

# Naomi Long 'reconsidering position' in Northern Ireland Executive

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**Justice Minister Naomi Long has said she has been reconsidering her position in the Northern Ireland Executive over its handling of the Covid restrictions.**

Her vote was excluded when **the DUP used the cross-community mechanism to block proposals to extend the regulations.**

Mrs Long, leader of Alliance, said while some parties had the right to deploy it, "it doesn't make it right".

The Executive **reached a compromise on Thursday** after four days of disagreement. Ms Long said she had been clear with ministerial colleagues that her position would become "unsustainable" if the use of the cross-community vote continued.

It is a mechanism that can be deployed on any issue in the executive, if three or more ministers ask for a vote to be taken on that basis. It effectively gives parties with enough ministers a veto.

In an interview with BBC News NI, Mrs Long said the device "shows the farce that is these structures".

"I have been reconsidering my position - it would be hard to imagine anyone around the Executive table with an ounce of sanity or scruples wouldn't have reconsidered their position, in light of the debacle that took place this week," she said.

"On balance, I still believe it is important that those of us who want to do our absolute best for the people of Northern Ireland, and find a way through these difficult times, are still at that table trying at least to have influence - even if there are those who try to block us from having that influence through votes."

The Justice Minister said she had warned before entering the Executive in January 2020 about use of the cross-community vote, and continues to oppose it.

"I have asked people to desist from this abuse of power because it will make my position in the executive unsustainable," said Mrs Long.