

WEEKLY REPORT

8 October 2021

COVID-19 UPDATE

The number of people testing positive for COVID-19 in the UK has decreased by 3.1% in the last seven days. The number of people admitted to hospital has continued to decline by 16.6% and the number of deaths having tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 30 days has reduced at a rate of 37%.

The vaccination scheme continues to remain significant, with 94 million doses given in the UK. A total of 49 million first doses have been administered, equating to 89.8% of the UK population aged 16 and over, with 45 million second doses given, accounting for 82.5% of the UK's population who are over 16 years old.

In Wales, following the vote for the mandate of COVID-19 passes, first minister Mark Drakeford said that the "opposing parties were not prepared to support the measure" which was "extraordinary". This comes as more than 10,000 children missed school for COVID-19 reasons last week in the country, compared to 204,000 UK-wide, with the Welsh Situational COVID-19 Report revealing that the case incidence is highest in those between the age of 10 and 19, at almost 2,000 per 100,000 people.

In Scotland, the government has announced a COVID-19 recovery strategy for a fairer future, setting out next steps to address systemic inequalities; make progress towards a wellbeing economy; and accelerate inclusive person-centred public services. Deputy first minister and COVID recovery secretary John Winney has said that this is a product of "months of engagement with a variety of individuals and organisations representing sectors across the country" in a bid to "go further than how life was before COVID".

ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

Boris Johnson pushes levelling-up message as he promises £3,000 in bonuses for teachers

The new premium for teachers was announced by Boris Johnson on Tuesday, as part of the Conservative Party project, which will cost the Treasury more than £60m over the next three years through new funding. The announcement means that professors who teach subjects such as mathematics, chemistry, computing and physics can “take advantage of up to £3,000 if they choose to stay in [these] professions” for up to five years. Speaking on Thursday, education secretary Nadhim Zahawi claimed that this effort will ensure to keep teachers “in the schools that most need them” and is “better than the similar, previously scrapped policy”.

The Bank of England warns that inflation will get worse before it gets better UK

FTSE-100 contracts rose almost 40% on Thursday before Russian president Vladimir Putin said he was prepared to help the UK stabilise the state of the gas and petrol market. The price of gas has surged in recent months through a combination of the global economic recovery from the pandemic, a shortage of supplies and the longstanding global effort to reduce the use of fossil fuels, as a result of this the growth of the economy is expected to slow down and inflation to rise. The latest measure of the Consumer Prices Index was 3.2%, which had proved “greater than expected” according to new chief economist, Huw Pill, on the state of inflation. Despite the magnitude and transience of the spike, the end of the furlough programme, amongst other rises in imported goods which “reflect these dynamics” make rates hard to predict and thus as the pandemic recedes, and supply composition normalises, these pressures “should subside”. For now, the Centre for Economics and Business Research revealed that the cost of inflation to a typical family of four will be £1,800 extra by the end of the year.

Three out of 10 businesses report facing higher input prices than normal

The percentage of businesses reporting higher prices for materials, goods and services bought and sold has increased. Data collected in September 2021 but published on Thursday this week showed that 29% of businesses who continue to trade, following the fallout of the pandemic, have expressed that their normal price fluctuations have increased in the last two weeks, this is up from 21% in late May 2021, and from 14% in late December 2020, the Office for National Statistics has confirmed. By contrast, 10% of businesses reported that they have decided to increase the price of goods or services that were sold in early September, which is up from previous figures of 8% in mid-August and 4% in late-December.

TRADE UPDATE**UK travel red list cut to just seven countries**

The number of countries on the COVID-19 travel red list will be cut from 54 to seven, the government confirmed on Thursday. Countries including South Africa, Brazil and Mexico will come off the red list, which requires travellers to quarantine in an approved hotel at their cost for 10 full days. Transport secretary Grant Shapps said the changes will come into place on Monday 11 October and "mark the next step" in opening travel. Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, Haiti and the Dominican Republic remain on the red list.

Pandemic travel rules in the UK have recently been simplified with the amber list cut and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) travel advice relaxed. The FCDO this week lifted its advice against non-essential travel to 32 countries and territories including Bangladesh, Fiji and Malaysia, making it easier for people visiting those locations to obtain travel insurance. Before Wednesday's changes, the FCDO advised against non-essential travel due to the virus to 117 countries and territories.

AITO hails reduction in red list as 'game changer'

Members of the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO) hailed government confirmation that the red list of countries would be slashed from Monday as "a game changer". AITO chairman Chris Rowles said: "There is real hope now for the travel industry to pick up and move forward. There are just a handful of destinations left on the red list." Speaking following an AITO autumn general meeting in London, Rowles told Travel Weekly: "This is the game changer. It means a real opening up of travel. There could always be hiccoughs – a deterioration in some destinations that we'll have to deal with...but there is the demand. The industry can pick up now. It's the best news I've heard in ages."

Gatwick puts forward noise cap commitment as part of second runway bid

Gatwick Airport has committed to no more aircraft noise than in 2019 by the time its planned second runway reaches full capacity. The airport also proposes to increase the number of eligible households for noise insulation by up to 1,750 homes, compared to an existing noise insulation scheme, plus offering enhanced measures for those most affected. A cap on aircraft noise is being proposed if the northern runway, currently under public consultation, is brought into routine use. The aim is to incentivise airlines to increase the number of quieter aircraft they use at the airport as the project reaches full capacity by 2038.

Aviation sector targets net-zero carbon emissions by 2050

The global air transport industry has adopted a long-term climate goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Air Transport Action Group said the world's airlines, airports, air traffic management and the makers of aircraft and engines are committed "to reduce CO2 emissions in support of the Paris Agreement 1.5°C goal". This comes after the resolution on Monday (4 October) of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) membership to adopt a net-zero goal.

Insurers Direct Line and Churchill resume COVID-19 cover for cancelled trips

Direct Line and Churchill have removed restrictions to cancellation cover which were put in place last year as the pandemic took hold. The changes now mean travellers have "much more extensive cover where the claim relates to disruption caused by COVID-19", according to a statement by the brands' owner UK Insurance Limited. Alongside this, the policy gives customers a choice of cancelling their trip or continuing to travel where the Foreign Office changes advice to against 'all but essential travel' after a trip has been booked.

AIRLINE UPDATE

Etihad Airways - Etihad Airways is inviting passengers to book a special 'sustainable flight' from Heathrow to Abu Dhabi on 23 October. The flight aims to celebrate the second anniversary of the Etihad Greenliner Programme, which uses Etihad's Boeing 787 fleet as a test bed for sustainability improvements. Since 2019, the airline has worked with Boeing on inflight products, airspace management, flight deck tools, sustainable fuel and noise levels. Operated with Etihad's Greenliner aircraft, the flight is expected to emit 72% less CO2e (carbon dioxide equivalent) in total and 56% less CO2e per unit of payload than the equivalent flight operated in 2019.

Norwegian Air - Norwegian Air carried almost one million passengers in September as demand improved across its network. The budget carrier, which abandoned low fare long-haul routes last year and faced a financial restructuring in the face of the COVID-19 crisis, reported strengthening in demand across its network. "Traditional booking patterns are beginning to return and we are seeing more people planning ahead and booking to travel to our popular city break and winter sun destinations," the airline said.

Wizz Air - Low-cost carrier Wizz Air will offer 1.5 million seats from Doncaster Sheffield airport next summer (April-October 2022) – one million more than it did in summer 2019. Additional new routes are now on sale for next summer to destinations in Spain, Turkey, Portugal, Bulgaria and Crete. The hike in capacity is part of a new deal between the airline and airport, which hopes to further increase services to holiday destinations in future years. Wizz Air will have 250,000 seats on sale for winter (November 2021-March 2022), with flights to the Canary Islands, Cyprus and cities in Latvia and Poland. The airline said it is already seeing an increase in bookings for October half-term and summer 2022.

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES & OTA UPDATE

Explore - Explore has revamped its customer loyalty scheme to encourage repeat bookings via travel agents. The improved scheme includes increased discounts, 'refer a friend' bonuses and early access to new trips and offers, as well as discounts linked to how many trips clients have taken. Discounts range from 5% off all trips after a client's second trip to up to 10% off after nine trips. Head of global sales Ben Ittensohn is hopeful the scheme will encourage clients to return to their travel agent to book further holidays with the adventure tour operator. Ittensohn said: "We've been working hard on developing a loyalty programme we're really proud of – one we think is the best out there. We're super excited to give customers even more reason to keep travelling, and to keep returning to their trusted travel agents."

Jet2 - Jet2 has confirmed its network of ski destinations this winter with the addition of Chambéry in France. The carrier is to serve eight winter sports gateways in Europe with the return of flights to Geneva, Grenoble, Salzburg, Innsbruck, Turin, Lyon and Barcelona for Andorra. The company's ski programme includes six new routes – Geneva from Newcastle and Glasgow, Innsbruck from Bristol and Edinburgh, and Salzburg from Bristol and Newcastle. The new links to Innsbruck and an additional service from Manchester means the airline has doubled its programme to the Austrian city.

Joe Walsh Tours - Irish travel agent and tour operator, Joe Walsh Tours, is set to reopen after ceasing trading in April 2021. Joe Walsh Tours first launched in 1961 and specialised in tours to pilgrimage destinations. A statement issued on behalf of the company said: "Following an exhaustive and transparent sales process, David Walsh has announced that he has reached agreement with the liquidators to

acquire the business and certain assets of Joe Walsh Pilgrimtours Ltd including the Joe Walsh Tours brand.” David Walsh was the owner and a director of Joe Walsh Tours and the amount paid in the sale has not been disclosed. The company is seeking a licence from the Commission for Aviation Regulation (CAR) and it intends to operate in various specialist tour markets including pilgrimages, said the statement.

TUI - TUI is to raise €1.1 billion to bolster its balance sheet as travel starts to emerge from the worst effects of the pandemic. Europe’s largest travel group reported UK winter bookings “trending strongly” after the 17 September government update on travel rules. Overall, summer 2022 bookings are up 54% over pre-pandemic summer 2019. TUI said: “We believe many customers will continue to want to secure their summer holidays in advance, with Turkey, Florida, Greece and Cyprus the most popular destinations at present. With the strong indications of pent-up demand, we believe summer 2022 volumes will likely recover close to normalised levels of summer 2019.” Early Marella Cruises sales for summer 2022 are “well positioned”, supported by both rebookings and new bookings.

SOCIAL UPDATE

Instagram retires IGTV brand to merge video feed

Instagram is combining IGTV and feed videos into one streamlined format - Instagram Video. There will be a new video tab where this combined format will live, making it easy for users to discover new content. The video previews in feeds will now be 60 seconds long, unless it’s eligible for ads - in which case, the preview will remain at 15 seconds. This enables users to view more content without having to tap through, generating more interest. Instagram is also testing a like button for Stories which would appear alongside the message field at the bottom of the Stories display, providing another engagement opportunity.

Instagram launches new click to WhatsApp message ads

Instagram has announced that all businesses can now connect their WhatsApp account to Instagram to facilitate new connection opportunities. They’ll be able to add a new WhatsApp connection tab to an Instagram business profile, providing another way for people to get in touch and spark direct conversations. Facebook is also working on a new ad messaging process that will detect the messaging platform used most often by the individual user and prompt them to message a brand on that service.

MICE UPDATE

Eight in 10 UK and European planners are sourcing in-person events

Eighty per cent of event planners across the UK and Europe are currently sourcing in-person events, according to the Cvent 2021 Planner Sourcing Report: Europe Edition. Of those planners, 81 per cent are sourcing for events to take place in 2021, and 63% are sourcing for events to take place in 2022. The results suggest strong industry momentum as planners become more confident about hosting in-person events across the continent.

Almost half (46%) of respondents said that they are organising hybrid events, ie; events that offer both in-person and virtual experiences. When asked what venue offerings would most influence their venue sourcing decision for their in-person events, hybrid-ready meeting space and studios (30%) and on-site production and technology expertise (29%), ranked among the highest requested offerings.

LIGHTER NOTE

Golden retriever handed Guinness World Record for fitting most tennis balls in mouth. See it [here](#).