- **SoS Wales** - thinks Drakeford's request is positioning himself for next year's Assembly elections. There are profound differences between S, W & NI. It's been useful in defending and promoting UKG to say WG have been involved at every stage of the decision making process for Covid-19 - lots of public support for the current approach. Nervous of excluding DAs - could possibly engage more than we are at the moment. Expects Drakeford is speaking on behalf of all the DAs in his request.
- **Minister for the Constitution** - should continue principle of reasonableness in involving the DAs. Agree that we need to hold them to account on their approach to Covid-19. We may not need an additional forum every week, but should be working towards net goal of holding DAs to account. Weekly meeting might be best way to do this.
- **Lucy Smith** - the context to the Drakeford request is UKG deciding its exit strategy from current social distancing measures over the next 2-3 weeks. DAs will also be interested in our long-term Covid strategy too. DAs appreciate there's a huge step up in complexity of the issues UKG is currently deciding on - the request for more meetings is an attempt to keep on top of this. There's an ambition to maintain a common 4 nation approach on this which is positive.
- **SoSNI** - agree with Lucy; concern is that we're not going to get agreement on an exit policy in NI. Agreement will come from official level cooperation. The default position of dFM will be to agree with the approach in RoI. A regular meeting would be better at official level.
- **CDL** - Scottish FM said she'd announce the broader approach for social distancing measures. Do we know anything more about this?
- **SoS Scotland** - expect SG framework to be similar to that announced by UKG on Friday. Agree with SoSNI that working at official level would be better; would avoid Scottish FM grandstanding.
- <u>**CDL** - conclusion: he'd heard SoS TOs' caution that regular meetings won't mean DAs agree on the approach to Covid, and that regular meetings could be a 'potential federalist trojan horse'. CDL said he'd reply to Drakeford proposing meeting DAs on a fairly regular basis on Covid, to test their views on issues. He was attracted to individual meetings, but expected Scottish FM to bounce these.</u>
- **SoS Scotland** - prefer individual meetings with DAs given the differences between S, W & NI.
- **SoS Wales** - Flagged that if UKG isn't in a position to outline UK recovery plan in next 2 weeks, the Welsh FM would come forward with an (unworkable) proposal, and there's a risk of UKG looking like the unreasonable partner in recovery plans.
- **SoSNI** - DAs are dispersed in wider UKG meetings; if we convene them in a smaller meeting, they may prove more difficult to handle. Reiterated that the NIO hasn't been asked for this, and NIE have been very positive re UKG's approach to date.
- <u>**CDL** - conclusion: fair point about handling the DAs. Could involve officials in these meetings to diffuse tensions. Will work with Lucy Smith on a few options - won't commit to weekly meetings; could involve officials; will consider SoS Scotland's option of meeting with the DAs individually.</u>

On Wed, 22 Apr 2020 at 10:27, **Name Redacted** Ⓐnio.gov.uk> wrote:

Strand leads

Please could colleagues provide updated lines for SOSNI's meeting with CDL and SoS DAs today, focusing on two or three key issues to flag in his brief.
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1D46V2sFdQq4HQnLuH1dPQR4o0B7Fzr7Epm9ZZ1V9Dhc/edit#heading=h.ebrdat5apew5

We are still waiting for further update from CDL's office re a more detailed agenda but so far we understand the focus of the discussion will be around improving engagement with DAs on Covid-19, with a view to potentially setting up more regular DA meetings with the centre. Therefore from an NIO perspective, we will want to flag key Covid issues for NI and how we think contact with the NIE has been working so far. Please do also add any relevant background intel you have re the best ways to keep the NIE plugged in, and grateful for all updates by **1pm today**

Many thanks,

Name Redacted