

To all potential coach passengers:

You will no doubt be aware of the highly transmissible "Omicron" variant of Covid-19. According to current Government guidance, around 1 in 3 people with Covid do not have any symptoms and may be spreading the virus without knowing it.

In a (possibly) crowded and enclosed space with limited fresh air such as a coach cabin, there is a higher risk of catching Covid or, if you are infectious, passing it on. The guidance already asked us to wear masks in such circumstances, which is why we have had a compulsory mask policy since the start of the season. Wearing a mask over the mouth **and** nose helps to suppress the droplets and aerosols that we produce with every breath and are the principle means of Covid transmission.

The guidance now recommends that people undertake a rapid lateral flow test before a period of high risk. By testing, the chances of detecting Covid when you are infectious but not displaying symptoms are improved; and by then isolating, you can avoid spreading the disease.

The Supporters' Club does not discriminate on the grounds of age or infirmity when accepting bookings, and there may well be passengers on board who are vulnerable - for whom contracting Covid might be dangerous. Passengers expect to board a coach which is as safe as can **reasonably** be made, and you should also expect your fellow passengers to have due regard for your safety and that of everyone else on board. In the current circumstances, with a highly infectious disease prevalent, we must all act responsibly.

**It is therefore reasonable to ask passengers on our coaches to take a rapid lateral flow test in the run-up to travelling.**

This is not a decision that I have taken lightly. I am as fed up with Covid as everyone else, but our individual views on the subject should not influence health and safety matters. The Supporters' Club is a responsible travel organiser which must take notice of relevant guidance when running trips, and it must take all **reasonable** precautions to keep passengers safe. You should expect nothing less.

Rapid lateral flow tests are a good test of whether a person is infectious with Covid. Many of you test already, perhaps in relation to work, to gain access to football (and our coach), or because it is the responsible thing to do - and this will not be a problem for you.

However, some of you may not be testing yet. I am now asking you to do so if you want to travel with us, as a reasonable precaution to ensure everyone's safety and to minimise the risk of spreading the disease.

Rapid lateral flow tests are quick and easy to use. To summarise:

- They are free.
- You can test at home.
- You can get them sent to you, or collect them from pharmacies and other locations.
- You can visit a test centre (usually requires booking) to test.
- The test is easy - it takes five minutes to perform and involves a swab of each nostril. (Older test kits used throat swabs as well.)
- The result is obtained in 15 - 30 minutes, and must be reported to the NHS, either online or by phone.

Click [here](#) for the NHS rapid lateral flow test site, in order to obtain test kits. (There has been a shortage of test kits in recent days but this is expected to ease.)

I do not propose inspecting all lateral flow test results as I know many passengers are testing regularly already. However, I will change the Health Declaration form, asking you to declare that you can produce official evidence - an NHS email or text - of a recent, negative, rapid lateral flow test result if asked. Ideally, the test should be done within 24 hours of travel.

(You may also wish to note that such evidence is sufficient for you to gain entry to a football match or to board our coach, irrespective of your vaccination status.)

This is a rapidly changing situation, and the Government's guidance may well change again before the end of this season. I have no desire whatever to impose these precautions - health declarations, masks, testing - on passengers, but I have to do what is reasonable and current to ensure your safety and prevent the spread of disease. I hope you understand that.

Equally, I have no desire to exclude anyone from travelling with us. Testing is free, quick and easy, and it should not be a problem - but if you will not do it then I will have to exclude you for the time being.