

Explanatory Memorandum to the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Wales) (Amendment) (No. 21) Regulations 2020

This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Welsh Government and is laid before Senedd Cymru in conjunction with the above subordinate legislation and in accordance with Standing Order 27.1.

Minister's Declaration

In my view, this Explanatory Memorandum gives a fair and reasonable view of the expected impact of the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Wales) (Amendment) (No. 21) Regulations 2020.

Vaughan Gething
Minister for Health and Social Services

27 November 2020

1. Description

Subject to specified exemptions, until 10 July 2020, the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the International Travel Regulations”) required all passengers arriving in Wales from outside of the Common Travel Area (i.e. the open borders area comprising the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and the Republic of Ireland) to provide their contact details and travel information and to isolate for a period of 14 days.

The International Travel Regulations were amended by the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel and Public Health Information to Travellers) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 so as to (among other things) introduce an exemption from the isolation requirement for passengers arriving from specified countries and territories, known as “exempt countries”.

These Regulations amend the International Travel Regulations to implement changes identified by the Joint Biosecurity Centre in the public health risk status of certain countries or territories, as is necessary for the protection of public health.

2. Matters of special interest to the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee

Coming into force

In accordance with section 11A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1946, the Llywydd has been informed that the Regulations will come into force less than 21 days after the instrument has been laid.

European Convention on Human Rights

The amendments contained in these Regulations do not change the engagement under the International Travel Regulations of individual rights under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Charter of Fundamental Rights; the Government considers that they are justified for the purpose of preventing the spreading of infectious diseases and/or the interference is permitted on the basis that it is in pursuit of a legitimate aim, namely of protecting public health, and are proportionate.

3. Legislative background

The Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 (“the 1984 Act”), and regulations made under it, provide a legislative framework for health protection in England and Wales. The Regulations are made in reliance on the powers in sections 45B and 45P(2) of the 1984 Act. The Explanatory Memorandum to the International Travel Regulations provides further information on these powers.

4. Purpose and intended effect of the legislation

The International Travel Regulations were made on 5 June 2020 and came into force on 8 June 2020 in response to the serious and imminent threat to public health which

is posed by the incidence and spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

The International Travel Regulations are kept under review, and changes have been made to the list of exempt countries and territories from which travellers would not be required to isolate upon arrival in Wales – most recently on the 21 November 2020.

Advice which has now been received from the Joint Biosecurity Centre indicates that the risk to public health posed by the incidence and spread of coronavirus in Estonia and Latvia has increased. On the basis of this advice the Welsh Government consider that isolation requirements should now be introduced for travellers coming into Wales from those countries.

The Regulations also add Aruba, Bhutan, Mongolia, Timor-Leste and the Pacific islands of Samoa, Kiribati, Micronesia, Tonga, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands to the list of exempt countries and territories. This is on the basis that the data received from the JBC has indicated that the risk to public health posed by the incidence and spread of coronavirus in those countries and territories has decreased. Travellers from those countries and territories will therefore not be required to isolate on arrival in Wales.

The revised requirements will come into effect for any travellers entering the Common Travel Area from those countries or territories on or after 4.00 am on Saturday 28 November 2020.

The specific restrictions currently imposed on travellers from Denmark and members of their household will be lifted. The prohibition on the arrival of aircraft and vessels travelling directly from Denmark will also be lifted. Denmark will not, however, be included in the list of exempt countries and territories. Therefore, travellers from Denmark will continue to be required to isolate on arrival in Wales.

Additional events will also be added to the list of sporting events in Schedule 4 for which those involved are excepted from the isolation requirements for limited purposes connected with their participation.

The Regulations also make two minor amendments relating to the sectoral exemptions in the International Travel Regulations. The first provides that the Welsh Ministers may designate work as “essential government work” for the purposes of the exemption in paragraph 13 to Schedule 2 to the International Travel Regulations. The second is a technical amendment to update one of the paragraph numbers in regulation 9(2)(b) of the International Travel Regulations.

These changes will also come into force at 4.00 am on Saturday 28 November 2020.

None of the amendments to the International Travel Regulations made by the latest amending Regulations will affect the requirements under those Regulations for persons arriving into the Common Travel Area before the coming into force of the amendments.

The Welsh Ministers consider that these amendments are proportionate to what they seek to achieve, which is to respond to a serious and imminent threat to public health.

5. Consultation

Given the serious and imminent threat arising from coronavirus and the need for an urgent public health response, there has been no public consultation in relation to these Regulations.

6. Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)

There has been no regulatory impact assessment in relation to these Regulations due to the need to put them in place urgently to deal with a serious and imminent threat to public health.