

Press Release



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EMBARGOED TILL 5PM SATURDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2020

Guernsey 2021 NatWest International Island Games latest casualty of Covid-19

The International Island Games Association held their virtual AGM on Saturday 26 September when Jorgen Pettersson, chair of the IIGA, sadly announced that the NatWest International Island Games scheduled to be held in Guernsey in July 2021 have been postponed.

Jorgen said 'This decision was not made lightly and was based on the responses received from the recent survey undertaken with Member Islands, coupled with the best medical advice that could be obtained. First and foremost, in making the decision was the wellbeing of all the Member Island's sports people and the impact that any importation of the virus into Guernsey would have on their Island. We have waited for even the slightest possible opportunity to go on with the Games in 2021, but we have to acknowledge the facts. The pandemic is not over, the quarantine-regulations will continue to make planning forward very very difficult and even impossible.

'Therefore, it would not be fair to ask the Member Islands or the Host Island to commit financially to an event next summer. This has been a difficult decision to accept for all of us. I am truly sorry for this decision, but I also know the determination in our island communities, and I am convinced we will come back in friendly competition under the umbrella of NatWest International Island Games as soon as possible'.

Dame Mary Perkins, chair of the Guernsey 2021 Organising Committee added 'The Organising Committee have been contingency planning since March and have had several meetings with Dr Nicola Brink and the Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell (STAC) as well as communicating with the other Member Islands. In addition, we have used the World Health Organisation's 'Planning for large scale events' guidance as a template for our decision-making process. We have been in regular contact with the International Island Games Executive Committee and have kept them fully updated so that they have all of the information they need in order to make their decisions about the Games. In all of our planning, the health and safety of our athletes, volunteers, spectators, supporters and our Guernsey community have always been our priority, and will continue to be so. Whereas we know that this announcement comes as a huge disappointment, we would like to thank all our volunteers, sponsors and sports coordinators for their continued support'.

Julia Bowditch, Games Director, added some information about why the decision to postpone has been made now. 'As part of our contingency planning, we have had a freeze on our spending since March.

Whereas we were very advanced with our planning before the pandemic, there are now many other factors to be considered – as well as the obvious health and travel implications, many of the sporting associations and governing bodies are issuing new guidelines for hosting sporting events which we do not have the resources and facilities to implement. The last thing we want is for the Member Islands and sports to start incurring costs’.

‘The other thing we must remember is that we have been very lucky here in Guernsey in that most of our sporting activity has been able to start again. Many of the other Member Islands are still unable to get their teams together and train, especially with the contact sports’.

Vice-President of The Department for Education, Sport and Culture, Deputy Richard Graham, attended the last NatWest International Island Games which were held in Gibraltar in 2019. ‘The Gibraltar Games were a fantastic experience’, he said, ‘and we want the Games in Guernsey to be the best they possibly can, not only for the Bailiwick but also for the athletes and visitors from all of the other Islands. We fully support the Guernsey 2021 Organising Committee – they have worked very hard so far and we know that they will continue to focus and develop their plans through these challenging times’.

The big question now is what happens next? Jorgen made the following statement to the member islands during his announcement about the postponement:

‘We have to continue our forward planning. You must remember that we are dealing with two confirmed Host Islands – Guernsey in 2021 and Orkney in 2023. The IIGA Executive Committee will discuss the future Games with Guernsey and Orkney and our Member Islands before we make a decision on the dates for the next Games. There will be many different aspects on this, and we want to make a full analysis including sports, economy, political support and, of course, the continued fight towards the pandemic. Whatever happens, our main focus is for all our Member Islands to stay healthy and well. We would like to stress the importance of the fact that we are not cancelling. We are adjusting the map in order to make it compliant with the current reality’.

Julia added ‘We will continue to work very closely with the IIGA Executive Committee, the Member Islands and our sports. I know I speak for the whole Organising Committee when I say we are all bitterly disappointed that we will not be able to host the Games in 2021, but we will keep everyone informed as soon as we know about a decision on the revised dates. We will all continue to work as hard as we can to put on the best event possible and give Guernsey, Orkney and the other Member Islands something to look forward to’.

Ends



Screen shot of Julia Bowditch, Games Director for Guernsey 2021 NatWest International Island Games, during the Guernsey online update for the IIGA AGM



Jorgen Petterson, Chair of the IIGA, who opened the IIGA AGM