

WEEKLY REPORT

7 March 2025



ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

UK Pushes for Ukraine Deal as US Rethinks Support

PM Keir Starmer is working with European allies to secure a Ukraine agreement, as the US pauses military aid and intelligence-sharing. Defence Secretary John Healey reaffirmed the UK's commitment in Washington, while French President Emmanuel Macron warned Europe must prepare for reduced US support. Meanwhile, the EU approved an €800bn defence boost, and the UK signed a £30m defence deal while offering Ukraine a £2.26bn loan funded by seized Russian assets. US-Ukraine talks are set for next week in Saudi Arabia

Labour MPs Urge Banks to Ease Defense Investment Rules

Over 100 Labour MPs and peers are calling on banks to relax ethical investment rules that limit funding for defence firms. They argue that ESG policies, originally aimed at industries like oil and tobacco, unfairly restrict a sector vital for national security and economic growth. With the UK increasing defense spending to 2.5% of national income by 2027, MPs say financial institutions should rethink their stance. Some ESG funds are already shifting, investing more in defense since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Defense firms also face banking hurdles, including strict compliance checks. While banks insist ESG goals and defense investment can align, arms trade campaigners oppose any rule changes, citing concerns over war profiteering.

King Charles III Shares Personal Playlist for Commonwealth Day

King Charles III is launching a personal playlist featuring songs that uplift him and bring back cherished memories. The King's Music Room project, created in partnership with Apple Music, will showcase tracks from artists like Bob Marley, Kylie Minogue, Grace Jones, Davido, and Raye. A video trailer features the Changing of the Guard band playing Marley's *Could You Be Loved* outside Buckingham Palace, celebrating music from Commonwealth nations. The King described music as a powerful force that evokes memories, provides comfort, and brings people together in joy. The full playlist, accompanied by royal commentary and personal anecdotes, will be released on Monday for Commonwealth Day, offering a unique glimpse into the King's lifelong musical influences.

TRADE UPDATE**Gen Z 'slow business travel' trend emerges in new research**

Gen Z professionals (born between 1997 and 2012) are prioritising slower business travel by rail to align with climate concerns in what is being seen as a "major generational shift." A poll of more than 1,000 people in this age group found that almost two-thirds (60%) are open to adopting slower business travel, such as rail, if it significantly reduces their carbon footprint. Three-quarters (75%) are more likely to prioritise such options if their company actively supports them with clear policies and incentives. However, less than half (44%) said their company currently encourages lower-carbon travel through flexible policies.

Overtourism Increasingly Influencing Holiday Plans, Report Finds

More than half of holidaymakers would reconsider their travel plans if they knew a popular destination was experiencing overtourism during peak times, according to research for Travel Weekly's latest Insight Report. A consumer survey conducted in January revealed that 55% of those planning an overseas trip this year would alter their plans if their chosen destination was facing overtourism. The impact is even more pronounced among families, with 62% of all holidaymakers and 72% of adults with children saying they would rethink their trip if a destination had seen protests against excessive visitor numbers.

UK On-Time Flights Still Below Pre-Covid Levels, CAA Reports

The proportion of on-time flights at UK airports remained below pre-Covid 2019 levels in the final quarter of last year, according to new data. Passenger numbers increased by 6% year-on-year to 69 million, while the number of flights rose by 3% to nearly 500,000. The percentage of on-time flights improved by 4% to 71%, and the average delay per flight decreased by one minute to 17 minutes. However, these figures still fell short of the 2019 pre-pandemic levels of 80% on-time flights and an average delay of 12 minutes, according to the latest Civil Aviation Authority trends survey. Gatwick recorded the lowest percentage of on-time flights, with only 66% operating on schedule, lagging behind Stansted, Southend, and Manchester airports. Aberdeen had the best punctuality rate, with 79% of flights on time, followed closely by Liverpool, East Midlands, and Belfast City, each at 78%. Heathrow's on-time performance stood at 71%, matching Birmingham and Bristol airports.

AIRLINE UPDATE

Air France - Air France-KLM returned to profit last year with a net income of €489 million, reversing a €501 million loss from the previous year. Despite facing "operational and external challenges" in 2024, the airline group benefited from the Paris Olympic Games, which helped boost passenger numbers by 4.7% to nearly 98 million.

However, the company cited delays in its fleet renewal plan due to supply chain issues, engine problems with its new Airbus A220s, and higher fuel consumption from longer flight times caused by geopolitical factors as challenges during the year.

Delta - Delta Air Lines is supporting a project to introduce a revolutionary fuel-efficient aircraft into operation. Developed by California-based start-up JetZero, the blended-wing-body (BWB) design is expected to be up to 50% more fuel-efficient than conventional aircraft and capable of carrying more than 250 passengers. With engines mounted on top, the BWB is also expected to be "significantly quieter" than traditional passenger jets. Delta is exploring how the aircraft could integrate into existing airport infrastructure and improve turnaround times. Originally tested in the 1990s by NASA and Stanford University, the BWB is designed to be safe, efficient, and compatible with sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) while using today's propulsion systems.

Emirates - Emirates is expanding its network of refurbished Boeing 777s to include Stansted. Starting on 7th May, the upgraded four-class aircraft will be deployed on the Stansted-Dubai route, offering passengers the airline's latest cabin interiors. Enhancements include a reconfigured business class in a 1-2-1 layout with fully flat beds and personal minibars. Some aircrafts will also feature Emirates' exclusive 'Gamechanger' first-class suites. Stansted will become the third UK airport to receive the retrofitted aircraft, joining Heathrow and Edinburgh.

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES & OTA UPDATE

Jetline Travel - Jetline Travel, the parent company of Jetline Holidays and Jetline Cruise, has ceased trading as an ATOL holder, according to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). Established in 2000, the company held a license to carry 4,790 ATOL-protected passengers in the year leading up to September 2025. Announcing the company's failure, the CAA assured customers currently overseas that their return flights remain valid. The regulator is also in discussions with service providers to ensure other elements of affected trips continue as planned.

Ocean Holidays - Ocean Holidays is confident about returning to profitability as it expands trade partnerships and leverages its new ATOL provision. Co-chief executive Harry Hastings noted a significant rise in trade bookings, with agents accounting for 40% of Ocean Florida's peak season reservations, double the 20% recorded last year. The company's parent, Ocean Holidays, reported a £2.5 million net loss for the 16 months ending 30 April 2024, following financial challenges during the pandemic and the delayed reopening of the US travel market.

Travel Solutions - Travel Solutions, Belfast's award-winning tour operator, is celebrating a major achievement as the leading seller of holidays to the USA in Northern Ireland. Travel Solutions offer holidays to the USA from airports throughout the UK and Ireland, with a choice of holidays – from city breaks, escorted and self-drive tours, beach and theme park, cruise and stay – or something more adventurous.

SOCIAL UPDATE

YouTube updates its ad placement process

Starting in May this year, YouTube is improving the quality of mid-video ads by updating the process, which will detect natural breaks and transitions in videos, showing more ads during these pauses. Through better selecting ad placement in videos, ad breaks will be less disruptive to the flow of videos, keeping viewers more engaged. YouTube is introducing a new mid-roll ad placement option that combines both automatic and manual selection. Previously, creators had to choose between fully manual placement, which allowed them to control ad breaks, or automatic placement, where YouTube's system detected optimal points. With this update, creators can set manual ad breaks while YouTube's system may override them if it identifies a more natural insertion point than the manual placement. Additionally, YouTube is adding a feature that flags manually placed ads deemed too interruptive, giving creators the option to adjust them for a better viewer experience.

MICE UPDATE

The Business of Events reveals speakers for the 2025 Global Policy Forum

The Business of Events has announced a lineup of politicians, policymakers, and industry figures for its signature Global Policy Forum, taking place on 1 April. The forum aims to drive growth in the UK's business events economy, featuring key speakers such as Shaun Davies MP, chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Events, Dame Caroline Dinenage DBE MP, chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee, and Lord Daniel Finkelstein OBE, who will share insights on the political and economic landscape.

LIGHTER NOTE

The mother of a three-year-old boy, whose toy elephant was recently returned after being spotted in the window of a butcher's shop, has praised the power of community for its quick and heartfelt response. More [here](#).