

BA Chief urges to allow vaccinated passengers travel without restrictions

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London: British Airways' new chief urged vaccinated people should be allowed to travel without restriction and non-vaccinated people with a negative COVID-19 test, as he set out his ideas for a travel restart a month before the UK government finalises its plans.

Holidays will not be allowed until May 17 at the earliest, the government has said, but before that, on April 12, Britain will announce how and when non-essential travel into and out of the country can resume.

Sean Doyle, appointed BA's Chief Executive last October, called on Britain to work with other governments to allow vaccines and health apps to open up travel, after a year when minimal flying has left many airlines on life support.

"I think people who've been vaccinated should be able to travel without restriction. Those who have not been vaccinated should be able to travel with a negative test result," he said.

Doyle said the roll-out of vaccines made him optimistic BA would be back flying this summer, but added the recovery depends on what is said on April 12. He wants government to give its backing to health apps that can be used to verify a person's negative COVID-19 test results and vaccination status. Apps will be key to facilitating travel at large scale, the industry has said. Airline staff checking

paperwork takes 20 minutes per passenger and is not practical if large numbers of passengers return.

Britain has rapidly rolled out vaccinations and 44 per cent of the adult population, mostly people over 60, have now had their first shot. The government has said any return to travel must be fair and not unduly disadvantage those who have not been vaccinated.

Doyle expects Britain to bring in a tiered framework with destinations put into categories depending on risk, and that will determine BA's summer schedule. Beyond saying there was "huge pent up demand", Doyle declined to forecast how strong the season could be.

BA has struck a deal with a testing kit provider giving its passengers GBP 33 (USD 46) tests to take abroad.

BA is also looking further afield. "We're already looking at new destinations over the summer that we haven't flown to before, and that could be across both long haul and short haul," Doyle said.