MINISTERIAL ENGAGEMENT BRIEFING: PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES AT THE BORDER

Engagement title		Meeting with Michael Gove, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Robin Swann, Minister for Health Northern Ireland. We understand that a Minister from the Welsh Government will also join the call.
Engagement timing		Monday 29 June 2020 9:30 am – 10.15 am
Venue and full address		Cabinet Office are setting up the call.
Background/Purpose include invitation history		The Scottish Government, Welsh Government, UK Government and Northern Ireland Executive jointly moved to establish public health measures at the border including self-isolation measures. These measures are now being reviewed across the four nations including the potential to exempt travellers from certain countries from the self-isolation requirement. While the original intention had been to discuss and agree these measures on a four nation basis the UK Government has pre-empted this discussion by announcing their intention to exempt travellers from low and medium risk countries.
Relevance to core script		Decrease the risk of outbreaks through transmission from imported cases of COVID-19.
Key message		• Register our concern about the handling of this issue in relation to the engagement across the four nations and the announcement from the UK Government which was not shared with the Sottish Government in advance; which pre-empted any four nations Ministerial discussion and which implies that the decision from the UK Government applies across all four nations; • Set out our position on future exemptions • Seek to agree timing of any changes – UK Government are looking for an implementation date of 6 July which will be very challenging for all of the DAs especially Wales who have the added time pressures of translation of legislation; • Seek to agree information and handling

Attendees		Michael Gove, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Robin Swann, Minister for Health Northern Ireland Minister from the Welsh Government
Annexes		**Annex A: UK Government position paper** **Annex B: Bullet points** **Annex C: Submission to First Minister** **Annex C: Letter to Mr Gove**
Media Handling include mobile number(s)		To be discussed following the meeting
Official Support include mobile number(s)		Officials joining the meeting: Rachel Sunderland Irrelevant & Sensitive

ANNEX A

PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES AT THE BORDER – PAPER FROM UK GOVERNMENT

PDF ATTACHED

ANNEX B

PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES AT THE BORDER – PAPER FROM UK GOVERNMENT KEY BULLET POINTS

Introduction

- It is right that we regularly review the effectiveness of, and requirement for the public health measures we have put in place to protect the population.

- We agreed on the desirability of a four nation approach when establishing the border health measures and UK Government officials repeatedly assured officials from the devolved administrations of their commitment to continuing a shared approach during the review process, including through ministerial discussions.

- Our understanding had been that the UK Government shared our commitment to a four nation approach to this issue.

- It is therefore deeply regrettable that the UK Government elected to announce its intentions to establish 'air-bridges' to a number of countries prior to any engagement with Ministers from the Scottish Government, Welsh Government or Northern Ireland Executive.

- It is also unfortunate that your media announcement on the possible introduction of 'air bridges' failed to make it clear that the UK Government was only referring to the introduction of changes for travellers residing in England.

Review

- The Scottish Government has also undertaken a review of the border health measures and concluded that these measures are reasonable and proportionate and therefore that both the International Travel Regulations and the Information Regulations should remain in place

Exemptions

- Note the proposals by the UK Government to exempt countries assessed as low and medium risk

- Note the view from the English CMO that 'epidemiology was not the only issue that should be considered when taking decisions around measures at the border; ministers should also consider other factors including wider public confidence, travel and trade, which may be more important in policy terms'.

- Scottish Minsters are clear that the proposed differential approach in terms of applying an exemption to lower risk countries is reasonable as long as this is firmly based on a public health justification. Would be very concerned about any approach to differentiate between countries on non-public health grounds.

- We support a risk-based approach to exempting travellers from certain countries from the self-isolation requirements of the border health measures but only if this is evidence based on public health grounds.

- Support an approach which exempts countries assessed as low risk (green)

- [FM considering position on exempting medium risk countries]

- Specific queries – why has no assessment been undertaken of Taiwan?

- Deeply concerned about the proposal to exempt the Philippines. Note reporting that the WHO has said that the Philippines has the fastest increase in COVID-19 cases in the Western Pacific region. We cannot agree to an approach which would include such an exemption.

- We have had limited opportunity to scrutinise the list but given the points raised in relation to Taiwan and Philippines we have some concerns about the list. Even if we agree exemption of medium list I&S suggest we insist Philippines should be removed and we need to understand rationale re Taiwan.

- If there is any divergence in approach we will jointly need to ensure clear guidance is given to travellers.

Sectoral Approach

- We have seen the list of proposed sectoral exemptions and also undertaken our own analysis of sectoral exemptions

- We are broadly content with the proposals for sectoral exemptions.

- On elite sports we propose to exempt specified events rather than apply a blanket exemption

Timetable

- An implementation date of 6 July looks very challenging. This is likely to be most challenging for Wales who are pushing for the 7 July and we may wish to support them on this point

- Note the UK Government's proposal to move to a 28 day review period to align with the timetable for the review of the English social distancing regulations. Note that Scotland has maintained a 21 day review timetable for our social distancing regulations.

- Agree next steps in relation to any announcement and handling