

COVID-19 Northern Ireland Updates 31st March:

Health

- The number of confirmed cases in Northern Ireland has risen to 586 and there has been 28 deaths as a result of the virus
- A former WHO Director believes that Easter Weekend is likely to be the peak of the crisis in the UK and Ireland
- Early evidence from the Republic of Ireland has indicated that the response measures introduced, seemed to have slowed the growth rate of the new infections
- The ROI growth rate has dropped from 33% at start of the crisis to 15% according the latest figures
- The Chief Medical Officers from NI and ROI have signed a memorandum of understanding to develop an all-island approach
- The GP who is overseeing the assessment centre in Belfast has stated that centre is not a 'screening service' and that patients will not be tested at the facility
- As part of the contingency plans, the Maze/Long Kesh site is being considered as an area for a field hospital

Business

- Over 6000 payments have been made to companies as part of the Small Business Grants Scheme and a further 3000 payments have been processed today
- Further to EY's economic analysis from yesterday, the accounting firm has warned the crisis could see 132,000 job losses in Northern Ireland. They have also indicated that there is a possibility of a depression.
- Several UK airport handling companies have written to the UK govt today warning that they are at risk of collapse with some 25,000 jobs under threat
- The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) has written to the UK govt warning that millions of plants, shrubs and trees could be wasted in the coming days and weeks
- Supermarket sales in the UK have risen dramatically over the last few weeks with recorded sales levels higher than those seen at Christmas according to consumer analysts Kantar

Political Landscape

- A North-South Ministerial conference call took place today with the aim of developing a co-ordinated approach to tackle the crisis
- The Executive Office are also holding talks with the NI Secretary Brandon Lewis in relation to Covid-19

Housing

- Many UK mortgage lenders have now stopped offering new mortgage deals as the housing market enters a lockdown period

