

## **COVID-19 Northern Ireland Updates 7<sup>th</sup> April:**

Following on from the major development in the UK last night, with the news that Prime Minister Boris Johnson has entered an intensive care unit due to a deterioration in his condition, it has now been confirmed that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Dominic Raab, will collectively take on the Prime Minister's responsibilities in his absence.

On the island of Ireland, a memorandum of understanding has now been agreed between the respective departments of health in NI and ROI which will strengthen the all-island public health response. The memo will focus on a number of key areas including, research, modelling, public health and non-pharmaceutical measures.

Please see below for other key updates in Northern Ireland, pertaining to public health, political landscape, business, agriculture, construction and the economic outlook.

### **Public Health**

- There are currently 1255 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Northern Ireland with a further 3 deaths in the last 24 hours, bringing the total to number of deaths to 73.
- A special drive through testing facility has opened today at the Balmoral MOT centre, just off Boucher Road. Infrastructure Minister, Nichola Mallon, speaking at the launch, confirmed that all DVA centres across Northern Ireland are to be used as testing facilities
- A team of researchers at Queens University will lead clinical trials on an innovative cell therapy treatment for Covid-19 patients, beginning this week

### **Political Landscape**

- Today saw the first meeting of the Assembly's Covid-19 ad hoc committee, which contains all 90 MLAs, has been established to ensure thorough scrutiny of ministers during the crisis
- The Executive Office addressed the committee first and faced questions on key areas such as PPE, Welfare, and Business Support

### **Business**

- The First Minister has today stated that the £25,000 grant for businesses in the hospitality and tourism sector should be in place by the end of the week, adding that there is always a lag between an announcement and the implementation of funding
- Stena Line, a key player in logistics and transportation on the island of Ireland, has been forced to furlough 600 employees due to a decline in bookings and freight volumes. It transports 65% of all freights in Northern Ireland

### **Agriculture**

- Following on from the Ulster Farmers Union concerns last week around beef imports, DAERA Minister, Edwin Poots, has today raised these concerns with major



supermarkets and has sought assurances from retailers that they will support the local supply chain

### **Construction**

- The Construction Employers Federation is seeking clarity from the UK Government on what is classified as essential business. Managing Director of CEF, John Armstrong, is expecting a redefined list from the government in the next few days, to avoid further confusion in the construction sector

### **Economic Outlook**

- The Chief Economist for Ulster Bank, Richard Ramsey, believes NI's economic recovery will take years to reach pre-crisis levels such is the scale of decline that has already been experienced

