

# Scotland will take some time to consider air bridges

The UK Government has published a list of countries where it will remove quarantine restrictions from 10 July.

But The Scottish Government has not yet decided whether it can agree the same list, with the First Minister calling their decision making process 'shambolic'.

The First Minister set out at today's media briefing the reasons for this, and you can watch the video below.

She said: "I explained yesterday some of the reasons why it has been really quite challenging for Scotland to come to a position on the UK proposals with any speed. We've often had limited or no notice of the UK's proposals, and that matters because some of the judgments involved here are difficult and complex.

"And just to illustrate the point about the shifting sands of the UK government's position, the list of countries that they were yesterday demanding that the Scottish Government signed up to and suggesting that we were a barrier to getting agreement on, is not the same as the list that they have shared with us today. So, we need as the Scottish Government to analyse these proposals properly, and rationally, and we need to do that, obviously from a public health perspective, but we also need to do that from a legal perspective. All of these decisions are of course potentially open to legal

challenge.

“And when so much is at stake as it is right now, we can’t allow ourselves to be dragged along in the wake of other governments, to be quite frank about it, shambolic decision making process. So we will take time to properly and rationally consider this before, hopefully very soon, setting out our own decision.

“I want to just briefly share with you why it’s important to take care because of the complexity of the issues that we’re dealing with. The first thing I want to make clear, just in case there’s any doubt, I hope there’s not, but let me be absolutely unequivocal about this. We want to welcome visitors again from around the world and of course we also want to allow our own citizens to travel. That’s important for our tourism sector, it’s important for our aviation sector and it’s important for our economy, generally.

“Scotland has a long standing reputation, and one that I hope will go well into the future, of being an open and welcoming country. And we also want, if possible, for obvious practical reasons, to have alignment on these matters with the rest of the UK, But, and I hope this is a point that everybody can understand, we must make sure we open our country up again safely and we absolutely must make sure that the decisions we take don’t put at risk the progress that we have made in tackling COVID because that progress is significant, as you know, but it has also been very, very hard earned and it’s important that we protect it in the weeks ahead.

“The fact is that measures such as quarantine they become arguably more important, not less, as levels of the virus here in Scotland, reduce. And that’s because when there are low levels of the virus here, one of the key risks we have to manage, and it’s one of the key risks that people that Jason Leitch will advise me that we have to be very careful in our management of, is the possibility of new cases of the virus

coming into Scotland from outside. And that risk is of course greater when people might be coming to Scotland from countries where the virus is still more prevalent than it now is here at home. And while we do want an alignment with the UK, because as I said a moment ago the practical reasons for that are obvious, an added factor we have to consider is that we are not dealing with a uniform picture across the UK when it comes to the level of COVID infection.

“For example, we assess that the prevalence of the virus in Scotland, right now, is five times lower than it is in England. Northern Ireland actually faces a similar issue. So that means that there may well be cases where the UK Government is admitting visitors to England without quarantine from countries that don't present a significant risk of raising infection levels there, but would create that risk in Scotland.

“Now, none of this is easy and it is really important that we make sure that we consider all of these issues carefully and that we're not taking any of these issues in a careless way because they are complex, and the consequences of the decisions we take could be significant. There's a not, in my view, entirely unreasonable school of thought that travel restrictions should have been imposed for the UK earlier in this pandemic. Now others will take a different view on that and there is a debate about the rights and wrongs of it, but the fact that we do debate that I think underlines the importance of not taking ill-thought through decisions now.

“So we will consider this issue carefully, I think I can say now that it is very likely that we will be able to agree the list of countries that the UK has categorized as low risk, although we will need to do a proper assessment of that. But we need to take some particular care in our assessment of the list of countries that are being categorized as medium risk because that is where there may be some countries that have a higher prevalence of the virus than Scotland does right now.

“Now, we will hopefully conclude that process of consideration over the next couple of days and announce our decisions on that quickly, but I wanted to take just a minute or two to set out the reasons why we are not immediately agreeing the list of countries the UK Government has proposed and the reasons why it’s so important that we take these decisions, carefully.

“And in the meantime, if you’re desperate to book a summer holiday, and if you are, that would be entirely understandable, why not think about booking it in Scotland this year and giving some support to our own tourism sector at a time when they have probably never needed that support more.”

□ *Watch live: First Minister [@NicolaSturgeon](#) holds a press conference on [#coronavirus](#) ([#COVID-19](#)).*

*Joining the First Minister today is Economy Secretary Fiona Hyslop and National Clinical Director Jason Leitch.*  
<https://t.co/TuPEArFH3T>

– *Scottish Government (@scotgov) [July 3, 2020](#)*

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Separately from the matter of quarantine, The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has changed its advice on travel from the UK.

From 4 July 2020 certain countries have been assessed as no longer posing a high risk to those travelling there. The FCO ban on all but essential travel has been revised.

But the government says that all travel cannot be regarded as risk-free and that the global pandemic continues.

You are advised to consult the guidance [here](#) for your specific

destination.