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Office

Covid 19 Mailbox &lt;covid-19shared@nio.gov.uk&gt;

**QUAD READOUT | 19 May**

1 message

**SOS Lewis** <sos.lewis@nio.gov.uk>

20 May 2020 at 10:30

To: PSI <psi@nio.gov.uk>, PS SOS <ps.sos@nio.gov.uk>, SpAds PS <spads.ps@nio.gov.uk>, Paul Flynn <paul.flynn@nio.gov.uk>, Senior Leadership Team <slt@nio.gov.uk>, **Name Redacted** <Name Redacted@nio.gov.uk>, **Name Redacted** <Name Redacted@nio.gov.uk>, Covid 19 <covid-19@nio.gov.uk>

See below readout from yesterday evening's Quad.

**NR**

as discussed last night, you were going to flag with Home Office the Tánaiste's position on the border measures. Ciarán/Madeleine will also be able to relay any further steers from SoS if needed from a chat afterwards.

Grateful if you could also have a think about SOS' idea of getting Education Ministers to the next Quad to discuss schools. Seems a reasonable idea and would be good to get a sense if we think it could fly with the Exec and Irish.

**READOUT | QUAD - 19 MAY**

**Secretary of State** opened the meeting asking about how the first few days of easements had gone and whether they had received positive feedback.

**Deputy First Minister** outlined recent announcements on Friday and Monday in Northern Ireland.

**First Minister** outlined the difficulties of lifting measures. She made the point that as measures start to lift, people will always ask further questions. She said that managing expectations is important. She said the NI approach would continue to be guided by CMO advice.

**Tánaiste** said that easing measures could prove more difficult as implementing measures. He said the need was still to ensure a staggered approach as the cumulative impact of measures being lifted at once is a risk. He said that pressure from sectors to move quicker would come - and especially if the numbers and cases continue to fall, it will become more and more difficult to continue the staggered approach.

**Secretary of State** agreed and used the hospitality and tourism industry as an example of a sector that would want to move quickly to ensure that they capitalise on the small window through the summer to maximise earnings. He outlined the challenges facing the UK Government of moving people from furlough into work.

**Tánaiste** agreed and said that the same challenge facing Ireland in bringing people back to work. Phasing these out over time, cannot be done overnight. He said that Ireland was looking at a €25/30 billion deficit this year.

**Secretary of State** said the financial impact of COVID-19 was unprecedented. He looked ahead to 1 June review point and decisions that may need to be taken around schools. He said the First Minister and deputy First Minister will be involved in those discussions. He said good progress had been on the NHSX app, with a roll out expected next week. He asked that both Health Ministers update on the respective health situations and discussions on the app.

**NI Health Minister** said that conversations were ongoing on the app in NI and where data will be captured - he was aware of the complications around this. He updated the group on the downward trend in NI and said the R number was sitting at 0.7. He said care homes were the major focus and said that the NI Nightingale hospital had 'discharged' its last patient.

**Irish Health Minister** praised the work between NI and Irish health officials and their CMOs. He outlined the downward trend in Ireland. He looked ahead to upcoming decisions on re-testing and said that workplaces would now become a place of focus.

He updated on the Irish view of the app as a tool to be used alongside the physical 'boots on ground' tracing. He said that although the NHS and Irish apps are different - interoperability would be a positive. He said that unlike the

centralised NHS app, the Irish are adopting a decentralised model. In terms of timeline, he said that they expect the Irish app to be ready at the end of the month and hope to start trials on 2 June.

**Tánaiste** said he wanted to ensure the work is done on interoperability. He said that they must also consider the Apple and Google will play a big part as they must allow the app to be used on their phones.

**Deputy First Minister** said it was clear that the app must work North/South and East-West. She warned if not, it would cause a political problem in the Executive. She said that although apps was not the whole solution to COVID-19, it is important that they the app swork together, as the Executive do not want another battle on this. She said not only is this an issue at a technical level, but there is a political imperative to ensure they can work.

**Secretary of State** said that he understood that officials would be getting together on Friday to discuss this further and hoped a technical solution could be found. He cautioned that, as the Irish Health Minister said, the app alone is not a solution to COVID-19 and the public communications must make this clear.

**Tánaiste** raised the travel measures and outlined the Irish Government policy. He said that the PM and Taoiseach spoke about this on Friday and touched upon the CTA issue. He said the Irish Government were still working on enforcement of the self isolation requirements. He said the Irish measures were not making a distinction on nationality/country - it was about everyone who comes into Ireland from overseas. He then outlined concerns with the UK approach as creating an incentive to fly into Belfast and travel to Dublin.

**Secretary of State** outlined the UK Government stance that exempting all CTA journeys was the only way that you can fully deliver on the CTA.

**Tánaiste** said that although the potential numbers of people taking advantage of this incentive are very small at the moment, summer could see those numbers could change quite dramatically. He said it was something that the Irish Government should look at with the Executive.

**Secretary of State** said that the overall borders policy is a matter for the UK Government. He said that he appreciated that the travel issue is one of the challenges of CTA. But the UK Government would not treat different parts of the UK differently and that the view was that the CTA exemption is the only way to protect the CTA. He said that officials should look at some of the concerns raised and see if there are any logical conclusions.

**Irish Health Minister** agreed officials should engage on the issue but did flag that Ireland sees this as a genuine public health concern. He said that they did not want anyone to absolve themselves of the self isolation rules. Finally, he said that they would be very interested in learning from the UK approach on reopening of schools and childcare facilities.

**Secretary of State** agreed that they should all look to learn from each other, and said that they should look at inviting respective Education Ministers to the next Quad.

**Deputy First Minister** pushed the Tánaiste on the issue of cross-border workers who were out of work and the Irish government's approach to unemployment benefits for those workers.

**Tánaiste** said that he had previously sent a note on the wage subsidy scheme and outlined Irish position. He said there was no issue with cross-border workers. In relation to job seekers allowance, he said as a social welfare payment it is for the state where they are living to fund. But he promised to check again.

**Secretary of State** thanked those present and said they should look to get together at the beginning of June.

**Attendees:**

**Secretary of State**

**Tánaiste**

**First Minister**

**Deputy First Minister**

**Irish Health Minister**

**NI Health Minister**

**Gordon Lyons**

**Declan Kearney**

Madeleine Alessandri, NIO  
Anthony Harbinson, NI Exec  
Barbara Cullinane, Irish Gov  
Brenda Boylan, Irish Gov  
Ciarán Hayes, NIO  
David Sterling, NI Exec  
Emma L-Pengelly, NI Exec SpAd  
Fergal Mythen, Irish Gov  
Laurence Simms, Irish Gov  
Mark Larmour, NIO  
Mark Ovens, NI Exec SpAd  
**NR** NIO SpAd  
Phillip Weir, NI Exec SpAd  
Carol Morrow, NI Exec  
Deirdre Griffith, NI Exec  
Ruth Parkin, Irish Gov  
**NR** NI Exec

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Ciarán Hayes (PPS)

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