement on the impact on Manx residents of the latest lockdown announced in the United Kingdom?

The Speaker: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister (Mr Quayle): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I have sent a copy of this for reference to any Hon. Member wanting to discuss this with their constituents. Equally I will send a link, which I forgot to do, that the UK has published, Mr Speaker, on their new national restrictions from 5th November. Everyone can find it at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november> which gives very clear details of what the UK plans to do. As I say, I have already sent a copy of this to Hon. Members.

So as Hon. Members and Mr Speaker will be aware, the UK Prime Minister announced at a press conference on 31st October that England would go into a lockdown starting from Thursday this week and lasting until at least 2nd December. The Prime Minister made a further statement to the Westminster Parliament yesterday, Monday; the other nations of the United Kingdom have their own measures in place.

The package of measures for England outlined by the Prime Minister is subject to a vote in the UK Parliament tomorrow. Many of the details are gradually emerging and I can reassure Hon. Members that we remain in close touch with the United Kingdom government at a political and official level and through public health channels.

Mr Speaker, there are three aspects that I would like to highlight at this stage. Firstly, travel. The UK's latest guidance makes it clear that people cannot travel overseas or even within the United Kingdom unless for work, education or other limited, legally permitted reasons. While the Isle of Man is of course not a part of the United Kingdom, our people have an obligation to respect UK laws while they are there. Unless people have a compelling, pressing and, importantly, legal reason to travel within the United Kingdom or beyond, then I would urge them *not* to do so. Residents who need to travel through the United Kingdom to return home will of course be able to do so.

This leads me on to a second aspect: our students. Universities in England currently remain open. The new guidance in England does allow students to return for the Christmas break. It does, however, say that they must not move back and forward between their permanent home and student home during term-time. I know that a number of our students have already decided to return home before the end of term and continue their courses remotely until after the current lockdown. This is a decision for students and their families to make. But, as things stand, this would seem the best way for students to return, self-isolate for the 14 days required and still be able to enjoy Christmas with their families and friends.

Thirdly, I know there are concerns about the impact that this might have on supplies of goods to the Island. It is important to say there is no reason to think that the supply of essential goods – food and medicines – will be disrupted as a result of this latest lockdown in England.

What is less certain is the possible impact on non-essential businesses, especially those whose parent company may be based in England. We know from the last United Kingdom lockdown that some experienced challenges in terms of stock. Others may be instructed to close. At the end of the day these are commercial decisions, Mr Speaker, but where Government can help, advise or support, we will do. The Department for Enterprise has been in touch with some of these businesses and will continue to do so as the situation develops.

Mr Speaker, this a fast-moving and fluid situation. We will be offering a full briefing to all Hon. Members on Monday of next week to update them on developments as they arise.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Supplementary question, Mr Callister.

Mr Callister: Thank you, Mr Speaker; and I thank the Chief Minister for his statement this morning.

But can I ask him how a second lockdown in England will affect patient transfers, especially in the north-west who we already know are suffering at the moment with a high number of intakes into hospital. So the focus really is around patient transfer and how that will affect people who have appointments on Friday and possibly going into early next week, if possible?

The Speaker: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

At this moment in time I am led to believe that it is not impacted. There are a number of exemptions which I think all Hon. Members will find at the link I have mentioned. I will send you an email giving you that link. It gives clear legal reasons that people can move and the care of your health, going to work where you cannot work from home, etc., are all covered there.

But the patient transfers *will* continue.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary question, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

How many people have completed documentation that will allow them to return to the Island in the next seven days? And has the Cabinet Office the resources to monitor the people if the need arises?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker; and I thank the Hon. Member for his question.

We do not know how many residents are off Island currently as we do not track those leaving; and landing forms are required to be completed within 48 hours prior to travel. So we do not have those numbers. It would take an inordinate amount of staff and resources to track every member of the Isle of Man. They obviously have the right to go off the Island. People will have a number but that does not mean to say they have left the Island, it is only when they are coming back that they have 48 hours to fill out a form and that is when we find out.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Supplementary question, Ms Edge.

Ms Edge: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I just wonder if the Chief Minister could confirm with regard to the Steam Packet, because clearly when the boat arrives in UK waters it is obviously going to be under the UK rules. What advice is the Chief Minister ... I have just looked on the Steam Packet website now and there is nothing that has really been updated with regard to what is coming later in the week for the UK. With regard to the wearing of masks, I am aware that it is a requirement but there are many reports of it not being adhered to. I just wonder what the Chief Minister is going to do with regard to that.

Could I also ask a question which has been a concern of many constituents: will the Council of Ministers consider non-essential travel in the near future?

The Speaker: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I expect the Isle of Man Steam Packet to follow the rules when they are in UK territorial waters. That said, we have been assured as we have already been through this, that people travelling through the United Kingdom to get back to the Island will be allowed so therefore the Steam Packet will be able to operate as normal.

Obviously the Council of Ministers, we are meeting on Thursday. We have already got papers on a number of issues and we consider all topics based on the evidence given from our Gold Committee made up of medics, etc., when we make our decisions. As I say, we are all having a talk on Monday to discuss the latest updates on this in the Barrool Suite where we will hopefully be able to give Hon. Members far more information.

The Speaker: Supplementary question, Mr Hooper.

Mr Hooper: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

I know the Chief Minister is aware a number of our public services rely on people who live in the UK or further afield in order for them to continue to function – the courts, for example, or the planning system. During the last lockdown we saw that whilst people were legally able to travel for work there were a number of UK-based staff who, for a variety of reasons themselves felt unable to do so.

Is the Chief Minister anticipating this to happen again, and if so what contingency planning is in place to ensure that our public services can continue to operate?

The Speaker: The Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker; and I thank the Hon. Member for Ramsey for his question.

At this moment in time, as in the document I have referenced a number of times, and I will send all Hon. Members a link, you are legally allowed to leave the United Kingdom to go to work. So you cannot go on holiday. If you are in the United Kingdom you cannot go on holiday to Spain or anywhere, but if you are going to look after a vulnerable family member in those jurisdictions you can, and you can travel for work if you cannot do that work at home. Therefore anyone that we would need on the Isle of Man to help us with either courts, or helping in the hospital if they are were a consultant, that would be allowed to continue.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Supplementary question, Mr Callister.

Mr Callister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Isle of Man is home to a number of key workers, in the oil industry, for one example. Can the Chief Minister give an update on how the Isle of Man will deal with those individuals and will

the seven-day testing on their return still remain in place? Or will that rule change and they will have to lock down for 14 days on their return back from such important work within the UK?

The Speaker: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Council of Ministers did discuss this very topic only the other week, where we made an announcement that if you were a key worker living on the Isle of Man then you would be able to go away to work, come back and isolate for seven days but then have a test – because (a) there is a small number and (b) they would be continually in lockdown. We have also offered this option to people who are going away to hospital for, say, cancer treatment and then coming back if they have to do two turnarounds in a month period. It seemed fair that we could not have members of the public in constant lockdown.

People on the Isle of Man legally will not be stopped by the United Kingdom government going to the United Kingdom or further afield to work if they cannot do that job from home. So if they can show that they are needed to be physically somewhere else then they will be able to travel.

I hope I have made that as clear as possible.
Thank you.

The Speaker: Supplementary question, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Returning to my original question but with slightly more detail, which will hopefully be helpful: how many people have contacted the travel notification service team about travel but not actually completed the final bit and got the R number?

Out of those people, is the documentation open-ended? And do we have an awareness of how many people are actually off-Island who could potentially return within two days?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

My answer is no, we do not have that information because you could decide, giving yourself as an example, Mr Moorhouse, that you want to go away at some stage in the future on business. You apply for your number for leave to go and then it gets put back a week. Once you have got that number you use that number again.

So we do not know the physical numbers of residents off the Island. It would take a massive amount of resources. But obviously we have the team there that, should you come back, you fill in the form 48 hours before. We can then do the checks. But we do not have the information that the Hon. Member is looking for.

The Speaker: Supplementary question, Ms Edge.

Ms Edge: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I am just really going to push the Chief Minister for an answer on my previous question with regard to masks and the Steam Packet. The response I got was that you would *hope* the Steam Packet are following the processes.

Is it not a responsibility of this Government to ensure that the Steam Packet and anybody who is operating services to the Island to protect our people, that we are checking what they are doing?

Could the Chief Minister commit to making sure he checks what the process is on the UK side before anybody travels to the Isle of Man?

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I am more than happy to look into the rules and regulations on travel for the Steam Packet and ask for them to be circulated to Hon. Members. But it is not for Government, it is not for me to go around every individual business on the Isle of Man, or operating on the Isle of Man, to say you must wear masks if you are on the planes, etc. I expect them to follow the rules.

But obviously I will find out through our colleagues in either DOI or Treasury what the rules are for the Isle of Man Steam Packet on wearing masks. I am sure they are following the rules and regulations, but I will circulate what is expected of them.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Supplementary question, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Do we have the number of travel notification documents that are open? Are they open-ended or is there any date at which they simply are no use?

I have received a message this morning from an individual who has gone across, she has completed the documentation and she wonders if it is open-ended. It does not appear to be the case on the document that there is a final date when it has got to be used and they have got to apply for the return date.

The Speaker: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I am happy to seek advice on that. My belief is that it is open-ended once you have got the right, but there may be a time limit that I am not aware of. They are details I do not have, but I am more than happy to circulate all Hon. Members with confirmation of that.

The Speaker: Final supplementary, Ms Edge.

Ms Edge: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I just really want to push again on this question.

The Chief Minister focused on the Steam Packet and it sounded like their employees, who are very important to us and they bring many of our supplies to the Island ...

But my focus is with regard to our Islanders who are returning on that vessel to the Island and the advice that we are giving to them. Perhaps it can be done through their certificate to travel. But with regard to the masks it is about everybody because the UK says you have to wear them, and it is making sure that there is adequate notification to the individuals who are going to travel to protect the whole of the Island.

The biggest risk to the Island is people travelling into it. So can the Chief Minister confirm that he will look at this for the individuals, not just the Steam Packet Company?

The Speaker: Chief Minister to reply.

The Chief Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I thought I had, but I am more than happy to state, yes, I will ask to make sure that people returning follow the rules on wearing masks. I believe it is done on our planes and I thought it

was being done on the boat. If the Hon. Member has examples where it is not, I am more than happy to look at it. But, yes, I will check.