

## **FIRST MINISTER, DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER MEETING WITH SoS - 15/5/20**

### **STEER**

Important opportunity to set out latest plans on lockdown easements, to promote continued close-working on tools (such as Track and Trace) where there is a dependency on respective policies (contact tracing) and encouraging clear communication as we all build up to the decision-points on lockdown easements. Given the divergence it remains vital to minimise the risk of confusion or concern amongst the public. The Executive agreed a range of relaxations last night to be implemented quickly, you may wish to ask them for an update.

You may also wish to update them on the latest plans on the borders measures announced by the PM over the weekend and the family migration rules changes announced by Home Office today (Thursday)

### **SPEAKING POINTS**

#### *COVID-19*

- Welcome meeting again - it is a good opportunity to discuss our current priorities in the response to Covid-19 and exchange information;

#### *Approach to Easing Lockdown/review of public health measures*

- Northern Ireland: Welcome the NI Executive document (Coronavirus Executive Approach to Decision Making) setting out its five-stage plan for easing the Covid-19 lockdown which will be 'conditions-based', alongside the NI regulations being reviewed every 3 weeks.
- Welcome the announcement to relax a number of Northern Ireland's lockdown restrictions including the reopening of garden centres and recycling centres from Monday. Appreciate a further update on overall strategy, as well as any potential progression of the plan prior to 28 May?
- Welcome an update on North/South discussions and whether there are structures in place to share information on decisions on lockdown easements;
- Really important we continue to talk as our plans evolve - recognise what you said about NI being at its own stage of the outbreak and I'm keen to work with you to give you what you need from UKG

#### *NHS Covid-19 app - if raised*

- Important that we continue to work together to raise the importance of the NHS app being interoperable with the Irish Government's app, and to solve the

technological issues. I understand there is a meeting today [Friday] between our Health officials and those in Ireland to discuss the latest work.

*UK Borders announcement*

- As the UKG set out on 10 May, those arriving in the UK from overseas will be required to self-isolate in order to prevent re-infection from abroad and a second wave of cases.
- CTA routes will be exempt, which is a great result for NI.
- Understand there will be a further GPS MIG discussion on this week - ahead of a more detailed announcement at the end of this week or early next week.
- The plan is still for England to introduce regulations early next week - your officials are invited to the working groups for these regulations and other implementation issues - like enforcement.
- Understand you are due to receive advice on this to formally consider the policy and agree whether NI will implement its own regulations - really keen we have a four nations approach on this, so really grateful for your support in rapidly considering the advice and any issues.
- I can work with you to resolve any specific concerns you have so the policy we adopt works for all four nations.

*Inclusion of France - if raised:*

- No quarantine measures apply to France at this stage and we will be working together with the French on this issue in the coming weeks. As was said in the PM's speech, "co-operation is particularly necessary for the management of our common border" - but there are no current plans for a whole country exemption as some have reported.

*Family migration rules [if needed]*

- **As CDL set out to you,** a statement of changes to the Immigration Rules was laid before Parliament yesterday, confirming that our domestic Immigration Rules are being changed to allow the family members of the people of Northern Ireland to apply for immigration status in the UK, through the EU Settlement Scheme, in the same way as eligible family members of Irish citizens
- The new immigration status will be available to the family members of all the people of Northern Ireland, no matter whether they hold British or Irish citizenship or both, and no matter how they identify - **this delivers on the commitment, made under NDNA**

- **Family members will be able to apply online from 24 August.** More information on the application process and eligibility criteria will be published on gov.uk in due course.

*Further*

- By implementing this policy the Government is demonstrating, in practical terms, its unwavering commitment to the Belfast ('Good Friday') Agreement, as well as its commitment to the restored Northern Ireland Executive and to a diverse, prosperous Northern Ireland.
- The changes also deliver an outcome to the work undertaken, in response to the announcement made last year by the former Prime Minister, to review family migration arrangements for the people of Northern Ireland.