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1 Introduction

P&O has produced this document to reflect its longer-term approach to COVID-19 to ensure as far as reasonably practicable, the safety, health, and welfare at work of its employees by providing a safe place of work and replaces all other COVID Policy documents previously issued.

As society moves towards the 'new normal' we need to ask all vessel users to continue to consider carefully where they go and what they do and to take personal responsibility for their safety and that of their colleagues. This is particularly important in the **7 days before joining the vessel**. The vaccination programme is a key risk mitigator and P&O encourage all to get vaccinated as it offers personal and group protection.

This document is a condensed guide covering the essential points that **joining scientists** and **other passengers going to sea for >24hours and staying onboard overnight** should be familiar with prior to joining.

Refer to this [link](#) for the latest updates.

The best ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a workplace or any setting is to practice physical distancing, adopt proper hand hygiene, follow respiratory etiquette and increase ventilation.

2 Pre-cruise planning process

The Marine Institute and POML Ireland will identify at the pre-cruise meeting any specific scientists requirements for the upcoming survey. At least 14 days prior to a survey the MI or designate are responsible for notifying POML Ireland Operations Manager when specific scientists and other passengers are required to join an upcoming survey. In turn the MI will communicate with scientists and other passengers to ensure they are aligned with this procedure. It must be determined at the pre-cruise meeting who will be managing any ad-hoc vessel joiners so they fully comply with this COVID policy e.g. ROV contractors.

2.1 Scientist joining the survey from abroad

If there are scientists joining from abroad on a single leg journey (i.e. direct flight or ferry) they need to take **two PCR tests** ahead of joining the vessel:

- PCR test within 72 hrs of their direct flight or ferry;
- PCR test on arrival into Ireland (or within 48 hrs of joining the vessel in Ireland).

If you are **not** travelling via direct flight or ferry, i.e. multi-leg travel, to Ireland please contact the Marine Institute RV Ops contact for prior approval.

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2.2 Vaccinations

Mandatory vaccination + booster (or recovery certificate) for all contractors and third parties joining and sailing with the vessels.

3 Pre-Joining

3.1 Vessel Pre-Joining procedure for those sailing with the vessel

3.1.1 7 Days Before Joining

- complete the survey specific pre-screening form and inform Research vessel operations point of contact immediately of any issues. The pre-screening form will be sent to the science team via WhatsApp or email (depending on scientist numbers for each specific survey).
- Antigen test (on day 7) and if COVID is detected inform Research vessel operations point of contact immediately and follow the latest [HSE advice](#).

The information requested in the pre-screening form is to establish information relevant to COVID-19 protocols as it pertains to your current health and circumstances, which may or may not indicate you are at higher risk of contracting the infection or suffering more severe symptoms.

The form will ask you to speak to your GP or specialist if you have pre-existing conditions which could make you more vulnerable to severe symptoms, to ensure you are fit and healthy to go to sea in this situation. The form will also ask you to confirm that you will comply with the relevant restrictions which are mandatory for all vessel joiners.

Beyond this the MI and P&O ask that all personnel exercise good judgement, greater levels of adherence to Government and public health advice as Ireland reopens society and avoid any situations which could violate social distancing precautions or pose a risk to your own or other vessel users health.

3.1.2 24 Hours Before Joining

You will be sent the pre-screening questionnaire again 24hours prior to joining the vessel. This ensures that everyone is clear of symptoms and that nothing has changed since the original 7day pre-screening form was completed.

For example, the 7 day pre-screening form will be sent on 1st April, PCR test in the hotel on 7th April and the 24 hour pre-screening form must be completed on 7th April (24hours prior) before you are permitted to join the vessel on 8th April.

3.1.3 Additional P&O precautions for those sailing with the vessel

Regardless of changes to government and public health advice, the additional precautions you are required to adhere to where possible in the 7 days prior to joining the vessel are as follows;

- Maintain social distancing, the wearing of face coverings, hand hygiene where possible
- Avoid the use of Public Transport where possible within the 7 days
- Limiting the number of contacts to as low as possible
- Avoid peak times and crowded spaces indoor and outdoor (e.g. supermarkets, gyms, restaurants) where possible
- Avoid pubs and indoor social gatherings where possible (e.g. weddings, funerals).

If you or one of your close contacts are required to complete a COVID-19 test over the 7 days prior to joining the vessel and/or if you are feeling unwell you are required to immediately contact the MI.

3.1.4 Shoreside Accommodation Requirements

Overnight accommodation requirements will be reviewed on a case by case basis and the MI will arrange scientist's overnight accommodation where necessary in the 7 day pre-joining period. While staying in the hotel you must strictly limit your movements to the hotel only and avoid contact with other people and social situations as much as possible.

3.2 Scientific personnel joining mid-cruise

In exceptional circumstances where a crew member or other passengers joins mid-survey the MI will liaise with the person before sailing. A COVID test is to be undertaken within 48 hours of joining the vessel and a confirmed negative result is required in advance of joining the vessel. The time between test and receiving the result, arrangements will be made to ensure that the person tested either returns to their home (if it is local and where they have spent the previous 7 days), or in external accommodation pre-approved by the MI RVOPs Manager. When the result is returned negative the person will be allowed join the vessel and it will depart for the survey area.

3.3 COVID-19 testing: PCR & Antigen testing

3.3.1. PCR Testing

As an additional precaution scientists and other passengers are required to have a COVID-19 PCR test within 48 hours of joining the vessel.

The MI will liaise with all scientists and other passengers to arrange COVID-19 testing. The time between test and receiving the result, arrangements will be made to ensure that those tested either return to their home (if it is local and where they have spent the previous 7 days), or in external accommodation pre-approved by the MI RVOPs Manager. When all COVID-19 test results are returned and confirmed negative the vessel will depart for the survey area.

COVID-19 testing is a mandatory requirement. Refusing to take a test will be taken very seriously and may result in disciplinary action.

- If you have COVID symptoms within the 7 day pre-joining period, you should get a PCR test as quickly as possible.
- If you are a close contact of someone who formally (PCR) tested positive for COVID-19 you should please notify RV Ops as quickly as possible and follow the latest government health advice.
- If you are a close contact of someone who formally (PCR) tested positive for COVID-19 you will be required to get a PCR test as quickly as possible. Please notify RV Ops as quickly as possible.

3.3.2. Antigen Testing

Scientists to undertake self-administered (home) antigen testing on:

- **Day 7 prior to the scheduled joining date;**
- **Day 5 prior to the scheduled joining date;**
- **On the morning of the Day of joining (Day 1 of the survey).**
- **Self-administered antigen test daily for Days 2, 3, 4 of the survey.**

In the event of a positive antigen test result 7 days or 5 days out from joining the vessel please get a PCR test as soon as possible.

4 Joining the Vessel

The procedures will vary slightly between the Celtic Explorer and the Celtic Voyager however the following applies to both vessels:

1. Travel to the vessel will be either using your own car/household car or a rental car. If you normally travel using your own car and any problems arise please inform RVOPS and arrangement can be made if required.
2. When you arrive at the gangway, sanitise your hands with the hand sanitizer provided at the security gate.
3. You or the duty crewmember will check your temperature to ensure you don't have a fever (temperature 38 Degree Celsius or higher).
4. There will be PCR testing onboard the vessel for all crew and scientists on the first day of joining. Higher grade face coverings (FFP2) in common areas until the results of the ship-board PCR test are received. FFP2 masks will be provided when boarding.
5. From the time you board the vessel please try to observe physical distancing as far as possible as you transit through the vessel and working with colleagues.

4.1 Social distancing On-board

1. Crew briefings and scientist watch handovers should be conducted on deck where possible or in the lab when weather is unfavourable.
2. All personnel to make non contact greetings, avoid shaking hands, close contact/conversations.
3. Strict adherence to face coverings particularly in the 7 days prior to joining the vessel.
4. Meal times may be staggered to ensure sufficient space between individuals depending on the complement of personnel. The specifics will be agreed at the start of each trip. Please keep to the schedule or inform the Galley when this isn't possible. For those working during normal meal times, arrangements will be made for meals outwith these hours as is the usual practice.
5. If you encounter a crew member, scientists or other passenger on the stairs allow them to pass before climbing up. In the corridors move back to an intersection or pass facing towards the bulkhead.
6. Use your assigned toilet where possible rather than the common toilets.
7. During port calls request the Vessel Masters pre-approval if you need shore leave for basic exercise and local trips to shops. Local trips should be restricted to a minimum and for necessities only due to the potential risk of infection and the impact to the vessel community on board the vessel. Family members may not come onboard, and any interaction should be conducted with

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physical distancing protocols in place and no exchanges of personal belongings etc. Overnight leave will not be permitted.

4.2 Hygiene On-Board

Good hygiene is one of the best ways to avoid the spread of infection. A ready supply of products is available to help keep hands and surfaces infection free.

1. Regularly wash your hands using hot water & soap or use hand sanitiser for at least 20seconds.
2. Disinfectant wipes or spray will be available. Wipe down the hard surfaces and shared work stations between users to ensure they remain clean. It is essential that no cleaning products are allowed to enter the sewage system. As a reminder, disposal of disinfectant wipes down the toilet will block the system and cause significant disruption to vessel operations.
3. When sneezing or coughing cover your mouth with a tissue or the crook of your elbow. Dispose of tissues immediately into a closed bin and wash or sanitise your hands.

5 If you Develop Symptoms On-Board

If you feel like you are developing any of COVID-19 symptoms, proceed to your cabin.

If you are sharing a cabin, ask the other person to leave.

Close the cabin door and notify the Duty Officer by phone – they will implement the ships contingency plan.

If a suspect COVID-19 case occurs onboard the vessel will enact Vessel COVID-19 Outbreak onboard procedure and follow M-Notice Covid-19 – Maritime Declarations of Health.

6 Signing-Off

When signing off it's essential that you leave the cabin as clean as you'd expect to find it.

1. Put used sheets into the provided laundry bags.
2. Empty the bin.
3. Use the provided disinfectant wipes and spray to clean all hard surfaces.
4. If using a J-cloth do not place this cloth back into the wardrobe along with the other cleaning products when finished. It needs to be disposed of in a closed bin.
5. Fold the duvet neatly on the bed along with the pillows.
6. Hoover and mop the floor.
7. If you have any specific queries about the cleaning procedure while onboard, please consult with the assistant cook.

7 Additional requirements for scientists and other passengers joining the vessels

In addition to the Irish Government's latest [COVID-19 Travel Advice](#), any person travelling to a foreign country on holiday/trip will be required to adhere to additional MI and P&O precautions deemed necessary in the 7 days prior to returning to any vessel. Through the pre-screening form process the person will be requested to provide the date you arrived home from abroad, from where and confirmation that you:

- comply with Government's latest COVID-19 Travel advice
- informed the Marine Institute RV Ops.

If you returned from a foreign holiday/trip you are required to allow for 3 days at home before joining the vessel on day 4. Take a RT-PCR Covid test day 3, if the result is negative you are allowed to attend the vessel/site on day 4.

See Irish Government Department of Foreign Affairs travel advice. <https://www.dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice/coronavirus/general-covid-19-travel-advisory/>

Up to date information on travelling to Ireland can be found on Re-open EU <http://reopen.europa.eu/en>

8 Finally

It is essential that all act with responsibility and adherence to this policy and latest government guidelines. It is incumbent upon all personnel joining the vessel to remain extremely vigilant in protecting themselves and their colleagues from contracting COVID-19.