



PITCAIRN ISLAND COUNCIL
Public Meeting Notes held at the Public Hall
Commencing at 10.30am Tuesday, 13th May 2021

Present:

Mayor Charlene Warren, Deputy Mayor Kevin Young, Cr Shawn Christian, Cr L Jaques, Cr Lea Brown, Administrator Mark Tomlinson, Cr Michele Christian, Island Secretary Nadine Faulkner.

Apologies: None.

In attendance: Listed Councillors and 22 members of the community

Welcome: The Mayor welcomed the community to the meeting.

Agenda Item

The Administrator Mark Tomlinson advised that the meeting had been called to discuss the Astra Zeneca vaccine or any concerns around the vaccine itself with Public Health England.

In attendance via skype was:

- Dr Autilia Newton, Consultant Communicable Disease Control, Public Health England (PHE)
- Professor Ian Cumming, UK Ambassador for Health to the Overseas Territories, UK National Health Service
- Laura Clarke, Governor
- Alasdair Hamilton, Deputy Governor
- Adam Pile, Overseas Territories lead, London
- Stephen Thwaites, FCDO (former DFID)
- Mark McGuiness, Pitcairn lead, FCDO
- Karen Slater, FCDO officer leading on vaccine consignments to the OTs

Meeting with Public Health England regarding Astra Zeneca Vaccine

The meeting began with some trouble with the internet and connection with the large TV, and the Administrator ended up making it work with just an ipad.

The Governor Laura Clarke spoke briefly on the vaccines due to arrive on the Silver Supporter at the end of the week. She stated how pleased she was that the vaccines were on their way to support Pitcairn's community in remaining healthy and that the island was still covid-free. She noted that being vaccinated and covid-19 free would support Pitcairners' opportunities for travel and allow tourism when borders and industries around the world reopen in the future.

Dr Newton spoke briefly on the vaccine and the vaccination program in the UK, and then asked the community if they had any questions.

Question: Does the vaccine cause blood clots?

Answer: Any vaccine has risks, but the point of any vaccine is to avoid the even higher risks due to contracting the disease/virus. Generally statistics say four out of one million people will have a serious side effect to any medication, including vaccines. It was noted that the risk associated with catching covid is 200% higher than taking the vaccine, including the risk of clots or other complications. The Astra Zeneca vaccine is considered

safe to administer and the UK's vaccination programme is proof of this. It was pointed out that the UK death toll has dropped significantly since rollout of the vaccine. It was also noted that 90% of the adult population of Gibraltar has now been vaccinated and in the past seven weeks not one Covid-19 death has been reported.

Having the vaccine also reduces the transmission rate of the virus. If the Pitcairn population is vaccinated it will therefore make it harder for Covid to gain a foothold in the island. The intention of PHE supplying the vaccine is to keep Pitcairn safer from the virus.

Astra Zeneca has been proven to be as effective as all the other COVID-19 vaccines available around the world.

Clotting events with the Astra Zeneca have been extremely rare but have been documented carefully in the UK as per NHS regulations. It was stressed that blood clots have not just been registered against the Astra Zeneca vaccine, but also the Pfizer and Johnson and Johnson vaccines. The lower number of blood clot reports made for the other vaccines is also because of the much greater number of AstraZeneca vaccines having been distributed and because the UK reporting process is more precise than in many other countries.

Question: They say if someone has had a severe allergic reaction, then the vaccine is not as effective. What are the contents or ingredients in this vaccine?

Answer: There is very little in the Astra Zeneca vaccine to cause allergic reactions. There has been reported higher accounts of adverse reaction from the other vaccines compared to Astra Zeneca. The ingredients in the vaccine are L-Histidine, L-Histidine hydrochloride monohydrate, Magnesium chloride hexahydrate, Polysorbate 80, Ethanol, Sucrose, Sodium chloride, Disodium edetate dihydrate, and water. Some ingredients may cause a slight allergic reaction, but people who suffer from serious allergies can should use their epi-pen to relieve any incidents of allergic reaction.

At the beginning of the UK's campaign there was a lot of concern with the Pfizer vaccine because of the allergenic concerns and this was one reason why Astra Zeneca was chosen as the main vaccine in the UK vaccination program.

Question: Could the PHE explain the yellow card system in the UK?

Answer: The NHS's Yellow Card system is a surveillance system to track and report any severe reaction to medicines in the UK, including vaccines. This is why the PHE is very confident any allergic reactions to the Astra Zeneca vaccine are being tracked accurately.

Question: Reports have said that the Astra Zeneca vaccine is resulting in more Yellow Card reports than other vaccines. Is this true?

Dr Newton said that it was because of the accuracy of the Yellow Card system, the UK's complete monitoring of the vaccination program and the primary use of the Astra Zeneca vaccine in the UK it would certainly be the case that this vaccine should show a higher incidence of allergies or other issues. The PHE noted again that worldwide the reporting processes of these allergy or clotting statistics may not be as well recorded and the numbers are very different outside of the UK when you stack allergy reactions figures against each of the four widely used vaccines.

In total, across the UK and OT's 38 million people have received the first dose of the Astra Zeneca vaccine, and 23 million people have received a second dose.

Question: From the floor someone voiced concern that there is no major hospital on island here compared to other OT's. A spokesperson from PHE noted that Tristan de Cahuna and Ascension also have basic clinics like Pitcairn. It was also noted that if you caught Covid-19 then there could be major implications to your health depending on age, or underlying medical conditions that it would be difficult to treat with just basic medical facilities

Dr Newton indicated strongly that it's the PHE's recommendation to take the vaccine as the benefits of taking preventative medicine greatly outweigh the risks of contracting Covid-19 and falling ill. Great lengths have been taken to get the vaccines to the island and it would be a travesty to see the medicine going to waste when there are people around the world that are in great need.

In the UK mainland they were having 2000 deaths per day at the beginning of January 2021. The NHS was at the point of collapsing. Now after the vaccine rollout, based mainly on the Astra Zeneca vaccine, this was down to 4 deaths to per day, and last week for two days there were no deaths at all.

The Administrator noted that most people in the UK are eager to get the vaccine because they can plainly see the impact of Covid-19 and the devastation, death and sorrow it causes. On Pitcairn it is very difficult to really appreciate the impact the disease has as we have been untouched here (apart from the effects to tourism, cruise ship visits etc).

Governor Clarke added that another benefit of islanders being vaccinated would be the ability to reopen the borders and ease of traveling between countries. A lot of countries are saying that they will only allow vaccinated people or those who will be quarantined for two weeks. She also wanted to thank everyone for meeting and being open to discuss the vaccine and their concerns. She apologised for having to leave the meeting early but wished the community well and good health.

Question: If a population is totally vaccinated, does it make the virus harder to travel through the country?

Answer: The answer was basically yes. Vaccinated people are protected from getting the disease in question and passing on the pathogen, thereby breaking any chains of transmission. To safely achieve herd immunity against Covid-19, a substantial proportion of a population would need to be vaccinated, lowering the overall amount of virus able to spread in the whole population.

Question/Statement: I've heard that if you take the vaccine can you can still get covid-19 if you are exposed but it will not be as bad.

Answer: This is basically correct, but the benefit of being vaccinated is also that you are less likely to spread it further. It was noted that statistically after dose one of the vaccine you are 70% protected, and then after the second dose you are 90% protected from contracting the virus.

If you compare the vaccine provided to Pitcairn to all the others on offer around the world it is very good protection. The flu vaccine can vary between 60 – 80% protection. Any vaccine that is above 90% is considered very effective.

Question: Some people are due to leave on the Silver Supporter and should be able to return to take the second dose. Should they take the first dose and risk the chance that they will not return in time to take the second dose?

Answer: For the older person travelling – definitely take the first dose if available. The younger, it would not be so urgent. It was noted that if it were the case that you took the first dose of Astra Zeneca, and could not return to Pitcairn in time for the second dose, you could take the second dose of whatever version in NZ and it would not matter.

Question: Can young children take the vaccine?

Answer: Clinical trials are being undertaken for this. At this point the vaccine is not licenced for children because they appear to suffer less seriously if they contract the COVID-19 virus, but in the future it may be.

The Administrator closed the meeting after no more questions were asked from the floor. He thanked the PHE and UK team for their time to speak to the community and answer questions regarding the vaccine.

11.12 meeting closed

Date Approved: 16/06/2021

Mayor: *Warren*

