

Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands



Office of the Commissioner
Government House
Stanley
Falkland Islands

17th June 2016

Dear Stakeholders,

Consultation on the Medical Review

I am pleased to launch a consultation on a comprehensive review of the medical facilities and expertise available on tourist vessels visiting South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands. The review makes recommendations for a set of minimum standards for operators to follow. I would be grateful for responses to this consultation by close 29th July.

The comprehensive review was commissioned following a fatal accident involving a cruise ship passenger on South Georgia in 2012. Following the delivery of a Narrative Verdict, HM Coroner wrote to the vessel operator involved in the incident, IAATO and the Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI) with a number of recommendations. Those directed to GSGSSI related to the management of extended walks and the provision of medical treatment and care of tourists on visiting vessels (including yachts).

HM Coroner considered a number of issues including the standards of treatment provided, the provision of medical supplies, the ability of medical staff to communicate in the language of the passengers, levels of pre-planning and whether more advanced equipment on board the vessel might have gone some way to saving the life of someone with less serious injuries in similar circumstances. In respect of GSGSSI, HM Coroner recommended that:

- we engage with IAATO and their members and any appropriate medical authorities and organisations to consider what improvements and/or minimum medical standards should apply to trips to such remote places as South Georgia and the Antarctic;
- within any review of the medical provisions for voyages to remote areas, consideration is given as to what protocols should be developed in this respect and indeed making contingency plans for both medical and non-medical situations which may arise;
- it may be appropriate for GSGSSI to consider whether the provision of a minimum standard of medical care and the existence of relevant protocols should form a condition precedent to the grant of any permit.

In response to these recommendations, GSGSSI commenced a review of the medical facilities and expertise on tourist vessels visiting South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands. Following initial research, earlier this year GSGSSI contracted World Extreme Medicine (WEM) to finalise the review. WEM has now completed the initial phase of the review culminating in recommendations on the minimum provision of medical care on tourist vessels visiting South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands, ranging from larger 'cruise only' vessels to small expedition yachts. The review has

incorporated information from vessel operators regarding their provision for medical care (at sea and ashore).

Following my update at IAATO's recent meeting in Rhode Island, I am pleased to now be able to launch our consultation on the review and would be grateful for responses by 29th July 2016. During this period an external medical review panel will also be asked to undertake a review of the recommendations. On completion of this consultation process a final set of recommendations will be prepared.

It is our intention that this consultation process will guide us towards a set of agreed minimum standards, appropriate to the circumstances of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands and which could be advertised clearly to passengers, that IAATO members will wish to adopt for implementation in future seasons; and that in taking this action we can help reduce the chances of any future tragedies occurring.

Yours sincerely,

Richard McKee

Operations Director
Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands