

# WEEKLY BRIEFING

3 May 2024



## ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

### **Local elections take place ahead of the general election later this year**

Results from over 100 English councils, along with several mayor elections, have been announced, revealing early signs that the Conservatives are losing control of some key councils. Rishi Sunak has been hit by a string of defeats in the last big test of public opinion before the general election. Labour is gaining seats across England in the local elections and took Blackpool South in a Westminster by-election. More pivotal results will be announced this weekend, including mayoral contests like Tees Valley.

### **Government defeated in High Court over climate plans**

The government has been defeated in court, for a second time, for not doing enough to meet its targets in cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Environmental charities Friends of the Earth and ClientEarth, and the Good Law Project took joint legal action against the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero over its decision to approve the carbon budget delivery plan in March 2023. The plan outlines how the country will achieve targets set out in the sixth carbon budget, which runs until 2037, as part of wider efforts to reach net zero emissions by 2050. The High Court ruled that the government will now be required to redraft the plan again.

### **King Charles makes a return to public-facing duties**

As King Charles resumes his public engagements, he aims to demonstrate the possibility of leading a fulfilling life while battling cancer. His return to public-facing duties includes a visit to a cancer treatment centre and the announcement that he is now a patron of Cancer Research UK. A very vulnerable moment as this disease is one that not only affects him, but also the Princess of Wales. Following months of treatment, King Charles looked enthusiastic as he and Queen Camilla visited the centre after his doctors advised he was able to do so in a cautious return.

## **UK will be the worst performer in G7 next year, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development forecasts**

With high interest rates and the lingering effects of 2023's surge in inflation, the UK will be the worst performing economy in the G7 next year according to OECD. The UK will fall to the bottom of the G7 growth league in 2025 as the OECD predicts a growth of just 1%, just behind Germany at 1.1%. The US and Canada are forecast to be the fastest growing economies, both growing by 1.8%.

### **TRADE UPDATE**

#### **ABTA publishes guidance on new EU entry systems**

ABTA has published a range of resources for the trade and consumers ahead of the introduction of new entry rules and systems for travel to the EU. The information covers the new EU Entry/Exit System (EES) and European Travel Information and Authorisation System (Etias), which will apply to UK residents. The EES is an electronic system to replace the stamping of passports, which is expected to be introduced this autumn. Etias is the EU's pre-travel authorisation system which is scheduled to be introduced in mid-2025.

#### **Trade hopes bank holiday will spur late family bookings for summer**

Agents are hoping the first May bank holiday weekend will kick-start late family bookings for the summer school holidays but admit some people may have been "priced out" of the market. The trade has continued to report brisk sales across the board for all seasons but said the lower end of the late family market remained sluggish as holiday prices hold firm for July and August. The Advantage Travel Partnership chief commercial officer Kelly Cookes expressed her hopes for the May 4-6 bank holiday weekend, which follows soon after the traditional monthly payday.

#### **Agents seize touring and adventure momentum**

More agencies are developing specialist touring arms to seize on the opportunities presented by the sector, as one expert tipped adventure travel to soon become a mainstream holiday choice. The Association of Touring & Adventure Suppliers (Atas) revealed the average booking value for supplier members in the first quarter of this year was £4,137 – up 17% on the same quarter in 2023. The association's director, Claire Brighton, said revenue from trade bookings was 20% higher than from direct sales, according to research by Atas in partnership with data specialist Radar.

## AIRLINE UPDATE

**easyJet** - A sixth EasyJet aircraft is being deployed from Glasgow airport as the budget carrier operates its largest flying schedule from Scotland this summer. A new route to Enfidha in Tunisia will run twice weekly on Thursdays and Sundays throughout the year. Larnaca in Cyprus will be served from tomorrow (May 4) with flights on Saturdays and Tuesdays throughout the summer. Overall capacity is being raised to more than 2.2 million seats to and from Glasgow.

**Ryanair** - Ryanair flights are now available to book as part of an On the Beach package following a partnership deal signed by the two companies in February. As part of the agreement, customers who book a Ryanair flight with On the Beach will receive all flight-related communications directly from the airline as well as have direct access to their myRyanair account to manage their booking.

## TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES, OTA UPDATE

**Hays Travel** - Independent miniple Miles Morgan Travel has been acquired by Hays Travel for an undisclosed sum, bringing the estate up to almost 490 branches. Hays Travel has no plans to rebrand the 19 Miles Morgan Travel outlets, which operate in the southwest of England and South Wales. The agency has been a member of the Hays Travel Independence Group consortium since 2006.

**Newmarket Holidays** - Newmarket Holidays has brought out a Premier Collection of seven 'wish-list' escorted tours offering premium and slow-paced group travel experiences. Of the seven tours available in the new programme, three have been newly introduced by the operator for 2025-2026. Three tours depart this year. Chief executive Niel Alobaidi said the aim was to increase the number of Premier Collection tours to 20 within the next three to four years, adding: "The vast majority will be new product."

**Seabourn** - Tennis stars Sue Barker and Tommy Haas will join Seabourn sailings in 2025. As part of its The Collection series, Seabourn is operating two tennis-themed cruises in April next year, both called Mediterranean Marvels & Matches, where passengers will receive premium tickets to a tournament. Barker, also known for her work as a television broadcaster, will join an eight-day Mediterranean Marvels & Matches: Monte Carlo Masters itinerary, departing Barcelona on April 5.

## SOCIAL UPDATE

### **WhatsApp introduces 'Community Events'**

This new feature will allow users to highlight upcoming functions and gatherings within a group chat. The invited members of the community will be able to RSVP to the event highlight, informing the other users in the group chat who will be attending. The event will be displayed in-stream when announced, and also in the group's information page, making it easier to track multiple events. This new feature will encourage more social connections among users, enhancing expanded interaction, and participation within the app. Currently, this events feature is only available to users who are members of a community group on WhatsApp, but over the coming months, this will be rolled out to all group chats.

### **Instagram updates feed algorithm**

The photo-based app has recently made major updates to its feed algorithm, potentially offering huge benefits to content creators. In response to user feedback highlighting decreased post reach under the previous algorithm, Instagram has introduced these changes with the aim of prioritising original content creators over those who repost work by others. Additionally, the update seeks to provide smaller accounts with increased opportunities to reach wider audiences. The algorithm consists of four key elements: removing aggregator accounts from recommendations, adding labels to reposted content and driving users to the original content uploader, replacing reposts with original content in recommendations and enhanced visibility and engagement potential for original content posted by smaller accounts.

## MICE UPDATE

### **One third of business travel buyers expect meetings role to merge 'soon'**

The survey of Business Travel Show Europe buyers has revealed that 32 per cent of respondents think that they will soon be made responsible for meetings and events. In signs that the integration between business travel and meetings is picking up pace, 9 per cent said that they have had the responsibility of meetings added to their roles in the last year, and 12 per cent said it had been added to their responsibilities more than 12 months ago. When it came to the benefits of integrating business travel and meetings, cost savings came out top with 63 per cent, followed by efficiencies with 47 per cent and greater visibility and control on 41 per cent. The survey received 131 respondents, with 44 per cent from the UK, 43 per cent from the rest of Europe and 13 per cent from the rest of the world.

## LIGHTER NOTE

A woman in Massachusetts has won a \$1 million prize in the lottery for the second time in 10 weeks. [More here.](#)