

discussions to agree ownership since the issue straddles the remit of Health and Economy Ministers.

FM invited views on how quickly she and dFM could expect senior level engagement with HMG ahead of reviewing COVID Regs. FM noted that social distancing was working well in NI but some emerging concerns at increase in traffic in recent days and key messaging still needed that now is not the time to relax restrictions or compliance.

SOS (NI) referenced the return to full time duties for the PM and he would anticipate senior engagement (COBR or special Committee) early next week following this week's Cabinet meeting on Thursday of this week. He noted the ongoing participation of NI Ministers in the various Ministerial work streams and suggested that brief update meetings like this would be useful on a weekly basis from now on.

dFM referred to the imminent quad meeting on Thursday and noted the importance of maintaining regular N/S and E/W liaison. She reinforced FM's thanks for support on ferries and for ongoing work for hauliers. SOS (NI) agreed to come back with an update on progress on the haulier issue.

dFM referred to the PM statement yesterday and the importance of responding to NI needs on tracing, tracking and PPE supplies. dFM updated that the NI Executive was beginning to consider post-COVID environment with a focus on recovery planning. SOS (NI) noted a similar approach in HMG, referencing ongoing work with BAIS and HMT on economic recovery for businesses. A key consideration was the serious impact on the hospitality and tourism industry and the consequences for the economy. NIO getting mixed messages – some believe hospitality industry could re-open restaurants with reduced capacity, with others less convinced of the viability of this approach.

FM noted that this points towards a need for more conversations with a wide range of sectors. She further noted that other devolved regions had issued recovery plans but NI has yet to do so, reinforcing the importance of regular early engagement and advance warning of HMG direction of travel. FM cited the Scotland announcement in relation to use of face coverings on transport as an issue that would quickly become topical in NI and public expectation on clarity of policy.

FM sought clarification as to applicability to NI of the tracking and tracing app and SOS(NI) confirmed that NI will be included and he committed to sharing more detail. In relation to face coverings (including but not restricted to masks), FM and dFM noted that any decision in relation to absolute benefits may be marginal but the issue was more one of public confidence and assurance.