

Micheál Martin TD  
An Taoiseach  
Government Buildings  
Merrion Street  
Dublin 2

12 August 2020

**Re: COVID-19, localised restrictions, and future protocol**

Dear Taoiseach

Chambers Ireland represents the largest network of businesses in the State. With 40 Chambers, located in cities and towns in all parts of the country, we are uniquely positioned to understand the needs and concerns of Irish businesses and to represent their views.

Following the introduction of renewed restrictions in the counties of Kildare, Offaly and Laois last Friday evening, our member Chambers in these counties have been working closely with the business community, and with public officials, to address the fallout of the new restrictions and to support the local economies they represent.

While the business community will need support from Government and its agencies once businesses can reopen, what is required in the short-term is the dissemination of clear information to local stakeholders, particularly Chambers, on the implementation of new restrictions, how to interpret them and on the criteria that will determine for when they will be eased.

In the absence of clear, reliable and regular information, rumours are filling the gap. This is causing uncertainty and confusion on the ground. Through collaboration, we can work with you to ensure that information is circulated to local businesses in a clear and efficient manner to counteract the disinformation which is currently spreading. **We ask that your Department establish a regular forum to discuss these matters with Chambers Ireland and with the member chambers in this region.**

More broadly, the new restrictions bring home the reality of what living alongside the virus will mean in the months to come. New clusters and localised outbreaks in other

parts of the country are to be expected. If this risk is to be managed effectively, there will need to be a clear protocol on how these outbreaks will be managed. For example, at what stage will communities be directed to restrict their movements and economic activity? What supports will be made available to the wider community to help them through the new restrictions? In particular, what economic supports will be available? Will it be possible to trigger an emergency regional taskforce once the risk of new restrictions becomes more likely?

A strategic approach, which is clearly communicated in advance, must be put in place so that we are more prepared to deal with any new outbreaks as they occur. **Chambers Ireland and our member Chambers must be critical stakeholders in this process, and we ask that you work with us, both to support the communities in the leadup to any new restrictions, and in the management of these measures.**

Finally, the Government's approach to dealing with the covid-19 pandemic has been to conduct widespread testing and contact tracing. If this approach is to be effective, adequate resources and capabilities must be in place in all parts of the country. **We call on you and your Government to ensure that a framework for widespread community testing, that can be rapidly deployed, is available in every major town and county across the country.**

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the above in the coming days. We are available at your convenience.

Yours Sincerely,



**Ian Talbot**  
Chief Executive

