

WEEKLY BRIEFING

18 June 2021



COVID-19 UPDATE

A total of 42.2 million individuals in the UK have now had at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine accounting for 62.6% of the total population. A further 30.7 million people have been fully vaccinated. The vaccination roll out has now opened to anyone over the age of 18. The UK government has set a new target to have offered a first dose to all adults by 19 July and a second dose to two-thirds of the over-40s by this date.

Wales, Scotland and England are all seeing delays to the easing of restrictions, due to a rise in cases of COVID-19. The final stage of easing lockdown restrictions in England is to be delayed until 19 July, meaning most of the remaining curbs on social contact will continue beyond 21 June, when they had been due to be lifted. The limit on wedding guest numbers will be removed but venues will still have to adhere to other rules. The prime minister has said there would be a review after two weeks and he was "confident" the delay would not need to be longer than four weeks. However, he told a Downing Street press conference he could not rule out the possibility that the date could be pushed back further. Scientists advising the government had warned of a "significant resurgence" in people needing hospital treatment for COVID-19 if stage four of easing the lockdown went ahead on 21 June. It comes amid rising cases, driven by the more transmissible Delta variant, which was first identified in India.

Wales is delaying further easing of lockdown restrictions for four weeks with the first minister, Mark Drakeford, saying: "In the space of just a few short weeks, the Delta variant has entered Wales and quickly spread throughout the country." Drakeford is expected to encourage people to have their second jabs and the nation is aiming to roll out more than half a million vaccine doses over the next four weeks.

The easing of Covid-19 restrictions in Scotland is also likely to be pushed back by three weeks, first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, has said. The whole country had been

due to move to the lowest level zero of its five-tier system from 28 June. However, Sturgeon advised that this was likely to be delayed by three weeks so that more people can be vaccinated against the virus. The COVID-19 case rate in Scotland is five times higher than it was in early May. Sturgeon said that "we need to buy sufficient time for vaccination to get ahead and stay ahead of the virus, and that is the reason for caution at this juncture".

However, in Ireland, there is hope that the reopening plan will go ahead without any major roadblocks. The country has already seen a major reopening of outdoor hospitality with the next set of restrictions set to be lifted on 5 July. Meanwhile, it was confirmed that major changes would be made to Ireland's vaccine rollout in the next few weeks as the programme ramps up.

ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

Record rise in workers on payroll in May

There was a record rise in the number of workers on payrolls in May as the jobs market continued to recover. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said there were 197,000 more people in payrolled employment last month compared with April, the highest rise since records began in 2014. It came as the unemployment rate fell again to 4.7% in the three months to April, down from 4.8% previously.

TRAVEL AND TOURISM UPDATE

UK government reported to be considering quarantine exemption for fully vaccinated Britons

The exemption would allow arrivals into England to not have to quarantine if they have received both vaccines. This would in effect turn amber destinations green for those who have been fully vaccinated. It is unclear at this stage if those travellers would still be required to take a COVID-19 PCR test on return into the UK.

Travel between the U.S. and UK moves closer to a comeback

After more than a year of stringent travel restrictions between the U.S. and the UK, president Joe Biden and prime minister Boris Johnson have agreed to work towards reopening transatlantic travel. The two leaders met last week and agreed to work towards reopening travel between the U.S. and the UK, as part of a refreshed "Atlantic Charter". The two governments will participate in a joint task force with the objective of reopening a travel corridor between the countries, transport secretary Grant Shapps said. As of now, most U.S. travellers are required to quarantine for 10

days upon landing in the UK, and the U.S. continues to prohibit UK travellers to enter as part of its wider international travel ban. Many companies in the travel industry have urged both leaders to work towards lifting restrictions so that transatlantic travel may resume.

Air bosses launch legal challenge of traffic light system

British Airways and Virgin Atlantic have joined the legal challenge against the way the government is using the new traffic light system for international travel. The call for a judicial review over the systems "lack of transparency" is being led by Manchester Airports Group (MAG) and is also backed by low-cost carrier Ryanair. Court papers officially filed on Thursday (17 June), and seen by the *Daily Telegraph*, show Virgin Atlantic and British Airways are also "interested parties". The court papers argue that the government's reasons as to a country's traffic light status are "undisclosed and the decision-making process lacks transparency in a fundamental way". MAG wants a judge to rule on whether the UK government's decision to amend the traffic light list was against the law and is asking for details to be published of advice that ministers are using when changing the system.

Hundreds of agents plan to attend Travel Day of Action

Hundreds of agents are preparing to support the Travel Day of Action on 23 June to lobby for a safe restart of international travel. Some plan to shut stores to attend events in London, Edinburgh and Belfast for the Save Future Travel Coalition-led day of action across travel and aviation. Industry staff are encouraged to set up meetings with MPs at official events, locally or virtually, and support the day on social media, tagging MPs and sharing posts. The Travel Day of Action takes place days before the next review of the traffic light system for overseas travel which is due no earlier than 28 June.

Vaccine rollout and COVID-19 certificate boosts EU travel

As Europe opens up after months of lockdowns and restrictions, interest in travel has risen distinctly, with two-thirds of Europeans intending to take a trip by the end of November 2021. This is according to the latest research on 'Monitoring Sentiment for Domestic and Intra-European Travel' by the European Travel Commission (ETC). The speedy progression of COVID-19 vaccinations in Europe, coupled with the recent introduction of the EU Digital COVID-19 Certificate and the upcoming summer season, are boosting Europeans' travel spirit. Of those who responded, 70% are already making travel plans for the next six months, up from 56% in February 2021 and also at the highest point since August 2020.

Gatwick Airport lays out plans to reduce emissions over the next decade

Gatwick has outlined its sustainability goals for the next 10 years as the airport looks to continue its transition to becoming net zero before 2040. In the airport's

new 'Decade of Change' policy, Gatwick focuses on a renewed set of goals which include a zero-waste objective, local and national sustainability priorities and a pledge to improve air quality. Before 2030, Gatwick aims to reduce emissions by a further 25%, meaning emissions will have reduced by 80% against a 1990 baseline. The airport aims to become zero-waste within the next 10 years by recycling "all materials used in operations, commercial activity and construction". It also says it will work with transport providers to increase public transport and ultra-low emission journeys by 60%.

Nearly half of Britons would travel to Spain this summer

Research by travel insurance provider Battleface has found that 48% of Britons would holiday in Spain this summer - with 41% of respondents willing to quarantine on their return to the UK. According to the study, 64% of 18-34 year olds and 52% of 35-54 year olds are considering a trip to Spain. Other top destinations identified in the report are Italy and Portugal with 46%, Greece with 45% and France with 42%. Outside of Europe, 37% of respondents said they would "contemplate" a holiday to the U.S. Katie Crowe, director of communications for Battleface, said: "The great news is that as expected, there is still a huge appetite for international travel this summer. It's clear from our research that the vast majority of Brits are willing to be fully vaccinated in order to travel internationally."

AIRLINE UPDATE

Aer Lingus - Aer Lingus has announced that it is delaying the start of transatlantic services from Manchester to New York and Orlando until the end of September. In a statement, the airline said the delay was due to international borders reopening "later than expected." The new services were meant to start on 29 July but will now begin on 30 September. Aer Lingus is also launching a direct service to Barbados from Manchester, but its start date of 20 October is unaffected.

British Airways - British Airways is to launch four new domestic routes from Belfast this summer. Services to Exeter, Glasgow, Newquay and Leeds Bradford will be added to the current roster over the coming months, with 18 flights a week in operation between the destinations. The routes will operate alongside existing British Airways services between Belfast and London City and Heathrow airports.

easyjet - easyJet is to launch 12 new domestic routes around the UK from July, including its first flights between Belfast City and Gatwick, as well as new routes to Jersey and Newquay. The low-cost carrier will also return to East Midlands and Leeds Bradford airports with new routes previously operated by Stobart Air for Aer Lingus Regional, which were cancelled

suddenly last week after Stobart Air went out of business. easyJet has also added another 60,000 seats on routes from Belfast International to Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh and Glasgow. The airline is adding routes to Jersey from Bristol, Birmingham and Newcastle, as well as services to the Cornish gateway of Newquay from Birmingham and Inverness.

Stobart Air - Stobart Air, which operates regional flights on behalf of Aer Lingus, has ceased trading, meaning a number of regional routes have been cancelled. Stobart's chief role was to connect the UK and Ireland, including feeding Aer Lingus mainline's fast-expanding transatlantic network from Dublin. Stobart's demise was ultimately caused by the pandemic. Aer Lingus will hope all its connectivity is sorted when travel returns, otherwise it will find its U.S. services from Dublin less of an attractive proposition in the UK if there are no feeder flights and seamless connections. Aer Lingus announced on 18 June that it will operate six routes until at least the end of August 2021, following the collapse. It includes flights from Belfast to Edinburgh, Manchester and Birmingham as well as routes from Dublin to Manchester, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

TOUR OPERATOR UPDATE

Intrepid Travel - Intrepid Travel has unveiled new sustainable travel experiences designed to benefit local communities, thanks to an exclusive partnership with MEET (Mediterranean Experience of EcoTourism) Network Association. The association combines a group of Mediterranean parks, founded by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, which creates ecotourism products that support conservation. The partnership is part of Intrepid's focus on rebuilding responsibly and helping travellers ensure their trip has a positive impact on local communities. Intrepid has included MEET experiences within two of its new tours to lesser-visited regions of Croatia and Crete, with more to come across Europe and the Mediterranean over the next few months.

JG Travel Group - JG Travel Group has launched a collection of standalone brochures for its Just Go! Holidays and National Holidays brands. The move comes as demand continues to grow for breaks in the run up to, and during, the Christmas and New Year period. December bookings for Just Go! Holidays are currently up 241% compared to the same time in 2019, the group claims.

Newmarket Holidays - Escorted tour specialist Newmarket Holidays has kicked off a promotional campaign with the theme of the Euro 2020 championships. From 11 June, the start of the football tournament, the operator is offering 10% off all air holidays to destinations with teams taking part in the Euros. Once teams are

knocked out, the destination also leaves the promotion and reverts to a 5% discount. Richard Forde, head of trade sales, said: "In these difficult times for the travel trade, we decided to introduce an offer with a difference. The chance to have some fun engagement with a promotion that gives us the chance to communicate a little differently via email or social media for example." Newmarket said that sales for 2022 and 2023 have remained "robust" despite the short-term challenges of getting people away on holiday this summer. Bookings have also remained strong across the range of 15 holidays in the UK.

On the Beach - On the Beach has said that some return to travel this summer is "inevitable", but warned of continuing restrictions once destinations reopen. On the Beach is not selling any holidays for departure until 1 September. Speaking as interim results were released, chief executive Simon Cooper said he did not anticipate the return of widespread travel in July and August. Cooper said: "It depends on the information flow between now and then. Unless we were to see something that means customers could book, it is very difficult to put stuff on sale. We don't know, nor does Boris. They are trying to manage priorities, not just the sustained recovery of the travel industry."

Seabourn Cruises - Seabourn has amended its plans to restart cruising this summer, with the line now due to resume sailing in early July. Seabourn *Ovation* will sail from Athens starting 3 July, with another four Seabourn ships due to return to service over the 10 months to April 2022. On 18 July, Seabourn *Odyssey* will depart Bridgetown in Barbados and will sail the southern Caribbean. *Odyssey* will be followed by *Quest*, which will sail an ex-Miami Antarctica season starting 7 July. The cruise line said: "We know guests are beginning to restart travel on some level and we look forward to seeing them again as soon as possible, starting as early as this summer in Greece and the southern Caribbean."

TUI - TUI has added hundreds of excursions, activities and attraction tickets to its domestic experiences programme in a move to increase its UK offering this summer. It comes following the four-week delay to the UK's 21 June easing of restrictions. TUI has also extended its summer holiday cancellations into July. Popular experiences TUI will offer include Warner Bros' Harry Potter Studios, Westminster Abbey and flights on the London Eye. Outside of London, TUI said there was demand to visit Edinburgh Castle and Belfast's Titanic Experience. Katie McAlister, TUI UK chief marketing officer, said: "We're thrilled to grow our domestic experiences programme further."

SOCIAL AND DIGITAL UPDATE

Facebook adds new tools to group admin

Facebook has announced a range of new admin tools for Facebook Groups, including improved comment moderation processes, 'Conflict Alerts' to help detect potentially problematic exchanges and an updated overview dashboard which will highlight group tasks that require attention. The main addition is an updated Admin Home set up, which will now make it easier for group admins to access their various management tools and view what needs to be done each day, in a more intuitive interface.

Snapchat shares insights into how its users are celebrating Pride Month

Snapchat has published a new report which looks at how its users are looking to engage around Pride, and what they expect from brands who are engaging with Pride month. The insights are based on a survey of around 5,000 Snapchat users across the U.S., Canada, the UK, Germany, France, Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden and Australia. The report indicates that Snapchat users are increasingly looking to celebrate Pride month and facilitate inclusivity more generally: three out of four Snapchatters use the word "inclusive" to describe themselves and their friends, with nine out of 10 using the word "kind". Snapchat notes that 'inclusivity' in this respect also extends to all aspects, including the content they create and share online. The platform is also keen to engage with brands that reflect similar values and approaches, which is an important consideration in framing your stance within the app. The platform commented: "Nearly half of Snapchatters agree that all brands should reflect representation and inclusion - but while Snapchatters want to see brands support diversity and inclusion, it's important to them that these initiatives are meaningful and authentic."

MICE UPDATE

International Confex will move to September after reopening date postponed

Mash Media has confirmed that International Confex will move from 22-23 June to 1-2 September in response to the prime minister's announcement of a four week delay to the final stage of reopening in the UK. The show, which is co-located with the PA Show and the Publishing Show, will still take place at ExCel London. The pushing back of step four means that current step three rules still apply, which came into force on 17 May. At present, indoor events for 1,000 people (or 50% of venue capacity) can continue to run with COVID-19 mitigation measures in place.

LIGHTER NOTE

Turtle thrill-seeker! Sybil the tortoise can't get enough of riding down a slide on her belly - VERY SLOWLY. See it [here](#).