

QUAD BRIEFING

FOR INFORMATION

ISSUE: Briefing for Quad - 5-6pm, Tuesday.

PRIVATE OFFICE COMMENTS: The steering brief below helpfully outlines what the main areas of discussion will be. Previously, it has been helpful for you to begin the meeting and invite the two Health Ministers to provide the group with updates.

On the measures at the border - **you may wish to ask the Tánaiste for an update on the Irish position on CTA exemptions.**

On the tracing apps - we understand that the NI Executive has been unable to agree on whether to use NHSX app or Irish Government app or a combination of both - and as a result **the FM and dFM want to specifically raise how NI may approach use of the app(s).**

Annex A outlines the ongoing work on making the NHSX app and Irish app work together. In summary, there has been no resolution on the interoperability of the respective apps and it does not look likely. The UK app is scheduled to be rolled out further next week; the ROI app has been delayed and we are not sighted on a clear launch date.

If you need to comment on this, you could praise the cooperation between experts so the apps can work together and say that in the event of this not being possible, we should come back to Quad and discuss. Officials are meeting again on Friday.

NR

SPAD COMMENTS: Oliver is content and Isabel cleared the comms plan at annex B.

SECRETARY OF STATE COMMENTS:

FIRST MINISTER, DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER, HEALTH MINISTERS
AND TÁNAISTE QUAD MEETING

STEER

No formal agenda has been circulated for this meeting - the expectation is that the meeting will follow the structure below as agreed with the Tanaiste's team at official level:

- Updates from Governments on Covid-19 and update on N/S engagement via MOU process
- Discussion of phased plans for easing restrictions – identification of priority areas for coordination (incl. contact tracing technology) and contact points to take forward
- Updates from Tánaiste and SoSNI on inward travel changes
- Identify any further areas where more coordination may be required
- Media statement and next meeting

Following the review points in early/mid May this is another important opportunity for all the participants to set out their latest plans on lockdown easements, to promote close-working on tools (such as Test and Trace) where there is a dependency on respective policies (contact tracing) and value in coordinating to maximise practical benefit in cross-border communities, and encouraging clear communication as we all build up to the decision-points on lockdown easements. Given the divergence between Ireland, the UK and NI it remains vital to minimise the risk of confusion or concern amongst the public.

Track and trace apps - to date, there has been strong cooperation between experts seeking to achieve interoperability between the Irish and UK apps. **While it does not appear likely that compatibility between the apps will be feasible (given the differing technical approaches adopted), work continues on whether there would be any technical difficulty running both apps side by side on the same phone. This is likely to be raised as a current point of tension and they will ask for continued support from officials to work through.**

The NI Executive are keen to discuss the health measures at the border announcement, and ask whether there is more we need to do to join up the 2 regimes North/South. Ireland is still considering introducing their own mandatory regime, and their own CTA exemption - you'll want to ask the Tanaiste for an update, and reassure the NI Executive that the Home Office are engaging regularly with their counterparts in Ireland.

As usual - a planned joint statement will be issued immediately following the meeting. To ensure the statement is promptly released you'll want to ask all participants to confirm they are all content with the statement that has been sent to them.

SPEAKING POINTS

COVID-19

- Welcome meeting again in this format - it is a good opportunity to discuss our current priorities in the response to Covid-19 and exchange information;
- It would be useful if we could all give a brief update on Covid-19 - I'd also be keen to hear how the work North/South through the MOU processes is going.

UKG Update on Covid

- We are now seeing rates of infection and deaths coming down. Pleased to see that the wave 1 peak is less severe than originally expected.
- Work also continues on rolling out a track and trace app. The **current testing capacity** across all streams is 108,356. There are 100 mobile units across the UK, and 50 regional test sites.
- Since its launch, 800,000 employers have used the **job retention scheme** to furlough 6.3million jobs. This is to a total value of £8bn.
- The Chancellor has announced a host of measures to **help businesses** in this period with £330bn worth of government backed and guaranteed loans to support businesses across the UK - with the Northern Ireland Executive being provided £1.2bn in Barnett consequential for Covid-19 response.
- Since the start of the outbreak, **we've delivered over 1.24 billion pieces of PPE to the frontline**. On Monday alone, over 16 million PPE items were delivered to 238 trusts and organisations.

Inward Travel Changes

- As the UKG set out on 10 May, those arriving in the UK from overseas will be required to self-isolate in order to prevent reinfection from abroad and a second wave of cases.
- We are planning to set out more detail today, including a commitment to bring forward regulations shortly and to set out the detail of who will be exempt from the scheme. All CTA journeys will continue to be exempt;

- Those regulations will enforce a mandatory self isolation scheme, as well as a requirement to provide an address of where you will self isolate;
- The exemptions will ensure that people who need to travel for vital reasons - for example to move goods needed to support the effort on Covid-19, or those carrying out essential Government business, are not subject to the regime.
- The scheme will be continually reviewed - as will all the exemptions, we should all keep talking about whether any exemptions are needed to make the system work better on the Island of Ireland.
- Recognise the importance of working closely on this, given the different regimes in operation North/South - I know the Home Office are speaking regularly with their counterparts in Ireland and are broadly content that the 2 regimes can co-exist;
- Welcome an update from the Tanaiste on Ireland's plans;

If raised: Sharing data with Ireland

- This is certainly something I can take away and raise with the Home Office- I know they are engaging with their counterparts in Ireland and are keen to maintain a dialogue as we both work on this.

If raised: Inclusion of France

- There has been some misreporting about this - there are no plans for a country wide exemption for France - what we are discussing is narrow exemptions for French frontier workers and Pax Au Frontiers officers;

Approach to Easing Lockdown/review of public health measures

- Northern Ireland: Welcome the NI Executive document (Coronavirus Executive Approach to Decision Making) setting out its five-stage plan for easing the Covid-19 lockdown which will be 'conditions-based', alongside the NI regulations being reviewed every 3 weeks. Appreciate a further update on overall strategy?
- Ireland: Turn to the Tanaiste
- UK: Following the Prime Minister's lockdown easing announcement last week, in England, you can now leave home to spend time in open public spaces more than once a day, with no time limit and for a wider range of reasons. You can now:
 - Spend time outdoors, including exercise, with one person who is not in your household as long as you stay 2 metres apart;
 - Go for a picnic, to sunbathe or relax and read a book;
 - Work on a public allotment;
 - Go fishing;

- Drive to outdoor open spaces irrespective of distance;
- These measures are the first stage in the UK plan to ease the lockdown and fit into the wider five point criteria for reducing restrictions. These are:
 - Making sure the NHS can cope
 - A 'sustained and consistent' fall in the daily death rate
 - Rate of infection decreasing to 'manageable levels'
 - Ensuring supply of tests and PPE can meet future demand
 - Being confident any adjustments would not risk a second peak that would overwhelm the NHS

Identify any further areas where more coordination may be required

- It's important that as we transition now into the next phase of combatting the virus that we keep talking - I'm keen that we continue to meet in this format and maintain the official-level trilateral meetings at least for the next few weeks;
- Tools such as the NHS's Covid-19 app will be an important part of our approach to easing measures. Ensuring this technology works in practice, noting our geography and our cross-border communities, will be key. I have asked officials to keep me updated on the progress of discussions in this area.

Statement and Timing of the Next meeting

- I propose we have another of these meetings in [2 weeks, week commencing 1 June] - good to catch up after we've had our review points, though we should stay in touch offline;
- A draft statement will be shared with you all shortly - if there are no concerns we will issue it after this meeting.

Test and Trace - if raised

- To maximise the potential use of the Test and Trace app in Northern Ireland, interoperability with Ireland's app will be key. Technology is one element of this; data protection another.
- The safe transmission and use of the data collected must be done securely and in line with our national and international data protection obligations and standards.
- **I welcome the ongoing trilateral discussions on the development of respective apps, and understand the next meeting is scheduled for this Friday.**
- **I would welcome further update on the rolling out of the Irish Government's app and what the timeline for this is likely to be?**

PPE - if raised

- I'm glad that both the Northern Ireland Executive and the UK Government have taken a four-nations approach to PPE;
- The UKG has authorised the release of nearly 20 million items of PPE to the devolved nations to address immediate shortages of specific items, including over 5.5 million items being allocated to Northern Ireland.
- We've also set up a cross-government PPE sourcing unit to secure new supply lines from across the world and published rigorous standards against which we will buy. We're also asking our homegrown industries to come forward to create new PPE manufacturing capabilities in the UK.
- My officials will continue to work closely with officials in the Department of Health, the Department of Finance and other UK Government departments to ensure that Northern Ireland is allocated a fair share of additional PPE that the UK Government procures.

Testing - if raised

- I am pleased to hear that testing capacity in NI is now at over 2,000 tests per day, and I understand you plan to increase this by a further 1,500 going forwards;
- I welcome the announcement that DoH will be immediately implementing an expanded intensive programme of testing for residents and staff in care homes;
- I also note the introduction of sentinel surveillance in GP surgeries and emergency departments, which I understand has now been ongoing for a few weeks;
- I would welcome the opportunity to hear of any other updates.

Enforcement of cross-border travel regulation breaches - if asked

- I know the PSNI and An Garda Síochána are working hard to enforce the regulations in place to keep all Northern Irish and Irish citizens safe.
- This issue reinforces the point that close communications between us are absolutely vital, particularly as we seek to maintain the public's adherence to social distancing and save lives.

Background:

- There has been some media coverage of perceived loopholes in ROI legislation, meaning that restrictions on travel for those entering from NI cannot be enforced by An Garda Síochána and social distancing regulations are being breached. However, the Irish government has confirmed that An Garda Síochána currently has no serious concerns about cross border travel happening in this way. The Irish government has also underlined the high levels of cooperation between An Garda Síochána and PSNI.
- Changing the legislation would require Irish parliamentary assent, which is not possible until a new government is formed in Ireland. So for now, the current arrangements have to stay in place. The issue has gained greater prominence because of evidence that infection rates are higher in Ireland's border region than in some other parts of the country (outside of Dublin). Ireland's Chief Medical Officer has explicitly rejected the idea that this is because of travel from NI residents.
- Irish ministers may seek some kind of commitment for PSNI to conduct greater checks within NI to prevent excessive travel by NI residents into Ireland in particular over the upcoming bank holiday weekends

Annex A - NHS Covid-19 app: interoperability with the Irish Government's app

1. In theory, it is possible for the NHS and Irish Covid-19 apps to be interoperable, but **it is proving very difficult to find a technical solution**. The two apps use different data architecture, different protocols and different algorithms, for example:

Irish: data stored on each users' phone, and matches are made on the handset.

NHS app: data is stored by the central authority.

2. As a possible pragmatic solution, NHSX is looking into whether there would be any technical difficulty in phones running both apps.
3. Official-led meetings that NHSX has been attending with DoH and the IG have been positive and useful, with very good relationships. **To date, there has been no resolution on the interoperability of both the Irish Government and the UK Government's respective apps. The next meeting to further discuss this issue is scheduled for Friday 22 May.**
4. The UK app is scheduled to be rolled out further, week commencing 25 May. The ROI app has been delayed and we are not sighted on a clear launch date. In the preliminary technical discussion, the Irish Government was clear that its first interest is in delivering the app for use in Ireland; there was no suggestion that it could be delayed to accommodate interoperability with the UK app.

Annex B | COMMUNICATIONS PLAN: QUAD MEETING | TUESDAY 19 MAY

Covid-19 quad meeting with Tanaiste Simon Coveney TD, FM, DFM, both Health Ministers & the Chief Medical Officers

Objective:

- To demonstrate cross border collaboration in the battle against Covid-19
- To update Irish Govt on the UK wide response & receive updates on their progress
- To hear about NI executive's new five-step plan and its implementation
- To build and maintain positive relationships with the Irish Govt

Comms Activity:

- Tweet to be issued on Mon (May 18) evening approx 5pm
- Statement issued to media following the meeting & uploaded to gov.uk on Tues (May 19)
- Tweet to be issued following the meeting with a link to the statement

Tweet 1

In a series of regular meetings, tomorrow SofS [@BrandonLewis](#) & [@simoncoveney](#) will co-chair a meeting w/ [@DUPLeader](#), [@moneillsf](#) [@RobinSwannMoH](#) & [@SimonHarrisTD](#). They will review the latest developments in the collective effort to combat COVID-19.

Tweet 2 (will include link to [gov.uk](#) statement)

At today's quad meeting, chaired by [@BrandonLewis](#) & [@simoncoveney](#), discussions included respective plans for the gradual & controlled easing of restrictions given the importance of implementing consistent approaches wherever possible and strong collaborative arrangements. Read full statement ([link](#))

