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**Subject:** Official sensitive: note of Ministerial call 17 December

## Official sensitive: note of Ministerial call 17 December

The First Minister updated on media reports of 11,000 missing Covid test results in Wales. These were inaccurate: Public Health Wales announced last week that there would be maintenance conducted on their systems and there would be an impact on when test results would be reported.

METNW updated on plans for business support in the coming weeks. £110 million has been added to the business support package to bring the funding to £270m. Good progress is being made in issuing the funds to businesses. Supply chain businesses are also able to apply for the funding if they can demonstrate a 40% impact on their turnover. The sector specific fund will not be opened to non-essential retail. This support was developed for the hospitality sector in recognition that they were losing trade at the time of the year they are the busiest - non-essential retail has been able to trade as previously in the pre-Christmas period. If businesses received support in the firebreak, they will automatically receive support this time, if they did not, they need to register for the funding. There will be a review in January of support required moving forward, in line with the mid-way review for the Job Retention Scheme. Support being provided for Welsh businesses is more generous than in England -

an average hospitality business in Wales will receive £13,000 compared to between £4,000 and £6,000 in England.

CGMET updated on the UK Internal Market Bill. The Government had offered one amendment referring to Common Frameworks on the face of the Bill, but the Secretary of State is still given a power to decide whether to apply market access principles. Speeches in the Commons referred to working with Devolved Administrations, but no further amendments were brought forward. The Bill was passed and may get Royal Assent today. As the Bill was in its final form yesterday, the Pre-Action Protocol letter was issued as previously agreed. A Written Statement was also issued. UKG have 14 days to respond. Work will progress on preparing the claim.

The First Minister updated on 4 nations developments since yesterday afternoon's Ministerial meeting. Scotland's position had slightly altered from the morning call with CDL yesterday, when they were keen to formally change arrangements. In that call, Michael Gove had sought the maximum possible agreement, but recognised that there would be differences in each jurisdiction to reflect their particular circumstances. The FM had suggested changing the arrangements UK wide to enable two households to meet rather than three, but this was not agreed as a formal change. The Scottish Government made the move to two households later in the day (along with encouraging people to meet for one day only and no overnight stays), although they intend for this to be in guidance and not regulations.

A draft joint statement was prepared, that in the end Northern Ireland were unable to sign up to. This issued yesterday evening on behalf of the Welsh Government, Scottish Government and UK Government. (copy attached).

In communicating the position, the FM said we should emphasise that there was agreement on 95% of the issues, with perhaps 5% divergence, including our taking a different route in regulating for 2 households. By highlighting the agreement as a significant success, he was hopeful that the downside of divergence would be mitigated.

The First Minister noted that Ministers will need to meet next week if the negotiations with the EU are concluded. In that case, the Senedd will also be recalled to debate the outcome. The First Minister will consider what meetings are known to be needed next week and circulate a note to colleagues.

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