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**From:** TEO HOCS (DS) [HOCS@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk]  
**Sent:** 17/03/2020 13:44:54  
**To:** Stewart, Chris (TEO) [chris.stewart@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk]  
**CC:** [Name Redacted]@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk]; TEO HOCS (DS) [HOCS@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk]; Rooney, Bernie [Bernie.Rooney@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk]  
**Subject:** RE: NIO call - Feedback

Chris

I had a similar conversation with Mark Larmour. He emphasised it would be little more than a conference call designed to show the nations are "joined-up". I expressed similar reservations about the value of this and the distraction it will cause no matter how minimal a thing it is.

Interestingly he said that Stephen McGlade was very keen on the idea. I'm dubious about that and will mention to Stephen tomorrow.

David

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**From:** Stewart, Chris (TEO) [mailto:chris.stewart@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk]  
**Sent:** 17 March 2020 13:41  
**To:** TEO HOCS (DS) <HOCS@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk>; Stewart, Chris (TEO) <chris.stewart@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk>; Rooney, Bernie <Bernie.Rooney@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk>; Sterling, David <David.Sterling@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** [Name Redacted]@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk]; [Name Redacted]@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk]; [Name Redacted]@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk  
**Subject:** RE: NIO call - Feedback

David

I had a useful call with [NR] on the BIC suggestion, and advised him candidly that we see little prospect of it adding value, and that it would add to the DoH workload.

[NR] explained that SoS remains very keen, and that it would be a 'nations' teleconference rather than a full blown BIC. The objective would be not only to resolve differences here, but also to improve East West communication – NIO feeling a bit put out a not having been notified by Irish colleagues of last night's travel announcements.

I left it by re-iterating our concerns and my assumption of what the DoH reaction would be; and suggested that I could see value only if it was part of a broader 4 nations discussion of 'how and when to close schools (unlikely).

C

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**From:** TEO HOCS (DS) [mailto:HOCS@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk]  
**Sent:** 17 March 2020 10:08  
**To:** Stewart, Chris (TEO) <chris.stewart@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk>; Rooney, Bernie <Bernie.Rooney@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk>; Sterling, David <David.Sterling@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk>  
**Cc:** [Name Redacted]@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk]; [Name Redacted]@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk  
**Subject:** RE: NIO call - Feedback

Agreed

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**From:** Stewart, Chris (TEO) [<mailto:chris.stewart@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk>]

**Sent:** 17 March 2020 10:03

**To:** Rooney, Bernie <[Bernie.Rooney@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Bernie.Rooney@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk)>; Sterling, David <[David.Sterling@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:David.Sterling@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk)>

**Cc:** [Name Redacted] <[\[Name Redacted\]@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:[Name Redacted]@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk)>; [Name Redacted] <[\[Name Redacted\]@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:[Name Redacted]@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: NIO call - Feedback

Bernie

Thank you.

The proposal for a BIC meeting makes little sense. I fail to see how it would add any value, and it would merely distract CMO and others from priority tasks.

C

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**From:** Rooney, Bernie [<mailto:Bernie.Rooney@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk>]

**Sent:** 17 March 2020 09:51

**To:** 'Stewart, Chris (TEO)' <[chris.stewart@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:chris.stewart@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk)>; McBride, Michael <[Michael.McBride@health-ni.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Michael.McBride@health-ni.gsi.gov.uk)>; Sterling, David <[David.Sterling@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:David.Sterling@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk)>

**Cc:** [Name Redacted] <[\[Name Redacted\]@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:[Name Redacted]@executiveoffice-ni.gsi.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** NIO call - Feedback

Feedback

1. M. Larmour advised that publicly Executive holding differences well - behind scenes significant tension.
2. Ireland likely to publish draft Bill later today - likely to attract interest
3. Proposal for BIC involving Chief Medical Officers
4. Proposal for BIC Meeting - - coming under pressure to arrange one ASAP. - Ireland up for any fora that is VIRTUAL. Clear that it is not possible for Ministers to meet in person.
5. [NR] commented that -NIO want to be seen to 'lean in' more on NI issues.
6. Cabinet Office re structuring - currently has 4 groups operating

- 1 Health [NR]
- 2 Economic - Stephen Rusk lead
3. International [NR]
- 4 Public Sector - not clear who is leading

Stephen Rusk reported - has spoken to officials this am but giving them some space

- Executive - DfE preparing advice for Executive consideration this week focus on macro, tourism, hospitality sector and small businesses

- Executive considering what can be done on business rates.  
Nio commented that they wish to keep a close eye on this.

**NR** asked if NIO is sufficiently hooked into HMT. **NR** advised that SofS needs to be closer linked into meetings with HMT.  
Stephen Rusk asked to escalated any issues that may emerge with HMT.

#### Legislation

**NR** asked for update on next steps.  
It was reported that a further draft was escalated yesterday evening. NI now being included in some provisions that previously hadn't been.  
Not much offered here.

#### Resources

**NR** advised that communications are moving at such a pace hard to keep up.  
Covid-19 general email address has been set up.

Cabinet moving to a thematic approach (as above). Need to have central point of collation to maintain a strategic approach.  
Working from home has an implication. Clarification for staff what that actually means is tricky and clarification of business needs v staff is an issue.

**NR** asked for update on resources for Hub and sight of letter issued by Cris Stewart to staff. I confirmed that I was here with staff, letter had issued, staff were coming on Wednesday and that all the wheels were in motion.

**NR** highlighted ;

**NR** to keep an eye on border issues - important issue,  
- link comms team into everything  
- Cabinet Office has radically re-organised - NIO has put a liaison officer in the Cabinet Office to share information - not a

#### Comms

**NR** lead on Executive Comms. - invited to link in on the 9.15 am call.  
- what is the right method of Comms from NIO to NI Hub, liaison officers will be in the Hub. Needs to be wider than through Chris and Bernie - need to liaise on policy issues. [Action: Br to advise]

Four Nations official call today needs to be at senior level.

Note of meeting will follow.

Bernie

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([www.blackberry.com](http://www.blackberry.com))