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**From:** Mason, Toby (OFM - Communications) [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=1E3594C37993473993EBF794F7E6E1E6-MASON, TOBY]  
**Sent:** 17/07/2020 15:09:24  
**To:** Lalley, Liz (Project Team - C-19) [liz.lalley@gov.wales]  
**Subject:** FW: OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE COBR readout

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**From:** Mason, Toby (OFM - Communications)  
**Sent:** 10 May 2020 15:12  
**To:** Evans, Carys (Office of the First Minister) <Carys.Evans@gov.wales>  
**Subject:** OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE COBR readout

## **OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE**

### **Readout from COBR 10/5**

PM introduced and stressed four nations would remain important approach. He had seen the comments from Scotland on the change of message – stay at home remains important part of the messages, changing the emphasis to say that if people can't work from home, they should be actively encouraged to go to work, but avoid public transport. He said that the changes proposed for the future were contingent on a series of conditions being made.

CMO for England said the glass half full was that the direction of travel in every area was going in the right way, for example hospital admissions were consistently falling, and the R was 0.5 to 0.9 likely in the middle of this range.

Concerns – national sampling indicates 130,000 currently have the virus – and if the R went above 1 then it would grow very quickly. International comparisons have indicated that some have had to reverse measures that they have loosened. He added we need to be careful about the rate of loosening, if we go too far, R will go up, but leaving too long to relax would mean opening up in the winter season.

SoSH said the their first proposed changes would come into force from Wednesday, because evidence has strengthened that outdoor is less risky, that people can be outdoors for leisure, not just exercise, would be positively received but a low impact on transmission. Further changes being proposed for June and July would be contingent on the epidemiological evidence, but that we were on the right track to get the numbers down.

On June 1 – the proposals would be to start to bring back primary schools reception, 1 and 6 and in smaller class sizes to allow less spread. Phased opening of non-essential retail, on a least risky basis. July would be reopen some of the hospitality industry if they implement social distancing. Far more sophisticated measures to implement social distance have been developed and used by organisations to keep R down. On face coverings, the effect is weak, but might protect others from you in confined spaces, like shops and public transport.

PM said the four nations should work on the joint biosecurity centre / COVID alert system. The CMO said it would bring together information from PHE and devolved equivalents and other

information to drive localised responses, and a response function to support local authorities and others in their response to local outbreaks. Details were being worked through.

NS said that Scotland were in principle very keen to be part of biosecurity centre. The SG is concerned that their R number is slightly higher, and leading to cautious approach. This afternoon they would announce a change to outside exercise removing the once, but not extend to outdoor leisure, considering further approaches in the coming weeks. SG are profoundly concerned about weakening of stay at home messages. Stressed commitment to four nations cooperation – very strongly committed to this with appropriate alignment. NS stressed that no one should be reading about others position on the front pages of the newspapers and not give the impression that announcements relate to the whole UK.

PM said four nations cooperation was going well and intense committed to keeping it going. He added that the 'stay at home' message – was very heavy on that and people in UK stayed at home even when they could have worked from home, and now trying to recalibrate that message to encourage people who have to go to work to do so provided it is safe. Difference of nuance. Exercise changes – good to see moving together. Disease that is affective different regions in different ways and need to calibrate responses. Would be very careful in .

FM said we need a consistent pattern of ongoing engagements – not fits and starts. It needs a pattern that we agree in which officials share information, meetings with the CDL, and culminating in a COBR. The more we talk and share the more chance we can stick together. Raised concerns on the proposal that people may drive to outdoor spaces – this is really problematic for us. Stressed how important it is the message is clear on that. Emphasised that 'stay local' is our clear message and guidance. Also raised concerns about a potential message to avoid public transport, our view is that we can use it if it is done safely, and if we are we are now saying that it is not safe, then that is problematic in getting people back to work safely.

PM – agreed that Ministerial engagement should be reliable and regular – we must make sure we do that. As we go forward we are going to have concert and discuss the science. On the travel issue, he said that was why UKG were saying that – you can take exercise elsewhere, more than once a day – but insist on social distances and increasing the fine levels. Agreed on the message for stay local, no reason why that shouldn't be part of Welsh messaging, reflecting regional and national differentiation. On public transport, PM said that what applies on the Northern Line may be different for buses in the Welsh Valleys, but central message is that all public transport should be covid-safe.

NI will set out recovery and renewal plan this week once seen PMs. Also a welcome for the biosecurity centre. The whole point of devolution is that we can react locally. Need to deal with attempts to say that if there are differences then the four nations approach is breaking down. Need to emphasise this.

SK – we seen a large number of people on our streets, parks and public spaces in London. We were working closely with DfT, but the impact on public transport is specific – 15% capacity before social distancing rules are breached. Message needs to be avoid, or at least stagger journeys and remove rush hour. Wanted clear text message to go out from HMG tonight if possible. PM said he would be very clear on the transport issue tonight. PM said stay at home, if you can, remains of fundamental importance. But unless we flex that message a bit, we will remain in this lockdown. But messaging will be in cautious and restrained.

NS came back in to say that the Scotland message is to stay at home, not encouraging people to go out to work. Text messages and marketing should not appear in Scotland that cuts across

Scottish messaging. PM responded that nothing will appear in Scotland that will cut across the stay at home messages.

UK director of communications Alex Aiken – we will listen to what has been said very carefully and take on board. Communications has to be based on plan and science. We need to reflect on the fact that comms has worked, but also learn from this. We are seeing reduction in compliance, and polling and research shows weariness. So right time to change and adapt. Stay alert encourages people to change behaviour and permissions, it has polled well. Monday into Tuesday we will start national advertising to start to change behaviours, This is all about building the right behaviours and confidence, and this will shape the mo.

NS reiterated that they would not be moving to stay alert messages – like an assurance there will not be paid for ads on TV and elsewhere in Scotland– this will undermine SG messaging, PM said they will deconflict messaging as far as possible. We can move forward as four nations. Now is the moment to recalibrate messaging – all we are doing today is going back to the original advice from March 23 and getting ready for a covid-compliant world. We need to work together to make sure our businesses, schools and transport systems are ready and we work together to do this with stakeholders. The battle against covid will be intelligence and data let, we have had paucity of data until now.

PM briefly referred to the measures on the borders – we need to prevent reinfection in this country as we drive R down – and will be important we do that in a way that does not damage our ability to trade, and work together to get the package right, come in from end of the month.

ends

## **Toby Mason**

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