

WEEKLY REPORT

15 October 2021



COVID-19 UPDATE

The number of people testing positive for COVID-19 has increased in the last seven days. The number of people admitted to hospital has also increased slightly by 5.8% in the last seven days. The vaccination roll out has continued with 85.7% of the UK population over 12 years old having received at least one vaccination and a further 78.7% having had both doses.

The government has set out plans to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic this winter. England's proposal contains two options: Plan A, if the number of cases remains manageable and Plan B, if they reach a point where the NHS starts to struggle. Under Plan A, COVID-19 booster jabs are being offered to approximately 30 million people, including the over-50s, younger adults with health conditions and frontline health and social care workers. Plan A also includes, healthy 12 to 15-year-olds being offered a single dose, the continuation of NHS Test and Trace and free PCR tests, free flu jabs and reminding people to wear face coverings in crowded places. If Plan A isn't sufficient to prevent 'unsustainable pressure' on the NHS, the government can use Plan B, which includes compulsory face coverings in some settings, asking people to work from home and introducing vaccine passports.

The Welsh government has also set out a winter plan with two scenarios - COVID Stable, where Wales remains at alert level zero, with all businesses able to open, and COVID Urgent, where there's a sudden rise in cases, which could be caused by a new, fast-spreading variant, or a drop in vaccine immunity levels. Under COVID Urgent, previously drawn up 'alert levels' - including lockdown at level four - could be used as an option of last resort.

According to the Republic of Ireland's COVID-19 DataHub, there has been a rise in cases, but so far, 7,277,224 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been administered. Dr Ronan Glynn, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health, said yesterday: "Unfortunately, we have seen increases across key indicators of COVID-19 right across the country and the growth rate of the epidemic has accelerated in

recent days. All indicators of COVID-19 are pointing towards a deteriorating disease trajectory nationally.”

ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

Shoppers start to use new £100 contactless payment limit

The spending limit on each use of a contactless card has now risen from £45 to £100 in the UK, in a move that aims to make purchases more convenient. The decision to increase the threshold was taken by the Treasury and the City regulator, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), with chancellor Rishi Sunak believing the decision will also help boost the UK High Street following COVID lockdowns.

UK economy grows on camping and dining out

The UK economy grew by 0.4% in August, as more people dined out, went on holiday and attended festivals. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said the services sector made the biggest contribution to economic growth in the first full month after all COVID restrictions were lifted in England. Arts, entertainment and recreation grew by 9%, boosted by sports clubs, amusement parks and festivals, with more demand also seen for hotels and campsites.

TRADE UPDATE

Day two PCR testing scrapped in the UK

Returning holidaymakers can opt for cheaper and quicker lateral flow tests instead of expensive day two PCR tests from 24 October. The change to the post-arrival day two test will come into effect ready for those returning from half-term trips. It applies to fully vaccinated people arriving from countries not on the red list. The government announced the long awaited change and said lateral flow test kits must be from approved suppliers.

U.S. border reopening confirmed for November 8

The U.S. is to reopen its border to fully-vaccinated travellers from the UK from November 8. White House assistant press secretary Kevin Munoz said on Twitter: “The US’ new travel policy that requires vaccination for foreign national travelers to the United States will begin on Nov 8. This announcement and date applies to both international air travel and land travel. This policy is guided by public health, stringent, and consistent.”

Chile lifts travel quarantine restriction from 1 November

Chile has become the latest country to lift the need for fully vaccinated travellers to

quarantine on arrival. The quarantine rule for vaccinated international travellers will be relaxed from 1 November if a PCR test performed on arrival in the South American country is negative. Visitors must be fully vaccinated, and vaccines must be recognised in Chile.

Portsmouth gets green light to develop 'plug-in' shore power

Portsmouth council has approved the development of "plug in" shore power at the city's cruise port. The move, subject to funding, means visiting ships will be able to switch their engines off while docked and aid Portsmouth's ambition to become one of the UK's first zero emission ports. In a statement announcing the news, Portsmouth port said it would turn into "a living laboratory" as different sustainable power options were developed. In the short term, a battery storage solution will be used to provide shore power to cruise vessels, as well as a long-term ambition of supplying all vessels that visit the port.

ABTA to focus on sustainability

Abta is making a big effort to educate the industry around sustainability. Director of industry relations Susan Deer said improving agents' knowledge was one of three key areas it would be working on with members in the coming months, alongside climate change. Abta launched the Tourism for Good sustainability scheme last year when it collected data from members to find out what their policies were on the subject. Abta's next events will include a carbon measurement workshop and a sustainability surgery for members.

AIRLINE UPDATE

Air Canada - The carrier has released plans for its European schedule for next summer, including flights from Edinburgh and Manchester airports to Canada from June 2022. Further details have not yet been announced. Air Canada has already restored year-round routes to Canada from London and Dublin. It also plans to restart year-round routes to Amsterdam (December 2021), Copenhagen (May 2021), Lyon (December 2021), Madrid (April 2022) and Milan (May 2022).

British Airways - British Airways has announced it will be recruiting new cabin crew to join the airline in the spring to help fly its summer schedule. The airline has contacted people in its existing talent pools, which holds the details of those who left the business last year but have expressed an interest to return to the airline when jobs are available. To incentivise new starters, BA will also waive its policy for employees to have to work for six months for the carrier before they can access staff travel. Sean Doyle, BA chairman and chief executive, said the airline is "finally" seeing a demand for travel return after "18 long months of closed or restricted borders across the world".

Easyjet - EasyJet has added another 100,000 seats for first-quarter (Q1) 2022 in anticipation of restoring capacity to 70% of pre-pandemic levels, thanks in the main to "particularly strong demand" for winter sun destinations. During its fourth quarter, easyJet flew 17.3 million seats – 58% of the 2019 capacity flown during the same period (three months to 30 September). Intra-European and UK domestic routes have performed strongest, with UK government travel restrictions still hampering demand for international flights.

Qantas - The carrier on Friday (15 October) confirmed it will operate an up to five-times-weekly Sydney-London service starting 1 November. London flights will operate via Darwin until at least April 2022, Qantas said. It comes after Australia's federal government, and the administration in New South Wales, confirmed the territory's borders would reopen from the start of next month.

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES & OTA UPDATE

G Adventures - The operator is expanding its U.S. small group touring programme. G Adventures has doubled the size of its U.S. small-group touring programme ahead of the U.S.'s plans to reopen its borders to international visitors in November. An additional 13 newly developed tours have been added to the collection, which was launched in February to U.S. domestic travellers, expanding it to 28 in total. New additions include opportunities to explore various U.S. national parks, as well as the country's Navajo Nation parks.

Jet2 - Jet2.com and Jet2holidays has added 7,000 seats to the Canary Islands for the remainder of this month, citing strong demand. As well as additional flights to Tenerife, Lanzarote, Fuerteventura and Gran Canaria, there are also more departures to Dalaman in October, targeting half-term. The capacity increase is spread across Belfast International, Birmingham, East Midlands, Leeds Bradford, Stansted, Manchester and Newcastle airports.

Insight Vacations - The operator has launched a new trade focused U.S. and Canada campaign. Agents will be offered tailorable assets as part of the "Can't Help Falling in Love with the USA & Canada" campaign, such as brochures, email templates, window posters and ready-made social media posts to help showcase big sellers and bucket list trips. A digital brochure will also be available, which will include the highlights, USPs and day-to-day activities of each trip available. All assets will be shared via trade newsletters.

Travel Counsellors - Bookings for the Caribbean, U.S. and UAE are dominating Travel Counsellors business for winter, while the homeworking giant has also revealed an uptick in sales for half-term trips to Spain.

TUI - Tui will restart flights and holidays to Turkey this week as it looks to step up operations following recent changes to the UK travel rules and red list. Ahead of half-term, the airline and operator will resume operations to Antalya, Dalaman, Bodrum and Izmir – starting Saturday (16 October). This will be followed by Sharm el Sheikh, Cancun and Jamaica (Tui flights) on Sunday (17 October), and Hurghada on Monday (18 October).

SOCIAL UPDATE

Twitter tests ads in Tweet replies

Twitter is looking to expand its ad inventory with a new placement option within the reply threads of tweets. They are testing this new format globally with ads appearing after the first, third or eighth reply under a tweet. This facilitates the direct monetisation of tweets with creator's able to opt-in to these ads, and then get a cut of the resulting revenue. There would be a reply threshold to qualify, but this could be a big winner for the app and provide an even bigger incentive for users to try to go viral.

Instagram adds Reels ads into its marketing API

Facebook is looking to expand the usage of Reels ads by adding placements into its Instagram marketing API. This will enable approved third-party platforms to facilitate Reels ads creation within their digital ads flow. The addition of these placements will make it easier for brands to implement campaigns. As Facebook looks to enhance its focus on short video clips, this could present major potential for reach and growth over the coming holiday period.

MICE UPDATE

Confidence in face-to-face events is growing faster than expected, according to ExCeL London

The Royal Docks venue in East London is expected to host a total of 67 events in 2021, with many new and returning clients on the roster. The venue only reopened its doors to events in July after acting as a Nightingale Hospital to help the NHS during the COVID-19 pandemic. The convention centre has already hosted 25 events, including the Virgin London marathon Show, the Digital Transformation EXPO Europe, the Business Travel Show Europe, Global Offshore Wind and The Meetings Show – officially opened by Tourism Minister Nigel Huddleston.

LIGHTER NOTE

A Scots school girl is on a mission to help 'scared and nervous' animals by reading stories to them at a rescue centre. See it [here](#).