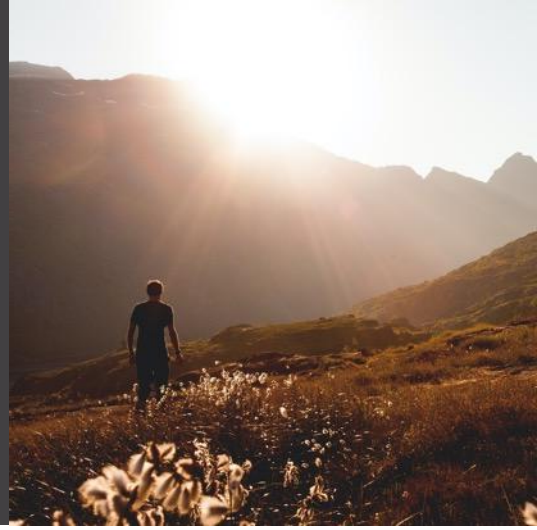


# WEEKLY BRIEFING

17 March 2023



## ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL UPDATE

### **UK's Illegal Migration Bill Announced**

Last week, the Illegal Migration Bill was introduced to the House of Commons without an impact assessment. The bill's announcement, in particular with regards to UK government plans to toughen its treatment of people who cross the Channel in small boats, has arisen concerns that these plans are not fully compatible with the Human Rights Act.

These plans bar illegal migrants from claiming asylum and returning to the UK. Later in the week, in a summit between Rishi Sunak and French president Emmanuel Macron, Sunak promised to give France £500 million to help decrease and stop the number of small boats crossing the Channel. Downing Street has said the money will go towards more French law enforcement officers with enhanced technology such as drones and a new detention center in France.

### **Gary Lineker to return to BBC following backlash**

A row began between the BBC and Gary Lineker following a Tweet Lineker made in response to the government's new Illegal Immigration Bill, in which he referred to it as an "immeasurably cruel policy" and likening the language used with regard to illegal migrants to "that used by Germany in the 30s". The tweet was criticised by Conservative ministers, including the home secretary.

Due to the BBC corporation's impartiality guidelines and Lineker's refusal to apologise for his words, he was forced to step down as presenter of Match of the Day. Following backlash however, it was announced on Monday that Gary Lineker will be returning to present Match of the Day and that the BBC will be carrying out an independent review of its social media guidelines.

## **Crisis following collapse of US tech bank Silicon Valley Bank**

The California-headquartered Silicon Valley Bank (SVB), formerly the 16th largest bank in the US which catered for the financial needs of technology companies around the world collapsed on 10 March 2023. As the second-largest bank in American history to collapse, and the largest bank failure since the 2008 financial crisis, it has triggered concerns over it marking the start of a banking crisis.

## **TRADE UPDATE**

### **Flights to become more expensive in 2024-25**

Domestic and long-haul flights are due to become more expensive next year following chancellor of the exchequer Jeremy Hunt's Spring Budget report. Hunt confirmed that Air Passenger duty (APD) will increase in line with retail price inflation (RPI).

The Office for Budget Responsibility estimates that APD will have raised £3.5 billion in 2022-23. ABTA chief executive Mark Tanzer voiced "disappointment" at the government pressing ahead with inflationary rises in APD as announced in the government's Autumn Statement. "Not only is this bad news for travellers, as they have to bear the cost of this rise through their air ticket, but also UK competitiveness," Tanzer said. "The UK already has amongst the highest APD in the world and increasing this further contradicts with the message that we want to grow the economy".

### **Passport Office staff to strike for five weeks from next month**

More than 1,000 Passport Office staff in England, Scotland and Wales will walkout for five weeks next month over an ongoing dispute regarding pay, pensions, redundancy terms and job security.

The action is an escalation of the union's long-running dispute with the government over working conditions and is likely to have a significant impact on the delivery of passports ahead of the summer season. PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka said the action has come about because, in contrast with other parts of the public sector, ministers have "failed to hold any meaningful" talks with the union.

### **Gatwick commits to net zero a decade early**

Gatwick today revealed £250 million plans to cut carbon emissions and become net zero for its buildings and vehicles by 2030 – a decade ahead of its previous commitment. This will be achieved through moving to an electric vehicle fleet and replacing gas boilers and refrigerants with low carbon alternatives. The airport will also continue to reduce overall energy use, invest in on-site renewable energy, including solar power, and source renewable electricity.

The disclosure came as the airport confirmed a return to the black last year with a bounce back in passenger numbers following the pandemic. The airport reported a 2022 profit of £196.5 million compared to a loss of £370.6 million for the previous year. Revenue increased from £192.7 million in 2021 to £776.6 million last year, with increases across all revenue streams. Chief executive Stewart Wingate said: “The decisive actions we took early last year allowed us to offer good levels of service to passengers who travelled through Gatwick.

### **Heathrow T5 records busiest day since Christmas 2019**

Heathrow Airport has identified the busiest single day for Terminal 5 since before the COVID pandemic. More than 94,000 passengers travelled through the terminal on 26 February, during last month’s half-term holiday. In total, 5.2 million people travelled through the airport in February.

Heathrow said departure punctuality was the most consistent it has been in the last 12 months and over 98% of passengers were through security in under 10 minutes for the second month in a row. Overall passenger satisfaction is close to pre-pandemic levels. CEO John Holland-Kaye said: “The February half term went very smoothly, thanks to a great plan and teamwork across the airport “This should give everyone confidence that we are prepared for a successful Easter getaway.”

## **AIRLINE UPDATE**

**Ryanair** - Ryanair just announced its biggest ever Dublin flight summer schedule with 130 routes. It includes 14 new destinations including Asturias and Castellon in Spain, Kos, Stockholm, Genoa and Leipzig. Ryanair’s Dublin flight schedule offers twice as many destinations as any other carrier, with over 33 aircraft based in Dublin with over 2,000 weekly flights. It equates to a 10% traffic increase on summer 2022. There will be increased services to Berlin (24 weekly flights), Krakow (18 weekly flights) and Lisbon (32 weekly flights) among others.

**Cathay Pacific** - The Cathay Pacific group expects to be operating half of its pre-pandemic capacity by the end of March, with London starting to see five

return flights a day on selected days from April. The rebuilding of schedules saw more than 1.1 million passengers carried by the Hong Kong-based airline group in February with a load factor of 86.2% as capacity rose by 6% over January. Chief customer and commercial officer Lavinia Lau said: "We are pleased to see that our positive start to 2023 continued in February".

**Emirates** - Emirates has tweaked its livery in the third iteration of its official aircraft brand colours. The original livery unveiled with the airline's launch in 1985 had its first refresh 14 years later, with the delivery of Emirates' first Boeing 777-300 in 1999. The new design sees the Emirates.com URL being dropped. The signature gold Emirates lettering across the main body in English and Arabic is also bolder and 32.5% larger. Red Emirates branding on the belly of aircraft, introduced in 2005, is retained. The UAE flag on the tailfin appears in a 3D effect artwork, and the wingtips have been painted red with the Emirates logo in Arabic calligraphy in reverse white. Passengers with a window view will see the UAE flag colours painted on the wingtips facing the fuselage.

## TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES, OTA UPDATE

**EasyJet** - Easyjet's £15 booking incentive is being offered to agents selling easyJet holidays' packages for summer 2024. The offer applies to bookings made by April 11 for holidays departing between April 1 and October 31 next year. The deal follows early booking discounts offered to the trade for a month until March 14 on 2024 holidays. Head of distribution Kelly Walker said: "We know lots of people are already turning to their trusted travel agent to help them plan their getaway for next summer. "Our travel agent partners play a big part in helping us deliver brilliant holidays at unbeatable prices, so we're really pleased to be offering this incentive on all holidays booked for summer 2024 as a token of our appreciation for everything they do."

**Original Travel** - Original Travel has launched a new collection of seven itineraries focusing on Indigenous tourism. The new programme features Australia, Botswana, Ecuador and the Americas and focuses on the protection of Indigenous people and their culture and traditions. Tom Barber, cofounder of Original Travel, said: "By encouraging dialogue with indigenous people in the development of tourism we hope to see a greater protection of indigenous culture, enhanced economic benefits for local communities and a diversification of tourism experiences."

**Elegant Resorts** - Elegant Resorts' average booking values are 48% higher than before the pandemic to reach £28,500 as luxury holidaymakers defy the cost of living crisis. Findings from an annual client survey show that more than half (55%) would cut back on other luxuries rather than reduce the number of holidays they take. The frequency of trips has returned to pre-Covid levels with more than 80% of clients planning to take three trips or more a year and 13% planning at least five. The Future of Luxury Travel report said: "As the cost of living crisis continues, clients are remaining fairly resilient with the majority not willing to compromise on their holidays, and even spending more per booking. A key development has been how they now prioritise their mental wellbeing above anything else – leading to an increase in those seeking to indulge in wellness retreats."

**Newmarket Holidays** - Newmarket Holidays' new campaign, celebrating scenic and nature tours from the Scottish highlands to the Costa Rican rainforests, offers 10% discounts on 2023 and 2024 departures of over 30 tours until May 2, 2023. Each select group break features impressive landscapes, natural wonders and diverse wildlife. Richard Forde, head of Trade Sales at Newmarket Holidays, said: "Demand for escorted tours has been at record levels this year, with both short and long haul proving extremely popular. "Agent bookings have been doing really well, so we're delighted to be able to continue our support for trade with fantastic savings on a really exciting selection of tours."

**Travel Counsellors** - Travel Counsellors has announced the acquisition of Holidaysplease as it continues to report significant growth and a record start to the year. Travel Counsellors said the deal follows record trading months in both January and February, with a total of more than £200m in sales. Steve Byrne, chief executive of Travel Counsellors, said: "We are delighted to have acquired such a highly regarded and successful business, finding a company that is both culturally and strategically aligned to our people led values and relentless focus on customer care."

## SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATE

### Instagram tests new 'Top 3' sticker

Instagram is currently testing a new 'Top 3' sticker option for Stories, which would enable users to highlight their top 3 favourite accounts, destinations, restaurants etc. Reminiscent of MySpace's 'Top 8', this feature is likely to spark a lot of engagement and debate with other users jumping in to agree or disagree, or share their own, which can be used to the advantage of brands.

### **Meta winds down NFT projects to focus on other elements**

Meta announced this week that it's ending its NFT display projects, across both Facebook and Instagram as it re-aligns its resources around evolving priorities. Meta's head of commerce, Stephane Kasriel, states: "We're winding down digital collectibles (NFTs) for now to focus on other ways to support creators, people and businesses." She goes on to say that Meta will continue to develop new ways for creators to connect with fans and monetise their work, but they will be focusing instead on areas where the company "can make an impact at scale", including messaging and Reels.

## **MICE UPDATE**

### **Lime Venue Portfolio launches cross-industry campaign**

Lime Venue Portfolio has announced it will launch a cross-industry campaign titled 'The Meetings of the Future', which will assess the events landscape. As part of the initiative, Lime Venue Portfolio has partnered with MESA (Meetings & Events Support Association) and event creative, Robert Dunsmore. The brand will conduct its own empirical research as well as engagement exercises and focus groups with event professionals throughout the year. Following this research, Lime Venue Portfolio will release "concepts" around the future of association, corporate and charity events. While food will continue to be a factor, the research will focus on the event environment. Lime Venue Portfolio also plans to extend the findings that came out of 'Beyond Food', which hinted towards a more "ethical and values-driven approach" to meetings and events.

## **LIGHTER NOTE**

Woman forms bond with squirrel she helped raise - and now it won't go back to the wild. Find out more [here](#).