

**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
- Updates from SoSNI, FM, DfM and Health Min on border regulations
- Discussion of phased plans for easing restrictions – identification of priority areas for coordination (incl. contact tracing technology) and contact points to take forward
- Meeting of Education Ministers
- Identify any further areas where more coordination may be required
- Next meeting

The key issues for continued coordination are test and trace, school openings, and further lockdown easements. You may wish to ask the Health Ministers to update on interoperability of the app that NI is working on. You will also want to update the Tanaiste on the slight amendments to regulations that give effect to the border quarantine measures - specifically that journeys that originate outside the CTA will be captured by the self isolation measures. Given that we were clear with the Tanaiste at the last meeting that our commitment to a CTA exemption was absolute - you'll want to be clear that these amendments do not change or undermine that commitment. Rather they are designed to more accurately capture those who are making a genuine CTA journey.

There will be no statement this week - just a coordinated tweet. You may be asked if the Quad meetings should continue, given the respective downward trajectory of the virus. Our recommendation is to keep them going for now - but to say we can review whether they need to continue in due course. At present, we believe it is still useful to have a political forum that brings all 3 Governments together formally - not least, as it is good evidence that we are taking the cross-border issues seriously.

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 be keen to hear how the easing of restrictions are going and to discuss recent developments, including the border quarantine measures recently introduced in the UK
- I'd also be interested in hearing any updates you have on how North/South engagement through the Memorandum of Understanding processes is progressing.

UKG Update on Covid

- We are still seeing rates of infection and deaths coming down. The easing of restrictions are being closely monitored and testing and tracing will be vital in controlling this virus.
- The UK now has the capacity to carry out 200,000 tests a day, including 40,000 antibody tests. There are more than 150 drive through and mobile testing units across the UK.
- Since the start of the outbreak, **we've delivered over 1.63 billion pieces of PPE to the frontline.**

Inward Travel Changes

- I was happy to see the Executive lay regulations on Friday on border regulations, and am keen to work together to swiftly resolve any issues with the implementation of these.
- I noted the decision to mandate self-isolation for those entering Northern Ireland from the CTA having been outside the CTA within 14 days, excluding certain exempted groups. I am pleased that this decision has been made in alignment with the regulations laid in Westminster.
- I would welcome an update from the First Minister and Deputy First Minister on this.
- I would also welcome any thoughts the Tainiste has on these regulations and their implementation.

Contact tracing

- With contact tracing now embedded across all four nations, a key priority will be to ensure there is a consistent and effective approach to contact tracing across borders which will be critical to supporting our efforts in containing, controlling and reducing the spread of the virus, and ultimately saving lives.
- Equally important we continue to coordinate our strategies where appropriate with Ireland, which is especially critical in the border regions. I know that our respective health departments continue to meet regularly to share information as our contact tracing programmes expand.
- I am also aware that the NIE are working closely with Ireland to develop new, more efficient ways of working collaboratively to protect cross border areas and travellers. I would welcome an update on how this work is progressing.

Economy

- The announcements of UK Government support have resulted in Barnett consequential of over £1.2bn for the NI Executive to support people and business in NI through the COVID-19 crisis.
- This is in addition to the UK-wide support measures we have put in place including government backed loans, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme. As of 31 May 8.7m jobs were furloughed with a total of £17.5bn in support claimed
- UKG officials have begun work on what post COVID-19 recovery looks like - and work on this will continue in conjunction with the NI Executive. We need to focus our thoughts on economic recovery in particular and what needs to happen to get Northern Ireland back on its feet.
- There will be some significant challenges ahead but the UK Government will be working closely with both the Executive and local businesses on getting things back up and running when the time is right and laying the foundations for a stable and sustainable recovery for NI.

Approach to Easing Lockdown/review of public health measures

- Northern Ireland: Welcome the next phase of easings which were able to proceed on 8 June due to the R number staying below 1. This includes expanded retail reopenings and a plan for tourism reopening from 20 July.
- Welcome the Executive's decision to publish the NI R number on a weekly basis.

- 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. 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.

Meeting of Education Ministers

- We discussed at the last quad that a conversation between the UK Government, Irish Government, and NI Executive about education would be beneficial;
- I propose that we agree to take forward a meeting of the 3 Education Ministers, with the option for us to join that meeting;
- We can agree the exact format and timing of such a meeting via officials - but it would be good for us to agree in principle now that this meeting should take place;
- I see this as a valuable opportunity to share information and learning - and to show that we are being joined up on the issue.

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;
- Contact tracing and tools such as the NHS's Covid-19 app will be an important part of our approach to easing measures. Ensuring our respective approaches to contact tracing work in practice, noting our geography and our cross-border communities, will be key - therefore important our health departments continue to coordinate and share relevant information as this work progresses.

Timing of the Next meeting

- I propose we have another of these meetings in 2 weeks, and that we continue to keep these going regularly for now - but we can keep this under review.

Other issues - only if raised

PPE - if raised

- 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 have signed deals with more than 100 new suppliers from around the world as well as ramping up domestic production with contracts signed to date for the manufacture of 2 billion items of PPE in the UK.
- We will continue to work closely to ensure that Northern Ireland is allocated a fair share of additional PPE that the UK Government procures.

JBC - if raised

- The JBC will be a vital component of the next phase of our strategy for targeted virus suppression and it is important that we work with you to ensure it can operate effectively across the whole of the UK;
- I do appreciate that there are particular sensitivities in Northern Ireland around the security aspect of the JBC, and we are feeding those concerns back to the centre;

Annex A

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN: QUAD MEETING TUESDAY 9 JUNE 2020

Covid-19 quad meeting with Tanaiste Simon Coveney TD, FM, DFM, both Health Ministers & the Education Ministers (TBC)

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 (June 8) evening approx 5pm
- Tweet to be issued following the meeting (June 9) with accompanying photo

Tweet 1

Tomorrow SofS @BrandonLewis & @simoncoveney will co-chair a Covid-19 roundtable w/ @DUPLLeader, @moneillsf @RobinSwannMoH & @SimonHarrisTD. They will update each other on respective plans for easing lockdown restrictions on the road to recovery.

Tweet 2

At today's regular Quad meeting, chaired by @BrandonLewis & @simoncoveney, w/ @DUPLLeader & @moneillsf discussions focused on the gradual easing of restrictions & how best to work together while rolling out vital tools such as track & trace for the benefit of all on the island of Ireland.

Updated tweet:

Today @BrandonLewis & @simoncoveney discussed w/ @DUPLLeader & @moneillsf the gradual easing of restrictions, how best to work together while rolling out vital tools, such as, test & trace & the importance of citizens following govt travel

advice

...bit.ly/30kBS1Y