EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 9) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

S.R. 2020 No. 193

1. Introduction

1.1 This explanatory memorandum has been prepared by the Department of Health and is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly to accompany the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 9) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

1.2 The Statutory Rule is made under sections 25B and 25F(2) of the Public Health Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 ("the 1967 Act") and is subject to negative resolution.

2. Purpose of the Regulations

2.1 These Regulations amend the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 ("The principal Regulations") to—

(a) enable a regional approach to be taken to removals and additions to the list of exempt countries and territories, in Schedule 3 to the principal Regulations, from which passengers arriving in Northern Ireland are not required to self-isolate;

(b) amend the entry for "Greece" to exclude specific Greek islands (Lesvos, Tinos, Serifos, Crete, Mykonos, Santorini and Zakynthos) from the list of exempt countries and territories, in Schedule 3;

(c) amend the list of specified competitions in Schedule 4 to the principal Regulations, which is relevant to the exemption from the requirement to self-isolate for elite sportspersons.

2.2 Passengers are not required to self-isolate on arrival in Northern Ireland if, during the 14 days preceding their arrival, they have only been in or transited through exempt countries or territories, or exempt parts of countries or territories. Passengers who have been in or transited through a non-exempt country or territory, or a non-exempt part of a country or territory, must self-isolate until 14 days have elapsed since the day after they last left a non-exempt country or territory, or a non-exempt part of a country or territory. The changes to Schedule 3 and Schedule 1 will not affect passengers who arrive in Northern Ireland before 4.00 am on 9th September 2020.

3. Matters of special interest to the Northern Ireland Assembly

3.1 The Statutory Rule is made under the 1967 Act, in breach of the 21 day rule. This has been necessary to introduce the requirement at the same time as the other UK regions in order to have consistency of approach.

3.2 Further, the Regulations provide that the Department of Health must review the need for the measures imposed by the Regulations at least once every 28 days.

3.3 The Regulations cease to have effect at the end of the period of one year beginning on the day on which they came into operation, i.e. the 8 June 2020.

4. Legislative Context

4.1 The 1967 Act and regulations made under it provide a legislative framework for health protection in Northern Ireland.

4.2 Part 1A of the 1967 Act, as inserted by the Coronavirus Act 2020 ("the 2020 Act"), provides a legal basis to protect the public from threats arising from infectious disease or contamination with coronavirus, and includes powers to impose restrictions or requirements on people, and in relation to things and premises, for use in rare circumstances where voluntary cooperation cannot be obtained. Overall, Part 1A of the 1967 Act sets out a framework for health protection which requires much of the detailed provisions to be delivered through regulations.

4.3 Section 25C of the 1967 Act provides a power for the Department of Health to make regulations to prevent, protect against, control or provide a public health response to the incidence or spread of infection or contamination with coronavirus in Northern Ireland. The threat can come from outside Northern Ireland.

4.4 These Regulations are made under section 25B to enable a number of public health measures to be taken for the purpose of preventing danger to public health from arrivals into Northern Ireland. They will also be made under 25F(2) which allows for enforcement provisions to be included.

5. Policy background

5.1 The temporary modifications to the 1967 Act made by the Coronavirus Act 2020 provide regulation making powers that were previously not available in Northern Ireland.

5.2 During the first review of the Regulations, a process was developed to assess the risk travellers posed from various countries. It was agreed that Northern Ireland would exempt travellers from countries where the risk was assessed as lower than the UK average.

5.3 Following new evidence, it was determined the risk for travellers from the Greek islands of Lesvos, Tinos, Serifos, Crete, Mykonos, Santorini and Zakynthos had increased and that they should be removed from the list of exempted countries.

6. Consultation

6.1 Given the rapidly evolving global situation regarding the spread of coronavirus there has been no public consultation in relation to this Statutory Rule.

7. Equality impact

7.1 Due to the rapidity of change, an Equality Impact Assessment screening was not conducted. The EQIA screening for the principal Regulations identified no disproportionate impact. Given these measures would reduce the transmission of coronavirus, there were positive benefits noted for those groups that are known to be, or suspected to be, more susceptible to the adverse effects of the virus, including older people, those with a disability and those in ethnic minority groups.

7.2 A human rights impact assessment was conducted for the principal Regulations to ensure compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights. This assessed the proportionality of the measures being taken and mitigations which could be considered to reduce the impact on human rights that the assessment identified.

8. Regulatory impact

8.1 Given the rapidly evolving global situation regarding the spread of coronavirus there has been no assessment of regulatory impacts in relation to this Statutory Rule.

9. Financial implications

9.1 Given the rapidly evolving global situation regarding the spread of coronavirus there has been no assessment of the financial impacts in relation to this Statutory Rule.

9.2 However it is likely there will be a financial impact on travel operators as there is potential for a reduction in demand as travellers may choose not to travel given the requirements in place.

10. Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

10.1 The Department of Health has considered section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and is satisfied that these Regulations are not incompatible with any of the Convention rights; are not incompatible with Community law; do not discriminate against a person or class of person on the grounds of religious belief or political opinion; and do not modify an enactment in breach of section 7 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

11. EU implications

11.1 There are unlikely to be any EU implications.

11.2 This Statutory Rule does not relate to withdrawal from the European Union / trigger the statement requirements under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act.

12. Parity or Replicatory Measure

12.1 England made the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (England) (Amendment) (No. 12) Regulations 2020 which came into force at 4am on 9 September 2020. Scotland made the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) (Amendment) (No. 12) Regulations 2020 which came into force at 4am on 3 September 2020. Wales made the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Wales) (Amendment) (No.8) Regulations 2020 which came into force at 4am on 4 September 2020.

13. Additional information

13.1 Not applicable