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**From:** [REDACTED]@fco.gov.uk  
**Sent:** 30/01/2020 02:39:47  
**To:** Sterling, David [david.sterling@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk]  
**CC:** TEO HOCS (DS) [hocs@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk]; [REDACTED]@nics.gov.uk  
**Subject:** RE: Wellbeing

Thanks for asking David.

The virus has spread to Beijing with 111 confirmed cases and 1 fatality as at 08.00 hrs this morning. The total number of confirmed cases in China is 7,736 and 170 deaths so rising by 1,000 and 1,500 cases a day and ratio of fatalities also increasing.

Internal travel in China is now severely restricted. In Beijing all public places (restaurants, shops, bars, tourist sites) are closed and health checks going in to apartments blocks is now compulsory as well as wearing masks. The Chinese new year holiday has been extended so businesses and government offices, unless working on the virus issues, are closed. The embassy is now operating on a crisis status with only essential staff coming in. Lisa and I have volunteered to help with the crisis team, (lessons to be learned here). I am also in contact with the Irish embassy.

BA and most international carriers have suspended flights to China and all others are restricted.

The government here is trying to contain and control the virus and I think they are doing a great job considering we are talking about stopping around 80 million people from travelling at the most important family time of the year. The advice is everywhere to wear a mask and maintain high standards of hygiene, alcohol wash at every entrance and used regularly. We would give this advice out at flu season at home every year so perhaps people will be a bit more conscious of this because of the Coronavirus. A number of 1,000 bed hospitals have been built in Hubei (one of our partner provinces) some of them in less than 10 days.

The roads and streets here are empty more from following advice than fear or panic but it does also help to create that surreal effect like the film "28 Days later". So it is important to keep the rational head on that although it is over 7,000 cases, that is against a total population of 1.4 billion. Looking at some of the media reports, whilst it is a serious situation and people are concerned, some of the stories have been blown out of proportion and panic can sometimes spread quicker than the virus.

The next 10 days to 2 weeks will be crucial to see if the number of cases go down and ratio to fatalities also goes down. My guess is that we are likely to be in a complete lockdown until mid February at the earliest but could be to end of March, based on conversations with some people who were here during the SARs crisis. One of the options we have to consider in the crisis team is evacuation so there are contingency plans for that. If that happened and people went back to the UK it would still involve a 14 day quarantine period for everyone. (Not an option I would want!). Eventually and hopefully it will pass and my main concern is if they run out of wine for [REDACTED] I am in deep trouble.

Best wishes

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Sterling, David <David.Sterling@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 29 January 2020 17:30  
**To:** [REDACTED]@fco.gov.uk

**Cc:** TEO HOCS (DS) <HOCS@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk>

**Subject:** Wellbeing

NR

Just checking in to see that all's well with you and NR It looks like the coronavirus outbreak is not yet contained.

I'd be interested to know how it's affecting you in Beijing.

Best wishes

David

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