

FIRST MINISTER & DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER CALL/ MEETING

I&S

- On **Covid** you may want to stress that the Government is working with DAs on this as cases fall across the UK and work continues around compliance. You may want to mention that you are considering arranging a **Quad meeting** with FM, dFM and the Irish Foreign Affairs Minister (and possibly health ministers) for either early next week or the week after following the Executive review meeting on Tuesday 16 March.

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LINES TO TAKE

NORTHERN IRELAND PROTOCOL

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ABORTION - NEW REGULATIONS AND POTENTIAL DIRECTION

Irrelevant & Sensitive

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COVID-19

Travel / managed isolation

- I would appreciate an update on Northern Ireland's approach to managed isolation and any key issues that remain to be resolved?
- *[If asked about expanding red-list]* I understand that this will be discussed this week. DA attended Covid-O meeting but I am happy to see if there is any detail that I can share on this issue.

Current Situation / Exit Roadmap

- I am happy to see Northern Ireland move into the first phase of recovery, moving cautiously away from lockdown restrictions. Is there anything that I can do to assist communicating this message?
- I am aware that officials from across the Four Nations are continuing to work closely together to assess possibilities for alignment and am happy to facilitate any helpful discussions.

Quad

- With the next NI review on 16 March, I want to arrange a meeting between us, the Irish Foreign Affairs Minister and both NI and Irish Health Ministers to discuss the next steps for restrictions in NI.
- I suggest that we have this meeting in the next few weeks and my office will be in touch to arrange this.

JCVI advice on vaccines [if raised]

- I welcome the Joint Committee on Vaccination and immunisation (JCVI) advice on Phase 2 of the UK's COVID-19 vaccination programme and am keen that we continue to work towards a joint statement supporting the strategy for phase 2.

Vaccine certification [if raised]

- I am keen that we continue to work towards a Four Nations joint approach on vaccine certification.

Military Aid to Civil Authorities (MACA) [if raised]

- I understand that DoH are considering a new MACA request and I will work with the Minister for the Armed Forces to ensure that the UK Government provides support to healthcare capacity in Northern Ireland where possible.
- I am happy to see that the previous MACA request was carried out successfully and reduced some of the intense pressure on healthcare in NI.

Data transfer [if raised]

- I recognise the need to resolve this issue urgently and support the ongoing coordination between the UK Government, the NI Executive and the Irish Government.
- (If pressed) The UK Government is facilitating discussions on this issue through the Northern Ireland Office, the Cabinet Office and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.
- The Irish Government has acknowledged the urgency and importance of the issue. I will continue to facilitate discussions and am keen to see a solution reached. I understand that the interim solution put in place is temporary and a data sharing agreement must be reached, especially as new strains of Covid-19 emerge.

COMMUNITY RENEWAL FUND & LEVELLING UP FUND

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INDEPENDENT FISCAL COUNCIL

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NI CENTENARY PROGRAMME

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CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

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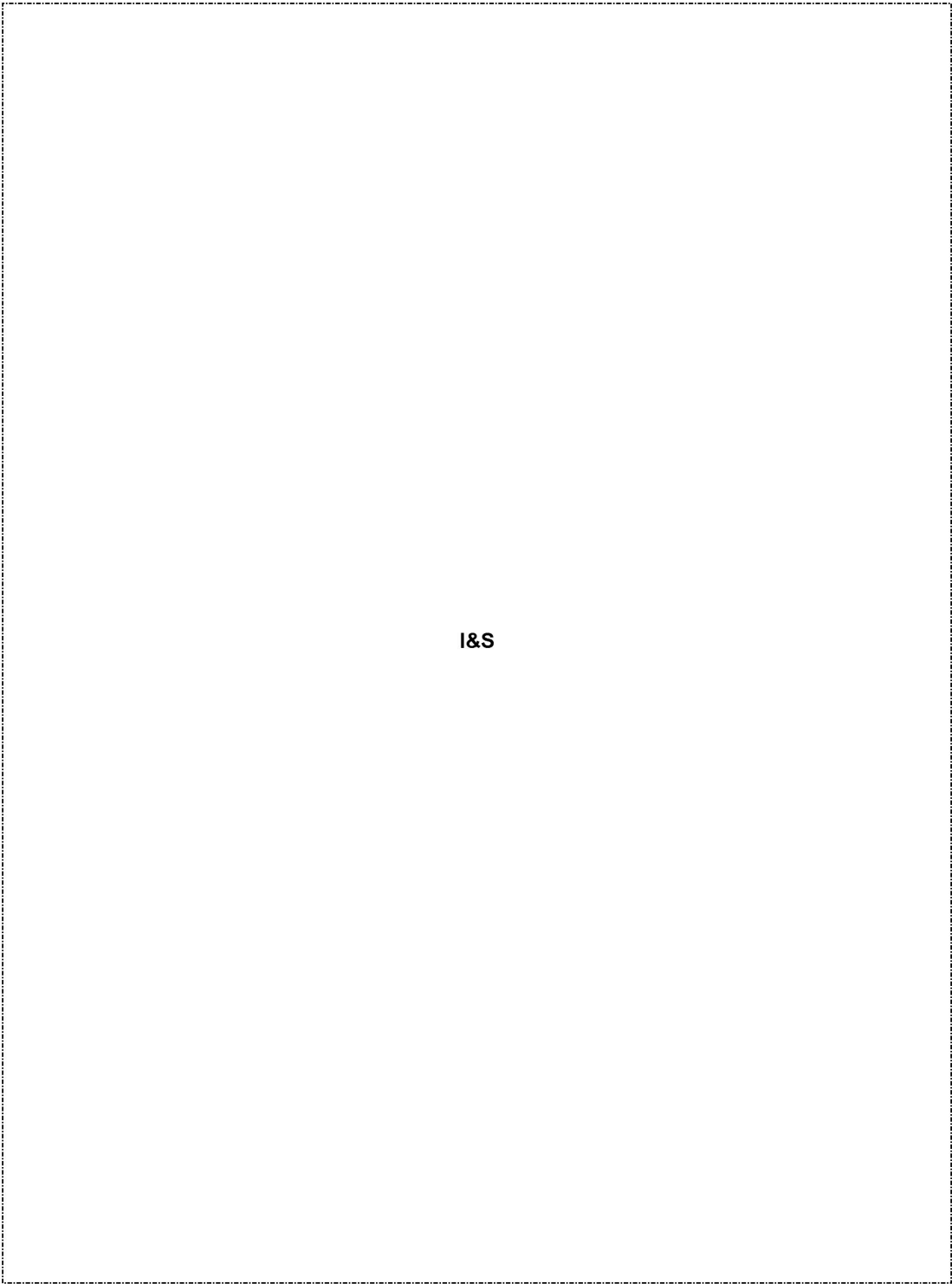
[If Raised - LEGACY/ VICTIMS' PAYMENTS]

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Protocol and Transition Period



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COVID-19

Data sharing

FM and Robin Swann have repeatedly stated their frustration at slow progress with the data sharing situation. An interim solution is in place whereby Ireland are texting those transiting from Dublin to NI, reminding them to fill in the UK Passenger Locator Form, but until the data sharing agreement drafted by DoH is signed, this will continue to be raised. Irish officials are currently considering the draft.

Military Aid to Civil Authorities (MACA) [if raised]

- We expect to receive a MACA request for military support this week from the Chief Nursing Office. The Ministry of Defence will be supporting a request from Northern Ireland's Department of Health to help relieve the extreme pressure the health services are under.

Vaccines Deployment

- As of Friday 05/03, NI had administered 596,860 vaccines, of which over 556,721 were first doses (29% of the population) and 40,139 second doses.

Vaccines Prioritisation

- DHSC are currently waiting for final advice on phase 2, and are looking to agree a joint statement between the DAs this week supporting JCVI advice for phase 2.

Vaccines Certifications

- DA engagement on certification continues this week with UKG ministers' keen to reach a Four Nation joint approach.

COVID-19 Rates [as of 019 February March]

- The COVID-19 7-day rate in Northern Ireland now stands at 63.7, down from 84.9142 last week. This represents a significant decrease from the January peak of last month's unprecedented rise in case rates (which peaked at 664.7 on Mon 4th Jan).

Pressure on Healthcare

- Numbers in NI hospitals continue to fall but there is a further MACA request anticipated as DoH seeks to maintain momentum.

Economic Support

Financial support:

- The Budget provided £410m in Barnett consequential for the Northern Ireland Executive.
- It is for the NI Executive to use this additional funding, which comes on top of substantial additional funding last year, to supplement UK wide support.
- This is new funding, in addition to the £918m announced at the Spending Review for 2021/22.

Business support:

- The Budget extended the operation of the furlough scheme for an additional 5 months, until the end of September.
- The Self-Employed Income Support Scheme has been extended to the end of July. 2019/20 tax returns can be included from the 4th SEISS grant;

Centenary

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Community Renewal Fund and Levelling Up Fund

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Victims' Payments

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