

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

TEO FIRST MINISTER'S OFFICE MEETING NOTE

Date 27 January 2021

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		UKG 4 Nation Covid Call		
DATE:	27 January 2021 11:30 – 12:00	NOTE WRITTEN BY		Deirdre Griffith
VENUE:	virtual		Officials present	FM Adviser present: Philip Weir dFM Adviser present: Not known
LIST OF ATTENDEES INCLUDED: First Minister – Arlene Foster Deputy First Minister – Michelle O’Neill Junior Minister Lyons Junior Minister Kearney Robin Swann, Health Minister Dr Michael McBride, CMO Michael Gove, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster First Minister of Wales First Minister of Scotland Simon Ridley, UKG Chris Whitty, UK CMO Robin Walker, Minister of State, NIO Deirdre Griffith, FM PPS Donal Moran, dFM office Karen Pearson, TEO Other officials from SG/WG/UKG				
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:		Read out of meeting attached below.		
ACTION POINTS:		None for TEO		

Detailed official readout prepared by Karen Pearson

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CDL called with FM and dFM, SG and WG at 11.30 today. JMs, Minister Swann and Dr McBride attended.

Main points on travel:

- Home Secretary will make an announcement in Parliament this afternoon
- Stronger messages on travelling abroad for holidays. This is illegal and action will be taken
- Review of exemptions, and bearing down on those who exploit the exemptions
- Requirement to isolate in hotels from variant hotspot areas

PM will announce that schools will not return before 8 March.

CDL noted:

- More details to be worked out on travel
- Need to look at CTA. SofSNI in touch with Irish Government
- Official level discussions later today with Irish Government
- Close working needed with DAs on messaging and enforcement

Simon Ridley noted:

- Next steps on travel, pulling together a programme of work and hope to dock in with DAs
- Review of travel exemptions will be taken forward quickly

Prof Whitty noted:

- Discussions ongoing with CMOs

FM SG:

- Press conference at 12.30 and significant speculation in the media. Will say it doesn't go far enough
- Such small numbers doesn't go far enough to suppress importation or guard against people arriving from South Africa via other countries
- Will consider if SG needs to go further
- Would prefer comprehensive supervised quarantine from other countries
- Need to learn from last year's experience

FM WG:

- Relatively small direct interest via Cardiff airport
- Entry via ports is largely CTA
- Advice to WG FM is that the UKG steps are not enough
- Variants unknown will not be captured
- Need to understand timings for new arrangements
- Need to understand enforcement arrangements
- Welcome discussions on a 5 nations approach

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- Routes from South Africa and South America need to be understood. Need to look at Schipol in particular
- On education, is that for all of England?
- WG numbers are falling fast and priority is to get schools back. UKG announcement will have implications for industrial relations management with the teaching unions

FM:

- Very few direct flights to NI from the hotspots
- Concerned about arrivals in London and where people should quarantine. Need to understand this
- Welcome engagement with Irish Government. Welcome a 5 nations approach
- Continuing issue on the travel locator and data from Dublin. Need to resolve

dFM:

- Clarified that all people arriving from hot spot areas must quarantine unless exempt
- Welcome the two Islands approach
- Travel has never been appropriately resolved and this is the time to do that

Professor Whitty:

- Nothing to add, mainly policy points

Simon Ridley:

- Will work closely with Border Force on travelling through hubs. Ways to identify where people have travelled from and through
- Conversations with Irish Government important
- Will look at travel from London to NI and where people should self isolate
- Importance of increased genomic sequencing

CDL:

- Policy development will continue
- Looking for a coherent and secure approach
- Will reflect DA points in meetings this week
- Will take time to put the arrangements into place
- COVID O will prepare a timeline for actions which will be shared with DAs
- Ramping up messaging
- Aviation industry and hotels need to be ready. Discussions underway
- Each administration will have its own issues but a lot of common ground
- NIO will keep NIE informed of progress with Irish Government including on travel locator
- Hopeful that case numbers are falling. Vaccines will continue for the 4 top cohorts, aiming to complete 15 March – hence 8 March is the earliest date for schools to return

It looks likely that the 5.15 meeting today will go ahead, but to be confirmed

Meeting ends, 11.57

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