

**FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER | CALL WITH SOSNI - THURSDAY 25 JUNE, 1415**

**STEER**

A catch up call with the FM and dFM. We imagine that these meetings will begin to rapidly shift away from a Covid-19 focus and move to address more 'business as usual' issues, such as NDNA implementation. It is likely that this meeting will replace the Quad as your formal set piece meeting involving the Executive. We judge that it is helpful to maintain a weekly meeting for the foreseeable future - offering value in strengthening relationships and also functioning as a problem-solving forum.

On Covid-19, we expect discussions to focus on recovery, following the publication of Northern Ireland's Economic Recovery plan on 17 June and recent Executive announcements to further ease lockdown restrictions. The Prime Minister's statement on Tuesday 23 June, introducing a reduction in social distancing on 4 July in England, is the first such move in the UK. This is likely to be raised in today's Executive meeting. It may also be worth mentioning the strong case the NIO has been making to secure Film & TV exemptions for Northern Ireland in the next review of Border exemptions. We have been lobbying hard to secure this, due to the importance for the NI economy and the future of the industry in NI. A decision is due to be reached very shortly [today] at a ministerial meeting. You may also wish to ask for an update on the Test and Trace app which NI confirmed it was developing last week, particularly given the recently announced delay to the UK derivative.

**Commented [1]:** add details of meeting once known

**SPEAKING POINTS**

- Great to meet again, really welcome our weekly rhythm of engagement in this format.
- As the Covid-19 operational response winds down, perhaps this format should become our primary forum of formal engagement? I imagine that Quad meetings will start to move away from a regular bi-monthly meeting and more towards an adhoc basis.

**I&S**

**COVID-19**

- I am very pleased to hear that the number of cases in Northern Ireland continue to reduce and remain low, and for the first time since lockdown, no new cases were reported over two 24 hour periods in the past week.
- With the R number under control and being closely monitored, I know we are all thinking about economic recovery. I welcome the announcement on Monday signalling a further relaxation of the restrictions in Northern Ireland, including allowing groups of up to six to gather indoors.

#### *2 metre social distancing guidelines*

- I understand there could be further discussion to reduce the current 2m social distancing guideline in NI, following the PM's announcement on Tuesday. The change to the position in England, like the rest of the UK follows the science to achieve the best outcome.
- I would welcome any update on the position of the Executive on this.
- I am keen to ensure that the Executive and UKG continue to be joined up and informed of any changes being made.

#### *Economic recovery*

- I welcome the Economy Minister's Rebuilding a Stronger Economy paper, and the recent guidance published by Tourism NI and the Department for the Economy this week on working safely in the hospitality and tourism sectors following reopening of businesses.
- These documents will provide clarity and direction for local businesses as we emerge from the restrictions and provide a platform to move quickly to a position of economic stability.
- Together, with collaboration between business, the UK Government and the NI Executive, we can help the NI economy to recover and thrive.
- My officials have begun work on what post COVID-19 recovery looks like - and work on this will continue in tandem with the Executive including to ensure that our economic strategies for NI align.
- In doing so, we will continue to work collaboratively with the Executive, businesses and local partners to get the economy back up and running, laying the foundations for a stable and sustainable economic future.

#### *Transport/Connectivity*

- I was delighted that UKG provided a very generous financial package of temporary support for airlines/airports and ferries in order to maintain crucial GB-NI connectivity during the peak of the pandemic.
- [IF PRESSED] I understand there may be further requests for UKG support as some of these financial packages come to an end. It is crucial that the Executive considers their long term plans if further requests are made and of course I would be happy to support any reasonable requests.

#### *Border exemptions for NI Film & TV Industry*

- I understand how vital NI's Film & TV Industry is to the NI economy and we have made a very strong case to include Film & TV workers in the next round of exemptions, due for review by 29 June.
- We have emphasised the success of the NI Film & TV industry, the potential £45 million cost to the NI economy if the high profile projects due to start shooting pull out, and the recent £45m investment in Belfast Harbour studios, highlighting the sustainability of the industry post Game of Thrones.
- Border exemptions will be discussed today at a ministerial meeting with CDL which I understand DAs are invited to. We will continue to do everything we can to support you on this issue.

**Commented [2]:** update when we know timings as meeting may have happened before this call

#### *Test and Trace - Manual contact tracing and COVID-19 apps*

- I am pleased to see that our officials are continuing to work closely on coordinating efforts to ensure that there is a consistent approach to cross border contact tracing, to data sharing and to the proposed new metrics for publishing this data, as we move towards releasing more granular contact tracing data.
- In parallel, work also continues on developing a contact tracing app which will complement the manual contact tracing service. As you will be aware, we will now be taking forward a solution that will merge the successes of the UK pilot and the Google/Apple variant and address identified weaknesses - and we remain committed to rolling out a contact tracing app as soon as possible.
- I know that work is also ongoing to develop an NI contact tracing app solution, and I would welcome an update on how this is progressing.

#### **Background:**

- Though not officially announced, we understand that NI plans to roll out its own contact tracing app (based on Rol's decentralised model) whilst also joining the UKG app.
- The overarching aim is that NI citizens will have the option to download either the NI app or the UKG app, or both. Again, whilst not officially announced, we understand that the NIE's public messaging around this will be to:
  - Encourage NI citizens living in border regions and/or that travel frequently to Rol, to use the NI app (which will be compatible with the Rol app); and
  - Encourage NI citizens who are more likely to travel/interact with GB, to download the UKG app.
- However the public messaging will also be clear that this is an individual choice and NI citizens are also able to download both apps (which has been tested and so far no issues encountered).
- NIO officials are continuing to monitor these new developments in both the digital and manual contact tracing space, and ensure continued coordination with NICS and engagement with IE.

*If raised - DA engagement with UKG*

- I know DA First Ministers spoke to CDL Tuesday and last Friday when he updated you on UKG thinking on next steps and briefed you on the PM's announcement yesterday.
- It is vital to maintain the strong engagement seen during the peak of the crisis and ensure that we collaborate and coordinate.

**Background:**

- DAs have asked what will replace the MIGs and why they aren't routinely attending Covid Operations Committee meetings.
- We expect a call between CDL and DA First Ministers to happen on Friday and for this to become a regular touchpoint. We also expect a letter to go from CDL to DA First Ministers outlining all of the cross UK ministerial engagement currently in place.

*If raised - International students coming to Northern Ireland*

- I understand how important it is for NI universities to be able to welcome their international cohort this coming academic year, and the significant financial impact if these students cannot safely make the journey.
- Minister Walker is currently looking at this issue and we will do everything we can to help.

#### **NDNA IMPLEMENTATION**

**I&S**

#### **VICTIMS' PAYMENTS**

*General approach*

**I&S**

**I&S**

**PLANNING POWER**

**I&S**

**HONOURS**

**I&S**

**I&S**

**PARADING**

*General approach*

**I&S**

**I&S**

**BONFIRES**

**I&S**