



Home Office

Home Secretary

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Dear colleague,

Following the recent announcement of the new public health measures to be introduced at the UK border to protect against a second wave of coronavirus infections, I am writing to you as members of the GPS-MIG to provide details of a change in approach that we have collectively agreed.

You will remember that we had to date agreed that journeys from within the Common Travel Area (CTA) should be exempt from the requirement to provide locator details and self-isolate. Whilst we had originally worked on the basis that only journeys across the land border would be exempt, a wider exemption covering all journeys from within the CTA regardless of route was supported by Northern Ireland Executive (NIE) and the Welsh Government in particular. Noting that this was not an exemption required by CTA arrangements, which are about an individual's ability to move freely within the CTA from an immigration perspective, we concluded that this was a simpler policy and more straightforward to communicate.

Whilst DA Ministers had supported the approach at the time, including at a GPS-MIG meeting last month, the NIE has subsequently agreed to legislate so that anyone who has been overseas in the last 14 days would be covered by the new restrictions, even if they travelled from within the CTA (including across the land border). Whilst this would be out of step with Ireland's own exemption from their advisory self-isolation scheme for journeys across the land border, NIE are concerned that a similar exemption would undermine the overall policy intent, given a significant number of arrivals into Northern Ireland come via Ireland.

Having reconsidered the approach in England to exempting journeys from within the CTA, we have decided that we should mirror the broad principles of NIE's approach, so that those arriving in England on a journey from Ireland, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man would be required to self-isolate in England if they had entered these jurisdictions, on a journey starting outside of the CTA, within the last 14 days. The period of self-isolation in England would be whatever is required to take them to 14 days from the time they arrived within the CTA – including any time spent in one of the other Devolved Administrations. It has also been agreed that individuals should be required to provide locator details if they are subject to self-isolation as otherwise we will have no means to enforce their self-isolation. None of the above would have any impact on individuals who have been within the CTA for more than 14 days nor were already subject to one of the separate cohort-specific exemptions – those exemptions would continue to apply.

In light of the NIE's decision, there is agreement that this is now the right policy to adopt as it would prevent journeys from Ireland to England becoming a way for individuals to then travel to other parts of the UK including Northern Ireland without needing to comply. At the same time, the headline exemption for journeys within the CTA would remain - this change would only impact on those who had entered the CTA and travelled on to England within 14 days of their arrival. Nor do I expect this change to result in an increase in immigration controls on arrivals into the CTA – I am clear that we must protect the fundamental principle that there are no routine immigration controls on such journeys.

I am also writing to the Devolved Administrations in parallel to inform them of this change, and to encourage them to take the same approach. We expect Wales and Scotland to broadly follow suit – it would be surprising if they wanted to retain the exemption and therefore become a vulnerability in the overall UK approach. NIE are still considering the details of their approach – they may decide that the 14 days should start from the point an individual departs rather than enters the CTA, which could in theory include some travelling time not in self-isolation. It is also not clear whether they intend to mandate the provision of locator details on such journeys. Officials will continue to work with counterparts in the Devolved Administrations to encourage an approach that is aligned as possible. Officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will also engage with counterparts in Ireland ahead of this change becoming public.

Government officials are working constructively with your officials to prepare a handling plan for the next phase of the process: the laying of the regulations in Parliament, which we expect to take place early this week. At that point, our change in approach relating to the CTA will become apparent and we will need to have a clear narrative in place.

**Personal Data**

**Rt Hon Priti Patel MP**