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**WINTER MINISTERIAL SUMMIT  
12 OCTOBER 2020  
14:00 - 15:30  
LOCATION: VIRTUAL**

## STEER

- The virtual summit, hosted by CDL, is an opportunity to discuss the ongoing Covid response and potential concurrent winter challenges to identify how the UKG and DAs can work together to provide a greater level of resilience to respond.
- The agreed items for discussion are: data - and the creation of UK-wide dataset; the latest approaches in the Covid response, with a focus on border communities; delivery and operational issues such as testing; and concurrent risks over winter to identify where coordination is required.
- CDL is seeking to build upon the coordination and collaboration across the 4 nations noting the ambition of all four nations to fulfil the commitments made in the Joint Statement published last month.
- The Summit will establish the risks, areas of priority and drive forward additional planning and preparedness activity.
- We expect that FM/dFM and FM Scotland could raise the need for additional, or more long term guaranteed funding, in order to facilitate local restrictions. We expect that CDL would respond to these questions on a four nations basis.
- FM, dFM and Minister Swann will attend the meeting. A full list of attendees can be found at **Annex A**.

## AGENDA (Proposed length: 90 minutes)

### Item 1: Welcome and Objectives (10 minutes)

### Item 2: Current state of Affairs (25 minutes)

- Each nation to set out their assessment of current response to rising case numbers, to establish where differences in approach may remain and whether there are implications for border communities in particular

### Item 3: Data (20 minutes)

- Baroness Harding to present on Joint Biosecurity Centre and data-sharing principles

### Item 4: Delivery and Operational Issues (25 minutes)

- To establish those issues UKG and DAs believe require priority attention and discussion at Covid-O and/or alternative ministerial fora in the coming weeks

- to include discussion of:

- **Testing**
  - Baroness Harding to present on the testing capacity and demand, the expected evolution of testing capacity over the coming months, the prioritisation being used in England and ensuring that testing reaches those who need it most

### Item 5: Concurrent Risks (10 minutes)

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- CCS to share latest horizon scan outlining key risks over the Winter period.

**Item 6: Conclusions and next steps (5 minutes)**

**BRIEFING**

**Item 1: Welcome and objectives (10 minutes)**

CDL is likely to recap on this morning's COBR meeting regarding the new 'Local Alert Level' system for tiering. He will also set out the challenges shared across the UK, and the importance of on-going close collaboration.

**Item 2: Latest approach (25 mins)**

**STEER:** This is an opportunity to discuss the current and future UKG and DA strategic approaches to tackling the virus; to identify opportunities for further alignment wherever possible; and actions for mitigating the risks caused by any divergence in approach. It's possible that FM & dFM may raise the economic support package announced by CX on Friday. CST is willing to hold further conversations if DA ministers believe this is likely to prove insufficient.

**POINTS TO MAKE (if required)**

- (If raised by FM/dFM) I am keen to learn more about the 5 Tier approach and if alignment in the middle tiers is achievable.
- I think it is right that NIE choose a system that works for Northern Ireland and takes account of its unique circumstances. I am happy to continue to work with NIE to coordinate messaging in the coming weeks.
- Friday's announcement by the Chancellor will help protect jobs and support businesses across Northern Ireland: the government will pay  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the wages of employees where a business is required to shut due to restrictions; and we are providing £0.2bn additional Barnett funding to the Executive, taking the total to £2.4bn.

**BACKGROUND:**

- The Executive are considering how a tiered approach would work in NI, but are likely to move to a 5 tier approach, as is the case in Ireland. It is possible that NIE could bookend England's 3 Tiers with a tier each side. Early suggestions from NIE officials indicate Tier 5 would be similar to the restrictions NI saw in March, i.e. a full lockdown. This would diverge from England's harshest proposed restrictions in that schools, universities and retailers could be closed. No decisions have been taken as yet.

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- Due to the increasing rate of new positive cases in NI, we expect the Executive to meet and decide on further restrictions in the coming days.
- On Friday, CX announced an extension of the new Jobs Support Scheme that takes effect when the furlough scheme ends. The scheme will be UK wide and is available for employees who work for firms forced to shut by law because of coronavirus restrictions. Employees will get two-thirds of their wages paid for by the government, up to a maximum of £2,100 per month.
- In addition, in England only, the Chancellor announced an increase in business grants - with up to £3,000 a month paid every fortnight. HMT confirmed devolved administrations will receive increased funding allowing them to bring in similar measures if they choose to.
- Overall the total amount guaranteed to DAs in Barnett increased by £1.3 billion for 2020-21 as a result of this statement. In NI, this has meant an increase of £0.2bn on top of the previous Barnett guarantee to the NIE of £2.2bn. In total, NI will therefore receive an additional £2.4bn to support its Covid 19 response (on top of Spring Budget 20 funding).
- On 22 September, restrictions were extended across NI to forbid the mixing of households in private dwellings. On 30 September, new rules requiring the hospitality sector to close at 23.00 came into force. Further restrictions for the Derry and Strabane Council area came into force on 5 October.
- Last week, the Executive raised the minimum fine for breaches of coronavirus regulations to £200; extended the mandatory use of face coverings to several new settings; and introduced three new offences - not closing a business as required, breaching closing times and not implementing social distancing. Breaches will incur a fixed penalty notice of £1,000, or up to £10,000 on conviction. PSNI have revealed that over 1,000 penalty notices have been issued since March for breaches of Covid-19 regulations in NI.

**Item 3: Data (20 minutes)**

**STEER:** CDL will want to build consensus on the value of UK-wide datasets to inform UKG and DA decision making with the establishment of a UK-wide dashboard. Political agreement to the role of the JBC was reached in August. Progress is being made on the agency agreements which will establish the legal basis for the JBC to operate UK-wide, and CDL is likely to strongly encourage DAs to establish data flows rapidly. Baroness Harding and Claire Gardiner, Director General of the Joint Biosecurity Centre will present on this item.

**POINTS TO MAKE:**

- Support the creation of a common UK-wide dashboard, to aid with a four nation approach to decision making.

## BACKGROUND

- CMOs from all 4 nations sit on a joint technical board.
- Northern Ireland currently has the highest rate of cases per 100,000 population, with the 7 day average being 314. This is more than double the UK average of 152.5, and four times higher than Ireland's average of 71.1.
- We understand that CDL has expressed some frustration with the slow progress on the publication of the JBC legal agreement, with talks stalling over Scotland's concerns that shared data will be used politically, for example, with UKG questioning SG's approach using data supplied by the JBC.

### Item 4: Delivery and Operational Issues (25 minutes)

**STEER:** This item will focus on establishing what issues UKG and DAs believe require priority attention and discussion at Covid-O and/or alternative ministerial fora in the coming weeks. Vaccines, testing capacity and higher education are likely to be suggested as agenda items for future discussion.

Baroness Harding will present on the testing capacity and demand, the expected evolution of testing capacity over the coming months. The paper for this item is England focused, however, the ramping up of capacity will increase capacity in DAs under the National Testing Initiative.

### POINTS TO MAKE:

- (If raised by FM, dFM or Minister Swann) You may wish to lean in with support for increasing the testing capacity in Northern Ireland, given the current picture of NI's rate per 100,000 population (314).

### BACKGROUND:

- Testing capacity is set to ramp up rapidly over the next few weeks, with the aim of 500k tests per day by the end of October.
- NI is currently testing more people per 100,000 than other parts of the UK and Ireland.
- Over 59% of tests carried out in Northern Ireland are now provided by the UK Government – with over 330,000 tests carried out under the National Testing Initiative.
- Collaboration between the UK Government and Health and Social Care Trusts has enabled over 560,000 tests in Northern Ireland.
- Your recent engagement with the NI Health Minister has underlined that the Minister is confident in his working relationship with those managing testing in NI.
- Under the National Testing Initiative, UKG fund 4 testing centres across Northern Ireland - in Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, Craigavon and Enniskillen.

### Item 5: Concurrent Risks (10 minutes)

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**STEER:** The focus is likely to be on specific winter challenges which have the potential to impact the effectiveness and feasibility of interventions and the environment in which UKG and the DAs will have to operate within. This includes the impact that severe winter weather could potentially have on supply chains, a second wave on C-19 alongside pandemic flu, and any impacts from D20.

All of these issues are likely to affect the way a response is undertaken and some of the capabilities which would be relied on to protect UK citizens, including how we safely evacuate and shelter affected individuals during a pandemic.

The summit would also inform likely asks on MOD and other partners and help to identify critical points of failure within the system.

**POINTS TO MAKE (if required):**

- Reciprocal information sharing will be critical in order to ensure a common understanding of all risks and appropriate co-ordination of the response.

**BACKGROUND:** XO agreed on 7 Oct that the DAs should be fully brought into the D20 programme through ongoing engagement, involvement in key meetings and shared situational awareness products. This is not about the making of decisions but about enabling the full range of delivery partners to be able to achieve a positive outcome for the end of the transition period. Some detail remains to be worked out, for example exactly what data flows between the Devolved Administrations and UKG, and whether the primary relationship with the DAs will be owned by the central Winter Coordination Cell or other contingency leads where required. This second option would run the risk of an unnecessarily bureaucratic relationship.

Officials' understanding is that NIE's preparations for readiness are less advanced than they might be and their ability to respond to concurrent risks may be limited. DAs have now been given significant access to UKG government meetings and information on UKG readiness. They should reciprocate so that UKG can understand the totality of risks and coordinate the UKG response.

**Item 6: Conclusions and next steps (5 minutes)**

- Round up of areas identified as priorities for further discussion to be brought to Covid-O, or alternative ministerial fora as soon as possible.
- There are no planned comms or press releases.

**ANNEX A**

**ATTENDEES:**

- NICOLA STURGEON (FIRST MINISTER OF SCOTLAND)
- MARK DRAKEFORD (FIRST MINISTER OF WALES)
- ARLENE FOSTER (FIRST MINISTER OF NORTHERN IRELAND)
- MICHELLE O'NEILL (deputy FIRST MINISTER OF NORTHERN IRELAND)
- SECRETARIES OF STATES FOR THE TERRITORIAL OFFICES
- HELEN WHATELY (MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE, UKG)

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- JEANNE FREEMAN (MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE, SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT)
- VAUGHAN GETHING (MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE, WELSH GOVERNMENT)
- ROBIN SWANN (MINISTER FOR HEALTH, NIE)