

# WEEKLY BRIEFING

9 September 2022

## ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

### **Buckingham Palace announces the death of HRH Queen Elizabeth II**

The UK's longest-serving monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, died peacefully at Balmoral aged 96 on the afternoon of Thursday 8 September. The Royal family gathered at Her Majesty The Queen's Scottish estate after she was placed under medical supervision by doctors. Her reign spanned 15 prime ministers, post-war austerity, the transition from empire to Commonwealth, the end of the Cold War and the UK's entry into - and withdrawal from - the European Union. She is succeeded by her eldest son and heir, the Prince of Wales, who becomes His Majesty, King Charles III. The Royal Family now enters a period of mourning. Official engagements will be cancelled and union flags will be flown at half-mast on royal residences, government buildings, and establishments across the Armed Forces and UK Posts overseas. The Queen's funeral is anticipated to take place on Monday 19 September and a two-minute silence will be held across the country. Members of the public will be able to pay their respects as she lies in state at Westminster Hall, before her funeral at Westminster Abbey. From there, she will be taken to Windsor Castle to her final resting place in St George's Chapel, where she will be buried alongside her beloved parents, sister Princess Margaret and the Duke of Edinburgh.

### **The UK's next prime minister is appointed**

On Tuesday 6 September, Liz Truss was appointed the new prime minister of the United Kingdom after being officially asked by the Queen to form a new government in what was to become the monarch's last Official Act. The former foreign secretary, Truss, beat her rival Rishi Sunak to win the Conservative leadership race on Monday replacing Boris Johnson in Number 10. In her first days as prime minister, Liz Truss announced her new cabinet ministers, unveiled a plan to freeze average energy bills for households at £2,500 and formally addressed the nation following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, calling the monarch "the rock on which modern Britain was built".

## COVID-19 UPDATE

The number of people testing positive for COVID-19 in England has increased by 0.5% in the past seven days. However, the number of deaths within 28 days of a positive test result fell by 24.9%, and there was a 12% decline in the number of patients admitted to hospital. As of 7 September 2022, 69.3% of people over the age of 12 in England have received their third or booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. The autumn COVID-19 booster campaign also began this week. Around seven million people, including those aged 75 and over, people who are immunosuppressed and health and care workers will be able to book their boosters online or by calling 119

## TRADE UPDATE

### **Travel industry pays tribute to HM Queen Elizabeth II**

Airlines, airports, agents, industry bodies and many others from across the travel and tourism sector have paid tribute to Her Majesty the Queen who passed away at her Balmoral residence in Scotland on 8 September. The UK's national carrier British Airways said: "We are deeply saddened to hear of the loss of Her Majesty the Queen. At this terribly sad time, our thoughts are with the entire British Royal Family and the nation, as we grieve her immeasurable loss. We are deeply honoured and proud to have flown Her Majesty on a number of occasions, moments which we will always cherish."

### **MPs call on Truss to support travel and aviation**

A group of 55 MPs has written to the new prime minister spelling out how she can back aviation, travel and tourism in her new post. The letter from the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Future of Aviation calls for minimum staffing levels for Border Force at UK airports and a minister for the sector. The group asked Liz Truss to give "specific responsibility for overseeing the cross-government approach to international travel policy" to an individual minister. They also asked her to confirm commitment to the Jet Zero Strategy and put in place levels of price stability "to attract investment and new entrants to the market". The MPs also called on prime minister Liz Truss to work with the industry to create an international travel "toolkit" to prepare for future crises and to create a long-term skills strategy for jobs. The group's chair, Henry Smith MP, said that despite a good summer, the industry was still recovering from the past two years. "As an island nation, our aviation industry is one of the key drivers of our economy and a fully recovered and fighting fit industry will be vital as the new government looks to tackle the challenges ahead" he said.

### **Sturgeon confirms plans for Scottish 'Tourism Tax' legislation**

Scotland's first minister Nicola Sturgeon has revealed the Scottish government will introduce legislation that will pave the way for UK destinations to charge so-called "tourism taxes". Sturgeon this week confirmed a Local Visitor Levy bill would feature in the Scottish government's 2022/23 programme making provision for local authorities to tax tourists to raise additional revenue. "We will introduce a Local Visitor Levy bill to give local authorities additional fiscal flexibility," said Sturgeon. "This will help councils, if they so choose, to fund activities related to tourism and related infrastructure." The bill is expected to be laid before parliament early next year. Edinburgh is anticipated to become the first destination to introduce a visitor levy, something for which the city council has long campaigned for the right to charge on accommodation. The city estimates such a levy could raise in the region of £15 million a year to invest in sustainable tourism and managing the impact of tourism on the city. Council leader Cammy Day hailed the "landmark step", claiming it would allow the city to bring itself into line with what is a "common practice" in other major cities around the world.

### **Heathrow facing new disruption from further strike threat**

Heathrow-based American Airlines engineers are set to vote this month on strike action in a dispute over pay. More than 50 aircraft technicians and crew chiefs, responsible for maintaining aircraft flying 23 daily departures, will be balloted from 13-30 September. The Unite union said engineers are "angry" about a three-year pay offer and warned industrial action would bring "massive disruption" to the carrier's operations. According to Unite, in the first year of the current pay offer, technicians would receive a 5.3% rise and crew chiefs 3.8%. In the second year, all workers would receive a lump sum cash payment, while in the third year a pay freeze would be implemented. Unite highlighted how the real rate of inflation currently stood at 12.3%.

## **AIRLINE UPDATE**

### **Air Transat**

Air Transat has launched a special trade incentive to mark its 35th anniversary, enabling travel agents to receive cash rewards for every booking they make. To celebrate 35 years, Air Transat is offering 5,000 return seats for under £350 from all UK departure points (London Gatwick, Manchester and Glasgow) to Toronto and Montreal. The incentive, which runs from 8th September until 31st October 2022, is available on all Air Transat flights to Canada and the US from the UK for travel at any time.

### **Aer Lingus Regional**

Emerald Airlines, operator of Aer Lingus Regional, will start two new services from Dublin from October 30, serving Southampton and Aberdeen. The flights will operate daily, with fares from €37.99 each-way as part of a return trip. This announcement means the carrier will be flying 22 routes.

## TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENTS, OTA UPDATE

### **Jet2Holidays**

Jet2holidays has launched 'Holiday Saving Experts', a brand-new campaign which will see the award-winning tour operator support independent travel agents with a huge range of advice on how to help their customers make their money go further – whilst possibly saving thousands on their own business bills this winter. The campaign has been designed to position independent travel agents as 'Holiday Saving Experts' so they can provide money saving tips for customers, whilst promoting and selling package holidays.

### **Tui**

Tui Group has claimed employees have worked 10,000 days remotely from overseas locations since launching its flexible "Workwide" scheme a year ago. The programme allows Tui staff to spend up to 30 days each year working from "anywhere in the world". Tui said around 800 employees from across 34 countries had used the scheme, with average working stays abroad lasting 8.5 days. Employees have so far worked in 82 different countries, according to Tui.

## SOCIAL UPDATE

### **Royal website and social media accounts turn dark as family mourns the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II**

The Royal Family's official website has been changed in tribute to the Queen. A message in white text, placed over a black backdrop can now be found on royal.uk. On any other day, the website would provide information on the history of the Royal Family, the Queen's charities and patronages and the royal diary. Following the news of the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, however, its usual functions have become temporarily unavailable. A picture of the Queen on her coronation day in 1953 has been added, alongside the Royal Family's crest. With the monarch's death, changes have also been made to official Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts of the Royal Family. The official crest, used in previous years across their social media accounts, which used to be swathed in royal purple now appears in black and white.

### **Instagram tests a new 'Add Topics' option**

Instagram is trialling a new way to refine its Reels recommendations with some users now able to add topics to their Reels uploads. This 'Topics' option aims to better categorise clips, boost Reels performance and help Instagram to showcase content from brands and creators to a more engaged and interested audience.

**Twitter launches live test of Tweet editing**

Twitter has launched the first stage of live testing for the capacity to edit a tweet after posting. Edited tweets will include a note at the bottom to say that it has been edited. All users will be able to access the edit history of a tweet by tapping on the pencil icon. The feature will be tested amongst internal staff, before expanding the test pool to Twitter Blue subscribers in the coming weeks.

**MICE UPDATE****Budgets creeping back as associations return to the skies**

According to the 2022 Business Events Consumer Demand Project (CDP), 84% (+2%) of 159 surveyed associations showed confidence in holding their events internationally and 82% (+37%) have already hosted an event abroad. The pandemic does not seem to have had a lasting impact on frequency of meetings, with 84% of associations saying they intend to hold the same number as before. Budgets also appear to be slowly bouncing back, with 71% saying they expect an increase in budget for overseas events over the next 12 months (+3%).