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Subject: [READOUT]: Quad / 1st Feb

Date: Tue, 2 Feb 2021 10:49:25 +0000

Morning all,

Please see below for a readout of yesterday's Quad. SoS had to take an urgent call last minute, and so Min Walker deputised, though he joined the call approx 10 minutes late. There was quite a bit of friction between Simon Coveney and FM/Minister Swann on data sharing, but both he and Minister Donnelly committed to securing adequate resolution to this ongoing issue by the end of the week.

Thanks,

Name Redacted

Quad 1st February 2021 read out

Present:

First Minister	FM
Minister Donnelly	SD
Minister Swann	MoH
Deputy First Minister	dFM
Steven Coveney	SC
Minister Walker	MW

Stephen Donnelly

Expressed regret at what has been a very tough January with a very serious spike in cases that translated into hospital admissions and ICU. At least $\frac{2}{3}$ are the UK variant.

'Stay at home' measures are working, with the 'R' rate now between 0.4 and 0.7. Moving forward, the next question is whether or not the benefits we see will begin to flatline. If so, the approach switches to understanding where these cases are happening, and where we can keep pushing to knock the virus down further. The vaccination programme is going well, with Ireland moving onto the over 85s shortly.

Simon Coveney

On the issue of international travel, IG have been under pressure to change strategy to seal off ROI. Their assessment is that this just isn't possible or deliverable.

IG are looking at measures including 14 day quarantine for those travelling from high risk areas in state provided facilities, though this is legally and practically difficult.

On the North-South element, IG have been attempting to secure a data sharing agreement so NI will get data of anyone who comes into NI via Dublin, and likewise will reciprocate data for those coming from other parts of the UK into Belfast then through to ROI. In the meantime, anyone

travelling into Dublin fills out a part passenger locator form and then are sent a text that requests they fill out a UK passenger locator form too. Until a data sharing agreement is agreed, this is the next best option.

Minister Swann

Expressed concern that this adds further confusion, given previous assurances that there were no hurdles to getting this secured.

Simon Coveney

Clarified that there is a need to find a legal way around sharing this data. IG are also going to initiate more checks on roads to ensure people stay within 5km radius of their home, including monitoring essential cross-border travel.

Minister Walker

Implored continued collaboration across UKG, IG & NIE to fully resolve data sharing.

Simon Coveney

Clarified that there is no political impediment, only legal clarification. He confirmed he would update the group on progress as soon as possible.

dFM

Welcomed broad alignment across GB and NI/Ireland. This period of suppression should be used as an opportunity to fully clarify a 'two island' approach to international travel.

Simon Coveney

IG public health officials predict that by the end of February, 200-400 people a day will be testing positive as opposed to approx 1000. When numbers fall domestically, international travel will become a much more sensitive issue. Given the extent of essential travel that takes place across the border, close cooperation is vital to ensure consistency.

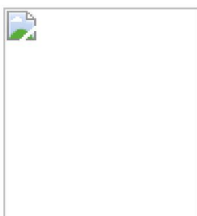
FM

Challenged SC on this point, making clear that NIE have been waiting on appropriate Belfast-Dublin data sharing for 10 months. In her view, NI is more vulnerable to travellers from ROI spreading the virus, whereas SC pointed to the numbers of Irish travellers going to ROI via Belfast for Christmas, despite travel ban put in place by IG.

Stephen Donnelly

Committed again to leading on a data-sharing resolution, which SC supported and also committed to.

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