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Ms Kate Brunner KC
Chair of Independent Covid Review

28 July 2023

Dear Ms Brunner

Independent Covid Review – Isle of Man

Thank you for your letter of 20 July 2023, providing an update on the progress of the Independent Covid Review.

I note your comments with regards to progress and I am pleased to note there has been a good level of co-operation from Government. I note also that you continue to receive a large volume of information and understand from the Covid Review Coordinator that, by the end of July or shortly thereafter, some 90,000 or more documents will have been shared with the Review.

I recognise there are challenges for all involved in the provision of such extensive amounts of information and the associated data protection requirements. The adaptation of the Review processes to manage this as well as the ongoing work of the IOM Project team and officers around Government to facilitate provision of the information is recognised and I would like to express thanks to all involved for the considerable work being undertaken, which for many, is in addition to their day to day workload.

I and the Council of Ministers support and agree with your comment that Government should continue to actively encourage individuals, whether they are inside or outside Government, to engage with the Review. Indeed the Review as the recipient of the considerable volume of information and evidence received, (and you have referenced the wide participation with the Review in your latest progress update), is the appropriate forum for all those who have information or evidence to share in order that the Review can reach informed and evidence based conclusions.

It is important to note that there is a difference between full engagement and openness with the Review, and potentially defamatory comments published elsewhere, and I appreciate the need for clarification to ensure all those who wish to engage with the Review understand that they may do so in a full and frank way.

To that end I note your request that it is made clear that where a part of Government issues a "cease and desist" letter or similar correspondence, it is not the intention to seek to restrict the recipient's or any individual's full and frank cooperation with the Review. I have thus directed that this is made clear to any recipient(s) of such correspondence and that the message is also conveyed to Government Departments.

Finally, I note your clear statement that you do not have any concerns that releasing information in response to an FOI request would compromise the Review and your request that this is made clear to all Government Departments. Noting this we will remind all Departments, in the event that there

has been any misunderstanding in this regard, that they should continue to respond to FOI requests in accordance with the usual process and legislative framework.

Please rest assured that the Council of Ministers remains wholly committed to supporting the Review process and you should not hesitate to raise any issue where I or the Council may be able to assist.

Best wishes

Hon. Mrs Jane Poole-Wilson MHK
Minister for Justice & Home Affairs

cc. Caldric Randall, Interim Chief Executive Officer