

Media Release

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Lock down restrictions: phased resumption of business activity

The States of Guernsey will continue with the current 'lock down' restrictions for the next week.

The restrictions, and the community's support in observing them, have been a real success and meant a significant rise in COVID-19 cases has so far been avoided. For this reason, it is planned that there will be a phased easing of restrictions from midnight 00.01 Saturday 25th April, that will gradually allow some sectors to resume business activity and allow more employees onto premises and work sites, albeit with significant restrictions in staff numbers and how they operate.

More detail on the plan for phasing in business sectors will be shared with the public and business community next week. This move will need to be carefully planned and communicated to ensure suitable public health guidance is available to employers so those who do choose to have employees on site can do so safely. Businesses are asked to await this detailed guidance before making plans to reopen or contacting the States of Guernsey's business support helplines.

The Director of Public Health, Dr Nicola Brink said:

"This next step is one we need to take carefully. The lock down restrictions we've put in place, asking Islanders to stay at home unless it's essential and hammering home the messages about social distancing, washing your hands and shielding the most vulnerable, have been effective. Islanders have done brilliantly, but we need them to keep doing what they're doing.

We're seeing the 'flattening of the curve' and I'm hopeful we'll soon see the number of new positive cases begin to fall. For that reason I'm optimistic that, to a limited degree, some more business activity can soon resume. But we need to make sure there's very clear guidance for businesses, and businesses really will have to make sure they look at that guidance in detail and stick to it. We can't afford for the community's hard work in responding to this virus to be undone."

Deputy Gavin St Pier, Chair of the Civil Contingencies Authority said:

“Our message remains the same, stay at home unless it is for essential reasons, including work. Soon we will begin allowing more people to work in their businesses premises or on site. When we do that, the guidance will need to be more detailed and this will inevitably make it more complicated. We’ll also see more movements on the roads and more people spending more time outside their household bubble. We now need the community’s support, especially that of employers, more than ever to make this work. And anyone breaching the restrictions will be subject to fines of up to £10,000. I am reassured by the good position our health service is in, and by the way Islanders have so willingly observed the public health guidance so far. While there’s no perfect way of coming out of lock down that can guarantee we won’t see the number of cases rise again, the data is on our side and it is the right time to start phasing more sectors back to work.”

Deputy Heidi Soulsby, President of the Committee *for* Health & Social Care said:

“Thanks to the support from the community we are in a really good place and are seeing the flattening of the curve. It is because of this that we are in a position where we can consider easing the current tight restrictions gently in accordance with our exit strategy. However, this is not business as usual nor is it life as normal just yet. The Committee *for* Health & Social Care has approved the easing of restrictions for businesses representing a low risk to the community, but only so long as they can meet specific social distancing and hygiene requirements.

We plan to provide detailed guidance to businesses over the coming week about the measures that they need to take in order to meet the strict social distancing and hygiene requirements. Any business not able to meet those requirements will not be able to operate. It is as simple as that and we will not tolerate any business trying to bend the rules in order to be able to do so. No business is being forced to operate either. Staff will be available to advise businesses with specific queries but will not provide allowances. The rules will be the rules. In addition, we will be creating a whistleblower line in order that anyone can report whether they believe a particular business is flouting the rules. We are giving an inch, we will not allow any business to take a mile for the purpose of making money.

We are in a great place at the moment but we need to ensure as we ease our way through the exit strategy, that we continue to be in control. We need to continue to be ‘GuernseyTogether.’”

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