

CDL – FM call Tuesday 7 July - 09.00 - 09.45

Ministerial attendance

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister, Scotland

Mark Drakeford, First Minister, Wales

Arlene Foster, First Minister, Northern Ireland

Michelle O'Neill, deputy First Minister, Northern Ireland

The Rt Hon Alister Jack, Secretary of State for Scotland

The Rt Hon Simon Hart, Secretary of State for Wales

The Rt Hon Brandon Lewis, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

Actions

- Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to consider how to articulate the joint objectives of the UK Government and devolved administrations.

Key points

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster thanked the Ministers for their time, and asked for their reflections now that all administrations had put in place some relaxation of social distancing guidelines. He also noted that it would be helpful to discuss economic recovery, given the Chancellor would be making an announcement the following day. During the discussion, the following points were made:

- The **First Minister of Wales** noted there had been an extensive period of reopening, with each Government choosing different approaches. The First Minister noted that self-contained hospitality would reopen a week on Saturday, and measures were staggered on a weekly basis to allow the Government to map cause and effect. The First Minister noted that recent working on quarantine measures had been the exception to good collaboration not the rule.
- The **First Minister of Northern Ireland** noted that people were being responsible. Due to the different school terms, NI schools were now closed but looking to reopen for key years on the 24 August. The virus was at a low ebb in NI, and the CMO had noted this would be the normal rate of local transmissions without a vaccine. The First Minister noted that the work on quarantine could be improved.
- The **deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland** noted there had been no deaths for three days, and no ICU admissions for the last seven days. Regulations from easements had become messy so this would be rectified on Thursday. The work on travel regulations and quarantine had caused concerns about travel between NI and GB. The public were keen for clarity on this matter.

- The **First Minister of Scotland** noted next week would be significant as the tourism sector opened, along with indoor and outdoor hospitality. The First Minister noted that it would be helpful if the four countries could jointly articulate an objective to keep the virus as low as possible, in order to be in the best position going into Autumn. It was noted that a four nations approach to quarantine was best, with reliable data and evidence sharing. It would also be important to ensure the Joint Biosecurity Centre was operating on a collective basis. The First Minister also noted the importance of developing a mutual understanding on outbreak management, and working to provide reassurance on this. It would be sensible for officials to work together on outbreak management.

The **Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster** agreed with the need to keep transmission as low as possible, although demographic factors could cause spikes. The Minister agreed to share information to increase confidence that would allow people to enjoy the relaxation of regulations. Turning to quarantine measures, the Minister noted that the need to have precise data when incidences of Covid-19 were fluctuating made it difficult to share a completely accurate picture. It was important for CMOs to have the best available data to advise on next steps, and it was noted that we would learn from the most recent easements. Turning to economic recovery, it was noted that announcements on culture, building back green and apprenticeships had already been made. The need to specify which measures were England only, and which were UK wide, was noted, with Ministers invited to ask any questions after the announcement. During the discussion the following points were made:

- The **First Minister of Scotland** noted that outbreak management was increasingly important. The economic interventions so far were helpful but the Scottish Government would await further detail, particularly around replacements for the furlough scheme. The Scottish Government had argued for a cut in VAT, and would welcome a significant package of measures.
- The **First Minister of Northern Ireland** noted that while the furlough scheme was helpful, there were concerns it would mask a cliff edge of unemployment. The aerospace industry was particularly vulnerable and it was hoped that the Government would look at specific packages to address this. The Minister was open to discussing this in another forum, and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster noted he would ensure this was understood by HMT.
- The **deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland** said there should be room for a tailored approach, particularly for young people and apprenticeships. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster asked Ministers to get in touch after the Chancellor's announcement if they still had specific requests.
- The **First Minister of Wales** said officials working on the Joint Biosecurity Centre had progressed well, and this should receive political agreement before the end of July if possible. The First Minister reiterated the need for a tailored end to the furlough scheme for certain sectors of the economy. There was also an engineering firm in

Wales which would be keen for further UKG support to prevent key skills being lost. The First Minister noted the importance of joint communications as they moved beyond the crisis phase.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster noted he would consider ways to speak as joint Governments, and revert in a following meeting. This could set out steps to take and the responsibility of the UK Government and role of the Devolved Administrations