

WEEKLY BRIEFING

1 July 2022

COVID-19 UPDATE

The number of COVID-19 cases is rising across England, Scotland and Wales with experts warning of a fifth wave. Between 19 June 2022 and 25 June 2022, 112,710 people in England tested positive for COVID-19, an increase of 35.1% compared to the previous seven days. In the past week there have been 8,594 COVID-19 related hospital admissions in the UK, 6,305 Wales and 848 in Scotland.

Access to free lateral flow tests has been extended in Wales until the end of July and vaccination efforts continue. UK MP Matt Hancock declares that though COVID-19 cases are rising, there is no need for alarm with vaccines preventing serious illness and death. Governments in Wales and England are continuing to roll out their booster vaccinations for those over the age of 75, those in adult care homes and those who are immunosuppressed. The UK has a high vaccination uptake with 93.2% of the population aged 12+ as of 29 June 2022 having received a first dose, 87.2% a second dose, and 68.6% a booster or a third dose of a vaccine.

ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

UK inflation higher than Europe

Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey has stated that inflation is set to be higher for a longer period of time in the UK than most European countries. The global economic shocks from the pandemic and from Russia's invasion of Ukraine have been felt worldwide and are the overwhelming driver of high inflation and slower growth for most European countries. Retailer Pepco found that UK customers were scaling back even on essential purchases, whereas elsewhere in Europe, where wage rises were making up for price rises, this was not the case.

Nicola Sturgeon announces second Scottish independence vote

First Minister of Scotland and Leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP), Nicola Sturgeon has asked the Supreme Court to rule on whether the Scottish government can hold a non-binding referendum on independence on 19 October 2023, without having Boris Johnson's permission. Sturgeon told MSPs her party would fight the next general election on the single issue of ending the Union if the UK Supreme Court blocked her plans. The SNP leader insisted that any vote on independence must be able to withstand a legal challenge and ruled out holding a so-called wildcat referendum. The Lord Advocate - Scotland's top law officer - has agreed to refer the case to the Supreme Court.

Roe V Wade decision overturned

Millions of women in the U.S. will lose the constitutional right to abortion, after the Supreme Court overturned its 50-year-old Roe v Wade decision on Friday 24 June 2022. The decision has triggered both elation and despair as the judgement paves the way for individual states to ban the procedure, with half expected to introduce new restrictions or bans. Thirteen states have already passed so-called trigger laws to automatically outlaw abortion. According to research from Planned Parenthood, the ruling is expected to cut off abortion access for around 36 million women of reproductive age, sparking protests across the U.S. and worldwide. President Joe Biden described it as "a tragic error" and urged states to enact laws to allow the procedure.

TRADE UPDATE

Government sets out 22-point aviation action plan to avoid summer disruption

A 22-point government action plan to support the aviation industry has been unveiled as it urged the sector to avoid a repeat of Easter and half-term disruption this summer. It sets out the measures the government is taking to support the aviation industry. Ministers have made clear to airlines that they must run realistic timetables that can be fulfilled and must make passengers aware of any changes to their flights well in advance in order to avoid last-minute cancellations. New regulations have been introduced as part of the 22-point strategy that aims to give airlines the tools to ensure that schedules are manageable and reduce flight disruption over the summer peak.

Global air travel nears pre-pandemic levels in Q3

Global air travel will near pre-pandemic levels in the third quarter of 2022, according to travel analytics firm ForwardKeys. According to data produced by the firm for the World Travel Market, in July, August and September, global air traffic is set to reach 65% of where it was before the pandemic in 2019. However, the revival is "patchy", with some

parts of the world performing better than others and some types of travel, particularly beach holidays, being more popular than urban city visits and sightseeing.

Pandemic driving digital revolution throughout travel

The COVID-19 pandemic has inspired a digital revolution throughout travel, with more passengers embracing mobile technologies to make journeys more convenient, according to new data. According to air transport IT provider SITA's 2022 passenger insights research, there has been an increase in passenger use of mobile devices for booking, onboard the aircraft and for bag collection in Q1 2022 compared to Q1 2020, while automated gates saw increases in adoption for identity control, boarding, and border control. The company said the results "clearly reflect" the accelerated digitalisation of air travel since the outbreak of the pandemic and passengers' willingness to adopt technologies.

Heathrow Airport told to reduce passenger charges over next five years

Heathrow Airport has been told by the CAA it must cut its airline passenger charges every year in the period up to 2026. The charge, which is paid by airlines per passenger but can be passed on through air fares, is currently set at £30.19. However, the CAA wants Heathrow to reduce this to £26.21 in 2026 – a near 6% reduction every year over the term of the next settlement. The proposal for the next five-year control period (H7), which runs from 2022 to 2026, is subject to consultation with a final decision due later this year.

Mauritius set to end testing for fully vaccinated arrivals

Mauritius is set to end arrival testing for fully vaccinated travellers from Friday 1 July 2022. The island will also drop quarantine for unvaccinated visitors and mandatory mask wearing around hotels on the same day. Face coverings will remain in use in public areas such as hospitals, airports and public transport. Testing for non-fully vaccinated visitors will be kept.

AIRLINE UPDATE

Air New Zealand

Air New Zealand is promising economy passengers the "best sleep in the sky" when it launches flights with bunk bed-style sleeping pods in 2024. Called Skynest, the sleep pods will be installed in the carrier's ultra-long haul Dreamliner aircraft from 2024. The six-pod units are said to be the first such offering in the world for economy passengers.

Etihad Airways

Etihad Airways expects to welcome “more than 2.7 million passengers” this summer following a surge in demand for global travel. Mohammad Al Bulooki, chief operating officer of Etihad Aviation Group, reported a “vast increase” in bookings in recent weeks. The carrier forecasts that more than 1.4 million passengers will depart from Abu Dhabi International Airport alone across 1,100 weekly flights.

Qatar Airways

Qatar Airways is expanding connectivity across southern Africa via a codeshare pact with Johannesburg-based carrier Airlink. The new arrangement provides connections between 45 destinations in 13 countries across southern Africa and the rest of the world. The agreement increases Qatar Airways’ footprint in southern Africa, with improved access to destinations in South Africa and to Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES, OTA UPDATE

Newmarket Holidays - Newmarket Holidays has reported an 80% increase in long-haul agent sales for the year to date, compared to the same period in 2019. Head of trade sales Richard Forde said: “We are delighted with the year so far and agents have played a big part in bringing confidence back to our customers, especially when it comes to big-ticket long-haul adventures”.

Travel Counsellors - A Travel Counsellor generated £1.5 million in sales last month – the highest number ever recorded for a single person in the company’s history. The achievement came as the company reported that almost 60 agents saw their strongest ever sales month in June. This came as bookings for the first half of the year reached 150% of pre-pandemic levels and the company has already generated more departures for June to October 2022 than in the whole of 2019.

SOCIAL UPDATE

Instagram opens Reels API access to third-party platforms

Brands will soon have more options for posting Instagram Reels to their accounts as Meta announces that it’s launching its Reels API for external use. API access enables platforms like Hootsuite and Sprout Social to provide cross-platform posting and analytics capacity within a single dashboard. This will make it easier to keep track of Instagram Reels and schedules in one place. The new API will support content scheduling, insights, moderation, hashtag search and more within the Reels element.

Facebook launches new 'Creator Collaborations'

Facebook is launching a new 'Creator Collaborations' feature which will enable creators to collaborate with others on content to expand their reach. Creator Collaborations will enable multiple creators to be listed on a single Facebook post, providing both additional brand awareness, through the tag and expanded reach, to the combined audience of both collaborators.

MICE UPDATE

The Meetings Show celebrates a successful return

The landmark 10th edition of The Meetings Show was officially opened by Yeoh Soon Hin, Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy for Penang at ExCeL London this week. The show was twice the size of the 2021 show with more than 500 exhibitors from across the globe. In addition to meetings and networking events, a varied education programme highlighted the latest trends and developments whilst tackling burning issues including current recruitment challenges and sustainability.

Lord Sebastian Coe kicked off the first day in his opening keynote on event legacy as London celebrates its 10 year anniversary since the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

LIGHTER NOTE

Woman discovers the vintage skates she bought online belonged to her 40 years ago. Renée Forrestall sold her beloved skates 40 years ago during a yard sale and after deciding to pick the hobby back up, unknowingly purchased her original pair online which had her name written inside each shoe. See more [here](#).