

Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands Season Update



Welcome Address

Introduction by the Commissioner, Nigel Phillips CBE

What you can expect from us

Let me start by thanking you for finding time to attend this meeting. We live in extraordinary times, in unsettling times. That is particularly true for the cruise ship industry. But let me say at the outset, having met many of you, I know also that this industry attracts talented and hard-working people. You will come through this and the Government of South Georgia will do its part to support that.

I talk today as the Commissioner for SGSSI, not as the Governor of the Falkland Islands. But it was with my Governor's hat on that I and my team together with the wider FCO worked with some of you and the Falkland Islands Government to repatriate nearly 700 passengers in March of this year when gateway ports and airports in South America were closing. Suffice to say, what was achieved under real duress reinforces my view that together we will prevail.

So returning to my Commissioner role. Today will not replicate the review we would typically give at an IAATO Conference. We want to focus these messages on what you need to know now regarding SGSSI. We know you are planning for multiple scenarios, and we know it is difficult. If Hurtigruten are struggling in Norway to develop an effective system of operation in the face of this dreadful virus, I imagine you all are.

We accept that getting to South Georgia will present significant challenges. Determining an effective gateway strategy will not be easy. Our aim is to integrate what is required to make those gateways work into our approach, to facilitate the visitor experience your clients want with our biosecurity and immigration requirements. Put simply, we are open and want to

work with you to create visits that are safe, environmentally sensitive, and which create ambassadors for the Territory.

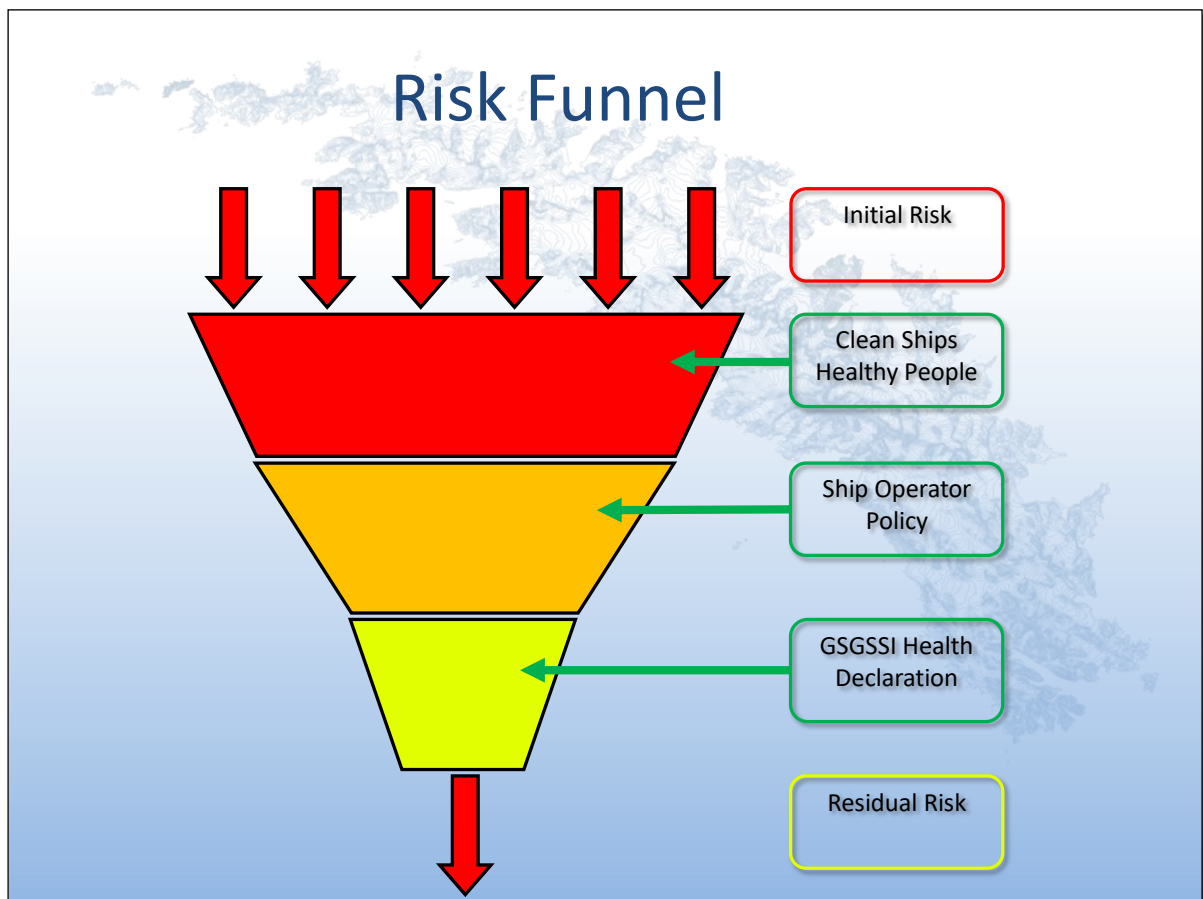
And coming to South Georgia is a prize worth working for. After the success of the rodent eradication programme and all that meant for ground nesting birds, we have now seen a recovery in whale numbers. In the words of Sir David Attenborough, South Georgia is one of those very rare things in this world – an ecosystem in recovery.

That success is not luck, it is years of work. You have been part of that. Last season we received an unprecedented number of visitors, yet thanks to the efforts of those visitors and your staff, we collectively achieved the best biosecurity standards, as measured by our audit, we have ever seen. This is what sustainable tourism is all about and I want to thank you for your commitment. We also want to recognise it, something Ross will talk about.

Of course I am not blind to the loss and disruption the pandemic has wrought across the globe, it is horrific. But I do want to use this window in time to build back better; whether this be reviewing our operations, policies and objectives, or to attend to the jobs which in a normal season would fall to the bottom of the priority list. We are striving to be in a better position coming out of the pandemic than we were going in. That helps all of us.

So why remain open? Why don't we simply close shop this season and give people certainty whilst reducing costs? The simple answer is that we want to be good partners. If you can find a way to get here, we want to turn that endeavour into success. Tourism is key to the long term administration of South Georgia, and you, our stakeholders and partners are an intrinsic part of our vision of South Georgia's future. If it is possible this austral summer to have a tourism season, we will support it because in so doing, we are supporting you through these challenging times. We are in this together.

As to the How, I'll hand over to Helen, our Chief Executive Officer.



CEO Helen Havercroft - Pre-requisite Mitigation (what we expect from you)

Thank you Commissioner Phillips...

At the moment, South Georgia remains free from COVID-19, and it is our priority to ensure that this remains the case.

Although our station personnel are young and fit, we are simply not able to deliver the sort of medical interventions which may be required if personnel were to be infected with COVID-19 and as you know we provide no medical provision for visitors.

For the coming season, we have had to make some planning assumptions to try and bring some clarity despite the uncertainty.

In a world where everything sadly continues to be in disarray, and with many of the key decisions which stand between us and a successful season not within our control we have sought to answer questions where we can.

The first planning assumption is, by working in partnership with industry South Georgia's wild and uninhabited spaces would be open for visitors.

But, as you might imagine we are setting out some pre-requisites to be fulfilled before visit permits will be authorised.

The main assumption is that any vessel together with the passengers and crew reaching South Georgia will already have passed through rigorous, thorough and ongoing mitigation measures to reduce significantly the risk of COVID reaching South Georgia. We look forward to seeing the next iteration of IAATO's Guidance for Managing COVID-19 as it uses the comprehensive AECO's Clean Ships – Healthy People document which sets out clearly the

scale of the challenge and mitigation required. However, we know that many operators will themselves add additional levels of mitigation as well. But I get ahead of myself ...

To help explain our thinking, we came up with the risk funnel, this starts from a position of no mitigation by us or you. This is clearly not satisfactory and would not allow us to be open. So we need mitigation and protection to achieve that desire.

Other factors will also play a part here, such as the decisions made by gateway authorities and transit ports, sanitary corridors, the efficacy of testing etc. These are outside my control, but will form part of your ability to assure us.

The news earlier this week of covid-19 being detected on cruise ships despite stringent measures being in place, only highlights the need for exemplary risk mitigation measures in order for any sort of season to be possible.

The AECO Clean Ships – Healthy People document is a good start in providing us with the assurance that the initial risk of transmission has been mitigated prior to arrival, and we will look to ensure that the final outputs of IAATO's Guidance for Managing COVID-19 provides us with the level of assurance we have based our own risk assessments on.

As with any policy, it's only effective if properly implemented and followed with discipline and rigour, we would like assurances to this effect.

We have worked with many of you over a long period and know that you take the safety of your passengers and crew extremely seriously.

As that is more important than ever I imagine that many operators will seek to go beyond these base guidelines and implement additional measures which will bring the risk down further.

However, importantly for us it is that only through the disciplined practise of any implemented measures that risk is actually reduced.

The result of this funnel of risk mitigation is that only a small risk remains and we believe that we can mitigate for that using a health declaration to provide a final level of assurance that all is well onboard before any landings are permitted.

Lastly, we can mitigate against the residual risk by use of PPE for Government Officers boarding your vessel at King Edward Point, closing indoor visitor spaces, and practicing the basic but effective measures of reducing to a minimum close contact and regular handwashing and personal hygiene.

Ross will bring you up to date with the key COVID-19 related changes for the coming season. Thank you.

COVID-19 Health Declaration

The GSGSSI request a series of declarations are completed and signed by the Captain or Doctor

- **Declaration A** Initial declaration is completed on entry into the South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands Maritime Zone (SGSSI MZ)

'Is there now, or has there been in the last 14 days, anyone on board who you know to have COVID-19?'

Ross James, Visitor Management Officer – Covid-19 Visitor Impacts

Thank you Helen, and hello everybody. I'm sure we'd all rather be meeting in person in Providence, but I'm very grateful to at least have this opportunity to say hello and discuss the season. Thank you to IAATO for facilitating this meeting.

As Helen explained, the risk mitigation measures I'm about to describe are only a last line of defence and are there to mitigate the already much reduced 'residual' risk of COVID-19 infection.

Since all of our sites except Grytviken are uninhabited, we have decided to take a different approach to asking for a 14 day quarantine. Instead we have developed a 3 tier health declaration system to risk assess each vessel. We believe this is a practical yet effective way to mitigate residual risk, but would welcome your feedback and thoughts at the end.

So, let's talk through the basics of each health declaration.

Declaration A The Initial declaration is completed on entry into the South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands Maritime Zone (SGSSI MZ)

This declaration simply asks if there are any known cases of COVID-19 on board. We assume that if there was you wouldn't be heading to South Georgia, but nonetheless, it's important to set out that any vessel with known cases of COVID-19 will be refused entry or asked to leave.

We accept that even in times of covid, people may get colds or exhibit flu-like symptoms which are not covid related. As such, landings will be permitted outside of Grytviken even if flu-like symptoms are reported on the vessel, as long as the vessel has dispensation to do so (more on that later).

COVID-19 Health Declaration

The GSGSSI request a series of declarations are completed and signed by the Captain or Doctor

- **Declaration B** Second declaration is required on entry into Cumberland Bay

‘Is there now, or has there been in the last 14 days, anyone on board who you know to have COVID-19, or any of the following known core COVID-19 symptoms¹? ‘

- **fever** (feeling hot to the touch on chest or back or confirmed temperature above 38°C)
- **new, continuous cough** (coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours)
- **loss or change in sense of smell or taste**

Declaration B the second declaration is required on entry into Cumberland Bay, and more specifically asks ‘Is there now, or has there been in the last 14 days, anyone on board who you know to have COVID-19, or known core COVID-19 symptoms?’

Vessels will be refused permission to land at Grytviken if they trigger our risk thresholds, but if the vessel can provide assurance that they are covid-free, landings will be permitted at Grytviken.

If permitted to land, Government Officers will board the vessel to conduct a biosecurity audit and check rodent monitoring stations. This is our opportunity to ensure that the visit is being conducted in an environmentally sensitive way and that procedures to protect the environment are up to scratch.

GO’s will board wearing PPE including face masks, and we ask that during their boarding social distancing is observed by staff and passengers, and that all persons wear face coverings whilst in the proximity of Government Officers.

The Biosecurity Dog Team will operate out of the Falkland Islands if normal operations in the Falklands are possible, but in the event that they can't, they'll relocate to South Georgia, and conduct their vessel searches from Grytviken. The dog handler will be in PPE, and the same rules will apply as with GOs. There will be a strict 'don't touch the dog' policy.

COVID-19 Health Declaration

The GSGSSI request a series of declarations are completed and signed by the Captain or Doctor

- **Declaration C** If Government Officials boarded the vessel a third declaration is required after 14 days.

'In the 14 days after a Government Official boarded the vessel, has anyone who was onboard at that time since tested positive for COVID-19?'

Declaration C is a contact tracing element and will notify us if any persons on the vessel later went on to test positive for covid-19, and hence if our staff may have been exposed to the virus.

Declaration C If Government Officials (including the dog team) boarded the vessel, a third declaration is required after 14 days.

'In the 14 days after a Government Official boarded the vessel, has anyone who was onboard at that time since tested positive for COVID-19?'

We appreciate that this may be something easier said than done, as your passengers may well have left the ship by this point. We would welcome your feedback on the practicalities of this, and how we might best achieve a contact tracing element in our system.

Dispensation & the Biosecurity Audit

Dispensation = vessels can choose to make first landings outside of Grytviken.

1. Dispensation is first gained by successful completion of the online Permit Holder Briefing and Assessment.
2. Dispensation is retained by passing the Biosecurity Audit.

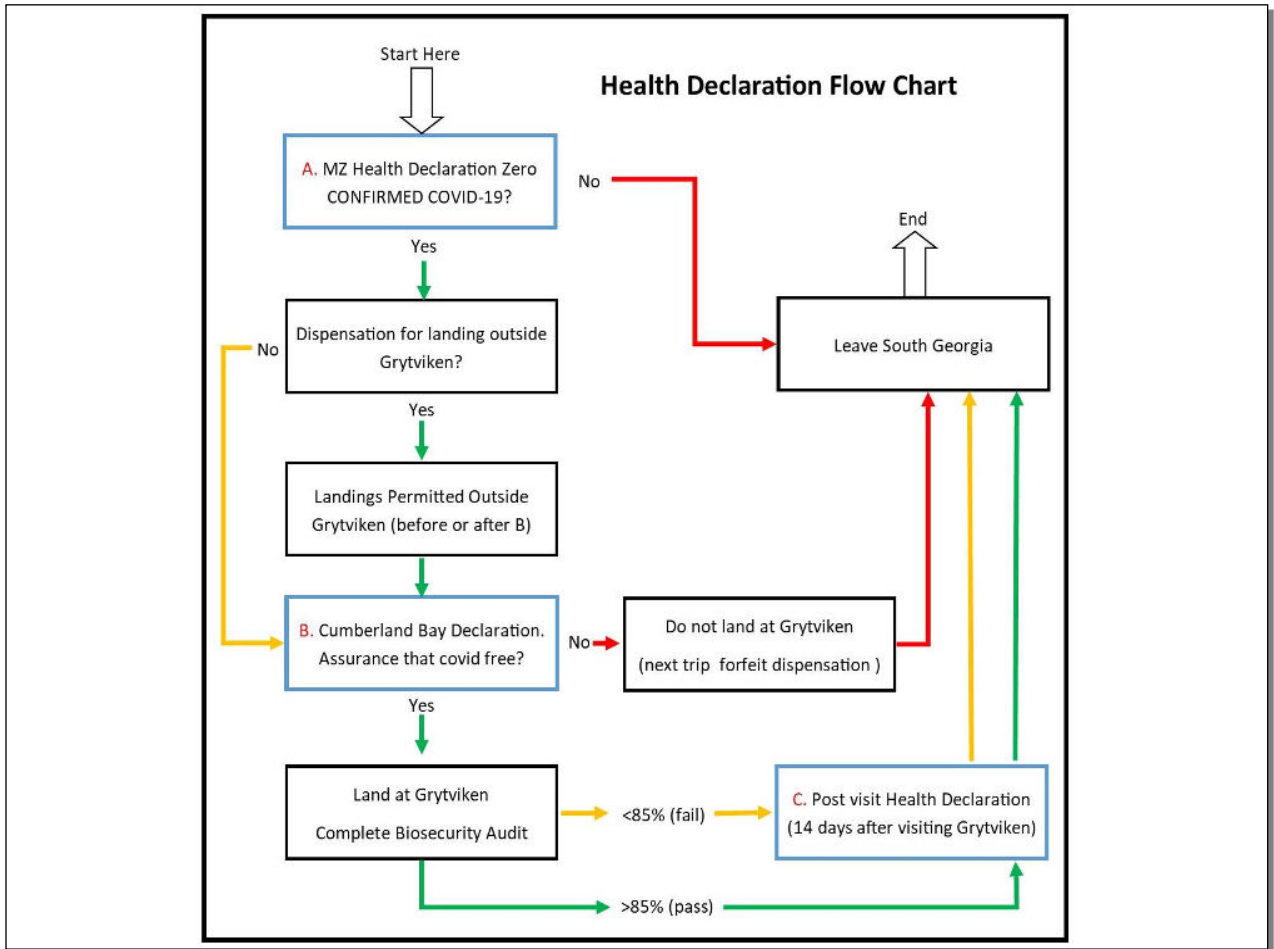
Dispensation and the biosecurity audit. It's important to note the importance of these elements and the impacts they may have to your visit, so I'd like to explain them in more detail.

Dispensation enables vessels to make their first landings outside of Grytviken.

Dispensation is achieved by the Permit Holder (EL) successfully completing the GSGSSI online briefing and assessment,

and is retained after each visit by passing the biosecurity audit. In other words, failing the audit means dispensation will be revoked.

Without dispensation, vessels must make their first call at Grytviken, and if the results of their health declaration prevents them from doing that, they will have to leave the MZ without fulfilling their itinerary – a situation nobody wants. It is therefore important to maintain dispensation, by ensuring biosecurity practices are thorough.



I'll run through a few scenarios on the flow chart to help explain the system further, and how your visit could be impacted by it.

The aim is to stay on the green path and avoid the yellow and red paths.

First, the ideal situation – green

Second, the yellow path is about dispensation, or lack thereof, and how it increases the risk of you not completing a full itinerary, either in the present voyage or a future one.

Third, is the worst case scenario, where you forfeit some or all of your landings – red.

COVID-19 Mitigation Measures

COVID-19 Restrictions at GRYTVIKEN:

- All of the indoor spaces closed –
 - Museum, Gift Shop, Church, Post Office and Toilets.
- Grytviken itself remains open
 - Explore whaling station, visit the cemetery and Shackleton's grave.
- King Edward Point and Hope Point will be out of bounds to visitors.

At Grytviken a number of mitigation measures will be in place, but most noticeable to your passengers will be that:

all the indoor spaces, such as the church, museum, gift shop and toilets will be closed. There will be some sort of remote Post Office Service to enable visitors to purchase gifts and post letters.

The external spaces will remain open, and we encourage visitors to explore the whaling station and cemetery.

King Edward Point and Hope Point will be out of bounds to visitors to protect station staff.



Thank you for listening, I hope it's been useful and now we'd like to invite questions or comments.