



Northern  
Ireland  
Office

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

## QUAD | 8 October

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

6 October 2020 at 09:36

To: Mark Larmour <mark.larmour@nio.gov.uk>

Cc: Paul Flynn <paul.flynn@nio.gov.uk>, [redacted] NR [redacted]@nio.gov.uk, Ciaran Hayes <ciar.hayes@nio.gov.uk>, [redacted] NR [redacted]@nio.gov.uk

Great - thank you for the update

NR

On Tue, 6 Oct 2020 at 09:21, Mark Larmour <mark.larmour@nio.gov.uk> wrote:

We are not pressing for a quad this week following chatsa with DUP so lets assume no QUAD

Mark

**Mark Larmour**

**Director (Political)**

Northern Ireland Office

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On Tue, 6 Oct 2020 at 09:15, SOS Lewis <sos.lewis@nio.gov.uk> wrote:

Hi Paul - any word back?

NR

On Mon, 5 Oct 2020 at 09:36, Paul Flynn <paul.flynn@nio.gov.uk> wrote:

Morning all,

Just to update, DFA folk are testing this with their D/Health colleagues. They've asked if we can test, informally, with other participants (FM/dFM/Swann). I'm fine to test directly with Spads to see if Thursday c5.30 or 5.45 can work, and if so and it works for the IG, we can issue the formal invitation.

P

On Fri, 2 Oct 2020 at 16:50, Mark Larmour <mark.larmour@nio.gov.uk> wrote:

NR

Thanks, that sounds like a good plan. Let me test the Quad with Irish officials before we tie it down.

Mark

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On Fri, 2 Oct 2020 at 16:30, SOS Lewis &lt;sos.lewis@nio.gov.uk&gt; wrote:

4.30-5.30 is confirmed for the Coveney-SOS, 1 on 1.

Irish Gov have proposed that we then do Quad straight after. SOS has a flight at 19.15 so we probably have him at SH until 6.20ish. So could do 5.40-6.20 - I think 40 minutes will be enough?

**NR**

On Thu, 1 Oct 2020 at 18:41, SOS Lewis &lt;sos.lewis@nio.gov.uk&gt; wrote:

Separately, just off the phone to **NR** in DFAT who thinks that 4 onwards could work next Thursday afternoon for the 1-1, which we can also do.

Will pin that down first thing in the morning.

**NR**

On Thu, 1 Oct 2020 at 18:30, Mark Larmour &lt;mark.larmour@nio.gov.uk&gt; wrote:

Thanks **NR** this looks fine to me. Don't worry about sending out the original email. We can sort the date for the bilat and then look at Quad and make sure that Irish officials feel part of the process.

Thanks

Mark

**Mark Larmour****Director (Political)**

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 Northern Ireland Office logo Signature banner: Passionate about Northern Ireland: flexible, empowering,On Thu, 1 Oct 2020 at 17:54, **NR** <@nio.gov.uk> wrote:

Hi Mark

I propose sending the following in response:

'All

*Please disregard. I'll be in touch shortly with another proposal after further discussions with Irish Government colleagues - apologies!*

NR

Apologies on the misstep, it followed how we had previously sent out invites ie. we heard that DFAT were content with a Quad and then we sent out the initial message trying to sort out times before the usual back and forth on diaries. Unsure on whether the in-person side of this made it feel more a formal invite than previous zoom set ups.

On the Thu/Fri point, I spoke with NR in DFAT earlier and they said they would look into Thursday for options (but it looked difficult for Coveney) and we would look into Friday morning (but it looked difficult for SOS). NR has since gone back to say that Friday morning won't work for SOS as he's back in London. We hadn't heard back from them yet for re. Thursday, though helpful to have the above from NR

I'll send back the above message if you're all content and then pick up further tmrw.

NR

On Thu, 1 Oct 2020 at 17:16, Mark Larmour <mark.larmour@nio.gov.uk> wrote:

Hi

I have just had a call from Irish officials who are unhappy that this email issued about a potential Quad.

When Paul and I spoke to NR in DFA this morning, we agreed that we would seek a bilateral between Simon Coveney and SOS as a broad political catch up to maintain relations, they haven't spoken for some time. I also mentioned that it would be good to have a quad in the margins, and this remains our intent, given that potentially five of the six Ministers involved might be in the same place.

Their expectation was that officials would have had a further conversation about the Quad prior to any invitation being formally issued, as it has, to all parties - their view is that this does not seem to be a joint approach. And further, the timing for the SOS/Coveney bilat has not been agreed - they can't do Thursday as I understand and they said that Private Office colleagues were aware of this. They are looking for options on Friday morning now.

NR will reply in terms - I explained that we were agreed on getting the bilateral meeting in between SOS and Coveney in the diary as the priority. Once this was in the diary we would look at potential for a Quad. The bilat is the must have meeting.

I wonder if we could withdraw the invitation in the meantime saying that we need further discussions ahead of arranging timing for a Quad? Happy for other thoughts. And also happy to discuss.

Mark

**Mark Larmour**

**Director (Political)**

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On Thu, 1 Oct 2020 at 16:54, SOS Lewis <sos.lewis@nio.gov.uk> wrote:

All,

Hope you are all well. We are seeking to reinstate the previous Quad forum next week to discuss COVID response, with the proposed ministerial cast list being:

NI Secretary  
Irish Foreign Affairs Minister  
FM  
DFM  
Irish Health Minister  
NI Health Minister

If possible, we would look at doing this in person in Stormont House (with social distancing rules in place). I'd be grateful if you could therefore let me know timings on Thursday that could work for your respective Ministers. We will seek to sort out dial-in details for officials also.

**NR** (cc'd) and I will be in touch over the next few days as we try to arrange a time.

**NR**

--



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1 Horse Guards Road, London  
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Ciarán Hayes (PPS)

**NR**

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**NR**

Assistant Private Secretary to the Secretary of State

1 Horse Guards Road, London

**Irrelevant & Sensitive**

*I do not usually monitor this inbox out of hours. Please contact sos.lewis@nio.gov.uk for NI SoS issues. Otherwise, please message on the number above.*



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**NR**

**Irrelevant & Sensitive**

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**Paul Flynn**

Deputy Director, Political Affairs


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