

Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, GBM, GBS, JP
Chief Secretary for Administration
25/F, Central Government Offices,
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar

25 May 2021

Dear Chief Secretary,

I am writing to you following a recent meeting of our General Committee when we discussed the impact of the SAR Government's current response to COVID-19 and in particular the opening of international borders, the current quarantine arrangements, and vaccination rates in Hong Kong.

A significant concern at our General Committee, and across the Chamber more widely, remains the designation by the SAR Government of the UK (together with Ireland) as a Category A2 country for inbound travelers. We recognize and appreciate that this represents a relaxation from the previous categorization for the UK. However, in our view, this categorization does not reflect the significant progress the UK has made in the last six months both in fighting the virus and vaccinating the population. As a consequence, the COVID-19 risk today from inbound travelers from the UK has been very substantially reduced.

From the data that we have seen, the UK is in a much better position than many of the countries in Category B. Based on the most recent data, the UK is recording around 21 weekly cases per 100,000 of population; this is far better than the vast majority of the countries in Category B including Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Switzerland, Turkey, UAE and the USA. In addition, 72 per cent of the population in the UK has had one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and 43 per cent have had two doses; this is greater than any other country in Category B.

We acknowledge that Variants of Concern ("VOCs") remain a necessary area of focus for the SAR Government in designating country categories. However, the prevalence of VOCs in the UK is very similar to those in many Category B countries. Over this past weekend there has also been medical evidence that the current vaccines are effective against these VOCs, benefiting the UK's status in light of its very successful vaccine programme.

We strongly advocate that a review should be undertaken to include the UK in Category B and that the data should be monitored on an ongoing basis with a view to a further downgrade as soon as this can be supported. As you are aware, the summer months are usually the optimal moment for families on an international assignment to Hong Kong to relocate. In particular they use the period, starting in June, to find accommodation, secure school places for their children and generally acclimatize. We, therefore, urge the SAR Government to consider the recategorisation of UK inbound travelers as soon as possible in order that such needs can be met and to ensure Hong Kong remains an attractive and welcoming destination for the international business community. In this context, we would also encourage the SAR

Government to give due consideration to the position of unvaccinated children travelling with vaccinated parents.

We fully appreciate that these are difficult issues and that the Government needs to adopt a suitably conservative approach. However, a balance, based on a consistent and transparent approach to medical and economic data, needs to be struck. There continues to be considerable personal and professional stress for those who need to travel to the UK for business and family reasons, and for children returning to Hong Kong from school or university. As you will appreciate, one of the significant attractions of Hong Kong for international business is its connectivity and its role as a business hub both within the region and more broadly.

We would be very happy to meet with you or your colleagues at any time to discuss this issue.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Burnett

Chairman

The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong

Cc: Mr Edward Yau Tang Wah, GBS, JP, Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development
Prof Sophia Chan Siu Chee, JP, Secretary for Food & Health