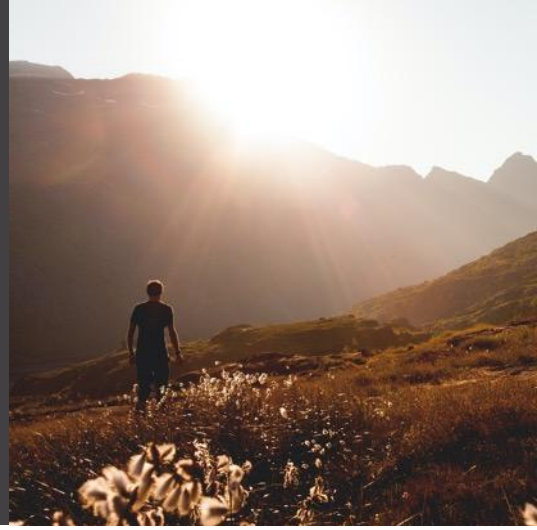


WEEKLY REPORT

11 April 2025



ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

UK economy grew more than expected in February

The economy expanded by 0.5% in February, outperforming economists' expectations of 0.1% growth, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The surprise increase was driven by strong performance in the services sector, along with a boost in manufacturing and production. The better-than-expected figures come as the UK economy braces itself for the impact of tariffs imposed on goods being imported to the US and analysts have warned that the growth may be short-lived. Chancellor Rachel Reeves described the latest growth figures as an "encouraging sign", but added that the government is "not complacent".

Source: [BBC News](#)

Wildfire warnings issued as UK temperatures set to reach 24C on Friday

Hot weather is expected to bring highs of 24°C to the UK on Friday, as fire services continue to warn of wildfires across the country. The Met Office has forecast that temperatures will peak in London and south-east England, making it potentially the hottest day of the year so far. Dan Stroud, a forecaster at the Met Office, said: "The average for this time of year is around 13°C, so it's going to be about 10°C above average on Friday." England experienced its sixth driest March on record due to historically low rainfall, while Wales saw its fourth driest March since records began in 1836, according to the Met Office. Firefighters continue to battle big blazes in Northern Ireland, and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service issued "extreme" wildfire warnings on Thursday in south-west, eastern, central and northern Scotland.

Source: [The Guardian](#)

Cabinet Office to shed 2,100 civil servant roles

A government department led by one of Sir Keir Starmer's most senior ministers is cutting nearly a third of its jobs as part of efforts to accelerate civil service reform. Officials at the Cabinet Office, headed by Pat McFadden, were informed today that 2,100 of their 6,500 roles will be cut or moved to other parts of government over the next two years. Along with other reforms, the Cabinet Office stated that the cuts will save £110m a year by 2028. Civil service union Prospect warned that "blunt cuts of this scale" could negatively impact delivery of government services. In recent weeks, the government has announced plans to make "radical" reforms to the civil service, including reducing government running costs by 15% by the end of the decade.

Source: [BBC News](#)

TRADE UPDATE

Global travel and tourism set for record growth in 2025, driving economic impact and job creation

The global travel and tourism industry is set for strong growth in 2025, with international visitor spending forecast to hit a historic \$2.1 trillion, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. The industry is expected to contribute a record \$11.7 trillion to the global economy, accounting for 10.3% of global GDP, while supporting 371 million jobs worldwide. Despite economic uncertainty, travel spending continues to rise, although growth has slowed in key markets such as the US, China, and Germany. The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) predicts that by 2035, the industry will inject \$16.5 trillion into the global economy, reaching 11.5% of GDP and supporting over 460 million jobs.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#) & WTTC

Heathrow sees 7.5% drop in March passengers due to power outage, but remains optimistic for record year

In March 2025, Heathrow Airport experienced a significant operational disruption due to a major power outage caused by a fire at a nearby electrical substation. The incident led to the cancellation of over 1,300 flights and affected approximately 300,000 passengers, resulting in an estimated 7.5% drop in passenger numbers for the month. The outage raised concerns about the airport's infrastructure resilience, prompting Heathrow's CEO, Thomas Woldbye, to apologise for the disruption and announce a comprehensive review of the airport's systems. The financial impact on airlines was substantial, with costs potentially reaching up to \$100 million due to rerouting and accommodation expenses.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

Travel industry monitors impact of US tariffs on bookings and consumer confidence

In response to recent US trade tariffs and global economic uncertainty, travel agents and tour operators are closely monitoring the impact on holiday sales. While many report a slight slowdown in US bookings, particularly for family travel, there are mixed reactions across the industry. Premier Travel's Paul Waters noted a slight dip in US bookings but emphasised continued strong overall demand. Despite these concerns, some agents, including USAirtours' Guy Novik, remain optimistic, suggesting that a weaker US dollar could make holidays to the US more attractive. Industry experts agree that while the full impact of the tariffs remains unclear, travel agents need to stay vigilant as the situation evolves. Despite the challenges, cruise bookings have seen strong growth.

Source: [TTG Media](#)

Thailand introduces mandatory digital arrival card for all international visitors

Starting 28 April, Thailand will introduce a mandatory digital arrival card for all international visitors, set to go live for arrivals from 1 May onward. The system is free to complete and can be submitted up to three days before arrival, streamlining the entry process for those arriving by air, land, or sea. Exempt from the requirement are Thai passport holders and those transiting through the country without clearing immigration. While travellers can complete the process on arrival using WiFi-enabled devices, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) encourages completing it beforehand for convenience. Upon submission, travellers will receive a QR code, which must be shown at immigration along with their passport. This digital system aims to improve efficiency and gather travel trend data, though it is important to note that the digital arrival card is not a visa. British and Irish citizens can continue to visit Thailand for up to 60 days without a visa.

Source: [TTG Media](#)

AIRLINE UPDATE

American Airlines - American Airlines has introduced a series of new route updates to enhance global connectivity, particularly between the United States, Mexico, Greece, Spain, and Ireland. The airline is also extending its summer European routes into the cooler months, offering extended flights from Philadelphia (PHL) to Athens and Greece, New York (JFK) to Barcelona and Spain, and Dallas–Fort Worth (DFW) to Dublin and Ireland. This extension ensures travellers can enjoy more options to international destinations as winter approaches. These moves aim to provide more direct flights and streamlined connections, enhancing convenience for passengers traveling between North America and Europe.

Source: [TTW](#)

EasyJet - EasyJet is launching two new winter services to Scandinavian Mountains airport in Sweden, connecting Gatwick and Manchester to the ski resort region of Sälen. Starting 6 December, these weekly flights will provide convenient access to the resort, with the nearest ski area, Hundfjället, just a 10-minute drive from the airport. This marks the first time the Scandinavian Mountains will be connected to the UK by a low-cost carrier.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

International Airlines Group - The joint business agreement between British Airways (BA), Qatar Airways (QR), and Iberia (IB) has been extended for five more years, following approval by New Zealand's government. The new agreement, which will run until 31 May, 2030, incorporates Iberia into the existing alliance, enhancing flight coordination, scheduling, and loyalty program access for travellers. This expansion, part of the International Airlines Group umbrella, strengthens connectivity between New Zealand and the UK, while offering additional European destinations. The move follows Australia's approval of a similar Qatar Airways-Virgin Australia alliance, reflecting increased regional airline cooperation.

Source: [TTW](#)

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES & OTA UPDATE

Cox & Kings - Upmarket operator Cox & Kings is set to embark on a major global expansion, targeting key markets such as the USA and Australia, leveraging its parent company Abercrombie & Kent Travel Group's (AKTG) extensive global network. The goal is to solidify Cox & Kings' position as a leader in immersive travel experiences. Jennifer Charlton, who brings over 30 years of industry experience, has been appointed managing director to lead this new strategic direction, while continuing her role as senior vice-president of sales and business development for the UK & EMEA. Since AKTG acquired Cox & Kings in 2019, the brand has undergone several enhancements, including a refreshed website in 2024, and is poised to introduce its culturally rich travel offerings to new markets worldwide.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

G Adventures - G Adventures has appointed Nick Hughes as the new UK director of growth, a role designed to oversee the strategic direction, sales, and marketing of the UK business. Hughes, who brings a strong background in business strategy and commercial growth, previously held senior positions at Scenic Group, Princess Cruises, dnata, and Attraction World. In his new role, Hughes will focus on driving profitable growth and enhancing agency partnerships across the UK.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

Premier Holidays - Premier Holidays is restructuring its sales team with the creation of an expanded on-the-road team to offer more personalised support to travel agents across different regions. The operator has appointed three new business development managers (BDMs) to cover the South, East, and West of the UK. Hayley Smith, formerly of Serenity Holidays, takes on the BDM role for the South, Louisa Smith, previously with Blue Diamond Resorts, will cover the East, and Rachel Small, formerly with MSC Cruises, joins as BDM for the West. This move aims to enhance collaboration with trade partners and boost sales in long-haul and Channel Islands destinations.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

SOCIAL UPDATE

LinkedIn introduces a new video trend feature

LinkedIn has launched a new video feature designed to encourage users to upload their own videos to trending topics. Videos will now include topic tags that highlight current trends, allowing audiences to click through to see related content. Additionally, a new 'add to this trend' button will appear alongside these videos, encouraging users to join the conversation by uploading their own video content, enhancing engagement and promoting more video content from creators and brands.

Source: [Social Media Today](#)

Meta adds new parameters for account verification

Meta has updated its verification requirements to help prevent scammers from impersonating others. To qualify for creator verification, accounts must avoid making frequent changes to key profile details such as profile image, username, location or account type. The purpose of this is to detect fake accounts attempting to mislead users with a verified tick.

Source: [Social Media Today](#)

YouTube launches new AI sound elements to assist in video creation

YouTube has introduced new AI features to help streamline video editing and enhance creativity. Users can now generate copyright free AI music tracks directly within YouTube Studio by simply entering a description of the desired sound and YouTube's AI will generate a custom clip based on that input. In addition, YouTube is testing a new beat matching feature for Shorts, allowing users to easily sync video clips with music. These new tools aim to save on editing time and simplify the creative process for content creators and brands, while offering a unique edge through personalised soundtracks.

Source: [Social Media Today](#)

MICE UPDATE**UK events industry pushes back on cuts to VisitBritain's Funding**

UKEVENTS has joined forces with other organisations within the Tourism Alliance in expressing deep concern over the recent decision to significantly reduce GREAT funding for VisitBritain, a key partner. This decision, which sees a 41% cut in funding compared to last year, will impact VisitBritain's opportunities in promoting the UK as a premier destination for tourism and events. The UK events industry contributes £61.6bn to the UK economy (UK Events Report 2024) and benefits significantly from the promotional activities and support provided by VisitBritain.

Source: [Conference News](#)

LIGHTER NOTE**Scientists perform world's first de-extinction to revive the dire wolf that vanished 12,000 years ago**

Scientists have announced the world's first de-extinction, bringing the dire wolf back into existence. Colossal Biosciences, a genetic engineering company, has birthed three dire wolves, naming them Romulus, Remus and Khaleesi in homage to the legendary creatures made famous by the HBO hit series Game of Thrones.

Source: [Daily Mail](#)