

Travellers left to carry the cost...AGAIN

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NEWS of the Omicron Covid variant was the last thing any of us in the travel industry wanted to hear.

Yet again, the population is facing curbs on freedoms it once took for granted, just as the aviation industry was starting to make a comeback.

Within hours of the announcement last weekend, 13 per cent was knocked off the value of airline shares.

Whitehall has since announced new restrictions, including a requirement for passengers returning from abroad to isolate at home until the result of a PCR test taken by Day 2 – at their own expense.

Bookings have slowed (though not as much as on previous occasions), with many people – who understandably don't want the stress of any new restrictions or the cost of testing – moving trips forward to early 2022.

Of course, any risks from a new variant must be minimised even if that means some high-risk countries being put on a red list. Scientists need time to better understand Omicron to make informed decisions. But I do not believe that fresh testing requirements for every returning passenger can possibly be justified by what we know so far.

Cases in Europe are isolated, and even those arriving from countries where *no*

cases have been found are having to quarantine until their Day 2 result. That makes little sense. Once again, the UK seems out of step with its neighbours.

Ministers must ensure their decisions are backed by data and precautions are kept in *proportion* to the threat.

Blanket PCR testing must be rolled back as soon as it is possible, but in the meantime, passengers should not have to bear the cost of testing. That's unfair for a nation that has suffered so much and is eager for a break, in every sense.

Going forward, there is a huge opportunity for growth for *easyJet* – and we will do all we can to help holiday-makers. But the only way we can deliver is to have all unnecessary barriers to flying abroad removed for good.

