MINISTERIAL DIRECTION – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Department:

Department for the Economy (DfE)

Title:

Large Tourism and Hospitality Business Support Scheme (LTHBSS) – Extensions from 1) 31st March 2021 to 14th April 2021; and 2) 15th April 2021 – 23rd May 2021

Description:

The LTHBSS scheme was covered by a Ministerial Direction from its launch. Subsequent Ministerial Directions were requested and received to extend the LTHBSS for the following two time periods:
1) 31 March 2021 - 14 April 2021;
2) 15 April 2021 – 23 May 2021

Background:

Extension 1; 31 March 2021 – 14 April 2021

On 18 February 2021, the Executive agreed to extend Covid restrictions as set out in the Health Protection Regulations until 1 April 2021. The extension of Covid restrictions meant that businesses that were at that stage provided support via the LTHBSS would remain impacted. The then Minister, Minister Dodds, subsequently wrote to Executive colleagues outlining Value for Money (VfM) concerns around extending the LTHBSS and highlighting the need for a further Ministerial Direction should payments continue. The advice reiterated the VFM concerns around overcompensation expressed in the original scheme assessment and cognisant of that advice, the Executive was content that schemes continue based on the original payment structure. The position at that time was that eligible applicants would receive a further grant payment if they remained eligible to cover up to 31 March. As restrictions were to continue beyond that date, it was agreed to provide further top-up grants via a LTHBSS extension to cover any new period of restrictions ahead of the 15 April 2021 review point.

Extension 2; 15 April 2021 – 23 May 2021

On 15 April 2021, the Executive extended some of the Health Protection Regulations until 23 May 2021. This extension had implications for the LTHBSS which provided support to businesses in the Leisure and Tourism sectors forced to close or cease trading by the Health Protection Regulations. An extension to the scheme was

requested to provide support to those businesses in the effected sector who remained closed.

Rationale:

Extensions 1 and 2

The LTHBSS was operating under a Ministerial Direction. Given significant value for money concerns that had previously been raised, a new Ministerial Direction was requested to extend the grant payments to cover the new period of restrictions. The DfE Accounting Officer was unable to give the necessary assurances that extending grant payments to cover the new periods of restrictions represented VfM as required by the MPMNI for either of the extension periods.