

**FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER**  
Diane Dodds MLA



**From: Diane Dodds MLA**  
**Minister for the Economy**

Netherleigh  
Massey Avenue  
Belfast BT4 2JP  
Tel: **Irrelevant & Sensitive**  
email: [private.office@economy-ni.gov.uk](mailto:private.office@economy-ni.gov.uk)

**Date: 04 September 2020**

**To: Arlene Foster MLA and Michelle O'Neill**  
**First Minister and deputy First Minister**

## **COVID 19 – POTENTIAL EASEMENTS OF RESTRICTIONS**

Thank you for your Executive paper of 3 September 2020 regarding the above.

As stated in the paper, our key consideration is the need to keep restrictions under review and to make easements as soon as it is possible to do so. The areas of restriction of concern to my Department relate to non-food pubs and conferences/meetings.

I note there is no change in CSA's risk assessment of non-food pubs and reopening for this sector is not recommended at this time. I am very aware that the non-food pub sector is very keen to re-open. These establishments have been closed for some six months and this is a significant challenge for these businesses. While much of our tourism and hospitality industry has had the opportunity to generate much needed revenue over the summer, this has not been possible for non-food pubs.

The deferral of an opening date has caused considerable difficulty for non-food pubs which hoped to re-open on 1st September. To facilitate the re-opening of non-food pubs, it is incumbent on the Department of Health and the Public Health Agency to set out under what conditions they could operate safely and work with the industry to put in place the right conditions. The industry are very keen to work with government to put in place whatever restrictions or guidelines are necessary. I welcome the decision taken at today's Executive Meeting that the Junior Ministers should engage with the industry to plan a way forward that will allow non-food pubs to open.

I note that while the Regulations currently prevent conference facilities opening including those which take place at hotels, the risk assessment would support some easements, short of full conferences. Given the importance to the sector

and wider economy of facilitating business meetings and exhibitions, I welcome CMO view that it should be possible to relax restrictions on meetings and exhibitions subject to appropriate definition being developed. My officials are liaising with TEO/DSO colleagues to take this forward and to ensure the appropriate guidance is in place.

I am copying this to the Attorney General, Departmental Solicitor's Office, First Legislative Counsel and to Executive Secretariat.

Yours sincerely

**Personal Data**

**DIANE DODDS MLA**  
**Minister for the Economy**