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GOVT STEPS IN TO HELP JAMES CORNELL

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A CRITICALLY ill TT competitor will be flown home to San Francisco this week after the Isle of Man Government stepped in to help pay for a special flight.

James Cornell, 36, suffered massive head injuries in a sidecar crash at May Hill, Ramsey, during TT practice week.

He has been in an induced coma since then at Noble's Hospital and has shown little sign of improvement.

Friends and family in the

USA and the Island have been organising fundraising events to try and raise the \$50,000 needed to fly him home.

Now the Department of Tourism and the Department of Health and Social Security have combined to meet the target.

Tourism Minister David Cretney said: 'I wasn't aware there was any difficulty in terms of him getting home, until very recently.

'Once I found out it was an issue and collections were going on.

'I got my department to contact the DHSS. We have now come up with enough money to ensure he gets back.'

He didn't disclose the exact figure, but said it had been split between the DoT and the DHSS with support from the Auto Cycle Union.

Friends and family of Mr Cornell have been working hard to raise the cash to fly him home. They have pledged to reimburse the government with \$25,000 from donations.

A fundraising website has been set up by his friends at the San Francisco Motorcycle Club and Santa Cruz Vampires Motorcycle Club. Several biker events have taken place in the city.

The Manx biking community, many of who have never met Mr Cornell, also rallied around, with events being held across the Island.

Racing fan Tim Edwards, 45, from Douglas, only met Mr Cornell four days before the crash, but has visited him in hospital every day since.

He said of the announcement: 'This is spot-on, absolutely fantastic, really, really good news.

'There are about eight people visiting him regularly, but the difference when his best friend Jason visited from America was incredible.

'Being at home will bring him on a lot more.'