

FROM: NICHOLA MALLON MLA
Minister for Infrastructure

DATE: 10 November 2020

TO: ROBIN SWAN MLA
Minister for Health

REF:

**MODELLING THE COURSE OF THE COVID EPIDEMIC AND THE IMPACT OF
DIFFERENT INTERVENTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Dear Robin

Thank you for your paper received for discussion at the Executive meeting on 5th November and tabled for decision for our meeting on 9TH November. It is deeply regrettable that a decision has yet to be taken. It is not acceptable that 48 hours away from the current restrictions coming to an end, businesses and the public have been given no clarity or certainty on the next steps and how they will be impacted.

As I have made clear in our previous meetings, I welcome the comments within your paper on the positive impact of the restrictions to date. Furthermore, I note the recommendations you and the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Scientific Advisor have made, namely, that the Executive “Agrees a two week extension of the current restrictions; and In recognising the particular impact on the hospitality sector, gives urgent consideration to any mitigating financial support measures brought forward by the Minister for the Economy.”

Having considered carefully the medical advice and the modelling paper provided, as well as the scientific presentation and responses to questions provided by the Chief Scientific Adviser at our last meeting, I agree to the extension of the current regulations in order to ensure that we slow the spread of covid-19, reduce R, protect our health service and to best prevent against any further intervention in the month of Christmas. I also strongly agree that the Executive should provide further financial support to those businesses affected by the continued restrictions. It is vital that we work to protect lives and livelihoods.

Businesses and families are struggling to have hope. The one hope that they are able to unite around is having a prosperous Christmas from a business perspective and a

Christmas in the company of loved ones from a family perspective. As an Executive we should, in my view, not act in a way that would put that at risk.

Throughout this pandemic one of the areas that has caused us concern is the lack of a uniform approach across these islands. For the first time there is largely a uniform approach. I have yet to see the evidence and rationale for diverging from this particularly given that we have the highest infection rate across the islands.

As I outlined at our last meeting, this is a hugely difficult situation and there are no easy choices. This Executive must base its decisions on evidence. We currently have only one evidence based choice before us. I know this is a big ask of our citizens and our businesses, but in giving careful consideration to your evidence and to best protect Christmas for families and businesses, I support the recommendations in your paper. I welcome that an Executive meeting has been finally called for today. It is imperative that a decision is taken by the Executive at this meeting. As always, it is critical in reaching a decision, that clear and consistent communication is provided to the public as quickly as possible.

I have copied this to Executive colleagues in the hope that we can find a way forward to protect both lives and livelihoods.

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NICHOLA MALLON MLA
Minister for Infrastructure