

WEEKLY REPORT

24 June 2022



COVID-19 UPDATE

The number of COVID-19 cases seem to be increasing in England, Scotland and Wales. In Scotland the number of new COVID-19 hospital admissions increased by 15.2% to 696 in the week ending 14 June. This is likely due to the two new Omicron variants - BA.4 and BA.5. Meanwhile another strain which spread rapidly in the US appears to be rising faster in Scotland than the rest of the UK. Northern Ireland is also experiencing another wave of COVID-19, but experts say this is unlikely to be as severe as the peak from the beginning of the year. In the past week there have been 5,895 COVID-19 related hospital admissions in the UK, 6,305 in Wales and 707 in Scotland.

Vaccination rates continue to be on the rise. Governments in Wales and England are in a new phase of vaccination rollouts as governments urge the elderly to get their spring booster vaccinations. The vaccination, which is to help boost immunity in time for summer, is being offered to people over the age of 75, those in adult care homes and those who are immunosuppressed. This comes after high vaccination rates with 80.9% of the population in Wales, 87.1% in the UK and 74.5% in Scotland being fully vaccinated.

ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

Inflation pushes UK government interest costs to May record

Surging inflation has led interest payments on government debt to hit the highest amount for May on record. Government borrowing, which is the difference between spending and tax income, came in at £14bn down £4bn from last year but still higher than pre-COVID-19 times. The figure holds the record for the third-highest May borrowing since monthly records began in 1993. The increase, experts say, is largely due to higher inflation happening in the UK. Inflation has also had an effect on pay rises in the UK which stalled at 4% in May. This follows a Bank of England.

business survey which showed employers were not planning a further acceleration in pay rates.

Royals thank Caribbean migrants for contribution to the UK

At Waterloo station a windrush monument which depicts a man, woman and child standing on top of suitcases was revealed to mark Windrush Day on 22nd June. Prince William the Duke of Cambridge helped to unveil the statue, alongside his wife the Duchess of Cambridge who paid tribute to the contributions of the Windrush generation and their descendants. The Queen has also praised the Windrush "pioneers" for their "profound contribution" to British life. The royals' tribute works as a celebration and reminder of the migrants' work to help rebuild Britain after the devastation of World War I.

EU set to grant Ukraine and Moldova candidate status

Following several days of EU discussions internally, the European Union has decided to grant the status of candidate country to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. In total, 529 votes were made in support of the resolution while 45 votes were made against the proposal. A further 14 politicians abstained. The decision is significant in the nations' potential journey from ex-soviet republics to developed and distinguished economies. Whilst many politicians in Ukraine and Moldova remain hopeful, the ultimate decision lies with European leaders who are set to make a decision soon.

TRADE UPDATE

US Enquiries 'surge' after end of pre-departure testing

The US confirmed its pre-departure testing mandate would be removed on 12 June, which the US Travel Association described as a "huge step forward". Following the move, despite not seeing an instant uptick in bookings to the destination, the Advantage Travel Partnership reported a boost in enquiries for trips to the US. Leisure director Kelly Cookes said the change in rules reassured customers who had already booked and were considering whether to go ahead as planned. "We didn't see the change in testing rules for the US lead to an immediate increase in bookings," Cookes told TTG. "It did, however, lead to a surge in enquiries."

Trade welcomes cuts in summer flying as airport slot rules frozen

Agents welcomed moves to cut airline schedules at the busiest airports this summer despite the additional work required to rebook customers. The government announced an 'amnesty' on use-it-or-lose-it airport slot rules on Tuesday, making it

easier for carriers to cancel flights without losing slots. The amnesty came after Gatwick Airport, London capped flight numbers for July and August, and easyJet – the biggest operator at Gatwick Airport – announced a cull of more than 10,000 flights.

Trade bookings firm despite cost-of-living increases

Holiday bookings through the trade are holding firm despite continued cost-of-living increases. The trade gave positive trading updates this week despite inflation running at 9% and consumers cutting back in other areas, including on food. Althams Travel managing director Sandra McAllister said cost-of-living rises were yet to put holidaymakers off, with demand outstripping supply. “There is huge demand and not enough holidays,” she said. Fred Olsen Travel head of commercial Paul Hardwick agreed clients were prioritising holidays and cruises “above pretty much anything else for 2022”, adding that average booking values were also higher.

AIRLINE UPDATE

Norwegian Air strikes ‘landmark deal’ to acquire 50 new aircraft

Norwegian Air has secured a “landmark deal” to acquire 50 new generation Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft. The Scandinavian budget carrier announced an agreement in principle with Boeing for a “recommitment to purchase” including options for an additional 30 aircraft. The 50 Max 8s are due to be delivered between 2025 and 2028, at a schedule closely corresponding to current aircraft leases expiring.

United Airlines is official airline for Pride in London 2022

United Airlines has been unveiled as this year’s official airline for Pride in London, the organisation responsible for the capital’s flagship LGBTQ+ Pride parade and events. The airline’s employees will join this year’s London Pride march on 2 July and are entering a colourful float into the parade. United Airlines said it has a “proud history” of supporting LGBTQ+ communities and staff have previously marched together in parades and attended festivals in the UK and around the world.

Heathrow Airport raises passenger forecast amid stronger than expected demand

London Heathrow Airport’s traffic outlook for 2022 has been further revised to reflect stronger than expected passenger demand. A new forecast of 54.4 million passengers is 67% of pre-pandemic 2019 levels. The 8.96 million increase compared to the airport’s December 2021 guidance of 45.5 million and 52.2 million at first quarter results in April. The revised projection represents a “significant increase” to 2021 when COVID-19 travel restrictions were in place most of the year.

Air Canada plans seasonal London-India route

Air Canada plans to introduce flights from London Heathrow to Mumbai, India. The service, together with a planned new winter seasonal route between Vancouver, Canada and Bangkok, Thailand, is subject to receiving final government approval. Three-class Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircraft will be deployed on both routes with Mumbai flights from Toronto, Canada via London due to start on 29 October. The carrier is bolstering its international winter network to the South Pacific region with the return of seasonal service from Vancouver to Auckland, New Zealand and additional flights to Sydney and Brisbane, Australia. Services to South America are being resumed with seasonal routes from Montreal and Toronto in Canada to Lima in Peru.

easyJet to upgrade fleet with 56 new aircraft

easyJet has agreed to acquire 56 new generation Airbus aircraft as part of a fleet and capacity upgrade. The purchase price would be around \$6.5 billion based on 2018 list prices, but the overall cost of the aircraft will be “very substantially lower” due to price concessions secured in a 2013 agreement with Airbus. The A320neos are due for delivery between 2026 and 2029 with the carrier using purchase options and rights under an existing contract with the European manufacturer.

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES, OTA UPDATE

Barrhead Travel - Barrhead Travel has developed a virtual learning and development programme for staff to bolster plans to expand its cruise offering. New and existing agency employees will be invited to participate in tailored Cruise Academy sessions, including bespoke modules as well as sessions from key cruise partners. The Cruise Academy is part of Barrhead Travel’s core Training Academy division which has three full-time trainers. Face-to-face training is complemented by an online learning lab which houses self-guided development opportunities from industry knowledge to skills training.

Jet2holidays - Jet2holidays has tightened its booking and cancellation terms, after agents urged operators to reduce flexibility introduced to foster consumer confidence during the pandemic. The operator said it had listened to its agency partners and had received “overwhelmingly positive” feedback. The operator said: “Jet2holidays is totally committed to supporting independent travel agents so that they can continue to grow their businesses and succeed”.

JTA Holidays - A new incentive scheme for agents has been unveiled by JTA Holidays. The booking rewards scheme is due to go live next month. Travel agents

will have access to multiple rewards accessible in one place. JTA chief executive Wayne Darrock said he was thrilled to be able to offer rewards to agents after what has been a challenging couple of years for the industry. "We have incentivised travel agents for many years, to thank them for their business," he added.

Luxtripper - Online luxury travel firm Luxtripper has been named one of the UK's fastest-growing privately-owned businesses. Luxtripper is the only travel brand to feature in a list of 100 British-based entrepreneurial companies. The company appears in 34th place in a chart compiled by entrepreneurs club FEBE which highlights founder-led businesses. Other brands recognised in the FEBE Growth 100 list include Gousto, NEOM and Huel. The list recognises UK-based founders who have led, and continue to drive their businesses, to deliver significant sales revenue and consistent profit.

G Adventures - G Adventures is instigating its largest brand campaign across London's transport systems. The month-long 'When was the last time you felt like this?' promotion has been designed to target would-be-travellers along their commuting journeys. The adverts are designed to "celebrate those joyous moments you can only get when travelling on a small-group adventure". G Adventures marketing director Ant Stone said: "With London office workers quickly returning to our capital, that sense of 'Groundhog Day' was starting to set in. Being a travel brand that specialises in taking travellers out of their comfort zones and building epic memories, we recognised we had the perfect antidote".

Simpson Travel - Villa and boutique hotel specialist Simpson Travel is increasing its focus on trade, with plans to offer more fam trip places and to recruit a trade assistant. The operator is planning a fam trip in the autumn to build on the success of its recent trip to Corfu. The autumn destination is yet to be finalised. It has reported rising sales through agents, thanks to its "enhanced focus on trade activity" led by head of trade sales Hannah Naylor-Vane. She recently hosted a fam trip for seven agents to northeast Corfu, which is a key destination for the operator.

SOCIAL UPDATE

Instagram tests TikTok-like full-screen format

Instagram has launched an updated test of its new full-screen main feed. In the new format, Instagram Reels and video clips are expanded to full-screen style, with the navigation bar, description and Instagram logo overlaid on the content. This would move the Stories bar out of view, though the longer-term approach will likely see Stories incorporated into this new presentation format, with a frame count bar

along the bottom of the screen. The update reflects the ongoing influence of TikTok and changing user behaviour across all major social media platforms.

Twitter launches long-form blogging option “Notes”

Twitter has launched its new ‘Notes’ option on selected user profiles. Users will now have the capacity to include header images, insert images and links within the text, and a streamlined option to add in tweets. “Notes” titles are limited to 100 characters with the body of a “Note” extending to 2,500 words. Once published, Notes will appear as a Twitter card, linking users through to the full post, providing a simple, integrated way to attach longer text elements to tweets.

MICE UPDATE

Finalists announced for M&IT Awards 2022

The finalists have been announced for the M&IT Awards 2022 taking place on Friday 9 September at Evolution London. A total of 19 categories have been announced including new categories Best Incentive Provider and a Diversity and Inclusion Award. Other categories include Best Overseas Convention Bureau, Personality of the Year and Best Intermediary Agency. The awards are set to bring the industry together in celebration of event professionals brought together by Northstar Meetings Group.

The finalists and full details on the awards can be found on the M&IT Awards website.

LIGHTER NOTE

Dog owner left in stitches at hilarious photo driver left as proof of delivery. Paul Conway was left shocked after his delivery driver shared a picture of his dog 'accepting' his online order at the door. See the priceless picture and story [here](#)