

## **COVID-19 Northern Ireland Updates 30<sup>th</sup> March:**

### **Health**

- Northern Ireland now has 533 confirmed cases of coronavirus and 22 people have now died as a result of the illness
- The clinical director of the Ulster Hospital believes a 'significant amount of patients' will need ventilators and the health system has been preparing for such a demand
- Randox Labs are working alongside the government to provide a new coronavirus testing programme for NHS staff
- The first Belfast Covid-19 assessment centre is to open on Tuesday in West Belfast
- Over 9,000 people have expressed an interest to work in health service after a government appeal for extra staff

### **Political Landscape**

- The NI Executive will sign an agreement with the Irish government to ensure an island-wide response to the pandemic with a North-South Ministerial meeting scheduled to take place tomorrow
- A media briefing will be held on 31<sup>st</sup> March by senior officials from the Department of Finance to provide a high-level overview of the NI Budget
- The UK government is cracking down on misinformation about the coronavirus pandemic and it is setting up a response team to quell fake news
- An EU-UK meeting on Brexit is set to go ahead this week via video link

### **Business**

- Food firms in Northern Ireland are drawing up new guidance on business operations during the crisis to ensure appropriate social distancing is maintained at their production facilities
- The Minister for Economy will amend legislation so that workers in NI can carry unused annual leave from this year into the next two years, this legislation will bring NI into line with changes made in GB last week
- EY's Chief Economist Neil Gibson believes the NI economy will shrink by 10% in 2020

### **Infrastructure**

- Demand for electricity has dropped significantly compared with this time last year, SONI estimate a reduced consumption of 10-20% as a result of the pandemic
- NI Railways have revised opening hours at its contact centre and has encouraged customers to get in touch via email
- Easyjet has officially grounded its entire fleet and Ryanair will extend its limited schedule by another to week to April 9th



- Justice Minister Naomi Long is temporarily release 200 prisoners in response to a staffing crisis caused by the coronavirus
- Cemeteries across Northern Ireland will be closed to the public as a result of the new emergency legislation, with the exception of funerals and burials

### **Education**

- The Department of Education has launched an appeal for volunteers to help schools to stay open

### **Housing**

- Financial measures have now been put in place by the Department of Communities to protect tenants from being evicted
- The UK's main broadband providers have removed data caps during the pandemic

### **Sport**

- The Irish Open scheduled to take place in May has now been postponed

