

# WEEKLY BRIEFING

9 July 2021



## COVID-19 UPDATE

The UK has seen a rise in the number of COVID-19 infections over the last seven days owing to the more infectious Delta variant. The number of Covid-19 infections has risen by more than 50% in the week to 3 July, according to the Office of National Statistics.

The UK vaccine roll out has continued with now 45.6 million people having had the first vaccine accounting for 86.6% of the adult population. The government has put a focus on the roll out of the second vaccine to ensure full protection from COVID-19. 34.2 million people have also now been fully vaccinated accounting for 64.9% of the UK adult population. The government is also accelerating the vaccination programme for under-40s by reducing the 12-week gap between both doses to eight. This means all adults should have the opportunity to be fully vaccinated by mid-September.

Prime minister, Boris Johnson, has confirmed that the lifting of most COVID-19 guidance and legal restrictions in England is going ahead on 19 July. In his update, the prime minister revealed that the current restrictions of gatherings of only six indoors, no more than 30 for gatherings outside, one-metre social distancing in pubs, a ban on nightclubs and compulsory face masks would be removed in ten days. However, both the public and businesses are urged to apply 'common sense' when it comes to wearing face masks and social distancing.

The Government has already been accused of delaying "Freedom Day" after revealing that fully vaccinated people will still have to follow self-isolation rules until 16 August. It will remain a legal requirement to self-isolate if you test positive for COVID-19. Sajid Javid, the health secretary, announced on 6 July that plans to allow Britons who had received both vaccine doses to take an optional PCR test if they came into close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case, rather than isolating for 10 days would not be introduced for five and a half weeks. The prime minister said on

8 July that he understands the public's frustrations about self-isolating after contact with a positive case, but added that August 16 is "not too far off" for those who are double vaccinated.

Scotland is due to move to COVID-19 level 0 on 19 July, with most legal restrictions lifted on 9 August as planned. Finance secretary Kate Forbes said the data would be closely monitored, after it was revealed that Scotland has the highest COVID-19 rates in Europe. However, she said some measures, such as the wearing of face coverings, would remain in place in Scotland. "We expect some baseline measures - for example face masks, some limitations on working from home and so on - will continue for a longer period of time," she said.

The next review in Wales is due on 15 July and the Welsh health secretary has advised that they will not rule out further lockdowns and will 'follow the data' before easing restrictions. Health secretary, Eluned Morgan, said Wales will not be rushed into making a decision about scrapping its COVID-19 restrictions despite England's plan to do so on 19 July. She told a news conference in Cardiff: "We will have to learn to live with this virus and what I won't give you is any assurances that this is the end of the road".

More than two million people in the Republic of Ireland have received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccination. It is the total figure for first and second doses, with about 70% of the adult population having received at least one jab. Prime minister Micheál Martin said in a social media post that it was "a brilliant effort" by Irish Health Service Executive staff and volunteers. More than 50% of adults aged over 18 have received two doses of a vaccine. Irish Health Minister Stephen Donnelly said it was "another great milestone in our COVID-19 vaccination programme". In a social media post, Mr Donnelly urged adults to get their second dose of the vaccine "for the best possible protection". A Digital Covid Certificate is being rolled out across EU member nations this month. Irish deputy prime minister Leo Varadkar has suggested it could be adapted for indoor hospitality in the Republic of Ireland. Indoor hospitality was due to reopen in the Republic on the 5 July, but has been delayed. When it reopens, it will be limited to those who are fully vaccinated or have recovered from COVID-19, Mr Martin said last month.

## ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

### England through to the final of the Euros 2020

England head back to Wembley for the Euro 2020 Final this weekend after beating Denmark on Wednesday night. Harry Kane's successful rebound from his own saved extra-time penalty secured an unforgettable win for the Three Lions in front of

67,000 fans after Simon Kjær's own goal had cancelled out a quality Mikkel Damsgaard free-kick. England will face Italy in their maiden European Championship showpiece and first major tournament final since winning the 1966 World Cup on home soil.

### **House prices dip as stamp duty holiday ends**

House prices dipped 0.5% in June as the stamp duty holiday began to be phased out, according to Halifax. Prices rose 8.8% over the year, leaving average prices still more than £21,000 higher, following a broadly unprecedented period of gains. The lender said it was "important to put such a moderate decrease in context." The Government removed the need to pay stamp duty on certain properties throughout much of the pandemic. In the last year the housing market has been stimulated by stamp duty holidays in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, introduced by the government to boost the property market.

## **TRAVEL AND TOURISM UPDATE**

### **Quarantine-free travel for fully vaccinated passengers returning from amber list countries**

Fully vaccinated adults and all children in England will no longer have to quarantine on their return from amber list countries from 19 July, Grant Shapps has confirmed. Making a statement on international travel in the Commons, the transport secretary said those who have received two jabs and those aged under 18 will no longer have to self-isolate for 10 days after their return to the UK - but will still have to take a PCR test on their second day back. Mr Shapps also confirmed the government's guidance that people should not travel to amber list countries will be lifted on the same July date, meaning hopeful holidaymakers can travel for leisure purposes and to see family members.

### **Heathrow to reopen Terminal 3**

Heathrow's Terminal 3 (T3) is to reopen on 15 July, with Virgin Atlantic and Delta returning to their former home. Terminal 3 was closed in May 2020 as a cost-cutting move. Airlines that used it, mainly for long-haul services, switched to other terminals. Carriers will return to T3 on a phased basis over the coming weeks. Changes will be announced in advance on Heathrow's website and social media channels. Heathrow chief executive John Holland-Kaye said: "With passenger demand expected to increase when ministers permit fully vaccinated passengers to travel more freely, Heathrow is getting ready to welcome you back".

### **US government urged to 'immediately' reopen transatlantic travel with UK**

A coalition of 24 US-based travel associations has called for transatlantic travel

between ' COVID-19 vaccination programmes. The group, which includes the US Travel Association, Airlines for America, Global Business Travel Association, International Air Transport Association and the US Chamber of Commerce, has produced a "blueprint" detailing how US authorities can safely lift current restrictions on international visitors. One of the immediate steps that the coalition is calling for from the US government is a reopening of US-UK travel "given the two countries' similar vaccination records". The group also wants the US to allow "expedited" entry into the US for fully vaccinated travellers from "non-high-risk" countries. The blueprint calls for the US government to ease entry restrictions by 15 July when the country is "forecast to achieve widespread immunity and sustained declines in infections and hospitalisations".

## AIRLINE UPDATE

**British Airways** - Later this week customers travelling on selected flights from the US, Caribbean and Europe to London Heathrow will be invited to take part in a proving trial to support the Government in lifting some of the most onerous restrictions for travellers arriving from 'amber list' countries. Fully vaccinated travellers of all nationalities will be able to present their Covid-19 credentials in digital or paper format to help prove vaccination status can be quickly and easily checked away from the border and allow safe entry to the UK. Anonymised data will be shared with the UK Government at the earliest opportunity, providing real-world insights to support the introduction of a scheme to exempt fully vaccinated passengers from self-isolation.

**EasyJet** - EasyJet has put more than 145,000 extra seats on sale this summer between the UK and amber list countries including Spain, Greece, Portugal, France, Italy, Croatia and Cyprus. Fares start at £22.99 per person, one-way. The airline is operating around five million seats on flights between the UK and 85 green and amber list locations across Europe this summer. Johan Lundgren, EasyJet chief executive, said he was "delighted" with the customer response to the removal of amber list quarantine for fully vaccinated passengers.

**Norwegian Air** - Norwegian Air plans to expand its European network despite reporting low demand in June owing to "reduced flying schedules and government imposed travel restrictions". According to the airline, forward bookings and demand continue to show a "positive increase" as a greater number of markets unlock and ease restrictions. Last month, the carrier flew 225,509 passengers, which, according to Norwegian, is around 100% more than June 2020. Compared with last year, the

total capacity for June reportedly increased by 182% with passenger traffic up 102%. Geir Karlsen, chief executive of Norwegian, said the airline has seen a continued month-on-month increase in bookings.

## TOUR OPERATOR UPDATE

**Jet2Holidays** - Jet2holidays is to restart operations to all amber list destinations it operates to from July 19 after the government confirmed the date from which quarantine-free travel will be allowed for the fully-vaccinated. The short-haul package holiday specialist has previously suspended all flights and holidays except to green list countries. It now predicts a "wave of demand" from customers and will continue to review its programme in line with government updates. Chief executive Steve Heapy said: "This is the news that UK holidaymakers have been looking forward to, as it finally signals a meaningful restart to international travel. "Instead of a handful of destinations to choose from, this news means our customers can plan and look forward to flights and holidays across 40 green and amber list destinations this summer."

**Prestige Holidays** - Independent tour operator Prestige Holidays has been purchased by M&A specialist Embrace Travel Group for an "undisclosed" sum. Prestige was founded in 1989 by John Dixon, who is currently chairman and managing director. Dixon will retire following Prestige's sale to Embrace after working for more than 50 years in the travel industry. The operator's commercial director David Skillicorn will stay with the company after its acquisition. Dixon said: "I am delighted to have secured new ownership for the company after what has been a particularly challenging 18 months. "This deal recognises the hard work of the Prestige team and will enable the business to move forward and adapt as international travel starts to pick up post-pandemic."

## SOCIAL AND DIGITAL UPDATE

### Facebook's business and ad chief outlines key areas of focus

Vice President, Ads & Business Products, Dan Levy has provided a new overview of its evolving business focus. Facebook is working to develop:

**Privacy-Enhancing Technologies** - to minimise the amount of personal information that the platform takes in, while enabling advertisers to focus promotions with efficiency

**Product and Business Discovery** - an option in News Feeds is being trialed which

enables people to tap to browse content from businesses on suggested topics of interest to help Facebook build more product and brand-focused listings for each user

**Commerce** - Facebook is also looking to build improved ad placements based on the content users are interacting with

**Business Tools Beyond Marketing** - it's continuing to improve business management tools and processes while adding in new elements like resume uploads on profiles along with improved messaging and digital education tools.

### **Twitter is testing new audience controls**

Twitter is working on a new development whereby users could share tweets with selected audiences, as opposed to all followers, meaning that users could avoid having to create separate accounts for different interests. One of the new processes being tested is a variable audience control toggle within the tweet composer, whereby users can choose which audience can see it. An example of this is 'Trusted Friends' similar to Instagram's 'Close Friends'. Another option is something Twitter is calling 'Facets', which would enable users to create different personas under a single profile. Followers would also have the option to see different elements of a profile, based on their interests.

## **MICE UPDATE**

### **Events to return at full capacity from 19 July**

The events industry is preparing to fully reopen in England from 19 July once the government confirms its final decision on moving to Step 4 on 12 July. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said that once Step 4 is enabled, all restrictions would be lifted and there would be no legal requirement for any form of Covid-status certification. This would mean that events of all types would not need to enforce social distancing or enforce the wearing of face coverings. However, individual event organisers may wish to implement their own measures in response to the wishes of their delegates or attendees.

## **LIGHTER NOTE**

Jumbo fun! Baby elephant slides down muddy slope in a Chinese rainforest in adorable footage. See it [here](#).