

WEEKLY BRIEFING

1 September 2023



ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

Junior doctors and consultants to strike together in England

Junior doctors and consultants across England will strike together this autumn as the pay row with the government remains ongoing. This comes after junior doctors voted in favour of continuing with strikes in an attempt to achieve full pay restoration to reverse the steep decline in pay faced by junior doctors over 15 years, and is the first time during this dispute that they will coincide with a strike by consultants. Ministers have called the coordinated strikes "callous and calculated" and state that there will be no more talks after their latest offer of 6% plus £1,250, working out at an average of nearly 9%. British Medical Association (BMA) junior doctor committee co-chairmen Dr Rob Laurenson and Dr Vivek Trivedi said: "We are sending a single message, loud and clear to the government: 'we are not going anywhere... We are prepared to continue with our industrial action, but we don't have to - the prime minister has the power to halt any further action by making us a credible offer.'" Alongside junior doctors and consultants, nurses, ambulance workers, physios and radiographers have all also taken part in strikes.

Grant Shapps appointed as defence secretary in mini cabinet reshuffle

In the past year, Mr Shapps has held five ministerial jobs and will now move from energy secretary to replace Ben Wallace as defence secretary, who is leaving politics at the next election. This appointment was widely unexpected, but it is believed prime minister Rishi Sunak considers Shapps to be a safe pair of hands and an effective communicator. A number of Tory MPs had expected Mr Sunak to conduct a more wide-ranging reshuffle, ahead of next month's Conservative Party conference and the King's Speech, setting out the government's priorities, but he has opted to play it safe for now. Shapps' previous role as energy secretary will now be taken on by Claire Coutinho who has only been an MP since 2019 and, at 38, will be the youngest minister to sit around the cabinet table. Shadow climate change secretary for the Labour party, Ed Milliband, has said the appointment of Ms Coutinho "speaks volumes about the failures of Tory policy that we are now onto the sixth secretary of state since 2019... Reshuffling of the deckchairs will not

deliver the proper energy policy Britain needs," he stated.

Brain fog after Covid linked to blood clots, study says

A research team, from the universities of Oxford and Leicester have conducted a study which suggests that blood clots in the brain or the lungs might explain some common symptoms of "long Covid", including brain fog and fatigue. In the study, out of 1,837 people admitted to hospital due to Covid, researchers found that two blood proteins point to clots being one cause. It is believed that 16% of such patients have trouble thinking, concentrating or remembering for at least six months. The research team has stressed that: their findings are relevant only to patients admitted to hospital; they are "the first piece of the jigsaw" but further research is needed before they can propose or test any potential treatments and that they tracked cognitive problems at six and 12 months only and this was done through tests and questionnaires, which may "lack sensitivity". Professor Paul Harrison, author of the study from the University of Oxford, stated that identifying predictors and possible mechanisms was "a key step" in understanding post-Covid brain fog, but there may still be many different causes of long Covid.

TRADE UPDATE

UK and European airports recover from bank holiday chaos

Airlines are recovering schedules after a bank holiday Monday that saw a quarter of departures from the UK and arrivals into the UK cancelled due to an air traffic control fault. The malfunction mostly affected short-haul services, with Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester airports dealing with the most disruptions, and the knock-on effects still being felt around Europe. Airlines were urged to improve communication with the UK trade following the incident. Transport Secretary Mark Harper MP has ruled out the possibility that the failure was caused by a cyber attack, and announced that a failure on this scale had not happened for almost a decade.

Travel mergers and acquisitions set for take-off during autumn

The second half of 2023 is expected to be "much stronger" for mergers and acquisitions in the travel sector after the emergence of "green shoots" in Q2, according to accountancy firm Grant Thornton. Grant Thornton's recent Cut Back Economy report revealed that holidays remain a priority for discretionary spending – surpassing clothing, electricals and household goods. "In travel sector M&A, this is reflected by a strong appetite for luxury travel assets," said partner Nicola Sartori, pointing to Hyatt Hotels' acquisition of luxury hotel booking platform Mr & Mrs Smith for £53 million in June.

Long-stay winter breaks see rise in popularity

High energy bills, coupled with the trend for more people to work remotely, is making long-stay winter sun breaks attractive and viable for a wider range of people. Abta's Travel in 2023 report predicted the "hibernation holidays" trend, with members reporting rising demand for winter stays of 21 or even 28 nights in the Canary Islands, Portugal, Malta, Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Florida.

Explorative travel should evoke "pioneering emotion" for clients

Brands hoping to deliver explorative travel experiences should strive to make their clients feel like pioneers, Leaders of Luxury delegates were told. Peter Shanks, Silversea Cruises' managing director for the UK and Ireland, highlighted the importance of offering "pioneering experiences" in the adventure travel sector. Geordie Mackay-Lewis, co-founder of luxury operator Pelorus, agreed, adding that Pelorus intends to "allow our clients to experience that in a safe, comfortable and stylish way". He cited destinations such as Saudi Arabia, Gabon in western Africa, and the Arctic as emerging adventure hotspots.

AIRLINE UPDATE

Corendon Airlines - Corendon Airlines will launch an adults-only section on flights this November. With dedicated seating for passengers ages 16 and up, the Dutch airline hopes to improve the experiences of both those with and without children.

Monarch - A bid to revive the Monarch brand has been grounded, less than two weeks after it was announced on social media. The former Monarch Travel Group collapsed in 2017 owing £466 million, and most of the group's companies have been dissolved. A statement from their board posted online on Thursday read: "It is with immense regret that we announce today that we have been forced to put the brakes on our process to relaunch Monarch".

Virgin Atlantic - Virgin Atlantic has increased capacity on its route from Heathrow to Los Angeles following the quick recovery of demand for the Californian destination, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. 2019. The UK carrier is now offering 21 weekly flights between Heathrow and LAX airports – providing 18% more capacity than during 2019.

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES, OTA UPDATE

EasyJet holidays - EasyJet holidays will offer free child places at a further 29 hotels across Egypt and Turkey next summer. It comes in addition to the more than 230 hotels and resorts across Europe and North Africa that offer free child places for easyJet holidays customers.

Royal Caribbean - Royal Caribbean International has formed a multiyear partnership with Inter Miami CF. The cruise line's logo will be featured throughout Inter Miami's home pitch and digital platforms, and the brands will work together across local initiatives in South Florida. "This partnership makes total sense for all of us: two local brands with global audiences and huge ambitions", says Inter Miami CF chief business officer Xavier Asensi.

Virgin Voyages - Virgin Voyages has confirmed plans to return to Portsmouth with a range of short itineraries, and teased additional product updates due to be announced next week. The new sailings out of the port, which feature itineraries to Amsterdam, Bruges, Barcelona, Lisbon and Ibiza, will be available to book from 7 September.

Wexas - Wexas is seeking fresh acquisitions after selling its business travel division to Good Travel Management. Wexas managing director Katherine Gershon said "Looking forward, the strategy for Wexas is to develop our core tour operating business, which today we operate under three brands – Wexas Travel, The Luxury Holiday Company and our specialist Scandinavian operator, Best Served Scandinavia".

SOCIAL UPDATE

Instagram is experimenting with longer form Reels

Instagram is testing longer form Reels with 3-minute and 10-minute options, similar to the longer video upload feature that TikTok introduced in 2022. IGTV was Instagram's previous long form video function, though it was phased out last year. This move appears to be a reintroduction of IGTV, but content will now be housed under Reels creating a more streamlined experience for users.

'AR Effect House' from TikTok moves out of beta mode

TikTok's Effect House AR studio has now been taken out of beta mode, giving creators the templates and tools needed to make their own effects. Since Effect

House launched in 2022, content made using it has already inspired over 21 billion videos, achieving 8.6 trillion views. Whilst Snapchat has led the way in regards to AR so far, the popularity of TikTok means that there's a greater amount of opportunity for users to be reached via the app's AR effects.

MICE UPDATE

ICCA to take its 63rd annual congress to Abu Dhabi in 2024

The International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) has announced that its 63rd ICCA Congress will take place, 20-23 October 2024, in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates. The ICCA Board said it had received several extraordinary bids "of the very highest standard. The decision review was in-depth as all bidding destinations showcased their enormous commitment to Congress, and a distinctive creative approach". The 153,000sqm Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC) will host the event, which will be produced by ICCA in collaboration with ADCEB (Abu Dhabi Convention & Exhibition Bureau). The association said that factors favouring the destination host include the ease of travelling to Abu Dhabi, the array and proximity of first-rate hotel accommodation, excellent transport links and of a range of potential venues for Congress social activities. The 63rd Congress will contribute significantly to Abu Dhabi's Vision 2030 which sets out a clear strategy around sustainability, education, and career growth; especially for young professionals entering the events industry.

LIGHTER NOTE

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Police pull over a car with a giant bull riding shotgun in the passenger seat as the owner drives around Nebraskan town. Watch the video [here](#).