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8th October 2025

The Hon Mr A. Cannan MHK
Chief Minister
Legislative Buildings
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OPEN CORRESPONDENCE

By Post & Email: Alfred.Cannan@gov.im

Dear Mr Cannan

Re: Digital ID Cards

On Friday 26th September 2025 the Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer announced that the UK Government is planning to introduce compulsory digital ID cards. Each so called *Brit Card* would include the individual's name, date of birth, nationality, residency status and a personal photograph.

Initially the ID card would only be required to obtain work, but the Prime Minister stated that before the end of the current Parliament (August 2029) it was hoped that the use of the card would be significantly expanded, "*to prove your identity to access key public services*", such as accessing schools, healthcare and social security benefits.

Political Reaction

Almost all political parties except Labour have united in expressing strong opposition to this proposed compulsory digital ID card. The Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch stated that the plan would, "*end up being used against law abiding citizens while crooks walk free*". Reform UK stated that, "*digital ID's are a cynical ploy to fool voters that something is being done about illegal immigration*", with Mr Farage describing the card as, "*An anti-British card*". The Liberal Democrat leader Ed Davey stated that his party would, "*fight tooth and nail against the scheme*". The SNP led Scottish Government stated that it was opposed to the introduction



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of any compulsory ID card and the First Minister of Northern Ireland, Michelle O'Neill called the proposal, "*an attack on the rights of Irish citizens in the north of Ireland*".

A petition on the UK Parliament website reached 2,763,938 signatures within just one week and continues to rise rapidly by the hour.

Necessity

The Prime Minister said that compulsory digital ID cards are to be introduced in order to reduce illegal migration, by requiring the ID to be produced in order to obtain work. However, employers are already required to obtain the National Insurance number of a prospective employee. Every employee needs a National Insurance number and is subject to a criminal record check. Unscrupulous employers and/or criminal gangs will simply create fake digital ID's or just completely ignore the requirement. In other words, ID cards are likely to have very little if any impact on reducing illegal migration or stopping the boats.

The only other time ID cards have been used in the UK was as an emergency measure during the Second World War in order to identify German militia and Nazi infiltrators collaborating with the so-called *Fifth Column*.

However, we are not currently at war or in a similar emergency situation and therefore many people are of the view that ID cards are wholly unnecessary.

Authoritarian countries such as Russia, Iran, North Korea and Belarus have mandatory ID cards but does the Isle of Man really want to be mentioned in the same breath as those brutal regimes?

Discrimination

According to Ofcom (the UK Government's Office of Communications), 92% of the UK adult population were mobile phone users in 2024. This means that 8% were not. This equates to approximately 4.5 million people in the UK. Of those aged over 75, the proportion was 28% who were not mobile phone users.

There are people who cannot use a mobile phone, and people who cannot afford to use a mobile phone.

Compulsory digital ID cards therefore risk discriminating against several million people in the UK, particularly the poor and elderly.

There are also people who simply do not wish to have a mobile phone. Under the UK Equality Act 2010, treating persons unfavourably because of certain characteristics is unlawful. Those characteristics include beliefs. A cogent philosophical belief genuinely held is a valid belief. If



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a person does not want to be part of the digital age and does not want a digital ID because of a given philosophical belief, arguably this would be a protected characteristic under the Equality Act.

Data Security

Digital ID cards would require to be checked and monitored through a central government computer system.

There have been a number of examples this year where large corporations have had their computer system hacked by criminals.

In April 2025, M&S and the Co-op were targeted with cyber-attacks in which customer data was taken. The companies lost millions of pounds during weeks of lost online sales.

In early September 2025, Jaguar Land Rover's computer system was hacked and production lines continue to be halted four weeks later, with thousands of workers at the Halewood and Solihull plants told not to come in to work.

On 25th September 2025, a criminal gang calling itself Radiant hacked the UK based children's nursery chain called *Kido*. The gang callously posted the photographs and names of 10 toddlers online and threatened to release the profiles of approximately 8,000 other young children unless a multimillion bitcoin ransom was paid.

Clearly, any stored computer data is not 100% secure and is vulnerable to hacking, which in turn represents a threat to an individual's safety.

Digital ID cards will undoubtedly increase such risks to personal security.

Inappropriate Access

Under the Data Protection Act 2018, only individuals in specified roles and for defined purposes are lawfully permitted to access personal data.

However, the media regularly reports cases in the Criminal Courts where government officials such as Social Workers and Police Officers have gained inappropriate access to personal data.

In one recent example, the Dorset Police Misconduct Panel found that between January 2023 and June 2024 a senior Police Officer had repeatedly accessed the Records Management System without any legitimate reason. The officer was found guilty of gross misconduct and placed on the Police banned list.



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A digital ID card system would be equally susceptible to inappropriate access by public officials.

Privacy

To many people, personal privacy is rightly regarded as sacrosanct.

Under the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 12, *"No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks"*.

In addition, under Article 8 European Convention on Human Rights, *"Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence"*.

Any interference by the State with Article 8 has to be necessary and proportionate.

Digital ID cards are supposedly only being introduced in order to reduce illegal migration. It may be in such circumstances the Courts rule that the mandatory use of such cards is unjustified and disproportionate i.e. that they violate the Article 8 right to privacy. The Courts may conclude that the aim of reducing illegal migration could sensibly be achieved by far less intrusive measures. In other words, introducing compulsory ID cards could be considered as using a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

Switzerland has just held a referendum on ID cards and narrowly voted 50.4% to 49.6% in favour. However, the big difference is that in Switzerland the use of ID cards will be entirely *optional*. The UK Prime Minister's proposal is that the ID cards would be compulsory for all adults.

Trojan Horse

The Prime Minister stated that digital ID cards would initially be introduced only to obtain work. However, he then expressed the hope that the cards would be broadened for use in accessing a wide range of public services.

It is this expansion in the scope of compulsory ID cards which deeply concerns many citizens.

It is easy to envisage a situation in a few years' time where it will be necessary to show a digital ID card in order to enter a hospital, secondary school, university or old people's home. It could then be expanded as being necessary to enter an airport or seaport or to obtain electricity, gas or a water connection or to have the ID with you when driving or even walking along a public road, in case the Police request an identify check.

Goodness knows what would happen if the whole internet system crashed for days or weeks.



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Of course, the use of digital ID cards could also be extended beyond public services to the private sector. Government could simply make it a requirement for banks to use ID cards as a stipulation for being granted a banking licence. Supermarkets could be denied operating clearance by the government if they fail to make customers use the ID cards.

And so, what naively starts as an attempt to cut illegal migration, insidiously mutates into a grotesque exclusionary device, creating a whole excluded tribe of fugitive second class citizens who refuse to carry digital ID cards. Either that or they simply pack their bags and move to America.

In other words, no ID = no schooling, no hospital treatment, no travel, no banking, no phone, no electricity or water and not even a walk on the road.

In the Bible, the book of Revelation talks about the end times and the mark of the beast and that, *"No-one could buy or sell unless he had the mark"*.

Some people fear that digital ID's are a presage of this coming *Armageddon*.

Coercion

It is a slippery slope from saying you can't come into our hospital without a digital ID, to saying you still can't come into our hospital because even though you have a digital ID we see from our online records that you haven't been Covid jabbed. Or you can't come into our school because even though you have a digital ID card, we see from your social media posts that you oppose transgender teaching in primary schools. Or you can't come into our airport because even though you have a digital ID card, we see that you have a petrol car registered in your name which is contributing to climate change.

In other words, digital ID cards could become not just a bar to entry but a powerful tool of coercion. A nasty mechanism to force people to change behaviour and thoughts, for example to be vaccinated or to support trans ideology or buy an electric car.

This is not far-fetched or fanciful. The Covid lockdown has effectively been a practice run for future State restrictions. For example, in Singapore unvaccinated individuals were banned from dining in restaurants and entering shopping malls. In Austria, the government planned to fine all persons aged 14 and over, €3,600 every three months that they remained unvaccinated. And at its most extreme, in the Philippines President Duterte in January 2022 ordered the arrest and jailing of all unvaccinated people who violated stay at home orders.

In effect, those not Covid vaccinated were ostracised like Jewish people in Nazi Germany, disgracefully considered as vermin representing a threat to the nation's health.



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And no doubt, just as during Covid, a network of snitchers and curtain twitchers will be spawned to inform the authorities about the activities of those with no ID.

Monster App

The Prime Minister suggested that the digital ID card would be incorporated into a citizen's Smartphone. So just like having apps for EasyJet or Spotify or M&S, there would be a digital ID card on a person's phone.

Once again, it is quite easy to envisage a situation in the near future where all government information about a citizen would be held on one single app.

This Super App would not only have a person's digital ID but also all of their primary school records, secondary school records, university records, GP records, hospital records, Income Tax & Social Security records, criminal convictions, literally everything the State knows about a person.

In a few seconds, a public official such as a civil servant or Police Officer would be able to access huge amounts of personal data about any particular citizen.

Of course, this Super App could then be merged with private apps to create a *Monster App* where the government would know almost literally everything about you.

Surveillance

I have recently become friendly with a Chinese man who now lives and works on the Isle of Man, having been brought up in the city of Shanghai, China.

My friend says that in China every adult citizen has to have a *Resident Identity Card*. This takes the form of a digital ID set up and stored on a person's Smartphone.

It is compulsory for every person aged 16 and over to have one.

The Resident Identity Card is the only acceptable document used to open bank accounts, register for a mobile phone number, apply for university entry, obtaining a driving licence as well as entry to a number of public buildings.

Apparently, if you do not have a Resident Identity Card in China you cannot enter a hospital and in fact the hospital authorities will inform the Police and they will come and arrest you.

My Chinese friend went on to say that because digital ID is on a Smartphone and Smartphones have GPS (Global Positional System), the authorities can find out where a person is at any given time.



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GPS is a satellite system that can determine a user's precise location anywhere on earth. And so if you are in a coffee shop in Shanghai or at the *Jiangyang* fish market or walking along the *Huangpu* river bank, the government knows exactly where you are.

This is the nightmarish reality of life right now in China. Do you want to live in a society where you open the curtains in the morning and the State knows where you are and what you are doing?

Tracking

If digital ID cards are set up on Smartphones in the UK it would be entirely possible for the government to track and trace a person's movements using GPS and phone cell site masts. From driving into work, going into Starbucks for a coffee, waiting at the library, having lunch at the sports centre, driving home or going out to the theatre. Every movement could be traced and plotted, not just where a person had been but where they are now.

Moreover, it would be a very easy technological step to link someone's known whereabouts to the local CCTV system in a particular street or vicinity so as to actually see that person in real time. As what currently happens when an announcer makes comments at a London Underground station about the misbehaviour of a person on the platform, the tracked individual could then be spoken to over a tannoy loudspeaker system fitted to a street lamp post.

I recently walked down Strand Street, the main shopping street in the Island's capital Douglas, and was surprised to hear what sounded like birds tweeting above the din of traffic and pedestrians. But as I carried on down the street I realised that the sound was actually being piped out of speakers fitted in the Council street lamp posts. It is easy to imagine something much less innocent and comical being transmitted by the authorities; *Stay at Home* comes to mind.

MI5

The level of surveillance and monitoring referred to above is not Sci-fi but is in fact current reality.

MI5 is the UK's domestic counter-intelligence and security agency, headquartered at GCHQ in Cheltenham, England.

MI5 has wide-ranging powers under the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 to intercept communications including listening to phone calls and reading peoples' messages such as texts and emails.



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The security agency is permitted to gather intelligence including by remotely accessing computers and covertly downloading the contents of mobile phones.

The agency is also permitted to gather and store "bulk personal data" which is information on enormous numbers of people, acquiring this from telecommunications operators.

The only justification required is that it is necessary and in the public interest. Plainly, such a broad criteria is essentially an open invitation to snoop on everyone's communications.

No doubt the spy's at GCHQ will be rubbing their hands in glee at the prospect of digital ID cards. This will be another surreptitious monitoring tool, enabling more dots to be joined together in the investigation of citizens.

In a disturbing case this year, the Director General of MI5, Sir Ken McCallum, had to publicly apologise to the Court after it was revealed that MI5 officers had repeatedly lied in three Courts. The case centred on an MI5 agent known only as "X" who had violently abused a number of women. Agent "X" gave false evidence and misled the Court but was protected by an MI5 cover-up and missing evidence. The government has now ordered an inquiry.

This case is surely a salutary lesson in how data (which would include digital ID cards) retained by State institutions can be abused and mishandled by the authorities.

The Government's desire for information is further highlighted in its ongoing dispute with the *Apple* corporation.

In February 2025, the UK Government sought worldwide access to data on Apple's Advanced Data Protection (ADP) Service. Apple refused, backed up by the White House which expressed concern that the data of US citizens using Apple could be compromised.

However, the Financial Times reported on 1st October 2025 that the UK Government has returned to Apple with a new access order, this time seeking access to encrypted cloud backups, but only of British citizens.

It is abundantly clear that the UK Government has an insatiable thirst to know as much as possible about its citizens, and compulsory ID cards are part of that appetite.

The Manx Position

The Isle of Man is not part of the UK. *Tynwald*, the Manx Parliament, decides what is and is not law on the Island. As Chief Minister, can you confirm that your administration has no plans to introduce any form of ID cards on the Island?



Will you clearly, explicitly and publicly rule out the introduction of any form of compulsory ID cards?

The Manx National Anthem:

*O land of our birth,
O gem of God's earth,
O Island so strong and so fair;
Built firm as Barrule,
Thy throne of Home Rule,
Makes us free as thy sweet mountain air.*

If you are considering introducing ID cards, please can you let us know what part compulsory ID cards play in making us, "*free as thy sweet mountain air*"?

And do you consider that such a fundamental change to civil liberties ought properly to be the subject of a national referendum?

Conclusion

Taking all of the above considerations into account, I am in no doubt that compulsory digital ID cards represent a deeply sinister and serious overreach by the State. A red line of coercion and control will be crossed.

Privacy is a basic and essential human need.

We must not sleepwalk into a dehumanising totalitarian society.

In my view, the mandatory use of ID cards for all adults would be a gross violation of personal autonomy and choice. The prospect fills me with a profound sense of uneasiness. It feels invasive. It feels instinctively wrong.

Such cards are very clearly an ***enemy of freedom***.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely