

FIRST MINISTER & DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER MEETING

Wednesday 3 February 2021

STEERS

- You may wish to apologise for being unable to attend the Quad meeting on Monday night with Minister Coveney, FM, dFM and the health ministers.

COVID

- With continuing pressure on healthcare in the UK and Ireland, this is an opportunity to ensure that each jurisdiction is in close contact with one another and that there is alignment where possible.
- You should ask the FM & dFM to provide a brief update on where things currently stand, ahead of the next review point on 18 February and the Executive's recent discussion on education.
- You should ask the FM & dFM to provide an update on the Executive's position on hotel quarantines, whether they expect to align with UKG policy. You should encourage ongoing engagement on this issue.
- You may wish to express your appreciation for FM/dFM's cooperation recently and reiterate that you will continue to work with the Executive and MoD to ensure people in NI are properly supported while maintaining the safety of service personnel.

Protocol/Transition

- Regarding the response to the EU's vaccine export control decision over the weekend and the focus this week on security concerns at Larne and Belfast, you should use this opportunity to focus on next steps, namely how to improve Commission understanding of the Northern Ireland context [planned FM/dFM discussion with the Commission today (Wednesday)] and how to focus on urging for a proportionate approach that realises quick fixes and for all parties to work together to rebuild trust. You should acknowledge the opportunities for further dialogue with Ireland and the Commission in the coming weeks, which will help ensure the Northern Ireland context is fully understood and that the Protocol continues to be implemented in a pragmatic manner.
- You should continue to acknowledge that while there has been a degree of disruption as businesses and others get to grips with new processes, this will be time-limited and does not amount to a more fundamental or systemic failure of the Protocol.

- You should stress that your top priorities are to work closely and collaboratively with the Executive to ensure industry awareness and keep goods flowing.

Economy

I&S

LINES TO TAKE

COVID-19

Current Situation

- What is your current assessment of the Covid-19 situation in Northern Ireland ahead of the review of restrictions in mid-February?

Hotel Quarantines

- I would appreciate an update on the Executive's approach to international travel and whether to introduce a period of mandatory quarantine upon arrival in NI?

Data transfer [if raised]

- I will continue to facilitate discussions on this important issue and am keen to see a solution reached.

Protocol and Transition Period

Article 16

- We have all followed closely the developments on the EU's vaccine export controls since Friday, and I of course welcome the decision taken by the EU to change course on their original move to unilaterally invoke Article 16 of the Protocol.
- The Protocol was put together in good faith with our partners in the EU, in order to uphold our mutual obligations to peace, prosperity and stability in Northern Ireland.

- It is vital that we take this opportunity to pause and focus on what will deliver the greatest benefits to people in Northern Ireland over the long term. That means working to deliver the Protocol in line with the agreement reached last year and addressing issues that arise and where further work is required, for instance on grace periods.
- Ensuring that all parties understand Northern Ireland's complex context and that cross-community support is sought as far as possible will remain central to that approach. Rebuilding trust between all parties will be a vital part of how we ensure that the Protocol is delivered effectively and proportionately.
- There will be ample opportunities over the coming weeks to work bilaterally with the Commission and with Ireland to resolve outstanding issues and to ensure the Protocol continues to be implemented in a pragmatic manner that delivers for people in Northern Ireland.

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Flow of Goods

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- Overall goods are continuing to flow effectively and we see high confidence in supplies, including for supermarkets.
- Many of the issues that have been noted are as a result of Covid-related staff absences affecting the retail sector and wider short straits disruption affecting the whole UK, with Northern Ireland being at the end of the supply chain. Some

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- Of course we cannot rule out further issues arising or Northern Ireland feeling the impacts of wider disruption from Covid or issues at the short straits, just like the rest of the UK.

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NDNA

Irrelevant & Sensitive

Protocol and Transition Period

Irrelevant & Sensitive

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COVID-19

Vaccine

- Over 221,000 people have been vaccinated in Northern Ireland, including care home residents and staff and HSC staff - representing over 10% of the entire population.
- UKG vaccine supply and scheduled deliveries will fully support vaccination of JCVI priority cohorts 1-4 by 15 February. We have signed deals for substantial future supply of both vaccines to replenish our stocks and enable swift vaccination of first and second doses across the UK in the weeks and months ahead.
- Vaccines are the way out of this pandemic and vaccine supplies are part of our critical national infrastructure. Vaccines are a precious resource in very high demand across the world and therefore for security reasons it is not possible to provide detail about the size of our supplies and exact detail about future deliveries.
- We are allocating shares of vaccine based on the business-as-usual Barnett formula split of doses as follows:
 - England: 84.09%
 - Scotland: 8.28%
 - Wales: 4.78%
 - Northern Ireland: 2.85%

Top Level Detail on UK and Ireland Announcements on Hotel Quarantine

NI Position

Northern Ireland has not yet made a decision on whether to align with UKG policy. TEO will manage this decision and have set up a task and finish group. Amongst other issues, they are working out how to best engage and coordinate with Ireland.

UKG Position

The UK Government has banned all incoming travel to England from 22 countries where there is a risk of known variants, including South Africa, Portugal and South American nations. UK nationals and residents returning from these countries must self-isolate in government -provided accommodation for 10 days.

Irish Position

The Irish Cabinet has agreed to introduce a range of measures to increase compliance, including a range of mandatory quarantine measures for passengers from South Africa and Brazil; and for those who arrive without a pre-departure negative test result. In other cases, passengers will be required by law to quarantine at home. Current travel regulations for overseas arrivals to Ireland will also apply to those who arrive via Northern Ireland.

COVID-19 Rates [as of 01 February]

- The COVID-19 7-day rate in Northern Ireland now stands at 196. This represents a significant decrease on this month's unprecedented rise in case rates (which peaked at 664.7 on Mon 4th Jan).

Pressure on Healthcare

- Pressure on healthcare capacity continues to be a major concern as hospitalisations remain high.
- Military personnel are now assisting in hospitals in Northern Ireland following the MACA request in

Economic Support

Financial support:

- The spending review confirmed £918m in additional Barnett funding to Northern Ireland for 2021-22.

Business support:

- Businesses and employees will benefit from the extension of the 80% furlough scheme and Self Employment Income Support Scheme (*to note: the level of support will be reviewed later in January*).
- Likewise, Self-Employed Income Support grants will continue until the end of April 2021.
- Other measures, including the VAT cut for hospitality and government-backed business loans, have also been extended.

[ONLY IF RAISED - LINES TO TAKE]

Economy

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£3 billion

in additional funding to the Executive to help fight coronavirus, and £216m at the Budget.

Legacy

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Border Poll for Northern Ireland

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Armed Forces Covenant

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