

Northern
Ireland
Office

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READOUT | SoS, FM & dFM - 28 April

1 message

SOS Lewis <sos.lewis@nio.gov.uk>

29 April 2020 at 09:32

To: PS SOS <ps.sos@nio.gov.uk>, SpAds PS <spads.ps@nio.gov.uk> **NR** @nio.gov.uk **NR** @nio.gov.uk, Covid 19 <covid-19@nio.gov.uk>, Senior Leadership Team <slt@nio.gov.uk>, Deputy Directors <Deputy_Directors@nio.gov.uk>, PSI <psi@nio.gov.uk> **NR** @nio.gov.uk, Simeon Hanfling <simeon.hanfling@nio.gov.uk> **NR** @nio.gov.uk

Actions:

- **Covid-19 team** - please can you follow up with DHSC on the track and trace app and find out when the NI Exec will begin to be engaged on the details and also with Cabinet Office to find out where things are with the consideration of the face mask issue.
- **Stephen R** - **NR** is in touch on the NW medical college issue.

READOUT - SOS, FM & dFM - 28 April**Attendees:**

Secretary of State
First Minister
deputy First Minister
Mark Larmour, NIO
Madeleine Alessandri, NIO
Ciarán Hayes, NIO,
NR NIE
Mark Goodfellow, NIE
Oliver Legard, NIO SpAd
Phillip Weir, FM SpAd

SoS opened by commending the collaborative work between NI Executive and UK Government officials on recent issues such as the ferries support package. He asked for an update on the North West medical college.

FM thanked the Secretary of State for the work on the ferries and said she understood teams were working on hauliers. In terms of the North West medical school, she updated on a slight issue around the inclusive future fund and NI Executive match funding. She said they was hoping to reach conclusions on those issues soon.

She was keen to hear the upcoming engagement planned with the NI Executive around the review in w/c 4 May and stated that they want to engage with the UK Government around the next COBR and decision point. She flagged rising concern about the increase in traffic in Northern Ireland and said that the FM and dFM delivered a harsh message on not relenting the lockdown at Monday's press conference.

SoS said he was speaking with colleagues in the Cabinet Office about the process. He said he expected a Cabinet on Thursday with a look ahead to COBR next week. He pointed to the Quad meeting on Thursday. He promised to keep FM and dFM updated on what to expect over the coming days.

dFM looked ahead to Quad on Thursday and said we must look at moving together. E/W and N/S must keep communicating. She thanked the Secretary of State for his help on the ferries issue and asked about hauliers. She raised the 4 nations approach on supply for testing and PPE, and said it was important they continue pressing the point regarding NI's needs. dFM finally turned to what post-covid looks like and NI's economic recovery.

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SoS said he was keen to have a discussion on the economy. He said the key was looking at this holistically rather than in a piecemeal way - he reiterated it was a very important piece of work. He said that different sectors would need different approaches, he used the example of social distancing in the hospitality context and whether it would work in restaurants who may not find their business viable if adhering to such measures.

FM agreed that conversations must be had with different sectors. She said that in terms of planning for recovery, the NI Executive have not published anything yet, but said it would be useful to get an understanding of the direction of travel for easing measures and the next phase of the response. She stressed the need for a collaborative effort. FM pointed that Scotland advising people to wear face masks will put pressure on NI to follow. Finally, she asked about the NHS track and trace app.

SoS said he understood that NI would be taking part in the track and trace app and said that he will follow up on the details of the health app and when the NI Executive will be engaged on the detail.

dFM said that the face mask issue was a question of public confidence rather than science, but acknowledged that the pressures on PPE must be balanced.

SoS outlined discussions at Cabinet last week regarding face masks. He said no decision was taken there but he would ask officials to seek an update on where the discussion has got to with the scientific advisory group.

FM said that she was happy to keep these conversations going and thanked SoS for being accessible.

dFM agreed and said that she was happy to meet regularly in this format.

SoS proposed meeting on a regular weekly basis starting this Friday.

FM, dFM agreed.

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NR

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