

**Stock Take Meeting
14:45 Tuesday 2 June 2020**

Note of Meeting

Attendees

Arlene Foster – First Minister
Michelle O'Neill – Deputy First Minister
Robin Swann – NI Minister for Health
Brandon Lewis – Secretary of State for NI
Antony Harbinson – NI Hub
Mark Larmour -NIO

Test and Trace

The Secretary of State for NI asked about the NI Test and Trace programme. The NI Health Minister said that the current system was working well. It had been built on top of existing health/food systems for tracing food poisoning cases etc. It had been enlarged to 90 operatives and has received very positive feedback to date.

The tracers have been recruited from existing HSC staff and volunteers with previous health experience who had not been deployed to the front line. This is being expanded further by ongoing training of volunteers from across the NICS and a second premises will be opened soon.

It is recognised that this work will be here for the long term, two years at least and so NICS will be recruiting a full time cohort for this work in the near future.

The Secretary of State for NI asked about the NI position on the App? The Minister for Health said that he believed the App was the icing on the cake. NI officials had been exploring how the UK App will interlink with Rol, but that a lot of work was still required to clarify concerns all the DA's have around data, where it would be held, who would have access, retention policy etc.

The Secretary of State for NI said the NIO stood ready to help with any queries or problems related to the App if required. The Health Minister thanked him but felt the ongoing four nation work had this well in hand.

Joint Bio-Security Centre

The First Minister asked about the proposals around the Joint Bio-Security Centre. The SoS said that work to develop the Centre was ongoing and he asked about the Executive's position on the JBC. The First Ministers said that they were aware of the concept but had no sight of the detail and hence her question. The SoS said that he understood that NIE officials had been involved in discussions and that things were

close to conclusion. Anthony Harbinson entered the conversation and said that a meeting had taken place last Friday at official level between the four Administrations.

The Devolved Administrations had all expressed concerns about the lack of detail on the structures and governance arrangement that would be put into place around the Joint Bio-Security Centre.

He said that Whitehall officials had put forward a potential governance structure but that this had yet to be cleared by UK Ministers. The proposed model has a top level oversight structure of the Health Ministers from the four Administrations, supported by a next tier official oversight board made up of the four Health Permanent Secretaries of the four Administrations and a commission group comprising the four Chief Medical Officers.

Further information on this will go to the Health Minister for a paper to then go before the Executive if UK Minister's agree the governance structure.

Persons Self Isolating

The Secretary of State for NI then asked about NI arrangements for those who are currently Self Isolating.

The NI Minister for Health said that they were currently consulting with persons who are shielding to ascertain what their needs are.

NI is working with the UK on sending out new letters to all those currently shielding, although the current advice is that if the R number stays below 1 such persons can go outside from 8 June and meet with 1 member of another household as long as they maintain normal social distancing rules.

UK Border Regulations

The Secretary of State for NI said that the border regulations were being made in Westminster tomorrow and if NI had any queries on these could we come to him.

The NI Minister for Health said that he has not yet had sight of these regulations. He said they this would be very difficult for his department, putting considerable time pressure on them since he would also have to lay regulations. He reiterated the need for timely engagement by UK Government with all the Devolved Administrations.

Action: NIO and DoH to check whether these regulations had been shared with NI and follow up as required.

The Secretary of State for NI said that the Common Travel Area (CTA) had been excluded from the regulations but not if persons had come from outside the CTA first, they could not use the CTA as a way to flout the regulations.

Future Arrangements

The Deputy First Minister said that everyone was in for a difficult time ahead with both the relaxation of the restrictions and especially with the economic impact of Covid. She said we are in a much better place than we feared a few months back and that the NI Executive would remain guided by the strategy they had set out but she had no doubts as to the difficulty of the road ahead.

The Secretary of State for NI agreed that a very tough economic time was ahead for the entire world. He said that things would start moving back to normal and that other issues outside Covid would be discussed from next week onwards. He suggested that perhaps they could look at progress on NDNA issues at the next meeting.

The Deputy First Minister welcomed this news, stating that the Executive had only been up and running just before the crisis began and they were keen to discuss many issues with the Secretary of State going forward.