

# WEEKLY REPORT

29 October 2021



## COVID-19 UPDATE

The number of people testing positive for COVID-19 has decreased in the last seven days by 0.4%. The number of people admitted to hospital meanwhile continues to climb, with admissions up 16%, in the last seven days. The vaccination rollout continues with 49.7 million people over the age of 12 having now had their first dose of the vaccine and a further 45.5 million being administered their second dose. With this total, 86.5% of the UK's population has received their first dose of the vaccine and 79.3% their second dose.

British prime minister Boris Johnson said on Friday a new COVID-19 lockdown is not on the cards, as advisers warned that acting early with lighter measures to cut rising case numbers would reduce the need for tougher restrictions later. Johnson's government has said there is no need yet to introduce a "Plan B" involving mask mandates, work-from-home orders and vaccine passports, though such measures could be introduced if more people do not come forward for COVID-19 vaccines and booster shots. Asked on Friday about the possibility of another lockdown over winter, the Conservative prime minister said: "I've got to tell you at the moment that we see absolutely nothing to indicate that that is on the cards at all."

More public health measures could be reintroduced in Wales if cases of COVID-19 continue to increase, the chief medical officer has warned. Dr Frank Atherton said he is "disappointed" to see that many people seem to have stopped carrying out basic measures such as wearing masks and social distancing. Wales' COVID-19 infection rate is at its highest level since the pandemic began, with 3,152 new positive cases reported on 24 October. A further 12 deaths were also recorded, bringing the total number of people who have lost their lives because of COVID-19 in the country to 6,086. The Welsh government is due to announce another review of the COVID-19 rules later today (29 October).

The Republic of Ireland is facing "one of the most difficult winters" it has experienced "for many years", Health Service Executive (HSE) chief Paul Reid has

said. He said the number of people receiving treatment for COVID-19 in intensive care units (ICU) in hospitals has risen. COVID-19 is “putting severe pressure” on the Republic's hospital system.

## ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

### **2021 Autumn Budget Announced**

On Wednesday, the chancellor of the exchequer committed to spending increases worth £150bn over three years, pledging nearly £2bn to help schools in England catch up from COVID-19, £5.9bn to tackle NHS backlogs and £7bn for transport projects. But Rishi Sunak's budget is likely to leave middle earners worse off next year, the Institute for Fiscal Studies think tank says. Labour has also accused the chancellor of failing to tackle the “cost of living crisis” and criticises a tax cut for banks. Responding to concerns over price rises, Rishi Sunak says he does not have a “magic wand” to make these issues disappear. Economic growth is forecast to rise to 6.3% next year - higher than previously predicted - but it will then slow to 1.3% by 2023.

### **Millions to be worse off in 2022, says IFS**

Millions of people are set to be worse off next year amid spiralling costs and tax rises, says an economic think tank. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) said that inflation and higher taxes on incomes would negate small wage increases for middle earners. Low-income households will also feel “real pain” as the cost of living is set to increase faster than benefit payments, it said. The chancellor acknowledged in his Budget that families are under strain. Paul Johnson, director of the IFS, said that “millions will be worse off in the short term” as a result of soaring costs. On Wednesday, the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) warned that the cost of living could rise at its fastest rate for 30 years. Its latest forecast predicted that inflation, which measures the change in the cost of living over time, is set to jump from 3.1% to an average of 4% in 2022.

## TRADE UPDATE

### **Red list and hotel quarantine ‘set to be scrapped’**

The government's red list of countries and hotel quarantine restrictions are ‘set to be scrapped’ as the COVID-19 threat from overseas declines. Hotel quarantine is expected to be replaced by a requirement for travellers to isolate at home for 10 days, according to sources talking to The Telegraph. The newspaper said ministers will meet on Thursday (October 28) to consider scrapping the red list and quarantine rules “in face of the declining Covid [sic] threat from abroad”.

### **Under-18s to be exempt from US travel vaccination rules**

The U.S. government has announced details of its travel policy for international visitors ahead of the reopening of its border to fully-vaccinated travellers from November 8. The Biden administration confirmed that children under 18 would be exempt from the vaccine requirements, in addition to people with some medical issues. It also confirmed international travellers would continue to be required to present a negative COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours of departure.

### **Cayman Island removes quarantine for fully vaccinated arrivals**

The Cayman Islands is set to lift its quarantine requirement for fully vaccinated arrivals from 20 November, its tourism minister has confirmed. From the end of next month, the British Overseas Territory will move to phase four of its reopening plan – meaning those who have had a full course of COVID-19 vaccinations and have been "securely verified" can enter without having to isolate.

### **WTM London to offer onsite COVID-19 testing**

WTM London and Travel Forward 2021 will have a COVID-19 testing facility inside ExCeL so visitors who need to take a test before flying home can do so without having to leave the venue. The service is being offered by ExpressTest by Cignpost, an ABTA partner. Both PCR and lateral flow tests are available, with PCR results delivered by 22:00 the following day and lateral flow results within 40 minutes.

### **WTM London to host tourism investment summit**

The International Tourism and Investment Conference (ITIC) will hold its Global Tourism Investment Summit next week in partnership with World Travel Market London. Called 'Invest, Finance & Restart', the summit will take place on November 1-2 at ExCeL London, and will connect investors with owners or developers of untapped tourism projects. The first day (November 1) will feature insights about the restart of the global tourism industry and will take place in the venue's Platinum Suite. Those who cannot attend WTM London in person will be able to follow the event live through a virtual platform.

### **Travel Forward to focus on start-ups and sustainability**

Start-ups and sustainability will be in the spotlight during the Travel Forward event next week, which is co-located with WTM London. The in-person travel technology show takes place alongside WTM at ExCeL from 1-3 November, followed by TF Virtual on 8-9 November. The Travel Forward conference programme will feature a pitching competition for start-ups, called Front Runners' Travel Tech Competition and Summit, on 2 November.

### **Chancellor confirms new higher rate of APD on long distance flights**

Chancellor Rishi Sunak has confirmed a 50% cut in air passenger duty (APD) on UK domestic flights together with a new 'long distance' rate on flights of more than

5,500 miles. Sunak hailed the changes as a cut to APD, but it's likely the new rate on the longest long-haul flights will match the reduction on domestic flights.

### **Glasgow Airport installs reverse vending machines to encourage recycling**

Glasgow airport has installed two reverse vending machines as part of a pilot project to encourage passengers and staff members to recycle more of their cans and bottles. Introduced in partnership with the airport's waste management partner Biffa, the two devices will be based on the first-floor area next to the e-gate entrance to the security hall and in the main area of the departure lounge for the next four weeks. It is hoped the installations will help boost recycling by passengers and staff by providing a dedicated return point for cans and bottles. The machines, which can each accept 320 plastic bottles and 650 cans, have been brought in on a trial basis to coincide with COP26.

## **AIRLINE UPDATE**

**Delta Air Lines** - Delta Air Lines will double flights to Heathrow from New York in December, as well as up its Dublin service. The U.S. carrier's JFK-Heathrow service will increase to twice-daily from 6 November, while its JFK-Dublin service will increase to daily. Flights to Paris from JFK will also be doubled. In total, Delta will operate up to 15 daily transatlantic flights to 13 destinations in December.

**Emirates** - Emirates will up planned capacity on its Gatwick-Dubai route by almost half when flights restart in December. The Gulf carrier will deploy larger Airbus A380 aircraft on the route instead of Boeing B777s, offering almost 50% more capacity than planned. It will offer three classes, First, Business and Economy.

**United Airlines** - United Airlines will add five new flights to the U.S. from Heathrow next year, including a brand new Boston route. The additions include two more New York-Newark flights, as well as extra Denver and San Francisco services. It means from March 2022, United will offer 22 flights a day to the U.S. from Heathrow. United said London was its most in-demand international destination for business customers in October, and expects this trend to continue into 2022.

## **TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES & OTA UPDATE**

**Cox & Kings** - Touring specialist Cox & Kings has added the U.S. to its 2022/23 offering. The addition comes as the operator launches its new Worldwide Brochure for 2022/23, which also includes trips to sub-Saharan Africa, Morocco, and Georgia.

**Intrepid Travel** - Intrepid Travel is to move into the accommodation sector through a joint venture with Drifter Hospitality Group. The venture will see an initial eight hotels across Australia and New Zealand in the next three years, growing to 15 properties by 2025. The group's first properties will open in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch in 2022, branded as Drifter – an Intrepid Hotel.

**Jet2** - Jet2.com has launched its summer programme for 2023 from six UK bases. With summer sun in demand, the tour operator has put its programme on sale earlier than ever before. This gives customers the opportunity to get a summer break booked well in advance – and for Jet2.com to bring in much-needed revenue as the COVID-19 recovery continues. Trips to Spain, Greece, Turkey, Italy, Cyprus, Croatia and Portugal are all on offer.

**The Travel House** - Wales' largest independent agency, The Travel House, has joined Hays Travel Independence Group (IG). The Swansea-based 20-branch miniple had been a member of The Advantage Travel Partnership for about a decade. Founder Martin Morgan, who set up the family business in 1992, said the move would save £1 million in bonding costs.

## SOCIAL UPDATE

### **Instagram makes links in Stories available to all users**

Instagram has announced that links are now being made available in Instagram Stories for all users, not just those with 10k+ followers or verified accounts. The addition of link stickers, as opposed to swipe-up links, gives users more creative control over how links appear within their Stories frames, which could be a better way to drive more referral traffic. For brands, this will likely put more focus on Stories as a communications tool.

### **Twitter looks to boost Spaces discovery**

Twitter is looking to get more accounts using Spaces by highlighting the most relevant conversations as they happen within the Explore tab. Currently there is no easy way to find in-progress Spaces unless you follow a host or speaker in a chat, so this is a significant boost in exposure potential.

### **Facebook changes its name to 'Meta'**

Facebook has announced that it's re-naming the company in order to better reflect its emerging focus. Its overarching company name will be 'Meta' from now on with the company separating its operational streams into two segments: 'Family of Apps': Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and Messenger, and 'Reality Labs', which will cover its VR and AR technologies and other evolving tech bets. This rebrand highlights the company's intention to make the evolving metaverse concept a much

bigger focus and Meta's aim to become synonymous with the next stage of digital connection.

## MICE UPDATE

### **Government report finds event vaccine passports would have minimal benefit but significant cost**

The Cabinet Office's COVID-19 task force has reportedly published an analysis that suggests the implementation of vaccine passports at mass events would reduce overall community transmission by between just 1% and 5%. However, the report also found that the introduction of vaccine passports would have a "high impact" on the economy, particularly on the business and live events industry, and would have wider impacts such as worsening the supply chain crisis. The internal Treasury impact assessment document suggests that moving to Plan B could cause up to £18 billion of damage to the economy.

## LIGHTER NOTE

Elephants have fun squashing pumpkins. Watch it [here](#).