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TEO FIRST MINISTER'S OFFICE MEETING NOTE

Date 6 January 2021

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		UKG		
DATE:	6 January 2021 17:15 – 18:00	NOTE WRITTEN BY		Deirdre Griffith
VENUE:	Zoom		Officials present	FM Adviser present: Philip Weir dFM Adviser present: Dara O'Hagan
LIST OF ATTENDEES INCLUDED: First Minister – Arlene Foster Junior Minister Kearney Robin Swann, Health Minister Dr Michael McBride, CMO Michael Gove, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster First Minister of Wales First Minister of Scotland Dr Van Tam , UK deputy CMO Brandon Lewis, SOS NI FM PPS – Deirdre Griffith Karen Pearson, TEO dFM office PS- tbc Other officials from SG/WG/UKG				
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:		General update on current Covid Position: International travel and need for negative test in advance of travelling; distribution of vaccines and the need for accurate statistical reporting and priority groups for vaccination. Also discussed impact of restrictions on examination; covid secure workplaces; and non-essential retail.		
ACTION POINTS:		None for TEO		

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Detailed official readout prepared by Karen Pearson

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CDL called the DAs this evening to discuss international travel and vaccines programs. Copying to CMO and Bryan Dooley, DoH.

FM, JM Kearney and JM Lyons, Minister Swann and CMO attended. Main points:

CDL:

- COVID O will discuss international travel tomorrow. Proposal is to build on the existing approach to self isolation. Proof of a negative test before travel, taken 48 to 72 hours before departure.
- Hauliers will be exempt
- Small number of other exemptions will be discussed at COVID O tomorrow
- British residents, enforcements, and what constitutes a valid test will be in the COVID O paper tomorrow
- If agreed at COVID O tomorrow, it will be announced on Friday. Implementation date will be discussed
- Passenger locator form will be revised
- Temporary ban on South Africa arrivals will be maintained

WG:

- Keen to support a 4 nations approach. But need to see this as a modest step
- Needs CMOs' endorsement
- Needs to be workable in practice
- Need to know what happens if people arrive without a negative test
- Need to understand issues for ports, including those who arrive via Dublin

SG:

- Strongly supportive of operating on a 4 nations basis
- Who does the checks, where does responsibility lie?
- Additional layer of protection
- Helpful to agree, announce and implement asap

FM:

- Dublin are moving towards a negative test approach too, subject to confirmation
- Strongly supportive
- Need clarity on who decides the person can travel

JM Kearney

- Welcome and essential to maximize measures at our disposal
- Need a 2 islands approach, synchronized and co-ordinate

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SofSNI:

- Irish Government introducing a similar system
- They are meeting tomorrow
- Officials are working together
- Simon Coveney keen that officials and CMOs look for common ground
- Should have more information in time for COVID O

CDL:

- Grateful for support
- Papers will cover tests undertaken in other jurisdictions
- Should not over sell the capacity of the measure, but it is an additional helpful step

Professor VT:

- Should not put too much science emphasis on the importance of this step
- The timing and quality of the tests may differ in other jurisdictions
- Supportive, and we are ahead on vaccinations
- Issue of imported cases becomes more important as and when we have increased protection from vaccines

CDL:

- On vaccines, we are ensuring distribution on Barnett principles and within JCVI
- 165,750 P and 50,400 OA for NI (other DA allocations were outlined) so far
- Clear forward look on supply but we protect the overall supply numbers
- Need to share the forward supply line with DAs
- For DAs to determine what to say to citizens
- PM proposes that there will be daily figures on numbers vaccinated from Monday against JCVI cohorts
- Important to keep public informed with caveats
- Handling the program across the administrations has helped build confidence
- SG has asked if teachers should be prioritized. UK judgement is that the JCVI program should be maintained at this time
- Protecting the vulnerable and NHS workers helps build confidence
- Greatest safety for greatest number

SG:

- On supply and pace and reporting, support daily reporting when figures are robust
- Sensitivity about quantity understood, but there will be scrutiny on whether we are going as fast as we can
- That position will come under pressure and might not be sustainable
- Similar position on quantum of vaccinations already undertaken in line with the PM's outline
- Support the JCVI approach, position is whether there is scope for a four nations position on teachers when there is sufficient supply
- Would be good to give clarity to the education sector when we can

FM:

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- Daily reporting, need to be robust statistically
- Need to make sure that the NI figures are in the public domain and consistent approach across administrations, otherwise leads to unnecessary comment

JM Kearney:

- Supportive of consistency in how we publish data

Minister Swann:

- Support the previous comments
- Need to be statistically robust
- Have used approximations but would like to move to a standard and robust approach

WG:

- Certainty of supply is key
- Need to know in advance for maximizing its use
- Under discussion between health Ministers
- On reporting, aiming for daily reporting. But must be robust
- Below the headline in Wales, numbers are relatively small which drive big % changes at sub category levels
- Must tell the public something useful and avoid inaccurate media reporting
- Supportive of JCVI approach. Many bids in to be prioritized
- Some teachers will be in the vulnerable categories
- Sympathy for teachers over 60 in the new variant context. Can they be brought into the vulnerable category?

Professor VT:

- JCVI list is sound
- In care homes, aged 65 and over – 43 people vaccinated saves a life
- In other groups, it is in 100s to save 1 life
- Then 1000s for 50 year olds
- 62,000 vaccinated for young teachers needed to avert 1 death. Not a supportable case
- Teachers over 60 will be included quite soon, and if they have co-morbidities they may be in the CEV category anyway. Possible they will be vaccinated before schools fully open

Dr McBride:

- Extensive time looking at this
- Ministers are standing on very firm ground in sticking to the JCVI list

CMO Wales:

- Agree entirely
- Anyone who gets bumped up bumps someone else down

CMO Scotland:

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- Agree entirely

CDL:

- Need for robust statistics fully understood
- Information and confidence are key
- SofS Health will ensure there is line of sight on supply

WG:

- Would like to explore Covid secure workplaces and schools examinations, we can come back to these
- Supermarket obligations, we are exploring what can be done and would welcome a discussion

SG:

- Support further work on supermarkets
- Support work on Covid secure workplaces, but would like to look at restrictions on non essential businesses in more detail
- Interested in the Irish Government's announcements

FM:

- We are seeing supermarkets selling non essential goods, and non essential shops are concerned about this
- Looking at options tomorrow including floor space

JM Kearney:

- Situation is grave, 13 deaths and 1900 confirmed cases today
- Executive has adopted measures and we will have to keep under review, alongside messaging and enforcement
- Will look at the provisions introduced by the Irish Government
- Good engagement with civil society including retail, business and construction. Collegiate and joined up approach

CDL:

- Workplaces. BEIS are engaging with TUC. Will ask BEIS to update DAs
- Will ensure exams regulators engage
- Supermarkets, we should keep under review. Can ask George Eustace to reinforce messaging with supermarkets
- Mobility figures, credit card spend etc. We can seek to share the data.

Meeting ends 18.00

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Draft UKG Communique

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and First Ministers Call

Communiqué: 7 January 2021

This communiqué summarises the meeting chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 6 January 2021.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster chaired a meeting with the First Ministers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to discuss the ongoing COVID-19 response on 6 January. The meeting took place via video conference.

The attending Ministers were:

For the UK Government: The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP; The Secretary of State for Wales, Rt Hon Simon Hart MP; and The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP.

For the Scottish Government: First Minister, Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP.

For the Welsh Government: First Minister, Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS.

For the Northern Ireland Executive: First Minister, Rt Hon Arlene Foster MLA; Minister of Health, Robin Swann MLA; Junior Minister, Declan Kearney MLA; and Junior Minister, Gordon Lyons MLA.

The group discussed the COVID-19 response, including the approach taken by the UK Government and the devolved administrations to international travel, vaccine deployment, and priority areas for continued joint working.

The participants agreed that ministers from the UK Government and devolved administrations will meet again on 7 January to discuss international travel, and that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will continue to chair regular engagement via videoconference with the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales and the First Minister and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland.