



German Honorary Consul Guernsey

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ENGLISH

Letter from Guernsey (a coronavirus update)
Sunday 3rd May 2020

Dear Biberachers,

This is a brief update from your friends in Guernsey, an island twinned with Biberach through its very special relationship.

The island was put on strict lockdown from midnight, Tuesday 24 March 2020, after Guernsey's Public Health team identified a case of 'community seeding' of the coronavirus. The original lockdown period was initially 14 days, although this was then extended, not surprisingly, and we are only now looking at relaxing the situation (ironically, just as our island's main public holiday, Liberation Day, approaches on Saturday 9th May, to celebrate the 75th anniversary of being liberated by occupying forces during the war!).

At the time of lockdown, we had 36 confirmed cases of COVID-19, and no deaths. Today, the statistics are 252 cases of COVID-19 and 13 deaths...

As with the rest of the world, this has meant a new way of life, with people having to stay at home, except for very limited reasons, with all non-essential shops and businesses being closed and with all gatherings in public of groups of more than 2 persons forbidden.

In practical terms, this has meant people working from home and only leaving the house for 1 of 4 reasons;

- shopping for basic necessities (supermarkets are well stocked and now very organised, with controlled entry by numbers and policing correct 'social distancing' at the check-out)
- 1 form of exercise a day (with a 2 hour allowance)
- any medical need
- or travelling to/from work (for critical workers only)

Our government, the States of Guernsey, has been exceptionally well led by Chief Minister, Gavin St Pier, and his team (the Heads of Public Health, the Civil Service and Law Enforcement), who have all been clear & precise in their plans throughout, communicating regularly to the island via media briefings that are broadcast live via social media/government website.

Their confidence and authority has been noticeable and appreciated. It is in times of crisis that true leadership qualities shine through...

And so, like everyone else in our changed world, we've had to adapt to a new way of living and hope/pray the situation will be controlled soon.

Meanwhile, life continues.

Church services are streamed live to housebound congregations.

People – certainly from my experience – are practicing proper social distancing when they do venture outside, and are being urged to #BeKind to others, particularly the elderly and vulnerable.

Our vital food supply is being well maintained, with freight ships arriving regularly, day and night (rice, pasta and flour are in demand, but toilet paper is so far in plentiful supply!).

Our holiday season has been devastated, with airlines grounded, cruise ships cancelled, hotels/tourist attractions closed and many staff now made redundant. However, the government has been swift to consider essential financial support for businesses, which continues to be vitally important for many employers, not just in the hospitality sector, who are worried about their own situations, their staff and the knock on effects, with the anticipated recession looming just around the corner.

For many, the similarities to the war years are striking, particularly with Guernsey having been an occupied island.

As our Chief Minister commented when announcing the lockdown, 'Even during the Occupation, the islands' residents had more personal freedom to move about our islands than will be the case for the time being, which illustrates the scale of the threat to the community and our willingness to take tough decisions quickly'.

We are acutely aware of the suffering that this pandemic is causing throughout mainland Europe, and the world.

We hope and pray that Biberach is managing to control its spread, without too many casualties.

So keep well. And stay safe.

From your friends in Guernsey, who are thinking of you.

Chris Betley
Honorary Consul
for the Federal Republic of Germany to Guernsey