

WEEKLY BRIEFING

4 November 2022

COVID-19 UPDATE

The number of people testing positive for COVID-19 has fallen by 32.1% between 23 October and 29 October to 32,236 cases. Meanwhile, the number of deaths within 28 days of positive test results has also fallen by 24.2%. As of 30 October, it still remains that 69.7% of people aged 12 and over in England have received their first booster or third vaccination.

ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

Money-off energy scheme launches to avoid blackouts

Homes with smart meters are now eligible for discounts on their electricity bills if they cut peak-time use during the winter months. The scheme will begin with a 12 day "test" period, designed to see how customers respond between November and March. Customers who own a smart meter, which is less than half of households in England, Scotland and Wales, will be given 24 hours notice before being asked to reduce their peak-time electricity use during a one-hour period. This period is likely to be between 16:00 and 19:00 and could save households up to £100.

Rishi Sunak to review leadership campaign pledges

Rishi Sunak will review the pledges he made during his summer Tory leadership campaign, No. 10 has said. The prime minister will examine "whether now is the right time to bring them forward," his spokeswoman said. Mr Sunak lost to Liz Truss in a ballot of Tory members - but was selected to replace her by Tory MPs when her leadership fell apart. He announced dozens of policies during his summer campaign, including tax cuts. But his spokeswoman said the economic "context" had changed since the promises were made. "We need to take some time to make sure what is deliverable and what is possible," she added. Unlike his summer campaign, Mr Sunak did not make any policy pledges during the four-day contest to replace Ms Truss as prime minister last month.

There will not be a Stormont assembly election before Christmas, the Northern Ireland secretary has confirmed

Chris Heaton-Harris had said he would call another poll after the deadline to restore power-sharing passed last week. The law requires an election within 12 weeks of that 28 October deadline but it will not happen next month. Devolved government has not functioned since February, with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) blocking the formation of the ruling executive. The party has taken that stance in its protest against the post-Brexit trading arrangement known as the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Bank of England expects UK to fall into longest ever recession

The Bank of England has warned the UK is facing its longest recession since records began, as interest rates from 2.25% to 3% – the biggest single rise in the cost of borrowing for more than 30 years. The increase, announced on Thursday (3 November), is the eighth in succession. It warned the UK would face a "very challenging" two-year slump with unemployment nearly doubling by 2025. Bank boss, Andrew Bailey, said to act forcefully now or things "will be worse later on". By raising rates, the Bank is trying to bring down soaring prices as the cost of living rises at the fastest rate in 40 years. Food and energy prices have jumped, in part because of the Ukraine war, which has left many households facing hardship and started to drag on the economy. The Bank had previously expected the UK to fall into recession at the end of this year and said it would last for all next year. But it now believes the economy already entered a "challenging" downturn this summer, which will continue next year and into the first half of 2024.

Cost of living: Second-hand shopping in vogue as prices rise

Charity shops have reported a surge in customers due to the cost of living crisis along with a "shift in attitude" towards second-hand clothes. Recent months have seen a record 14% increase in turnover for Cancer Research UK's network of 600 charity shops. Lauren Knapman regularly shops in charity stores and posts about what she finds online. "There's definitely been a stigma around buying second-hand in the past," she said. "But I just think mindsets are changing - obviously it does save you a lot of money but also stops things ending up in landfill." Cancer Research UK's director of trading Julie Byard said people were "choosing to shop in a way that makes their money go further".

TRADE UPDATE

Travel's £80bn contribution to UK economy laid bare in new report

A new report from Abta and UK inbound outlines the £80 billion value of international travel to the UK economy in jobs, economic contribution and taxes. The report, *International Travel: Powering the UK Economy*, looks at the combined value of UK inbound and outbound tourism based on research from consultants York Aviation. The report finds that each year, UK international travel contributes £80 billion to the UK economy in Gross Value Added (GVA), equivalent to 4% of total UK GVA. The authors claim travel supports 1.5 million jobs – 4.5% of all UK jobs and provides £13.2 billion in taxes. York Aviation also estimates travel generates £84 billion in related spending across the UK. The report said travel could outperform average growth for the UK economy over the next five years, with inbound travel forecast to grow 20% and outbound travel 15%.

Govt launches new campaign to boost aviation recruitment

Brits will be encouraged to take up a new career in the aviation sector as part of a new recruitment campaign by the government. Generation Aviation is part of the central authority's 22-point plan to support aviation as it recovers from the pandemic, and forms part of the wider aviation strategy Flightpath to the Future. The new campaign will help boost recruitment in the sector by raising awareness of aviation jobs, signposting training, careers and opportunities to people looking to enter or move up in the industry, championing the sector and driving research and data to highlight the issues it faces. The campaign was launched on Monday (31 October) at Heathrow's Employment and Skills Academy.

Parliament on the hunt for new Transport Committee Chair

Select committees are cross-party groups of MPs tasked with scrutinising the actions of government and its ministers; the transport committee has oversight of aviation, cruise and rail, among other sectors. Conservative MP, Huw Merriman, who has been a prominent supporter of the travel industry throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, will relinquish his chairmanship of the committee to focus on his new role at the DfT. Select committee chairs are allocated according to party, with transport falling to the Conservatives meaning only a Conservative MP can stand for the role, although all MPs can vote. Nominations will close at midday on Tuesday 15 November.

Workers at Heathrow to strike in World Cup run-up

Strike action by hundreds of workers at Heathrow Airport could hit football fans heading to the World Cup in Qatar, a union has warned. Unite said 700 workers who work in the ground handling, airside transport and cargo side of the airport will go on strike for three days from 18 November. It said the strike action would cause disruption and delays at Heathrow terminals 2, 3 and 4. The staff, employed by Dnata and Menzies, are calling for higher pay. "Strike action will inevitably cause disruption, delays and cancellations to flights throughout Heathrow, with travellers to the World Cup particularly affected," Unite regional officer Kevin Hall warned. The World Cup is set to begin in Qatar on 20 November and the union said it expected Qatar Airways, which has put on extra flights for football fans, to be "hit heavily" by the strike action.

AIRLINE UPDATE

British Airways - British Airways will increase its London-Bermuda frequency to daily from next March, bringing it back to pre-pandemic levels. The service, which previously operated from Gatwick, will remain at Heathrow for at least the summer season. Two additional frequencies will operate from 26 March, restoring the timetable back to that last seen in March 2020. The decision by BA means seven-day packages can be sold again. Tracy Berkeley, interim chief executive at Bermuda Tourism Authority, said: "We want to thank British Airways for their confidence in Bermuda as a destination and providing UK visitors with more flexibility and convenience in getting here."

Emirates - Emirates is to increase frequency from Newcastle airport to daily from 1 December. Two extra flights a week will be added, together with an earlier lunchtime departure to allow passengers to connect to onward destinations including Thailand, Australia, Malaysia and the Indian Ocean. Flights are operated with a Boeing 777 offering business and economy class.

Jet2 - Jet2.com and Jet2holidays have added more than 45,000 seats to destinations such as the Canary Islands and Turkey for the 2023 October half-term. More than 50 weekly flights have been added for the half-term holidays next year to Lanzarote, Gran Canaria, Fuerteventura and Tenerife in the Canary Islands, and Izmir, Bodrum, Antalya and Dalaman in Turkey. The extra capacity has been put on sale from nine of Jet2.com and Jet2holiday's UK bases, including Birmingham, Bristol, Edinburgh, East Midlands, Glasgow, Leeds Bradford, Manchester, Newcastle and Stansted.

The brands have also expanded their summer 2023 programmes to Spain, Portugal, Greece, the Balearic Islands, Italy, Cyprus and Croatia in response to an uptick in demand.

Ryanair - Ryanair has targeted Birmingham and Newquay for summer 2023 expansion, adding 12 new routes in total. Birmingham will see seven new routes and one additional based aircraft, bringing the fleet to six. It will offer 42 destinations next summer, with the addition of Girona, Pisa, Venice, Santander, Stockholm, Toulouse and Billund. One-way fares on the new routes are from £24.99 if booked by midnight on 4 November.

Virgin Atlantic - Virgin Atlantic has debuted its new Airbus A330neo on the first-ever Heathrow-Tampa Bay service on Wednesday (2 November). Virgin group founder, Richard Branson, and Virgin Atlantic chief executive, Shai Weiss, were part of a VIP delegation onboard the aircraft, named Billie Holiday. The pair donned Tampa Bay Buccaneers (American football) and Tampa Bay Lightning (ice hockey) jerseys in a nod to the city's sporting prowess. Virgin will initially operate the route on a four-times-weekly basis, before it goes daily from 28 November, complementing its existing Miami, Orlando and Austin flights. VS129 will depart Heathrow at 1.25pm arriving Tampa at 7.35pm with VS130 departing Tampa at 9.50pm arriving Heathrow 10.15am (+1). Return economy fares lead in from £440pp.

Wizz Air - Wizz Air has launched seven new routes from Luton and Gatwick to Sharm El Sheikh, Hurghada, Agadir, Marrakesh, Prague, and Tallinn. Tickets for the new services are now available on the airline's website and mobile app, with fares starting from £17.99pp. The inaugural flights from Luton commenced on Sunday (30 October) with the launch of daily flights to Prague. Twice-weekly services to Sharm El Sheikh began on Monday (31 October) and routes to Tallinn and Hurghada started on Tuesday (1 November). From Gatwick, the carrier launched flights to Marrakesh and Agadir on Sunday (30 October) and to Sharm El Sheikh on Tuesday (1 November). The carrier now offers more than 25 routes from the London airport.

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES, OTA UPDATE

EasyJet Holidays - EasyJet holidays will sell excursions, attractions and activities from Tui's Musement brand under a new partnership. The agreement will see the Musement team develop and power an easyJet holidays digital platform for tours and activities on the easyJet holidays online destination pages.

Musement's range extends from water parks and museums to sightseeing tours. The excursions, activities and attraction tickets have been selected from easyJet holidays' in-destination partners, as well as Musement's portfolio of experiences.

Explore - Explore has paid tribute to the way in which agents have weathered – and bounced back from – the COVID-19 crisis after recording a 50% uptick in new trade sales over the past three months compared with the same period in 2019. The adventure specialist is aiming to cement its ties with the trade with the release this week of a new Unforgettable Adventures brochure and a new Family Adventures brochure later this month. Both can be requested via TradeGate. For the second consecutive year, Explore's brochures are to be distributed plastic-free, in line with the operator's sustainability strategy.

Not Just Travel - Homeworking consultancy Not Just Travel has reported a record October with sales of holidays up 133% compared to the same month in 2019. Data showed consumers were also spending more, with current booking values at £4,285 per holiday, compared to £3,495 in October 2019. The brand also broke a sales record in August, when total transactions for 2022 surpassed that of any other 12-month period with four months to spare. Steve Witt, co-founder of Not Just Travel and its franchise recruitment arm The Travel Franchise said: "Our soaring sales figures dispel the myth that the financial climate is affecting people's desire to book holidays."

Titan Travel - Ahead of its 45th anniversary next year, escorted touring operator Titan Travel has gone live with a new logo and brand proposition. Andy Squirrell, managing director of Titan Travel, said the overhaul "symbolises our continued pursuit for innovation, excitement, and quality" as the company enters its 45th year of business. "As well as a new and distinctive creative look and feel, our new brand promise reflects our spirit and love of travel as well as the reassurance of a hassle-free holiday where everything is planned to a tee, and everything is taken care of," he added. Titan's new brand position will be rolled out across all communications over the next couple of months, with a new TV advert set to launch in December.

SOCIAL UPDATE

Meta announces new creator monetisation tools

Meta has announced new features to widen monetisation options for creators by offering fan subscriptions. Creators will be able to charge a monthly fee giving subscribers access to subscription only content such as exclusive live streams.

Fans will be able to send virtual gifts to Reel creators, with its cost being a donation to the creator. Meta is also streamlining NFT creation and sales, allowing them to be purchased within the app. This is part of its broader Metaverse strategy, where it's envisaged that NFTs will be used and displayed within this virtual community.

Elon Musk takes control of Twitter

Following Elon Musk's \$44billion takeover of Twitter, a number of top executives have been fired including the CEO, CFO and Head of legal policy, trust, and safety amid reports that up to 75% of staff are expected to lose their jobs. One of Musk's first actions was to delist Twitter from the New York Stock Exchange making it a private entity and as such there will now no longer be public quarterly performance updates. So far, it is unclear how the takeover will change the app, with ambiguous details provided by Musk such as increased subscriptions, new algorithms, improved data targeting, eliminating bots and increased rules on what can be said in the app.

MICE UPDATE

Business Visits and Events Partnership relaunches as UK Events

The Business Visits and Events Partnership, the umbrella body and advocacy group for the UK events sector, has rebranded as UK Events. The rebrand comes as the organisation bids to strengthen its position as the collective single voice for the UK events sector and grow its influence and collaboration with other aligned organisations and sectors. The change, effective immediately, reflects the group's values of championing a more inclusive sector that supports the delivery of economic growth and benefits for the whole of the UK.

LIGHTER NOTE

A black labrador has fun creating beautiful music by jumping on chiming metal plates. Watch him [here](#).