



**Economic and Business Response Ministerial
Implementation Group**

23 March

Time 14.45 | COBR F, 70 Whitehall via Dial-In

STEER

- This is the first Ministerial group meeting - substantive issues will be to consider **non fiscal easements** and **Government communications**.
- Devolved administrations will have a strong interest in the business of this Group and were expected to be invited routinely to business that was not England-only. **NI Executive Ministers are not invited** to this meeting and you may wish to stress the importance of inviting them to future such meetings that are not England-only.
- On **Business Roundtables**, you will be asked to give a verbal update where you can reflect the constructive engagement you had with business representatives last week. Subject to your agreement, you will be continuing this engagement with a further telephone conference this week and officials will be in touch with a wider group of stakeholders.
- There are no significant points to make on **non fiscal easements** and **Government communications** other than, if you feel it appropriate, to highlight the importance of coordination with the devolved administration and that the Government's actions have been well-received.

Agenda

1) Roundtables

All (i) the key asks from each of the sector roundtables which have not been addressed in the measures taken to date; (ii) whether and how these asks will be taken forward; (iii) any specific communications issues that colleagues should be aware of in the coming week; and (iv) the top non-fiscal easements their department is working on and the next steps they will take to develop them.

2) Non-fiscal easements

BEIS

3) Government Communications

Cabinet Office

LINES TO TAKE

Business Roundtables

- I hosted a call with stakeholder groups last week - their key issues then were the need for support for employees (since addressed by the Chancellor) and the need for effective comms.
- Our high level comms have been broadly welcomed but businesses were keen to see the detail of schemes published.

- The overriding message now emerging is pressure for a scheme for the self-employed.

Other issues (if required):

- **[Non-fiscal easements:]** Relaxation of the regulatory environment would be welcomed by business in Northern Ireland, who have specifically raised the competition law issues as being a problem.
- It will be important for devolved administrations' efforts to be aligned with this work. My department and I are in touch with the devolved Executive on this.
- **[Government comms:]** UKG Government comms have been well received in NI but it is important to make sure our comms continue to be coordinated with the Executive's.

Background

Business Roundtables

- Financial package for employees announced by the Chancellor on Friday was broadly welcomed across NI businesses although still some concern, as in the rest of GB, for the self-employed.
- note the importance of working with NI Executive on non-fiscal easements to ensure that cross cutting options identified include regional considerations.
- [If needed on Gov.Comms] Important that guidance and information issued via gov.uk is tailored to NI

Non Fiscal Easements

1. **Paper 3** sets out a suite of cross-cutting regulatory and non-financial easements, drawn from the longlist of potential options provided by OGDs, to support companies that are experiencing difficulties or have entered into distress as a result of Covid-19.
2. Specifically, BEIS has identified: **(i) competition law exemptions** (business representatives mentioned the need for this to you); **(ii) changes to the Corporate Insolvency Framework; and (iii) an approach to the forbearance for consumer refunds** that it recommends taking forward. A full list of the regulatory and other non-financial easements identified across Whitehall are set out in Annex A to Paper 3 .
3. Many of the proposed regulatory easements would also apply to Northern Ireland and would be welcomed, though Assembly consent would likely be

required. We are in touch with the NI Executive to ensure they are fully engaged in this work and to see what steps they plan to take locally.

Government Communications

4. The NIO maintains close contact with several key Business Representative Organisations in NI who last week relayed their concerns about the messaging from the government (UKG and NI Executive) and that this needs to be clearer on what support is available in NI. Our communications at the weekend, setting out the steps UKG and NIE have taken were well-received.
5. The NIO issued guidance on this at the weekend, including a signposting to UKG and DA support websites, which we will work to keep updated as events progress and communications need to be adapted.