

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

**Civil Contingency Group (COVID-19 Response) Meeting
08:30 Thursday 21 May 2020
Block B, Level 5 Conference Room, Castle Buildings**

Note of Meeting

Attendees

David Sterling (Chair)
Arlene Foster – FM
Michelle O'Neill - DFM
Declan Kearney - JM
Gordon Lyons – JM
Derek Baker – DE
Michael Bloomfield – NIAS
Mike Brennan – DfE
Katrina Godfrey – DfI
Sue Gray – DOF
Simon Byrne – PSNI
Alan Todd - PSNI
Lesley Hogg – NI Assembly
Maria Jennings – FSA
Mark Larmour – NIO
Peter May – DoJ
Stephen Reid – LG
Joan McCaffrey – LG
Chris McNabb – EIS
Denis McMahon – DAERA
Tracy Meharg – DfC
Jill Minne – NICS HR
Michael Graham - NIFRS
Richard Pengelly – DoH
Karen Pearson – TEO
Andy Cole – TEO
Andrew McCormick – TEO
Anthony Harbinson – NI Hub
Hugh Widdis – DSO

NR – Deputy Chief of Staff NI Hub (Yellow Team)
Secretariat Team – NI Hub

NR - Head of Secretariat NI Hub (Yellow Team)

NR - Secretariat NI Hub (Yellow Team)

NR – Deputy Head of Secretariat NI Hub (Yellow Team)

Apologies

Chris Stewart – TEO

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

2. COVID-19 - CURRENT SITUATION AND PROGNOSIS

Richard Pengelly (DoH) updated the meeting:

- To date there have been just over 4,400 confirmed cases in Northern Ireland and 494 deaths, further comprehensive statistics will be provided tomorrow a.m. by NISRA;
- The Mental Health Action Plan has been published and an update on testing strategy was completed last night for discussion by the Executive today;
- Contact Tracing continues to move forward and digital support for the 'app' is a work in progress; and
- A request for Departments seeking further relaxations has been commissioned for the next review of the Regulations on 28/05/20 with responses to be run through the risk matrix and presented to the Executive.

3. ACTIONS REVIEW

David Sterling provided updates on the following actions:

- **CCG1604/03 – Loss of Income for Councils** – closed as DoF to provide support with DoF and DfC working together on final details; and
- **CCG1304/02 – Regulations** – this can be closed following decisions made by the Executive in the last week.

4. SIT-REP UPDATE

Anthony Harbinson (COS) updated CCG on:

- The DAERA £25m funding boost for the beef and dairy sectors;
- More than 2500 council staff have been furloughed;
- Increased traffic flows
- The comparisons between Northern Ireland and other countries requested have now been incorporated to the Sit-Rep.

CoS invited delegates to let the NI Hub know if there are any more data sets or graphs that they would like to see incorporated.

He confirmed that moving forward the Sit-Rep will be produced from Monday to Friday each week with the exception of the bank holiday Monday 25/05/20.

He added that the NI Hub will be downscaled to two teams with effect from 26/05/20 for a two week period; Team A based at Castle Buildings and Team B at Goodwood House. Following this there will be a further downscale to a single team at Castle Buildings until the end of June '20. After this the NI Hub will step down with team members to be kept in "warm-storage" with routine updates provided. A half-team will be in place to provide weekly Sit-Reps until the end of June.

5. LEGISLATION UPDATE

Chris Stewart (TEO) advised HoCS, in advance of today's meeting, that there was no further update.

6. MEMBER UPDATES

PSNI – ACC Todd advised that pre-lockdown demands on policing were rapidly returning to normal levels. Enquiries to police on what members of the public are now permitted to do under the Regulations are rising exponentially. There will continue to be protective (PPE) patrols, responders and custody arrangements. Neighbourhood teams will be brought back over the next few weeks.

Regulation 5 enforcement has been rolled back but opinion is there is no value to enforcement given the number of exemptions and exceptions now in effect. Regulation 6 is an ongoing issue with young people gathering outdoors and in numbers; work is ongoing with councils and others. Regulations 3 and 4 are to be reviewed going forward in conjunction with local government. In terms of messaging around the regulations, police are clear that they do not want relaxations in terms of Regulation 5 being misconstrued by the public. As an exemplar, ACC Todd advised that North Coast "resort" traffic was up by 40% last weekend.

NIAS – nothing to escalate.

NIFRS – nothing to escalate.

Local Government – Stephen Reid advised that household recycling centres have reopened, they are busy but are being consistently coordinated which helps in regard to social distancing and other necessary measures. He agreed with ACC Todd that there is an issue on interpretation of relaxations. Local Government is working with SOLACE to coordinate arrangements as they look towards opening other amenity and recreational facilities. He thanked the Executive, its ministers, Tracy Meharg and officials for the funding for furloughing and job retention; he lauded the level of cooperation and expressed his hopes for its continuation.

FSA – Maria Jennings advised that they are closely observing the positive diagnoses in meat plants; this is an issue affecting the UK and RoI so they are putting as many controls as possible in place including for returns to work.

DE – nothing to escalate.

DfE – nothing to escalate.

DfI – nothing to escalate.

DoF – Sue Gray updated that the £10k and £25k grant schemes closed last night and that the Department will be able to provide an update soon.

NI Assembly – nothing to escalate.

NIO – nothing to escalate.

DoJ – nothing to escalate.

DAERA – Denis McMahon updated that the Minister has approved the opening of country and forest car parks from 27/05/20. The Department is updating the Executive on food supply status; this benchmarking is not currently of particular concern but intended for the future should a similar situation arise.

DfC – nothing to escalate.

DSO – nothing to escalate.

EIS – nothing communications issues to escalate.

7. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

EIS – Chris McNabb agreed with ACC Todd (first point at **6.** above). He advised that NI Direct content is being updating in user friendly terms. EIS indicated it is likely they will need further advice from officials in regard to what the current relaxations mean. He advised that the Regulation 5 “Stay at Home” was no longer enforceable and that he believes messaging should reflect that the public should follow the spirit of the Regulation instead of the letter regarding enforcement.

HoCS – Elucidated that messaging around the regulations, and their interpretation, cannot exacerbate this current situation; he advised that the subject will be discussed with members offline.

8. AOB AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Date of next meeting: TBC. There will be no meeting next Thursday 28/05/20 unless matters arise.