

**FROM: CHRIS STEWART  
DIRECTOR, EXECUTIVE SUPPORT & PROGRAMME FOR  
GOVERNMENT**

**DATE: 15 May 2020**

**TO: PS/FIRST MINISTER  
PS/DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**

**copy recipients listed below**

**COVID-19 – NOTE OF A TELECONFERENCE: FIRST MINISTER, DEPUTY FIRST  
MINISTER & AN TAOISEACH**

1. The Taoiseach outlined the decision of the Irish cabinet earlier today to move to phase 1 of the Irish recovery plan. This will involve, *inter alia*:
  - re-commencement of construction, manufacturing and other outdoor work from later today;
  - re-opening, from next Monday, of some larger retail premises, including garden centres, hardware stores and electrical shops;
  - groups of up to four people to be permitted to take exercise together, subject to social distancing and the extant 5km limit on travel from home;
  - re-commencement of outdoor '*socially-distanced*' sports such as golf and tennis.
2. The Taoiseach expressed the view that this would place Ireland and Northern Ireland on a broadly similar footing. He indicated that he was not aware of any significant cross-border enforcement or behavioural issues, and welcomed the close co-operation between the PSNI and an Garda Síochána.
3. The Taoiseach suggested that there would be benefit in building, at political level, on the existing close co-operation between the respective Chief Medical Officers. He suggested exploring the scope for co-operation in a number of areas, namely:
  - places of worship (noting that some church dioceses straddle the border);
  - schools and child-care facilities (on which Ireland is keen to learn from the Northern Ireland experience of keeping schools etc. open for the children of key workers); and
  - border controls.
4. On border controls, the Taoiseach indicated that a decision had been taken to make mandatory the 14 day period of quarantine for persons entering Ireland, subject to exceptions (including travel within the Common Travel Area). The Irish

Government expected this to be difficult to enforce, and it the measure will not be announced until the enforcement concerns had been resolved. The Taoiseach, recognising the importance and sensitivity of the Common Travel Area, planned to ask the UK Prime Minister for further details of his government's plans for similar controls.

5. The deputy First Minister welcomed the opportunity for further political dialogue on the matters suggested. She outlined the Executive's decisions and announcements from 14 May, and the planned announcement for Monday 18 May on proceeding to stage 1 of the Executive's 5 stage recovery strategy.
6. The First Minister noted that the matter of border controls is reserved, and suggested that it should be discussed at the '*quadrilateral*' meeting scheduled for 19 May. She referred to a discussion with church leaders scheduled for later today, to explore how the churches could ensure appropriate social distancing and prophylactic hygiene in the event that the Executive permits the opening of places of worship for private prayer.

Personal Data

**CHRIS STEWART**

**cc PS/Minister Lyons  
PS/Minister Kearney  
David Sterling  
Peter May  
Anthony Harbinson  
Karen Pearson  
Neill Jackson**