


Swoffers

Guernsey Estate Agents

Guernsey
– as safe as houses



#GuernseyTogether



Guernsey's successful response to the Covid-19 pandemic has kept the island in the spotlight in recent weeks.

As we return to normal with the final elements of the economy, including bars and nightclubs, now able to open, the island is looking forward to launching and delivering its Recovery Strategy.





Under the banner of ‘Revive and Thrive’, the States of Guernsey is developing ambitious plans to not only recover economically, but also improve on where the island would have been without the virus.

The Recovery Strategy promises: ‘We can do something special and strive to achieve longer-term economic resilience and transformational wellbeing outcomes for our community.’

Revive and Thrive calls on the whole community to contribute and engage with the recovery and ‘grasp the opportunity to revive, renew and revitalise’.

The team at Swoffers is excited to be part of this recovery.

Local business groups, including the Guernsey Chamber of Commerce, are already backing the plan. ‘Chamber is keen to help turn the fine words in the Revive and Thrive document into tangible results which will benefit the economy and community as a whole,’ states the group.

Guernsey certainly appears to be ideally positioned and ready to take advantage of the opportunities presented by its successful handling of the coronavirus crisis.

What has been clear over recent weeks is that the strength of Guernsey’s community has contributed to the success of both lockdown and the exit from it. The island’s response to the pandemic has also kept it squarely in the spotlight.

Director of Public Health, Dr Nicola Brink, appeared on national breakfast television and was interviewed by presenter Lorraine Kelly.

The pair discussed the island’s approach to tackling coronavirus – with the host even saying, ‘we could have done with you over here on the mainland’.



Dr Brink has hailed the early introduction of a track and trace system as one of the main reasons for the island's success in eradicating the virus.

'Our extended testing programme will continue to test hundreds of samples each day and our contact tracers will be ready to respond 24/7 if and when we see a new positive case,' she said. 'We must be alert that this is a real possibility. We shouldn't panic when it happens, and we will react quickly to identify and isolate any associated cases. That "test, track and isolate" will remain at the heart of our strategy going forward.'

The island's size, its dynamic leadership and ability to make swift, evidence-based decisions has made it the envy of many places in the world. Our robust approach to tackling the virus is certainly paying dividends. Various articles in national newspapers, TV and radio news programmes and social media feeds have celebrated Guernsey's success, often commenting with a tinge of jealousy at how well the island has coped.

As we look forward to embracing normal life – no social distancing, no queuing for the supermarket, shops, pubs and restaurants open, all children back at school and all sports being played, the opportunities to 'build back better' are there to be grasped.

The government's Recovery Strategy talks about building a more sustainable economy, growing new sectors, whilst also addressing pressing social and environmental issues. It will deliver improved infrastructure through major investment, in turn supporting local industry. And it will look to improve our health, wellbeing and build on the strong sense of community already present and shown over the last few months.





The team at Swoffers are keen to contribute, with booming house sales and a buoyant rentals market already playing a big part in boosting the post-lockdown economy.

What has been surprising has been the performance of the local housing market since the lifting of lockdown. Estate Agents were able to resume viewings, albeit within strict public health guidelines, on 25th April, with the first sales following shortly afterwards.

Since then, as lockdown restrictions continued to be relaxed, the pace and number of property transactions has increased way beyond expectations.

'We certainly didn't expect the local market to explode in the way it has done,' said Swoffers Director, Andre Austin.

The final stage for recovery for the island's housing market is dependent on the relaxation of the current border restrictions requiring people travelling to the island to self-isolate for 14 days when they arrive.

The island's leaders understand how vital this is for Guernsey's continued economic recovery but are cautious about opening up the island too soon.

'We aren't setting a date for this, it's very much dependent on finding the best, safest way to do it without putting our community at risk,' said Gavin St Pier, Guernsey's Chief Minister. 'We'll be looking very hard at all the options for this. And as our domestic economy fully reopens, we will be getting on with the job of recovery.'

One of the options Guernsey's authorities have just announced is the introduction of a pilot study which will involve a Covid-19 test for those travelling to the island seven days after they begin self-isolation. If the test comes back negative then they will be released from self-isolation of the 8th day, or as soon as a negative result becomes available. They will still need to limit their social contact with other people as much as possible until the full 14 days is up.

This approach balances the health protection risk of infection with the wider health and wellbeing needs of the population.

A pilot is going to be run in early July before this 7-day testing is introduced as the norm.



What is happening with Guernsey's Open Market?

Swoffers commands around two thirds of all Open Market property sales per year and the team is confident that the Open Market will bounce back as soon as the borders open.

'We've already seen a good number of enquiries about relocating to Guernsey and we've kick started our global targeted marketing efforts to ensure that all our clients, new and old, are aware of what benefits the island can offer both in terms of being a safe and secure place to live but also the financial benefits that residency can bring,' said Craig Whitman, Managing Director.

'Guernsey's amazing efforts at eradicating the Covid-19 virus are certainly a big selling point and have attracted a lot of interest. Now is a great time to start thinking about a move here and we would encourage anyone thinking about it to contact us now and chat things through. We can share details of suitable properties and even conduct online video viewings to help our clients narrow down their options so that when our borders are fully open they can come here hopefully with a shortlist of properties that meet their requirements.'

In the interim, islanders are making the most of their new freedoms with restaurants and bars busy, sports teams – including contact sports – back competing and an increasing interest in booking staycations, especially visiting the other islands of the Bailiwick.

But even though normal life has resumed, some of the lessons learned in lockdown remain. Over the past few months Guernsey has built a stronger community, where people look out for each other, help each other and #GuernseyTogether really means something.

It is that community spirit that will hopefully see the island continue to prosper and come out of this even better than before.

