

TEO FIRST MINISTER'S OFFICE MEETING NOTE

Date 14 March 2020

INV 1442/2020

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		ROI		
DATE:	14 March 2020	NOTE WRITTEN BY		Deirdre Griffith
VENUE:	NSMC Offices, Armagh		Officials present	FM Adviser present: Philip Weir dFM Adviser present: Stephen McGlade
LIST OF ATTENDEES included: First Minister – Arlene Foster deputy First Minister – Michelle O'Neill Declan Kearney, Junior Minister, dFM FM Private Secretary – Deirdre Griffith dFM Private Secretary – Carol Morrow Philip Weir, Special Adviser FM Stephen McGlade Chris Stewart, Director, TEO Chris McNabb, EIS, TEO Donal Moran, TEO <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">NR</div> TEO <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">NR</div> EO Robin Swann, Minister of Health Dr Michael McBride, CMO <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">NR</div> PS MoH Leo Varadkar An Taoiseach Simon Coveney, Tánaiste, Simon Harris, Minister for Health Dr Tony Holohan, CMO Range of support staff from NSMC team and ROI officials				
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:		LV: Different jurisdictions will be differences, appreciate concern about lack of warning of changes in ROI; want to exchange information, keen for close		

	<p>contact and coordination and where different explain to public.</p> <p>FM: Thanked CMOs under significant pressure; difference of approach difficult to understand for public; CMOs maintain close contact; stick to action plan based on science and be flexible.</p> <p>SC: Thanked CMO, decisions flowed from medical advice; no big difference in approach; create clam and certainty; recognise live on same island; anxiety N/S; danger is allowing difference in approach to create more anxiety; medical advice changed and finalised ROI approach at 3am.</p> <p>dFM: Important to be aligned; thanks to CMO on the record; challenging and rapidly evolving situation; need to work together ; difference in approach causing confusion; need to take action now; need to be aligned; WHO critical of UK Approach; err on side of caution.</p> <p>CMO Ireland: close co-operation; outlined figures and outbreak details which changed in middle of the week; different approach but share focus on interruption of transmission; behaviours consistent with advice; population based measures need trust.</p> <p>CMO NI: Timing is issue; interruption or delay reflect different stages of progression of disease; range of measure implemented now; focus on steps to reduce height of peak and push it to late spring; don't know seasonality yet; advised by SAGE and others; next decision to protect the most vulnerable and how to support health care needs; isolate from virus but not society; outlined surge plans – hospital repurposing, flex up workforce; in absence of vaccine need some exposure for herd immunity; risk second peak in winter months alongside winter flu.</p> <p>Minister Harris: 2 jurisdictions long history of working together No government can respond on its own – need community organisations and mobilisation of civic society; Institute of Public Health can contribute knowledge; can we work together on joint messaging? Lots of information and noise need clear messages; social distancing is not ignoring.</p>
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	<p>Minister Swann: Good connections; legislation on an UK wide basis</p> <p>Discussion including:</p> <p>dFM: Political reality decision in one part of island impacts on the other; need to join up messages; concerned decision in the North have implications for a second peak on the island; concerns not party political; in public interest to be in step, agile and aligned.</p> <p>FM: Difference of approach; full and open co-operation; use right tools at the right time; implications of school closures.</p> <p>CMO NI; greater risk is small intimate gatherings - small numbers in close contact. Recognise uniqueness of islands; virus is “out and running”; balance benefit of restricting travel and constraint on supply chains eg O2 supplies; repurpose airlines for freight; role of children , targeted campaign in schools on respiratory health and hand washing; finely balanced judgement calls for Ministers; capacity to test increasing; need to continue to provide access for trauma and cancer treatments; risk of over reliance on data.</p> <p>SC: Can’t stop virus; possible cross-border approach to contact tracing; International and EU air travel impacted – fleets grounding; travel advice under review – risk of being unable to return; supply chain impact; goods need to continue to move; must change behaviours.</p> <p>LV: Concern that a travel ban feeds idea that “foreigners” are the problem. Different views on schools and on testing and contact tracing</p> <p>DK, JM dFM – Do we need to move in lockstep? Movement of children N/S; need to avoid community hysteria; need joined up comms and actions; role of GAA and IRFU; don’t want fortress Ireland.</p> <p>CMO ROI: Changed case definitions for travel – focus on symptoms; virus can cluster – localised peaks</p> <p>SH: action proportionate for jurisdictions now. Concerns that govt decision to protect populations but won’t be effective; Change behaviour to protect at risk</p>
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	<p>population; longer we can keep testing – will detect and understand prevalence; contact tracing to continue as long as possible.</p> <p>RS: Same tools being used – deploy at right time; message is key need to reduce public hysteria.</p> <p>SC: focus on areas where already good co-operation Soften areas of difference It will get worse – reassure that cooperation on practical basis underway All have the same objective - just different timelines. Communication plan would be helpful.</p>
ACTION POINTS:	Make press statement following meeting Meet again - virtually

**COVID-19 NORTH SOUTH MEETING
14 MARCH 2020
NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH**

DRAFT PROGRAMME

ARRIVALS

10:30-10:50 Irish Government Ministers and officials arrive
(An Taoiseach, Tánaiste, Minister for Health, CMO and Deputy CMO)
First Minister and deputy First Minister and officials arrive
(Minister for Health, Junior Minister, CMO and officials)
Greeted by Joint Secretaries and escorted to delegation rooms/
conference room

MEETING

11:00 Meeting- NSMC conference room

12:30 Meeting concludes- First Minister, deputy First Minister, Taoiseach, Tánaiste, Minister Harris, CMOs escorted to media opportunity.

MEDIA OPPORTUNITY

12.45 Press conference- (NSMC press room)

Lunch available in NSMC

COVID-19 North South meeting

14 March 2020

NSMC Joint Secretariat offices, Armagh

DRAFT

Meeting Agenda

- 1. Introductory Remarks**
- 2. Briefing by Dr Tony Holohan and Dr Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officers**
- 3. Exchange of views on situation facing the island as a result of Covid-19**
- 4. Confirmation of ongoing cooperation and communication regarding the virus**
- 5. Agreement of key messages**