

WEEKLY REPORT

22 October 2021



COVID-19 UPDATE

The number of people testing positive for COVID-19 has increased in the last seven days by 17.9%. The number of people admitted to hospital has also continued to incline by similar proportions at 15.4%, in the last seven days. The vaccination rollout continues with 49.5 million people over the age of 12 having now had their first dose of the vaccine and a further 45.4 million being administered their second dose. With this total, 86.2% of the UK's population has received their first dose of the vaccine and 79% their second dose.

Speaking at a Downing Street news conference on Wednesday, health secretary Sajid Javid confirmed that additional coronavirus restrictions – for example, face coverings becoming mandatory in some public places – are not going to be introduced in England for the foreseeable future. Despite Javid saying that he could see the UK heading to amass 100,000 COVID-19 cases a day stressing that the pandemic is “not over”, he later revealed that current COVID-related deaths still remain “mercifully low”. This assertion was later questioned by British Medical Association (BMA) council chair Dr Chaand Nagpaul who, by contrast, believes that hospital admissions and deaths are currently at an “unacceptable” level.

This comes as reports from Wednesday 20 October recorded 49,139 new COVID-19 cases, the eighth day in a row that infections have been above 40,000. While Javid said that Plan B will not be introduced in England at this point, in other developments, former prime minister Tony Blair and his institution, have made 12 key recommendations for cutting the spread of COVID-19, of which setting a target to vaccinate 50% of 12 to 15-year-olds by 1 December and approving jabs for under 12s are the forefront of priorities.

Since the announcement of the NHS COVID recovery fund in which the Welsh government promised plans to invest £248 million in health and social care as a means to mitigate the effects of the pandemic and help health boards tackle

waiting times, health minister Eluned Morgan has opted for an additional £42 million in extra funding in his recognition of the public's dependency on social care.

The Republic of Ireland has paused some of the measures that had been planned for the reopening of society today (22 October). The slight digression comes after a recommendation from the country's National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) voicing their reluctance to ease the use of masks and social distancing in public places, following a rising number of COVID-19 cases in hospitals in recent weeks. Even though 89% of those aged over 12 in Ireland are vaccinated, cabinet ministers have decided to continue with COVID-19 certificates for proof of entry into indoor drinking and dining venues and have extended these restrictions as nightclubs reopen, for the first time since March 2020. In spite of this, Taoiseach Micheál Martin confirmed that from today, there will be no restriction on the number of people allowed to attend weddings and funerals in Ireland as well as lifting capacity prohibitions for outdoor events and sporting facilities, a phase he assured will continue to be implemented. Meanwhile, vaccine boosters for people aged 60 and over have been approved by the Republic of Ireland's National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC).

ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

Conservative MP Sir David Amess fatally stabbed outside his constituency surgery

Sir David, who represented Southend West in Essex as an MP for 38 years, was stabbed to death last Friday as he was meeting his constituents at Belfairs Methodist Church in Leigh-on-Sea. Charged with the preparation of terrorist acts after the MP died from "serious injuries", Ali Harbi Ali, from North London appeared at Westminster Magistrates Court on Thursday 21, where he was remanded in custody. Before the hearing, Nick Price, from the Crown Prosecution Service, said that the murder had a "terrorist connection, namely both religious and ideological[ly] motivat[ed]". In the wake of the stabbing, former chief constable of South Wales Police, Matthew Jukes has said that the Metropolitan Police is now working closely with parliament's security team and the Home Office to review security for MPs in which "specific arrangements" are now being made.

UK retail sales slump to record low for September

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), retail sales have fallen by 0.2% compared to August 2021. September was the fifth consecutive month that retail sales declined, making for the longest continuous stretch on record, with data showing volumes were 4.2% higher in February 2020. CEO of the British Retail Consortium, Helen Dickinson, said that for the sake of the UK's economic recovery, it

is “vital that retail sales bounce back as we near the festive season” and that the “government [must] find a long-term solution to labour shortages across supply chains”. Whilst the looming spectre of rising COVID-19 case rates have seen people shy away from physical retail stores, automotive fuel sales volumes were up by 2.9%, 1.8% above pre-pandemic levels, with proportions of online retail sales reported to be 28.1% higher in September and food store sales volumes up by 3.9% from February 2020.

TRADE UPDATE

Brand USA Travel Week returns to London

Preparations are now finalised ahead of next week's #BrandUSATravelWeek Europe 2021, which takes place at County Hall from Monday with 85 exhibitors. The week-long event, which includes networking opportunities and enrichment sessions, is particularly poignant this year ahead of the U.S. reopening its border on 8 November, with promising steps made towards the return of transatlantic travel.

ABTA urges chancellor to extend financial support for travel

ABTA chief executive Mark Tanzer has called on the chancellor Rishi Sunak to extend business support measures to help the travel sector "get back on its feet", with the chancellor due to announce the autumn budget on 27 October. Tanzer said that despite the more positive outlook for international travel following the easing of restrictions, "it will take time for travel to get fullyback on its feet". Last month, ABTA reportedly wrote to the chancellor urging him to use the budget to provide an update on the additional £1.5bn in targeted support for businesses which was announced earlier this year.

AIRLINE UPDATE

British Airways - British Airways has agreed a codeshare deal with Kenya Airways, making it easier for its passengers to fly to 20 destinations across east and central Africa. As part of the reciprocal agreement, passengers flying with Kenya Airways to London can connect to 26 destinations including Glasgow, Madrid, Milan, Amsterdam and Frankfurt. British Airways currently offers four flights a week between Heathrow to Nairobi. Christopher Fordyce, British Airways' head of

alliances, said: "After a difficult 20 months with global travel restrictions, it's fantastic to see travel between the UK and Africa resuming."

Qantas - Qantas is adding more than 10 extra flights between London and Sydney due to a surge in Australians seeking to fly home by Christmas, as the country gradually reopens its border. The airline is also returning its fleet of Airbus A380 superjumbos into service earlier than planned after the aircraft were originally expected to remain in long term storage in the Californian desert until the end of 2023. The ramp up follows the federal and New South Wales governments confirming that international borders would reopen from 1 November and NSW authorities removing quarantine requirements for fully vaccinated arrivals, which significantly increases travel demand.

Virgin Atlantic - Virgin Atlantic is to resume its transatlantic flights to Orlando and Las Vegas from Heathrow on 8 November. Flights from Manchester to Orlando and New York will resume on the same day, with the carrier saying that the move is in response to a "surge" in customer demand. It comes after the White House confirmed last week that the U.S. would reopen to fully-vaccinated international travellers from the same date. Services to Orlando will depart daily from both Heathrow and Manchester. The route is currently the most booked across Virgin Atlantic's global portfolio, which the carrier said "reaffirms the pent-up demand for families and thrill seekers to enjoy the magic of Florida's top destination".

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES & OTA UPDATE

Jet2Holidays - Jet2holidays has put its 2023 summer sun programme on sale from six UK bases earlier than ever before, in a bid to capitalise on "strong demand" from customers. Package holidays, as well as flights with sister airline Jet2.com, are available from Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, East Midlands, Manchester and Stansted. Destinations that have gone on sale for summer 2023 include the Canaries, Balearics, mainland Spain, Greece, Turkey, Italy, Cyprus, Croatia and Portugal. The programme includes more than 135 weekly flights to the Canary Islands, more than 150 weekly flights to the Balearic Islands and almost 200 weekly flights to 14 Greek destinations. The UK's second largest ATOL holder said it will make further summer 2023 announcements "over the coming weeks", with summer sun to go on sale from more of its 10 UK bases, in addition to city break options launching.

easyJet Holidays - Almost four million Britons are still planning to holiday abroad during 2021, according to a report released by easyJet holidays. Spain tops the list of destinations, followed by France, Italy, Greece and Cyprus, for the 3.8 million estimated to be heading for a "great late escape". Almost half (1.7 million) will be heading overseas for the October half-term holiday period, in time for new COVID-19 testing rules which will make their return to the UK cheaper. Lateral flow tests will be introduced in place of PCRs from 24 October for fully-jabbed passengers and most under-18s arriving in England from countries not on the red travel list.

SOCIAL UPDATE

Instagram to enable uploads via desktop

Instagram has announced it's adding image and video posting functionality from the desktop version of the platform as of 21 October, providing a more centralised way for businesses to maintain their social presence. The platform will facilitate the posting of photos and videos of less than one minute in length, but will not include Stories or Reels uploads at this stage.

Instagram adds collaboration options

Instagram has added a new way for users to collaborate on feed posts and Reels. Users will now be able to invite others to collaborate on a post or Reel, which will then show up on both of their profile grids. This new element will enable brands and creators to generate more reach and engagement by getting their posts seen by a broader, combined audience of each partner.

Donald Trump to launch new social media platform

As an alternative to Silicon Valley titans Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Chinese-owned TikTok, former president Donald Trump, has revealed plans to create a new media empire that would not only intend to compete with Disney+ and Netflix for streaming TV but also the likes of powerhouses Amazon and Google for their cloud-hosting services. Trump was banned from major social networks across the world following the storming of the U.S. government in January. In Trump's words, he wants to "tackle the tyranny of Big Tech" following merger announcements between Trump Media and Technology Group (TMTG) with Digital World Acquisition Corp. Truth Social will be TMTG's first product and social media platform, with Trump promising that it will offer users "an open, free and honest global conversation without discriminating against political ideology".

MICE UPDATE

UK business events sector showing growth in 2022

Bedfordshire venue Wyboston Lakes Resort has reported that bookings for conferences, meetings and training events for 2022 are currently over 140% ahead of 2019, alongside what it says is a record number of large events from leading pharmaceutical companies taking place this autumn. According to the venue, other sectors that are returning to in-person events include government (and associated bodies), associations, professional services, technology, education and training providers, financial services and construction.

These findings are backed up by the latest statistics from Trinity Event Solutions that show pharmaceutical event bookings have increased for the agency by 476% in 2022 compared to this year, followed by the finance and insurance industry which is up by 21%. New business has increased by 266% compared to 2020, and is up by 14% on 2019.

LIGHTER NOTE

A sneaky alligator steals golfer's ball and swims off with it. See it [here](#).