

WEEKLY REPORT



MMGY
Weekly Report for UK & Ireland
15 August 2025

TRADE UPDATE

Heathrow expects government third runway update in autumn

Heathrow expects an update from the government this autumn on its proposed third runway, which includes an M25 upgrade designed to avoid traffic disruption. July was the the airports busiest month on record with 7.9 million passengers and 95% clearing security in under five minutes. The airport also recorded its busiest day ever on 1 August and saw North American traffic rise 0.9% year-on-year.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

Gatwick baggage screeners to strike in late August

Baggage screeners at Gatwick, employed by ICTS, are set to strike from late August (22-26) and again from August 29 - September 2, covering the Bank Holiday weekend. The Unite union says the walkouts are in pursuit of a 'fair' pay rise and claims all flights from Gatwick will be affected. The airport, however, expects 'normal' summer holiday operations and states it is working with suppliers to avoid disruption.

Source: [BBC News](#)

Agents outstrip other sectors for transaction growth in July

Consumer card spending with travel agents grew year-on-year in July, with transaction growth of 15.9%, outperforming all other sectors. Agents saw a 2% rise in spending last month against overall expenditure growth of 1.4%, according to new Barclays data. This represented a recovery from marginal 0.5% spending growth in June. Airline spending grew by 4.7%, though transactions fell 6.6% compared to last year.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

Gatwick 'optimistic' about approval for second runway

Gatwick chief executive, Stewart Wingate, is 'optimistic' about securing approval for a second runway, with a government decision expected by October 27. The airport reported first-half profits of nearly £129 million, up from £106 million last year, as passenger numbers rose to 20 million. On-time performance improved to 75% from 68% after collaboration with airlines and NATS, and 98% of passengers cleared security in under five minutes following a £60 million upgrade to next-generation screening technology.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

ECONOMIC, POLITICAL & SOCIAL UPDATE

Plaid Cymru Rules Out Conservative Deal Ahead of 2026 Senedd Election

Plaid Cymru leader, Rhun ap Iorwerth, has ruled out any post-election deal with the Conservatives after the 2026 Senedd vote, reiterating his earlier stance against working with Reform UK. Speaking to BBC-produced Newyddion S4C, he dismissed the prospect of cooperation, citing the Conservatives' current difficulties and their political alignments with Reform. Historically, Plaid nearly formed a "rainbow coalition" with the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats in 2007 before entering a Labour-led coalition. Current polls suggest Plaid and Reform are competing for the largest share of seats, with Labour third and the Conservatives fourth, in a landscape with no overall majority. Ap Iorwerth signalled a preference for independent governance, referencing the SNP's 2007 minority administration in Scotland as a model.

Source: [BBC](#)

UK Economic Growth Slows but Outperforms Expectations in Q2

UK economic growth slowed to 0.3% between April and June, down from 0.7% in Q1, but exceeded the 0.1% expansion forecast by the Office for National Statistics. Growth was driven primarily by services and a 1.2% rise in construction, while business investment fell sharply and household spending dipped. Revised data showed April's contraction was smaller than initially reported, and June's performance was stronger than expected, prompting Goldman Sachs to raise its UK growth forecast to 1.4% for the year.

Source: [BBC](#)

UK Jobs Market Continues Gradual Cooling as Vacancies Fall

The UK labour market showed further signs of cooling between May and July, with job vacancies down 5.8% to 718,000, the lowest level since early 2021 outside the pandemic, and payroll employment falling by 8,000 from June. The Office for National Statistics attributed the decline to reduced recruitment and replacement hiring across most industries, particularly hospitality and retail. Despite the slowdown, unemployment remained at 4.7% and wage growth held steady at 5%, indicating gradual easing. Economists noted that April's increases in the National Living Wage and employer National Insurance are beginning to stabilise. Government ministers described the data as broadly positive, while opposition parties and business leaders warned that higher costs and taxes are squeezing employers and limiting hiring.

Source: [BBC](#)

Irish Mortgage Rates Remain High as ECB Rate Cuts Slow

Borrowers and prospective homebuyers in Ireland are advised to exercise caution amid slowing European Central Bank rate cuts, with the Central Bank reporting a marginal decline in the weighted average mortgage rate to 3.6% in June. Ireland remains one of the more expensive eurozone jurisdictions due to higher capital requirements for lenders and challenges in recovering defaulted loans. Analysts expect only one further ECB rate cut this year, with potential hikes in 2026 if inflation rises. Fixed-rate mortgages now account for 85% of new contracts as borrowers seek security amid rising property prices, while market competition gradually brings rates down.

Source: [The Irish Times](#)

AIRLINE UPDATE

Norse Atlantic - Norse Atlantic Airways saw its load factor improve to 94% across all flights in July. The increase in passengers per flight compared with the same month last year, covered both the long-haul low-cost carrier's own operations and Boeing 787 Dreamliner services leased or chartered to other airlines. Last month, the number of chartered or leased-out flights climbed to 54, up from nine in July 2024.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

Ryanair - Ryanair has introduced a new "authorised distribution platform" that allows travel agents to book flights directly. The Travel Agent Direct (TAD) channel is designed to give offline travel agents access to book Ryanair flights while "ensuring full transparency for passengers," Europe's largest airline said. The new booking platform represents the latest development in the no-frills airline's distribution commitment to work exclusively with "trusted and authorised" travel agencies.

Source: [Travel Gossip](#)

Virgin Atlantic - Virgin Atlantic has unveiled a new training portal, 'The Hangar', designed to enhance agents' knowledge while enabling them to earn additional rewards. The Hangar forms part of the airline's Sky High Club, a training and rewards platform for travel trade partners. Described as a "one-stop hub", the portal provides comprehensive details on Virgin Atlantic's cabin classes, codeshare agreements, route network, joint venture with Delta Air Lines, and other partnerships.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES & OTA UPDATE

Abercrombie & Kent - Abercrombie & Kent (A&K) has acquired Copenhagen-based Borealis DMC, a long-standing partner with expertise across the Nordic wilderness and cultural landscape. Borealis DMC offers experiences throughout Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The luxury operator said the acquisition strengthens its position as the 'world's largest network of luxury destination management companies (DMCs),' with more than 3,000 staff across 65 offices and 40 countries.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

TUI - Tui has credited "the proven sales strength" of third-party agents for helping it deliver its best early summer (third quarter) result in more than a decade, despite summer bookings being 2% down year-on-year. Tui Group said summer business was shaped by a highly competitive environment, a continuing trend toward later bookings, and was impacted by the hot weather in June and July across its source markets, as well as conflict in the Middle East.

Source: [TTG](#)

SOCIAL UPDATE

Instagram's video editing app, 'Edits', gets new round of updates

Instagram's video editing app, Edits, has rolled out a new update featuring three new enhancements designed to streamline the editing process. Users can now convert notes from sticky notes into a teleprompter-style script directly in-app via a simple drop-down option, eliminating the need for external script tools. Creators can also share unfinished videos with other Instagram users to receive feedback on their in-progress content. Additionally, the app now allows sound to be boosted by up to 150%, offering more creative flexibility with audio tracks.

Source: [Social Media Today](#)

Threads reaches 400 million active users

Meta's Threads has surpassed 400 million monthly active users just two years after its launch. The platform added 50 million users in the past quarter alone, following the announcement in late April that it had reached 350 million. As Meta's answer to X, Threads' steady growth brings it closer to X's 600 million active users.

Source: [TechCrunch](#)

MICE UPDATE

Updated CMP exam now live

The updated Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) exam launched on 13 August, receiving positive feedback from the Events Industry Council (EIC). The new exam aligns with the 2025 CMP International Standards (CMP-IS), which aims to provide a future-focused framework that reflects the evolving global business events landscape. The CMP designation is held by more than 13,000 meeting professionals across 55+ countries and validates expertise in strategic planning, operations, risk management, stakeholder engagement and emerging areas such as sustainability, technology integration, and outcome evaluation.

Source: [CMW \(Conference & Meetings World\)](#)

LIGHTER NOTE

'Deceptively cute' ancient whale with razor-sharp teeth and eyes the size of tennis balls discovered in Australia. See [here](#).