

WEEKLY REPORT



MMGY
Weekly Report for UK & Ireland
19 December 2025

ECONOMIC, POLITICAL & SOCIAL UPDATE

Bank of England cuts interest rates

The Bank of England has cut interest rates from 4% to 3.75% which brings the cost of borrowing to its lowest level since 2023. The decision came after a very close vote of 5-4 in favour of lowering the rates after figures showed that inflation had slowed to 3.2% in the year to November. Despite still being above the 2% target, the Bank says that it has fallen “a long way” from its peak three years ago and forecasts inflation to fall closer to the target by spring or summer 2026. Originally, they had not expected this until 2027. Chancellor Rachel Reeves has noted that the cut is “good news for families with mortgages and businesses with loans”, whilst her opposition, Mel Stride, stresses inflation is “well above target” despite the “welcome news”.

Source: [BBC](#)

Boys to be sent on courses to tackle misogyny in schools

The government is unveiling plans to tackle misogyny in the classroom and prevent the radicalisation of young men in hopes to halve violence against women and girls in the next decade. The £20m package - which has been pushed back three times - will include specialist training for teachers around issues such as consent, the dangers of sharing intimate images, how to identify positive role models and to challenge unhealthy myths about women and relationships. It will also introduce a new helpline for teenagers to get support for concerns about abuse they may be experiencing in their own relationships. Under the new plans, students considered high-risk will also receive behavioural courses to tackle their prejudice against women and girls. Domestic abuse commissioner for England and Wales, Dame Nicole Jacobs, has however shared concerns that the commitments did “not go far enough” to see abuse figures fall as the level of investment “falls seriously short”.

Source: [BBC](#)

Rise in flu patients in England starts to slow down, but NHS says hospitals on 'high alert'

New figures have shown that an average of 3,140 patients were in hospital with flu in England last week. Though this was a rise of 18% in the last seven days, it was a smaller increase than the 55% hike the previous week. The UK Health Security Agency's latest weekly surveillance report has stated that it appears to be stabilising in the community as well as hospitals. Health correspondent for the BBC, Nick Trigg, notes that we must remember that flu can be unpredictable. A lull can be followed by another rise in the coming weeks, however the report suggests that the pressure on hospitals relating to flu should not get significantly worse over the festive period.

Source: [BBC](#)

TRADE UPDATE

Heathrow Announces £1.3bn Upgrade Programme Through 2026

Heathrow Airport has announced a £1.3bn investment programme set to roll out throughout 2026, aimed at improving efficiency, resilience, and the passenger experience. Key upgrades include the phased refurbishment of Terminal 4, featuring a new multi-storey car park and enhanced check-in facilities, with work continuing through to 2031 while maintaining normal operations. Terminal 2 will also benefit from a new high-capacity baggage system capable of handling 31,000 bags per day, helping reduce delays and misconnected luggage. In addition, Heathrow is installing an AI-powered camera network to speed up aircraft turnaround times and investing in improved accessibility facilities, including a new dedicated assistance area in Terminal 2.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

Early Bookings Surge as Value Drives 2026 Travel Demand

Bookings for 2026 are gaining strong momentum, led by summer holidays which are up 27% and now account for nearly half of all forward bookings. Travellers are increasingly booking earlier to secure better value, with notable growth also seen in winter 2026/27 trips, cruising, and touring holidays. Cruise in particular is expected to outperform in off-peak periods, while tours are also seeing strong demand. Despite a challenging year for US travel in 2025, bookings for 2026 are up 20%, boosted by major events such as the FIFA World Cup and growing interest in immersive destinations like the Deep South, highlighting a continued shift towards value-led, experience-driven travel.

Source: [TTG](#)

Festive Travel Surge as Five Million Head Overseas for Christmas

More than five million people are expected to travel overseas over the Christmas and New Year period, according to Abta, with today set to be the busiest day for departures and Christmas Day the quietest. Strong demand is being reported for winter sun destinations such as mainland Spain, the Canary Islands, Portugal, Turkey, Dubai and Sharm El Sheikh, while France, Austria, Switzerland and Scandinavia are leading ski hotspots. European city breaks, including Amsterdam, Paris, Rome and Prague, remain popular for New Year, alongside Christmas market favourites such as Vienna, Cologne and Tallinn. Major UK airports are preparing for exceptionally busy periods, with several forecasting record passenger numbers over the festive break.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

AIRLINE UPDATE

Alaska Airlines - Alaska Airlines will begin daily year-round flights between Seattle and London Heathrow on 21 May 2026, marking its first London service and fifth long-haul route from Seattle. The airline will use three-class Boeing 787-9 aircraft with ultra-fast Starlink Wi-Fi introduced from autumn. Flight times are designed to allow passengers a full day in either city, a benefit for business travellers. Alaska's Seattle hub already serves Tokyo and Seoul, and the airline plans to expand to at least 12 intercontinental destinations by 2030. Seasonal summer routes to Rome and Reykjavik will also start in 2026.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

China Airlines - Taiwan's China Airlines has placed a firm order for five additional Airbus A350-1000 aircraft, taking its total order for the type to 15. The aircraft will join the carrier's existing fleet of 15 A350-900s flying on the carrier's long haul route network. Kao Shing-Hwang, China Airlines chairman, said expanding its A350-1000 fleet marked another important step in its long term growth strategy.

Source: [TravelMole](#)

Ireland West Airport - Ireland West Airport-Knock is set to welcome close to 950,000 passengers this year, marking a record milestone for the Co Mayo airport. The growth follows the allocation of €1.9m in government funding as part of a wider €4m investment in regional airports under the Regional Airports Programme 2021–2025, supporting essential safety, security and operational services. Chairman Arthur French credited the continued backing of government, local authorities and regional stakeholders, noting that the strong passenger performance reflects widespread regional support and positions the airport well for continued growth in 2025 and beyond.

Source: [ITTN](#)

Qatar Airways - Qatar Airways is strengthening its global network with two major developments: a third daily service from Dublin to Doha, increasing weekly flights to 17, and the resumption of daily flights to Canberra via Melbourne. The Dublin expansion enhances connections through Hamad International Airport to Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, offering travellers more flexible onward options. Meanwhile, the Canberra route reconnects the Australian capital with Qatar Airways' network, giving passengers in the ACT and surrounding regions greater access to six key Australian cities. These moves highlight Qatar Airways' commitment to global connectivity and meeting growing demand for long-haul travel.

Source: [ITTN](#)

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES & OTA UPDATE

Barrhead Travel - Barrhead Travel has reported its highest-ever sales day following the draw for the 2026 men's football World Cup, as Scotland prepares to appear at the tournament for the first time in almost 30 years. The Scottish agency, an official travel partner of the Scottish FA, saw a surge in demand over the weekend after the draw, with matches set to take place across the US, Canada and Mexico. The company credited extensive preparation and collaboration with specialist partners for meeting demand, as fans seek trusted agents to secure high-value, once-in-a-lifetime travel experiences. Demand from UK travellers has continued to rise sharply since the draw was announced.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

Carrier - Carrier's overseas conference and reward event for agents is returning to Greece for its third year, with a three-night stay at Daios Cove, Crete, from 25–28 April. The Retreat will combine business-focused sessions with inspirational experiences, showcasing recent resort investments. Head of Trade Partnerships, Lee Marshall, highlighted the event's unique luxury appeal, including sales incentives to encourage new attendees and a revenue threshold for returning agents. In addition, Carrier will offer pre-recorded product updates, in-person Carrier Connect days in June and November, and a refreshed A-List awards event moving from BAFTA to Sopwell House on 20 March. The company also announced its Luxury Specialist Endorsed by Carrier programme, welcoming 50 agents, alongside a calendar of elevated educational trips set to be revealed in January.

Source: [ITG](#)

Jet2 Holidays - Jet2holidays is giving all agent partners enhanced commission on all bookings from today until 12 January 2026 to help them boost sales during what it has described as a 'critical booking period'. The discount applies to all holidays across all seasons, including beach, city breaks, villas and luxury breaks. The incentives were announced just a day after Jet2 put its first winter programme from London Gatwick on sale. Director of travel agent relationships Alan Cross said: "This is undoubtedly the biggest and best campaign that we have ever created to ensure that agency partners can boost sales and grow their businesses during Peaks. "Not only are we driving footfall and bookings at this crucial time by offering bespoke marketing support, dedicated Take Off Tickets and a fantastic sale, but we are also providing enhanced commission on all bookings.

Source: [Travel Gossip](#)

Tui - Tui Group believes artificial intelligence will accelerate a growing split in how consumers book travel, with around half expected to use platforms such as ChatGPT while the remainder continue booking directly with trusted brands. Speaking alongside the group's latest financial results, chief executive Sebastian Ebel described AI as a "game-changer" that will help Tui enter new markets, expand distribution channels, and reduce costs. He explained that Tui aims to sit at the centre of this shift with an AI concierge, catering both to brand-loyal customers and those booking through emerging platforms like ChatGPT and TikTok. Emphasising the importance of trustworthy content in an increasingly crowded digital space, Ebel said Tui is heavily investing in AI across the business, including enhanced app features and voice-based agents, while reducing reliance on traditional search engines such as Google.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

MEDIA & SOCIAL UPDATE

Instagram tests new TV app

Instagram is trialing a new TV app designed for communal Reels viewing on TV devices. This new app features a remote-friendly layout and curated "channels" for interests like sports and music. Viewers of Instagram TV can pair their IG account with the app. A maximum of five IG accounts can be added per household or users can make a new IG account for TV watching. The new Instagram TV app is currently available on Amazon Fire TV devices in the U.S. with expansion to further countries and devices expected in the future.

Source: [Social Media Today](#)

Movers and shakers:

Antonia Windsor has been made Global Digital Editor at Business Traveller (UK). She will continue in her role as the Editorial Director for Arrival Magazine.

Source: Roxhill

MICE UPDATE

FF15 presents University Challenge: Applications open for second edition of student events programme

Fast Forward 15 has announced the return of its University Challenge, launching the second edition of the initiative designed to give university events students real-world industry experience while raising funds for charity. Following a successful inaugural year, the programme will once again challenge student teams from across the UK to design, deliver and evaluate live charity events, supported by industry mentors and judged by leading professionals from across the meetings and events sector. The second edition of FF15 presents University Challenge is delivered in partnership with AEME as education partner, ABPCO as industry partner, and Meeting Needs as charity partner.

Source: [Conference News](#)

LIGHTER NOTE

Rare wolf pups' birth spark zoo celebrations

Zookeepers in the South West of England have been celebrating. Paignton Zoo in Devon - recently at risk of closure until a new owner decided to take it over - recently saw the birth of maned wolf pups, a near threatened breed due to a loss of habitat. Read more [here](#).