

Narrative on Proposal selection.

A total of 14 proposals have been submitted by five Departments (DfE, DfC, DfI, DAERA and TEO) for consideration in the 15 April review. These all fall within phases 2 and 3 of the Pathway and are summarised in **Annex A**. The proposals have been subject to the process as outlined to the Executive by HOCS.

Under this process, the Cross-Departmental group considered these proposals in the context of the priorities outlined in the Pathway, in particular:

“Our approach to further relaxations will likely focus on those activities which are of most benefit to our health and wellbeing, community and the economy and considered to result in a lower risk of increasing transmission. In practice, this is likely to include families first, outdoor activities/venues where it is possible to implement effective mitigations and practice social distancing, before those indoor activities/venues, where there is a higher risk of transmission.”

The focus of the Group’s consideration was to ensure the bundle of proposals put forward was consistent with the Executive’s desire to be cautious and ambitious, and to take small steps with pauses embedded to assess the impact on transmission before moving to further relaxations.

The Group considered the decisions that the Executive has taken to date, as well as a careful and measured review of the proposals individually and collectively, looking at the associated risks, mitigations, interdependencies and evidenced need to move forward with relaxations in each sector at this point.

This included analysis of the health, economic and community related statistics and trends as outlined in the Pathway, together with the position across other devolved administrations and the Irish Government, and a comparison with the corresponding position that the Executive faced in 2020.

All of this analysis has taken on board the ongoing work of the four reviews led by UKG on mass events, social distancing, immunity certification and travel.

There has also been consideration of key strategic factors, including the vaccine roll out, both domestically and internationally, the third wave data from across Europe, the introduction of managed isolation for incoming international travellers, the potential use of mass asymptomatic testing for transmission control and the threat from Variants of Concern.

On that basis, the following bundle of proposals is being submitted for CMO/CSA advice:

- Six proposals in relation to driving instruction and testing, close contact services, outdoor visitor attractions, outdoor squad training and outdoor Equine Assisted Therapy and Learning, with a proposed reopening date on 23 April (see detail in **Annex B**); and
- Four proposals in relation to unlicensed premises, retail, outdoor competitive sport, indoor individual exercise with a reopening date of the middle of May, subject to an end of April ratification by DoH (see detail in **Annex C**).

A single date for reopening has been selected to provide for clearer messaging, ease of producing amends to the Regulations and to allow for a clear point to assess their collective impact before moving forward with further relaxations.

In the context of the process outlined above, four proposals are not being submitted for CMO/CSA advice for the 15 April review point, on the basis that they have a higher transmission risk factor and their overall strategic fit at this stage in the pandemic is lacking. This, along with the need to allow time to assess the impact of the changes already made, has resulted in them being included. It is therefore recommended that these proposals are considered at the next review point on 13 May. For completeness, details of these proposals are attached at **Annex D**.

The process through which this assessment has been made has included consultation at the Cross-Departmental Group, complemented by close liaison with Departmental leads.

ANNEX A

	Dept	Proposal	Phase	Date proposed by Dept. lead for review	Date proposed by Dept. for reopening	Cross Departmental group recommended dates
1.	Dfl	Resume driving instruction and theory tests	2	15 April	1 May	23 April
2.	Dfl	Resume driving testing	2	15 April	4 May	23 April
3.	DfE	Reopening of Close Contact	2	15 April	22 April	23 April
4.	DfE	Reopening of outdoor visitor attractions	2	15 April	23 April	23 April
5.	DfC	Return of squad training for outdoor sports for organisations and clubs.	2	15 April	26 April	23 April
6.	DAERA	Equine Assisted Therapy and Learning (EATL) to resume on both an outdoor and indoor basis in gatherings of up to 10 persons as soon as is possible.	2/3	15 April	29 April	23 April – outdoors only
7.	DfE	Unlicensed premises (coffee shops)	3	15 April	23 April	Indicative date of 21 May – to be ratified on 13 May
8.	DfC	Return of individual activities in controlled gyms, swimming pools and other large venues	3	15 April	End of April	Indicative date of 21 May – to be ratified on 13 May
9.	DfC	Return of competitive outdoor sport.	2	15 April	17 May	Indicative date of 21 May – to be ratified on 13 May
10.	DfE	Reopening of all retail	3	15 April	22 April	Indicative date of 21 May – to be ratified on 13 May
11.	DfE	Reopening of indoor visitor attractions	3	15 April	7 May	Review delayed until 13 May
12.	DfE	Licensed Premises	3	15 April	7 May	Review delayed until 13 May
13.	DfE	Tourist Accommodation	3	15 April	7 May	Review delayed until 13 May
14.	DfC	Return of indoor group exercise and training in numbers limited to suit the venue.	3	15 April	Mid May	Review delayed until 13 May

The following proposals are submitted for advice from CMO/dCSA, with a view to going to the Executive for decision on 15 April, and then reopening in the following 2 week period.

Proposals 1&2

The resumption of driving instruction and theory tests, followed closely by the resumption of driving testing will have a beneficial impact on young people, particularly those in rural communities. It will also positively impact the economy. The Pathway has this as first step toward the reopening of the wider close contact services. The proposal outlines strict mitigations.

Proposal 3

Reopening of closer contact will be a major step with several mitigations in place, including recording of details, limits on numbers, appointments only and wearing of masks. It is important economically and from a personal wellbeing perspective. Whilst they falls outside the Executive's immediate priorities outlined in the Pathway they remain a high priority area and is considered an area where reopening would be particularly welcomed across society.

Proposal 4

Opening of outdoor visitor attractions will provide a safer environment for people to get out and about in a way that permits social distancing easily and is outside, therefore lowering the likelihood of transmission. It will have mental health benefits and with the weather becoming more pleasant will afford families the opportunity to go out. It aligns with the priority focus on outdoor venues in the Pathway, and with families/young people.

Proposal 5

A return to squad training outdoors in a small step to the full resumption of outdoor competitive sport and a further step in the current allowance for 15 people to participate. It again aligns to the outdoor message, has strong mental and physical health benefits for those involved.

Proposal 6

Equine Assisted Therapy and Learning taking place outdoors only. This is a highly beneficial activity for those who take part, enhancing their quality of life and mental health and wellbeing.

The following proposals are submitted for advice from CMO/dCSA with a view to going to the Executive for a decision on 15 April, to announce indicative dates for reopening.

Proposal 7

Return of individual activities in controlled gyms, swimming pools and other large venues, this would be the first move to indoor sport and would be on an individual basis only. Strong mitigations are proposed. The initial focus on outdoor venues should be completed prior to indoor venues opening, therefore this would be delayed until that had been completed.

Proposal 8

The return of outdoor competitive sport would again have significant mental and physical health benefits for the participant and is the final step in the full return to outdoor sport.

Proposals 9

Reopening of all remaining retail will be a major step with several mitigations in place, limits of numbers and wearing of masks. It is important economically. Whilst it falls outside the Executive's immediate priorities outlined in the Pathway it remains a high priority area and as such will be considered in this batch, but with a delayed indicative date to allow assessment of the first group of proposals and to allow the sector to prepare.

Proposal 10

The reopening of unlicensed premises. This sector is widely opened currently offering take away only services. Sectoral engagement has shown there has been a high level of investment in logistics to enable a safer return and the opportunity to socialise with family and friends in these settings albeit with limits in place would be of a significant benefit to people and show a positive move forward in the relaxations.

The following proposals are not being submitted for advice as they are considered too high risk, or do not adhere to Pathway.

Proposals 11

The reopening of indoor visitor attractions has not been proposed as it falls to phase 3 of the Pathway, subsequent to the reopening of the outdoor attractions which are included in the package for consideration.

Proposal 12

The reopening of licensed premises falls after the reopening of unlicensed premises, which is included in the package for consideration but with a delayed indicative date. This is a higher risk area, with the influence of alcohol considered to lower inhibitors and therefore introduce riskier behaviours. It would be optimal to have assessed the introduction of the proposals going forward today before reopening this area.

Proposal 13

Tourist Accommodation reopening has not been included. The stay at home message is only being lifted from 12 April and the message will return to stay local which would not align to a reopening of the sector at this point.

Proposal 14

A return to indoor group exercise is considered to high risk at this. If the package is approved, all outdoor sport will have resumed as well as individual sport with an indicative date. The time of year means the restriction left on sport are minima and the impact of the initial individual indoor sport return should be assessed before a move to group use.