

WEEKLY REPORT



MMGY
Weekly Report for UK & Ireland
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ECONOMIC, POLITICAL & SOCIAL UPDATE

TfL invites RMT to talks as London tube strikes end

Transport for London (TfL) has invited the RMT union to resume talks after a week of tube strikes, which ended Thursday night. Underground services will restart gradually on Friday, with full service expected after the morning rush hour. The strikes, involving 10,000 RMT members demanding a shorter working week, caused four days of near-total closures, cutting TfL contactless tap-ins by 20–25% and forcing passengers onto buses, the Elizabeth line, Overground, and e-bikes, which surged 60–100%. Footfall fell around 20% and bar and restaurant bookings dropped up to 50%. Ambulance calls for bike accidents rose nearly 30%. The RMT has not confirmed whether it will attend talks next week, leaving the possibility of further strikes.

Source: [Guardian](#)

The UK economy showed little growth in July 2025

The UK economy showed no growth in July 2025, largely due to the sharpest drop in manufacturing output in a year (-1.3%). While services such as healthcare and IT supported modest expansion over the past three months (0.2%), the overall economy has slowed after stronger growth earlier in the year. With the Autumn Budget approaching in November, Chancellor Rachel Reeves faces pressure to boost growth while balancing fiscal rules, sparking speculation about potential tax rises. Economists warn of further slowdown in the second half of the year, while opposition parties criticised the government's handling of growth, investment, and business confidence.

Source: [BBC](#)

Prime Minister Keir Starmer has dismissed Lord Peter Mandelson as UK Ambassador

Prime Minister Keir Starmer has dismissed Lord Peter Mandelson as the UK's ambassador to Washington after newly disclosed emails revealed far closer ties to Jeffrey Epstein than were known at the time of his appointment in February 2025. The communications showed Mandelson defended Epstein's 2008 conviction and referred to him as a "best pal," prompting the government to conclude his association was deeper and more troubling than previously understood. Mandelson has since expressed regret and sympathy for Epstein's victims, but his removal coming just before a state visit by US President Donald Trump has intensified scrutiny of Starmer's political judgment and the vetting of senior diplomatic posts.

Source: [BBC](#)

TRADE UPDATE

Agencies step in at the 11th hour to save holidays hit by spate of ESTA issues

Thorne Travel and Glen Travel, both in Scotland, have each had clients have their ESTAs (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation) revoked shortly before they were due to travel to the U.S. Thorne has issued a warning to clients, and urged other agencies to be vigilant and strengthen their checks following a succession of pre-departure incidents. "We're seeing a rise in cases where previously approved ESTAs are being revoked without notice," said Thorne Travel in a recent warning to clients travelling to the US. "Some travellers have been denied boarding, and airlines report this is happening daily. No reason is given." TTG understands US Customs and Border Protection continues to check for new information or a change in status of travellers after their ESTA is approved.

Source: [TTG Media](#)

Barclays data highlights healthy travel spend in August and rising shoulder season popularity

The bank's latest Consumer Spend report, covering August, charted a 4.4% year-on-year increase in spend with travel agents, and a huge 17.9% uptick in transaction growth – outstripping all other sectors monitored by Barclays. However, more than half of consumers (54%) told Barclays they are opting for off-peak holidays in 2025, rising to more than two-thirds (71%) among Gen Z travellers. Of those travelling off-peak, 38% prefer the shoulder season, while one-in-three are booking trips during quieter times to save money. Figures for airlines showed a mixed picture with spend up by 2.1% but transactions down by 4.5%. Barclays said consumers were using AI tools to help cut costs. It found 27% were using tools such as ChatGPT to plan holidays.

Source: [TTG Media](#)

Doncaster Sheffield Airport to reopen after securing £160m funding package

Doncaster Sheffield Airport will reopen after council leaders unanimously voted to give it a £160 million funding package. All five board members of the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority made the decision at a meeting on Tuesday, which was held at the airport. The approved funding is on top of the £16m already committed previously by the authority. South Yorkshire Mayor Oliver Coppard said: "We're reopening DSA. Today, we've made a historic decision; to invest in the plans to reopen Doncaster Sheffield Airport, and to create a sustainable aviation and advanced manufacturing hub at Gateway East."

Source: [Travel Gossip](#)

Heathrow reaches record with 8m passengers in August

Heathrow airport said it "made history" in August, surpassing eight million passengers in a single month for the first time. It said it is also the first European hub to exceed the eight million mark in a month. Its busiest ever day was on 1 August with more than 270,000 passengers. The airport said service levels remained "sky high" in August, with 98% of bags travelling on their flights as expected and 96% of passengers waiting less than five minutes at security. Heathrow also recorded its most punctual August ever.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

AIRLINE UPDATE

Norwegian - The Norwegian Group has reported 2.8 million passengers for August, marking the end of a record peak season. Norwegian Air carried 2.4 million passengers last month, while its regional sister carrier Widerøe's August passenger numbers were more than 366,000. Widerøe set a new passenger record in each of the summer months. Geir Karlsen, chief executive, said: "August was a strong conclusion to a record summer, demonstrating that our preparations for the peak season were successful. Our network was well adapted to demand, and we further strengthened our product offering for our customers."

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

Ryanair - No-frills airline Ryanair has unveiled a partnership agreement with travel search engine Skyscanner. The deal guarantees that Skyscanner will now have direct access to Ryanair content, offering customers the airline's flights and ancillary products. Dara Brady, Ryanair's chief marketing officer, said: "We are pleased to announce our partnership agreement with Skyscanner – through this new agreement, Skyscanner customers will be able to search for Ryanair's low-fare flights with the guarantee of full price transparency. We look forward to working with Skyscanner over the coming months."

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

Jet2 - Senior trade figures have described Jet2's reduction in planned winter capacity as "pragmatic" amid fears of a challenging autumn market and suggested other major players could follow suit. The UK's largest operator and third-largest airline by passenger numbers blamed a "less certain consumer environment" as it cut 200,000 seats for this winter season, from 5.8 million to 5.6 million – still a 9% increase on winter 2024-25. In a statement, the company said it expected its full-year operating profit to be "towards the lower end of the consensus range" at about £449 million, with a late-booking trend "even more pronounced" since the summer and significant winter capacity still to sell. Jet2's package holiday passenger numbers grew by 2% this summer, compared with 8% last year, but flight-only carryings were up by 17%.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENCIES & OTA UPDATE

Audley Travel has opened an invitation-only travel agent members' club called Kindred.

Kindred has launched with 40 key UK agent partner members, who will have access to bespoke, immersive events, personalised training and networking opportunities. Members will also be invited to join an advisory board to help shape the future of Audley's agent experience, as well as get access to exclusive insights and content. Trade sales manager, Greg Thurston said: "We recognised that our most collaborative and supportive agents deserved more recognition and opportunities to help shape the future of Audley's trade experience."

Source: [Travel Gossip](#)

Intele Travel UK has increased its cruise turnover by 60% in the first eight months of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024. The homeworking agency also posted gross cruise sales of £17.5 million between January and August, up from £11 million versus 2024. The number of agents booking cruises within the organisation and average booking values increased by 66% and 5% respectively within the same timeframe. The agency has committed to a cruise training programme ahead of Clia Cruise Week with nine webinars, multiple podcasts, special edition newsletters, deals and social media activity to support agents.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

Cox & Kings has added new itineraries in Umbria, Tunisia, Namibia and Kyrgyzstan to its latest Small Group Tours brochure, covering 2026-27. The operator said Italy remains a "firm favourite", consistently performing well with strong sales across Cox & Kings' portfolio of tours. Demand for the destination has prompted the introduction of the new Umbria: Undiscovered Heart of Italy tour, visiting less well-known sights such as the Labyrinth of Hadrian and Civita di Bagnoregio. Cox & Kings' latest booking trends also show Africa and Central Asia emerging as the company's fastest-growing regions, showing year-on-year increases of 48% and 34% respectively from 2024 to 2025.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

Intrepid has released its annual Not Hot List, showcasing 10 lesser-known destinations which it says are "ready to welcome more visitors in 2026". The list is designed to direct travellers towards regions where their presence can have a positive impact. All the destinations on the list currently attract relatively few international visitors but with new investments, experiences and improved infrastructure being introduced or announced this year, they are ready for more travellers, says the adventure operator. Alongside the list, Intrepid has introduced new trips to six of the featured destinations, including Sierra Leone, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Turkey, Romania and El Salvador. The Not Hot List is developed with insights from Intrepid's global product and operations experts in 32 countries, alongside travel trend agency Globetrender.

Source: [Travel Weekly](#)

MEDIA & SOCIAL UPDATE

Community chats will no longer be available on Facebook

Facebook is planning to remove its group chat functionality soon, after community chats were launched back in 2022. The original idea hoped to extend community discussions to Messenger, bridging Facebook groups and the latter, although the concept didn't resonate well enough with group members. The non-success is thought to be down to Facebook users wanting discussions to stay on Facebook, as opposed to extending them on other apps.

Source: [Social Media Today](#)

MICE UPDATE

Glasgow convention bureau subsumed into new body

A new body aimed at boosting Glasgow's attractiveness as an international conference destination - amongst other things - has been given the go-ahead, following approval by the city's administration committee. The Destination Marketing and Management Organisation (DMMO) will bring together staff and expertise from across the city's investment, tourism, marketing, and conference sectors. The consolidated team will include specialists from Invest Glasgow, the Glasgow Convention Bureau and Glasgow Life Destination Marketing. The move follows calls from business leaders to streamline and strengthen the city's promotional efforts under a single, unified brand. The DMMO is expected to be operational before the end of 2025, with staff transitions from existing teams already in progress.

Source: [AMI \(Association Meetings International\)](#)

LIGHTER NOTE

Westminster's New 'Pawlitician' of the Year

Labour MP Sarah Edwards and her dog Poykee were crowned the winners of Westminster's "Dog of the Year" competition on 11 September in Victoria Tower Gardens. The event, often dubbed "Pawlitician" dog show, brought together MPs from across party lines with their pets. Edwards said she entered after being elected and was "absolutely delighted" by their victory.

Source: [Independent](#)