

Good afternoon. I'm going to open by addressing head-on some of the challenges we faced last week; and I'm going to make some comments on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> order economic and governance challenges. Heidi and Nikki will then speak; then Dr Peter Rabey and finally Paul Whitfield.

Last week we stumbled. We wobbled. And I'm sorry for that. I don't need you to like me or like what we are doing - but in this crisis, I need you to have trust and confidence in our decision making.

But fortunately we didn't fall. What did we do wrong? I've spent some time thinking about why and how it happened.

I think there were 3 contributory factors.

Firstly, the last press conference was on Tuesday evening. That was too long ago. The resulting vacuum was filled by uncertainty and anxiety. We won't make that mistake again. For the time being, we will hold regular press conferences, at least three times a week – and, of course, we will have more if we need them.

Secondly, although we said last week that we couldn't cover every situation, the initial guidance clearly did not provide enough clarity for you. I apologise for that. If someone doesn't understand what you are saying, it's easy to simply get frustrated at that individual's lack of understanding. Most of us do it, a lot of the time. But the reality is if someone doesn't understand what we are saying, it's not your problem, it's our problem. We have to try and explain again. And that's what we did over the weekend. We took the time to revisit, revise and reissue the guidance. And I would like to take this opportunity to thank political colleagues from the Committee *for* Health & Social Care, for their hard work on this over the weekend, with all the staff who assisted.

Thirdly, I think we were initially trying to be too 'helpful' without carrying you with us. This was interpreted as putting money or the economy over lives; let me be categorical: *that was not and never will be the case*. What we were trying to do, was, acting on public health advice, to identify those businesses that are low risk and allow them to continue to trade. We failed to adequately explain

what we were doing and so it *looked like* we were rowing back in some way from the lock down announced on Tuesday evening.

I admire the many businesses who got in touch to say – ‘you are permitting us to trade but we don’t want to, even though it will hurt us financially.’

I want to address one dynamic that concerned me last week. There was an element of the community, whose main objection to the guidance appeared to be: *‘I can’t operate, so nobody else should either.’* This may be a very human reaction but it’s short sighted. We are not some socialist republic where we all have to don a hair shirt, with the objective that the whole community feel an identical level of economic pain. In the next few weeks and months, it is in all our interests that those businesses who *are able* to continue trading safely - in accordance with public health advice of course – that they should be allowed to do so, and that they should be as successful as possible.

I said last week: *“When we find little evidence of widespread community seeding then we will be able lift these measures, either permanently or on a temporary basis.”* It is my hope that businesses – or some of them at least - can start up again just as soon as it is safe and possible. For that to happen, two conditions must be met: firstly, the public health advice must be clear that it is safe for any given type of business to re-start – whether that is a window cleaner working on his own outside, or the horticulturalist who desperately needs to water their plants to keep them alive; secondly, the community needs to have confidence – I referred to this in my open letter on Saturday night – I need to *feel* that you trust that we are making decisions for the right reasons and which are in the island’s interests. To build that confidence required rapid, clear and unequivocal decisions over the weekend – and that is what we provided. That is what we have sought to do since this crisis began 3 weeks ago – and that is what we will continue to do.

Nothing has changed. I’ve said this before and I not embarrassed to repeat it again and again if I have to. I will keep saying until you are sick of hearing it. The objective is to minimise contacts between households as far as possible, so that we can reduce the rate of transmission of the virus and number of COVID-19 cases, ensuring our health care system is not overwhelmed. And the core instruction has not changed: **you must not leave your home except to exercise, to buy necessary food and supplies, for medical appointments or to work – where that work is essential.** And, of course, we will have no hesitation in changing the rules and doing so very rapidly if they are abused,

circumstances change or the public health advice changes. If we need to limit your movements further, we will do so in a heartbeat **because the priority was, is and will remain the protection of you and your families, particularly for the benefit of the most vulnerable in our community.**

Heidi is going to talk a little bit more about some of the 'do's and don'ts' of what lock down should mean for you and your families in practice.

Dr Brink is going to talk about the change in the number and type of cases and testing. All I need to say, is that the numbers of positives going up is no surprise. It will go up further. Some of those new cases will be need to be hospitalised. Some of those who are hospitalised will need critical care. As we said last week, the hospital is now ready for that and Dr Peter Rabey, our Medical Director, will talk about that as well as some of the challenges, for example in relation to PPE. And we must brace ourselves for the fact that some of those who need critical care will, sadly, die.

As many of you will recall, our colleague Deputy Peter Roffey was caught in the Boxing Day Tsunami a few years ago. I've felt that in the last couple of weeks we have been preparing for the pandemic equivalent. The water has been sucked out, so we know something is going to happen. The animals have fallen silent, like our schools and businesses. And now we are waiting for the water to come back in; we can see from the cases we have, the wave on the horizon. The measures we have taken to mandatory self-isolate 1,500 islanders and to lock down, are the equivalent of moving everyone to safer, higher ground. We will soon see how big the wave is. Testing is our the equivalent of the Pacific Tsunami early warning system – that will tell us the rate of transmission and whether we need to move people to the equivalent of yet higher ground with more stringent restrictions.

And like that tsunami, the psychological toll on the community of this crisis may be longer lasting and impact a greater number of people than those lost directly to it. I spoke last week, before the lock down, of my fears for the mental health and wellbeing of the community. Now we are all isolated to some degree from each other, the need to look out for each others' well being – physical and mental – is greater than ever.

There is another group whom we need to have concern for – those for whom home is not a safe place. They may be children or adults; they may be the victims of domestic violence. If you are one of those people, please reach out

for help. It may be harder in these strange times, but there is still help there for you – please do not suffer alone and in silence.

The first order challenge is responding to the public health crisis. The second is responding to the growing economic one, which in turn will put more stress on families. When the first restrictions were imposed only two weeks ago, it was the travel and hospitality sectors that were hit hardest; now, almost every sector is or will feel the consequences. The consequent need for government's response has grown in scale. I'd like to acknowledge the work of Deputy Lyndon Trott, who has been working on behalf of the Policy & Resources Committee around the clock to develop that response in a fast changing environment. Most jurisdictions will enable their huge bailout packages to be funded by massive government borrowing and probably, ultimately, printing money. I am anxious, if we can, to ensure that we find a way to benefit from that, rather than simply see our community penalised by its ability to tap into the reserves others do not have, as a result of several generations of prudence in Guernsey.

The third order challenge is around our governance. The Civil Contingencies Authority was designed for short-term emergencies. This one is clearly going to drag on a little longer. And with the States of Deliberation currently not sitting in its normal way, there may be an absence of appropriate scrutiny of decisions taken. Although technology does allow remote working, the priorities and purpose of our committees has, for the time being, been thrown in the air. I've asked Deputy Le Tocq to lead a swift piece of work looking at whether we need to temporarily amend our system of government to manage us through this crisis. Any recommendations from the Policy & Resources Committee will be brought to the States in a policy letter as soon as possible.