

UK Office June 2020 TDC Report

Prepared by: Venessa Alexander
UK Director

Tour Operators

- **USAirtours** – We had a call with Linda Dixey, Product & Partnerships Manager and she was very happy to advise that most of their staff are now back in the office with only four team members still out on the government furlough scheme although they did unfortunately have to make 1/3 of their staff members redundant at the very start of the virus pandemic. All team members are currently multi-tasking and not just focusing on the normal job roles. She did say bookings are coming in and they had over 15 new bookings in one day with 85% of these bookings for Florida and the remaining 15% being split between Las Vegas and New York. They have been very pro-active in obtaining deals/rates for 21/22 from hotel receptives as they are now receiving bookings for 2022 as well as 2021. They are now up to date with re-bookings contacting people and switching all passengers that were booked up until August 2020. She advised that most customers that have October holidays booked are still planning to travel at that time if they can. Linda advised that they have started marketing this week with Universal Parks sending B2B & B2C email newsletters as Universal are due to open again on Friday, albeit not for UK customers. We discussed our campaign that was paused back in March and discussed the possibility of running this in September 2020 and will discuss this again in the coming weeks. Linda is currently working on an interim report and invoice for the activity that had ran back in Feb/Mar 2020.
- **Ocean Holidays** - Anna Janssen, Product Manager sent us an email update after our call last week to advise us of the following after the month of May trading update was conducted. Anna advised that they had a busy month and that they are incredibly proud of the latest achievements of Ocean Holidays. They managed to move around 70% of their March – June customers to different travel dates later in the year or 2021. They have now completed contacting all customers up until 31st August and so far, most of them have agreed to move their holiday to the same dates next year. Less than 10% of those customers have cancelled their holiday. They have also been contacted by about 10% of customers travelling between Sep – Dec this year who have also asked to move their holidays to the same dates next year. They have a dedicated team of switching experts in place that are dealing with those bookings only and have proven to be incredibly successful with some amazing feedback from customers. No need to say how pleased they are with those results as this means they are able to protect not only their business but also their valued partners. They managed to achieve 450 new bookings which equals a result of only -4% YoY. 2150 passengers bringing 6700 room nights to accommodations in Florida; What they are booking is as follows: 63 % of bookings are for 2021, 27% of bookings are for 2022, 6% of bookings are for 2023 and the remaining 4% are a mix of end of 2020 and 2024 bookings: About 50% of all those bookings are villa bookings in Kissimmee and Central Florida. Another 22% are made up by Hotels in Orlando only followed by Disney World Resort Hotels and Universal. They have also seen an increase in Florida Beaches & Gulf Coast bookings. With regards to marketing

and commercial, they have seen great success from the newsletters which they have been sharing on a weekly basis to segments on their database. Furthermore, they have seen increased traffic on their website and social media channels again. Anna has advised that they are actively resuming commercial campaigns with selected partners from June and as such have suggested that we look to run our postponed campaign from May to start running in August. We will be having further discussions regarding this in the coming weeks.

- **Bookabed Ireland** - We spoke with Beverley Fly and Colleen Butler who advised that Bookabed have definitely seen a positive turn over the last couple of weeks which is encouraging. They have had a good pick up in bookings and the US is leading, which is great. 2021 is the bulk of choice but it is a very positive sign. They are in a good situation right now in Ireland with some travel agencies opening this week and other small businesses in general. They had their best week last week since March 9th ... Still not anything on normal figures but as mentioned the US is performing well. Orlando is their top booking destination so Florida they believe is going to do well. They did get one booking for 3 passengers out of the UK market for Clearwater Beach last week. There is light at the end of the tunnel. As with everyone's comments they really need the US to open their borders and also need the return quarantine rules relaxed if we are to see business in the next few months.
- **Premier Holidays** - We had an update from Heidi Blades, Director at Premier Holidays who advised that business has been tough over the past few months as to be expected. That said they have in the last few weeks seen the tides turn a little with some new business coming in. Not as much as they would like but she expect that with agencies starting to open from Monday 15th June (many with a locked door policy) they will see business start to return. Much of what is booking is for 2021 as we would expect. In terms of destinations the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are proving popular with their clientele.
- **Tour America** - We received an update from Liz Wright, Product Manager and Veronica Flood Marketing Manager to advise that their offices are still closed and that they still have a reduced team working remotely. They are still spending lots of time servicing bookings, rebooking the majority which is good news. However, we are also starting to see some new bookings coming in which is encouraging. They advised that it's all about Florida, and that they have hardly anything left on the direct service to Orlando next Easter which is great for Aer Lingus and Tour America of course. They are predicting that summer 2021 will do well. They have a waiting list for June 2021 already. As soon as flights come into the system (11 months out) they can start booking them. They have been promoting offers through social media platforms and they have included St. Pete/Clearwater in some of their cruise offers as pre or post stays which is great. They have now to date moved all departures that have been booked up until September so 2020 is pretty much done so it's all about 2021 moving forward.
- **THG Holidays** - We spoke with Stam Tzafos Product Manager at THG Holidays who reported that there was nothing much to report yet. Demand hasn't been that great although THG hasn't actively promoted any holidays yet. As we know, they took a step back to deal with all cancellations and refunds first. The initial target for promoting holidays was the end of June but as cancellations progressed smoothly, they have now started their first promotions a little bit earlier than originally planned. Initially they will

run a series of email and Facebook campaigns, promoting their safeguard policy which includes direct flights, access to UK airport lounges, private resort transfers and private tours to name a few. They are also including media material received from their DMCs, CVBs and various other travel organisations, promoting resorts as a safe tourist destination.

- **Virgin Holidays** - We had a telephone sales call with James Killick, Destination Manager Florida for a further recap and update from a Virgin Holidays perspective since we last spoke almost a month ago. James has advised that flights to Orlando have now been put back on sale from LHR to MCO starting from the 15th July but that this will of course be dependent on the FCO (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and of course the borders in the US opening ahead of the first flight that is scheduled. James feels that as the UK travelling British public will always be when they will be able to take their next vacation and as we all know the US is a favourite long-haul destination for the majority and he feels will bounce back once borders do open. What is clear at the moment is that their customers are checking service-based enquiries, i.e. they want to know what the protocols are for example if they are visiting a theme park, what hotels are putting in place, if they could move their holidays over to 2021 etc. James advised that the number of new holiday bookings were minimal. He also advised that Virgin Atlantic were having a huge review of their flying programme and what this will look like for the rest of this year and consolidation will definitely be made. James also mentioned that their marketing plans for the remainder of this year are being reviewed and although he can't offer a definite answer and it would be just speculation, he feels that co-op destination partner marketing will not be taking place for the remainder of this fiscal year as they will possibly be going ahead with brand marketing when they change their name and business model to Virgin Atlantic Holidays. We also discussed retail and again he could not comment on what plans were at this stage and that he would keep us posted when he knows anything concrete.
- **BA Holidays** - We spoke with Kate Bigger, Destination Manager East Coast USA and Florida. Kate advised that although BA as a group are having to make redundancies, BA Holidays is a relatively small section of the brand with just 295 staff employees and as such (and although some staff are furloughed) their MD will not be needing to make any redundancies from this brand. Kate did advise that as most staff are furloughed until the end of June at the moment most of the remaining staff that are working are multi-tasking. We discussed the marketing plans that BA have and we were advised that these will not be worked on until all staff are back from furlough and as and when US borders are open to the UK. Kate mentioned that they still have daily flights from London Heathrow to Washington Dulles, New York, Boston, Miami and Chicago but that these are mainly cargo flights. They are looking at reinstating other flights on the 1st August and this would include both Tampa and Orlando.
- **Dnata Travel Group** – We received the following update from Allison Cockburn, Senior Partnerships Manager (Gold Medal). Dear Valued Partner, I wanted to send you a note following the wider announcement we have made today regarding proposed changes to dnata Travel Group's UK organisation, and which you may have seen reported in the media. The proposals shared with our teams today, as well as our travel agent partners and other key stakeholders, follow a wide-ranging strategic review which was begun at the start of the year. The objective of this review was to set clear strategic direction for the future and identify opportunities for greater efficiency. Little did we know when we

started this review that the industry's most challenging crisis was set to test us like never before, and exacerbate the need for transformation. The proposals cover a wide range of initiatives, which will be discussed with our teams during a 45-day period once employee representatives have been nominated. We will keep you informed regarding developments, but in the meantime wish to reassure you that nothing is changing and we'll continue to work with you on recovering from the current disruption. I also wish to take the opportunity to confirm that one of the key proposals under discussion would see us merge our trade-only brands, Gold Medal and Travel 2, to operate under the single brand entity of Gold Medal. Since the two brands became sisters under the ownership of dnata in 2014 there have been a number of synergies and shared services representing both brands, and there has been a close-working relationship behind the scenes despite each retaining its own contact centre and brand identity. Doing so will bring with it a number of advantages and benefits including retaining the extensive product portfolio you recognise in both brands. As such we also propose to retain the Pure Luxury, Cruise Plus and Incredible Journeys sub-brands. However, there are also some unfortunate potential consequences which include the need to put a number of our staff across both B2B brands into consultation and the proposed closure of our Glasgow office. A further proposal under discussion will see us close our Shaftesbury Avenue and Floral Street offices in Central London, and transfer those teams to premises in Kingston (Travel Republic). Our teams have risen to the current challenges with their usual professionalism, and will remain our primary focus now and during the formal consultation that we launched today. We will be providing them every opportunity to speak up, be heard, and giving them whatever support is necessary. Either myself or the team managing our valued partnership will be in touch in due course and wish to thank for your ongoing support. We truly value the relationships we have built over the years and look forward to this continuing in the future.

Meetings/Training/Events

- **Visit Florida UK/Ireland Office** – We had another general catch up with Gill Standeven, Account Director Travel Trade UK & Ireland and Gill advised us that the Visit Florida strategy they are working on is being presented this week (w/c 29th June). The UK plans will then be rolled out to all of the UK & Ireland international offices in the next few weeks in time for their new fiscal year which starts on the 1st July. She advised that no marketing campaigns are running in the UK & Ireland as these markets are unable to travel to the US at present. Gill is currently chatting to Travel Weekly, ABTA and the Travel Trade Gazette about agent liaison and will advise us if there are any opportunities for us to participate in things such as joint webinars, training opportunities etc. and will keep us posted once anything has been arranged. We were advised that the annual World Travel Market dinner will not be going ahead this year but that if WTM does go ahead this year they will be looking to do something on a much smaller scale and will invite key Florida tour operator partners to attend.

TRADE LIAISON

- **UK Office Weekly Updates (Trade & Consumer)** – We continued to provide VSPC with the collection of trade and consumer feedback from both our trade partners as well

as collation of trade & consumer media articles (received from Rooster PR) on a weekly basis.

- **UK Office Weekly Newsletters** – We have continued to send bi-weekly email updates to our trade partners and trade press contacts promoting things such as the new arrival of Hemingway at the Clearwater Marine Aquarium, family friendly attractions amongst other news and to continue to offer our assistance to these partners as and when needed. The newsletters are being very well received with feedback coming through from a number of our partners.
- **Virgin Holidays** – We advised James Killick that many of the hotel contacts they normally liaise with in resort are still on furlough as James was asking about hotel rates beyond May 2021 so that they are able to offer holidays to their customers further into 2021/2022.
- **Amerikaspesialisten Nordmanns-Reiser** – We provided Line Støber Taraldsen, Online Marketing, Social Media & Web Manager with mp4 versions of some of our destination videos as well as the link to our YouTube channel with assistance from the team in VSPC.
- **Travelbiz Ireland** – Shane Cullen one of the reporters at Travelbiz, one of the travel trade press organisations in Ireland has been requesting further information regarding our Virtual Fam Series videos as well as imagery so that they can publish these on their e-newsletters as well as their social media channels sent to the Irish travel trade.
- **Selling Travel** – We received an opportunity from Steve Hartridge, Senior Editor at Selling Travel to be part of their ‘Travel Talks’ interviews that are promoted to the trade on a weekly basis. We liaised with Mackenzie and Rosemarie and arranged for the interview to be conducted, which went ahead at the end of June and which will be published in their next e-newsletter at the beginning of July. The idea of the Travel Talks is to discuss our area in general, how we are promoting ourselves during the Covid-19 pandemic and to discuss things such as The Brighter Days Ahead campaign and Virtual Fam Series videos.
- **Discover America Sweden** – We have been advised by Goran von Arbin, Director of Events, and Executive Secretary at Discover America in Sweden that the Malmo workshop that was due to take place on the 29th September has now been cancelled due to Covid-19. It will be decided if the workshop that is due to be taking place on the 5th October in Gothenburg will be going ahead in the coming weeks.
- **Visit USA Committee Ireland** – We provided Tony Lane, Executive Director with details and a roundup of what measures Visit St. Pete/Clearwater have adapted during the Covid-19 pandemic for a special Ezine that was distributed to their consumer, travel trade and media contacts on their database. Visit St. Pete/Clearwater was part of this special edition that was sent out at the end of June after submitting details for them to share.

ENQUIRIES:

Telephone/website enquiries for information and/or literature: 27

MARKET INTELLIGENCE

01st June 2020, source: TTG

Travel's 'quash quarantine' plea backed by more than 200 firms

Last week, a coalition of some 70 travel leaders, including the bosses of Abercrombie & Kent, Caribtours and Kuoni, wrote to home secretary Priti Patel urging her to rethink the country's 14-day self-isolation requirement for UK arrivals, which is due to come into force on 8 June. The letter, penned by Red Savannah chief executive George Morgan-Grenville, said the move would harm the travel sector's hopes of a swift recovery, with few willing to book for the summer with the prospect of having to quarantine upon return. Together, the signatories account for more than £5 billion sales across the UK's travel and hospitality sectors, and their campaign has now been backed by some 217 firms. "The current plans are unworkable, poorly thought-out, and already damaging sales in the travel industry," they said on Monday (1 June). Instead, the campaign is calling on government to pursue individual air bridges, bilateral agreements with countries with lower rates of coronavirus infection, to render quarantine ineffective. The idea was first raised in the Commons by Huw Merriman, chair of the government's transport committee, and backed by transport secretary Grant Shapps. Number 10 initially played down the suggestion but is since understood to have warmed to the idea according to national press reports. "This is not just a group of company bosses complaining, but employees from bottom to top calling for the quarantine plans to be quashed," said Morgan-Grenville. "The extent of their pain is deeply worrying for our economy and our country." The campaign is also calling for the Foreign Office to relax its current advice against all non-essential travel worldwide, which it says is putting people off booking holidays in the future. Anyone wishing to endorse the campaign should email getgoing@redsavannah.com

02nd June 2020, source: TTG

Ministers to debate quarantine and 'air bridge' proposals

Several national papers, including The Times (Scotland) and The Guardian, report the government is looking at air bridges – bilateral agreements with countries with lower rates of coronavirus infection – which would allow UK nationals returning to the country to forego 14 days' mandatory self-isolation. While the UK's quarantine measures are due to become effective in a matter of days, they will be reviewed on a three-week basis; this could potentially allow any series air bridge policy or arrangements to come into force by the end of June. The Foreign Office continues to advise against all non-essential travel worldwide, but both the FCO and the Home Office is facing significant pressure from the travel sector to review its coronavirus policies, particularly quarantine which has been branded "unworkable and poorly thought-out". More than 200 travel firms have backed a call to rethink the country's quarantine policy, which the sector says was "already damaging sales". Dnata Travel Europe chief John Bevan, meanwhile, has called on the FCO to review its effective travel ban as a matter of urgency, claiming it too is a barrier to future travel sales. The idea of air bridges was first raised in the House of Commons by Huw Merriman, chair of the government's transport committee, and backed by transport secretary Grant Shapps. Number 10 initially played down the suggestion but is since understood to have warmed to the idea – according to national press reports. Ahead of parliament resuming on Tuesday (2 June), several government sources quoted in the national media have suggested an air bridge policy could be in place in time for the mid to latter stages of the summer holiday season, pending the relaxation of the FCO's travel advice. It comes after health secretary Matt Hancock last week told ITV's This Morning he "absolutely would not rule out" people taking foreign holidays this summer, just a fortnight after he told the same show the prospect was unlikely.

Hancock said on Thursday (28 May) he was "a bit more optimistic about being able to get some foreign travel back up". Formal quarantine legislation is set to be laid in parliament on Tuesday (2 June). However, it is expected to be subject to stringent debate in light of the increased prospect of air bridge policy. Several European nations, notably Portugal and Spain, have said they would be open to discussing air bridges or "safe corridors" for travel in Europe. Spain has called on EU member states to agree common rules on travel during the coronavirus crisis within the Schengen area to ensure consistency.

04th June 2020, source Travel Weekly Industry warns of quarantine impact

Industry leaders' furious reaction to quarantine restrictions appeared to have the government rattled this week and they showed no signs of relaxing the pressure. More than 300 travel and hospitality leaders signed protest letters to home secretary Priti Patel slamming the 14-day self-isolation of arrivals as "unworkable", with many warning they expect to lay off up to 60% of staff if the quarantine measures go ahead. They urged the policy be scrapped in favour of 'air bridges' between the UK and countries with low rates of Covid-19 infection and called for the Foreign Office to amend its advice against all but essential travel. A survey of more than 120 of the signatories found more than one in four (28%) fear they may cease trading if quarantine plans proceed. Almost all said they expect summer bookings to disappear, half by 80% or more. George Morgan- Grenville, chief executive of tour operator Red Savannah, said: "The findings are catastrophic." Advantage Travel Partnership, Aito, the Scottish Passenger Agents' Association, the Business Travel Association and events and hospitality association the HBAA also wrote to Patel and foreign secretary Dominic Rabb describing the policy as "draconian [and] short-sighted". Dnata Travel Group chief executive John Bevan warned in a separate letter to Raab of "a very real possibility that travel businesses will not survive the summer". Bevan said indefinite advice against travel "undermines any hope demand can start to return". EasyJet chief executive Johan Lundgren warned many businesses would be "scarred" by the impact and said: "It's frustrating the government chose not to consult on the quarantine measures." Clive Jacobs, chairman of *Travel Weekly* owner Jacobs Media Group, warned of a "crippling effect", and Iata UK country manager Simon McNamara said: "If the quarantine is in place, this will just kill travel." Patel was due to present the quarantine regulations to Parliament on Wednesday amid growing opposition among MPs. Huw Merriman, Conservative chairman of Parliament's transport select committee, criticised the plan and said air bridges should be prioritised, while Graham Brady, chair of the 1922 Committee of Tory MPs, described quarantine as "senseless". However, a YouGov poll suggested 80% of the UK population support the plan to fine travellers who fail to self-isolate for 14 days.

04th June 2020, source Travel Weekly Quarantine 'to Ease from June 29

The government is poised to drop blanket quarantine restrictions from the end of June, with travel due to open up to Europe as the Foreign Office relaxes its indefinite advice against travel. But the Home Office won't retreat on imposing 14-day self-isolation requirements on most arrivals for three weeks from Monday. 'Air bridges' or 'travel corridors' are set to be introduced from the first quarantine review date on June 29, with destinations prioritised according to their Covid-19 'risk picture'. The Department for Transport (DfT) and aviation representatives have been working on proposals for almost a month, with the quarantine announcement on May 22 confirming the government is considering "agreements between countries removing the need for quarantine". An aviation industry source said: "We're working with the DfT and are very close to finalising common health standards. Then we can

open up based on three things: the other country is low-risk; there are measures in place to limit infection spread; and health measures in place at both ends of the journey.” The standards will follow EU Aviation Safety Agency guidelines already released and International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) standards issued on Monday. These recommend physical distancing “to the extent feasible”, face masks, passenger health declarations, health screening and contact tracing, as well as sanitation and disinfection measures. Dale Keller, chief executive of the Board of Airline Representatives in the UK, said: “The ICAO guidelines will form the backbone.” He added: “The pressure from the sector is clear, but we don’t expect any change between June 8 and June 29.” The industry source agreed: “The quarantine will go ahead on June 8. There are arguments within government, but they’re not about to change position. The industry position is that blanket quarantine should end on June 29. That would slot us in with the rest of Europe.” However, industry leaders want the restart confirmed ahead of that date. A source said: “Airlines need the government to flag it earlier. It needs to say ‘We’ll use the first review to loosen restrictions’ or there is a fear it will roll over for three weeks and airlines will prioritise other markets.” Opening travel corridors will be linked to updated Foreign Office advice, removing blanket advice against travel. The source insisted: “Air bridges can’t happen without the Foreign Office being happy. The key is the medical provisions being confirmed, and that is close.” A list of 45 countries that UK airlines would like prioritised, published this week, includes North Africa, North America and the Caribbean. However, travel’s restart will be confined to “neighbours” initially. A source suggested: “The US will have to wait.” Cruise is unlikely to come back before late autumn, with P&O Cruises this week extending its cancelled sailings from the end of July to mid-October.

04th June 2020, source TravelMole

Agents to lobby MPs over quarantine and blanket travel ban

Agents are being urged to lobby their MPs over the 'damaging' quarantine and existing blanket travel ban. Travel Counsellors has provided its business owners with a letter to send to their local MP requesting a withdrawal of mandatory 14-day quarantine periods on UK arrivals. Home Secretary Priti Patel confirmed yesterday that the Government will insist that almost everyone entering the UK from June 8 goes into self-isolation for a period of 14 days, with the risk of £1,000 fines and prosecution if they break the quarantine. But she said in the longer term the Government is looking to establish 'international travel corridors' to allow travel without quarantine from countries deemed to be safe. Travel Counsellors says the quarantine will be further damaging to the UK economy and travel industry and argued the establishment of international air bridges or 'travel corridors' was the most sensible and viable solution at this time. The letter supports the statements made by others across the travel industry, stating: "A mandatory quarantine on all inbound travellers, which will deter visitors from coming here, make UK travellers think twice about going abroad, and most likely incur reciprocal quarantine measures on British travellers to other countries, will have real consequences for the UK travel sector." The letter also advocates a relaxation of the FCO's ban on travel and calls for more focus and resources aimed towards establishing air bridges or travel corridors with destinations deemed low risk. Travel Counsellors CEO Steve Byrne said: "With an effective track and trace system now being put in place, together with confirmation of international air bridges or 'travel corridors', and enhanced health and safety requirements met by measures instated across the globe, we're supporting our people to make their voice heard by encouraging their local MPs to see these initiatives as the most sensible and practical solution at this time." The WTTC said the quarantine will worsen an already 'critical situation' and delay the much-needed recovery of the UK economy. It said its data shows the Covid-19 crisis has already put 1.2 million travel and tourism jobs at risk in the

UK, with substantial losses already. In the announcement yesterday, the Home Secretary said the quarantine would be reviewed after three weeks. But the Business Travel Association warned travel industry jobs could be lost if the Government waits until the end of June. CEO Clive Wratten said: "If we leave it until the end of June before getting the first travel corridor in place, be it with Italy, Spain or Portugal, many jobs across the travel industry are at risk of being lost forever. "Quarantine crushes the innovation and dynamism that the Home Secretary applauded today. At this desperately difficult time for our industry, she offered no hope to the millions employed across the travel industry and its supply chains. "All of the country specific criteria required for the implementation of a travel corridor must be published immediately. There must be transparency about why these travel corridors are being delayed." Ryanair described the plan as 'utterly ineffective', pointing out that people will be allowed to travel from the airport on public transport, potentially spreading the virus before reaching their accommodation. "This 14-day UK quarantine is ineffective, completely useless, and will have no effect on British passengers who will largely ignore it," said a Ryanair spokeswoman. VIVID Travel boss Kane Pirie welcomed the review of the quarantine three weeks after its launch, but said: "The Government's approach to this is unfathomable. We do not quarantine when we are free of Covid-19 and other countries are mid-crisis, yet we do quarantine once other countries are broadly clear, but we are infected. Where is the logic? This belated gesture of a quarantine is unnecessary and reckless."

05th June 2020, source TravelMole

Agents give 'air bridge' wish list to Home Secretary

Advantage Travel Partnership and the SPAA have identified a wish list of 10 countries they want the Government to prioritise when air bridges are put into place. In a letter to the Home Secretary and Foreign Secretary today, they said although they were disappointed the mandatory 14-day quarantine would start on Monday as planned, they were 'heartened' by the promise that air bridges would be considered in the future. "The establishment of air bridges sooner rather than later is critical to allow the industry to get back on its feet after a prolonged period of stalemate during lockdown," said the letter. "However, whilst we welcome air bridges they will only work if the FCO ban on travel is reviewed in conjunction with their creation. It is the ultimate chicken and egg situation, and without the FCO ban revoked (even if it is just to those destinations with air bridges as a phased approach) the industry will lack the appropriate tools to sell holidays with confidence and their customers will have no recourse to adequate insurance." Advantage said it has drawn up a list of key destination based on extensive consumer research survey with over 4,000 respondents, intelligence from industry partners, sales figures from 2019, and on potential routes ready to fly and tour operators ready with packages to sell.

The key destinations are as follows:

1. Spain, 2. Greece, 3. Turkey, 4. Italy, 5. Cyprus, 6. Portugal, 7. France, 8. Iceland, 9. Egypt, 10. Malta

Earlier this week Advantage, the SPAA, the Business Travel Association, AITO and the HBAA sent another letter to the Government urging them not to go ahead with the plans for a mandatory 14-quarantine for most UK arrivals, which comes into force on Monday. They said the plans were 'draconian, short sighted strategies' and would damage the travel and tourism industry and the wider UK economy. Meanwhile, Travel Counsellors has been urging its business owners to write to their MPS to lobby them to drop the quarantine and the blanket FCO ban. The Government says it will review the quarantine every three weeks and

confirmed it is already in talks with some destinations about air bridges or 'travel corridors'. Major airlines, including easyJet and Virgin Atlantic, reportedly had a telephone meeting with the Home Secretary Priti Patel yesterday to discuss the quarantine. British Airways' parent IAG was notably absent from the meeting and although it refused to give a reason, it is believed it was annoyed that it wasn't involved in earlier consultations. A source reportedly told the BBC the airline felt the meeting was 'a waste of time'.

05th June 2020, source Travel Daily Media

Virgin Atlantic to resume flights in North America and Asia in July

Virgin Atlantic will resume passenger flights in July, starting with five routes to North America and Asia. The carrier will resume services to Orlando and Hong Kong from London Heathrow on July 20. The next day, Virgin Atlantic will operate flights from Heathrow to each Shanghai, Los Angeles and New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport. More routes will resume over the next few weeks in August. According to Virgin Atlantic chief commercial officer Juha Jarvinen, the airline is "monitoring external conditions extremely closely, in particular the travel restrictions many countries have in place including the 14-day quarantine policy for travellers entering the United Kingdom." The carrier will implement additional safety measures, including enhanced cleaning efforts, distancing measures at check-in and boarding and personal health packs with facemasks, surface wipes and hand gel provided to travellers. "Our medical experts are working closely with all relevant U.K. and international health and aviation authorities to ensure we adhere to, and on many occasions exceed, the guidance they are offering, whilst continuously reviewing and updating the measures we have in place to keep our customers and teams safe," according to Virgin Atlantic chief customer officer Corneel Koster.

07th June 2020, source Travel Trade Outbound Scandinavia

WTM London in November

World Travel Market London is to go ahead as planned in November this year, organisers have confirmed. The 2020 event, at the ExCel centre in London, will take place over the course of three days from November 2-4. Organisers said they will be following the UK government's public health guidelines in order to keep visitors safe. The venue had been used as one of the UK's Nightingale Hospitals to support medical efforts relating to Covid-19 but has since been stood down as the number of new confirmed cases falls. WTM London's senior exhibition director Simon Press confirmed the event, which attracted more than 30,000 visitors last year, will go ahead. He said: "Exhibitions are a huge part of the global effort to drive business growth and economic recovery. As anyone who has ever attended WTM London knows, it's a fun, lively, well-regarded and highly efficient event that brings everyone together – an opportunity for the world to meet, get inspired, do business and generate wealth. "Now, more than ever before, WTM London will be so important to restarting the global travel and tourism industry, on which the livelihoods of so many people depend. "It's also essential to highlight that the safety and wellbeing of our guests remains our highest priority and we will continue to follow the advice of the UK Government and Public Health England. IPW still in Vegas; Las Vegas will now welcome IPW May 10-14 of 2021, and Chicago, which had been slated for 2021, has graciously agreed to serve as our host site in 2025. Malcolm Smith, General Manager, IPW said, "We greatly appreciate the flexibility of our upcoming host cities. Other scheduled locations for IPW (Orlando in 2022, San Antonio in 2023, Los Angeles in 2024) remain unchanged." "When we meet next May, we'll be convening in the newly constructed West Hall of the Las Vegas Convention Center following its major expansion. It's difficult to express how much U.S. Travel, together with premier sponsor Brand USA and our hosts, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority and

Travel Nevada, look forward to welcoming the global travel community next year. It will be a moment of rebuilding and reconnecting—and there will be much work to do coupled with much excitement when we're together again," added Smith. "This is incredibly welcome good news amid the serious challenges facing the travel industry, the country and the world," said U.S. Travel Association President and CEO Roger Dow. "Cancelling this year's IPW was a difficult though clearly necessary call, and our future host cities came together to achieve a win-win outcome for the future of the event." Dow continued: "As we look to recover from this health emergency and the resulting economic crisis, it is fitting that we will be able to hold IPW in Las Vegas, a city that epitomizes the economic power of travel and tourism. We are deeply grateful to Chicago, which had one of the most successful IPWs in recent memory as a first-time host in 2014, for their flexibility, generosity and collaborative spirit."

08th June 2020, source TravelMole

ABTA calls for roadmap to restart international travel

ABTA has joined the fight against the mandatory 14-day quarantine and is calling for a roadmap to restart international travel. CEO, Mark Tanzer, who was part of a roundtable hosted by the Home Secretary last week, called for a coordinated plan and for the Government to urgently investigate travel corridors. "We must restart international travel as soon as it is safe to do so, and businesses and customers would benefit from the Government outlining when this is likely to happen," he said. "There are many livelihoods at stake, and bookings will only start to pick-up in earnest when people and businesses have a better idea as to what the Government's plan is to open up the UK and access to international destinations. "This is going to take a coordinated approach, and ABTA will continue to do whatever it takes to assist with this process on behalf of travel agents and tour operators across the UK who are desperate for a clearer direction for travel. "Of course, safety must absolutely come first, which is why the Government also needs to set out clearly the relevant scientific advice and epidemiological factors informing decisions, including the quarantining policy before its review in three weeks." In a letter to the Home Secretary, Tanzer reiterated the serious impact quarantining restrictions will have on customer demand for leisure and business trips. He also highlighted the serious impact the measures will have on the UK economy. ABTA said the Government must indicate its criteria for transitioning away from current Foreign Office advice against non-essential travel and urgently investigate travel corridors. It also called for the publication of the scientific and epidemiological advice that underpin the quarantining policy and which will inform the review due at the end of June.

10th June 2020, source Travel Weekly

PM 'deeply engaged' in creating air bridges

Boris Johnson is reportedly backing efforts to create air bridges to revive the prospect of overseas summer holidays through deals with low risk European countries. Ministers and officials are working "at pace" on the plans which could enable holidaymakers to sidestep the UK's new 14-day quarantine from the end of June to travel to countries including Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Greece. The prime minister is said to be "deeply engaged on the issue and working on the options" after the government faced legal action by airlines and widespread travel industry protests against the two-week isolation, which came into effect on Monday, *The Telegraph* reported. The Quash Quarantine group of more than 500 travel and hospitality businesses revealed on Tuesday that it would suspend its threatened legal action to overturn quarantine after receiving private top level government assurance that air bridges would be introduced from June 29. A Government source was reported as saying: "It's always been the plan to introduce travel corridors and we are proceeding through that plan."

Confirmation of the aim to establish links to foreign holiday destinations could come as early as this week. But any travel corridors would have to coincide with a change in Foreign Office advice banning any non-essential travel. An industry source told the newspaper: "Their difficulty is how to change travel advice for some countries and not for others without causing a diplomatic row, and we're led to believe that FCO advice would have changed before now were it not for those localised considerations." The Department for Transport is also expected to publish guidance for "safe" post-coronavirus air travel including compulsory masks or face coverings, regular and widespread use of hand sanitiser, contactless travel and social distancing where possible. Applying the two-metre social distancing rule on flights has been ruled out because it would make flying uneconomic. Instead there will be strict rules on embarking and leaving aircraft to minimise contact, the use of facemasks or coverings throughout flights, toilet rotas and frequent use of hand gel by passengers and crew. "All passengers have to be treated as if they have [Covid-19], because small numbers will be carrying the virus without symptoms (about 1 in 400 in UK at end May 2020). This will require new levels of hygiene," said advice led by Ashley Woodcock, a professor of respiratory medicine.

11th June 2020, source Travolution

August 2020 searches rise but bookers seek reassurance, says icelolly.com

Searches on icelolly.com for holiday departures in August 2020 saw a big leap this week as the prospect of air bridges being forged to popular European destinations increased. The Prime Minister Boris Johnson was this week reported as taking personal control of plans to open up air travel as the UK brought in a two-week quarantine for most overseas arrivals. The weekly icelolly.com COVID-19 Pulse report saw August searches leap 145% week-on-week although it remained the seventh most popular departure month. Users of the holiday comparison website still appear to have conceded a summer holiday this year will not be possible with October and September the only 2020 months in the top five. June 2021 increased its share of searches as the most popular month although the proportion of searches for May and July 2021 both fell slightly. September 2020 was the biggest weekly faller going from most popular to fifth. Icelolly.com said both search and booking activity continues to grow, but bookings were still mostly focused in 2021. Chris Webber, head of travel deals, said: "Positively both searches and bookings continue to grow. "While search volumes for October 2020 rose and August 2020 searches saw the biggest search increase, bookings are still predominantly for summer 2021. "Those 2020-traveller-to-be, aside from the most confident, are predominantly still in the research mode and seemingly waiting for further signs that they'll be able to travel." Spain continued to dominate the top 10 destinations with only the increasing popular Algarve and Turkish destinations featuring in the top ten outside of the traditional holiday favourite for Brits. Outside of the top 10 both Dubai and the Dominican Republic saw week-on-week increases in search activity of 30%.

11th June 2020, source TravelMole

Sadness as Virgin staff told they've lost their jobs

Virgin Atlantic has notified the majority of the 3,150 staff in roles earmarked for redundancy that they have now lost their jobs. In early May, Virgin announced its plans to reshape and resize in order to 'position itself for the post-Covid-19 future'. This included reducing its staff by 3,150 across all functions. There then followed a consultation period, working closely with the unions BALPA and Unite. A Virgin spokesman told TravelMole the vast majority of those being made redundant have been told today (Thursday). Virgin said: "On May 5, Virgin Atlantic announced plans to reshape its business to ensure that it is fit for the future, in response to the severe impact of Covid-19. "Uncertainty around when customer demand will

resume, coupled with unprecedented market conditions brought on by the pandemic, has severely reduced revenues for airlines around the world, and for Virgin Atlantic. "Subsequently, it has been necessary for the airline to take decisive action to reduce costs, preserve cash and to protect as many jobs as possible. "As part of these measures, regrettably we need to reshape and resize our business in line with customer demand, which means a planned reduction of approximately 3,150 jobs across all functions." Unite officer for Virgin Atlantic Claire Simpson said: "This is a deeply sad time for our members at Virgin Atlantic, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact it has had on the airline. "Unite has sought to mitigate the number of staff who face losing their jobs and will continue to ensure that all affected workers are treated fairly. "The workers who will ultimately be made redundant will leave the business in August." Pilots' union BALPA said: "The consultations between BALPA and Virgin Atlantic over proposed job losses and changes to terms and conditions has been professional and constructive but has been overshadowed by the Government refusing to give an answer to the company's request for financial support. "Sadly, despite various mitigations that BALPA has negotiated there are still around 300 Virgin pilots who will potentially be compulsory redundant in September however nearly all of those will be part of a holding pool to return to Virgin as the airline recovers from the current recession over the next few years." The reshaping plans announced in May included renaming Virgin Holidays to Virgin Atlantic Holidays to 'focus on one powerful brand' and to simplify the Virgin fleet, flying only wide-body, twin-engine aircraft from Heathrow and Manchester to the most popular destinations. The plans also included a move away from Gatwick, although Virgin says it intends to retain its slot portfolio at Gatwick 'so it can return in line with customer demand'. At the time, Virgin Atlantic CEO Shai Weiss said: "We have weathered many storms since our first flight 36 years ago, but none has been as devastating as Covid-19 and the associated loss of life and livelihood for so many."

12th June 2020, source Travelbiz

Ryanair, BA and easyJet launch legal action against UK quarantine

Ryanair, BA and easyJet have launched legal action against the UK government's quarantine policy, asking for a judicial review to be heard as soon as possible. The airlines said earlier this week they would try to end the 14-day quarantine rule for international arrivals, which they say will deter travel and threaten more jobs just as the battered aviation industry was hoping for a recovery. Lawyers have said the government would have to show the scientific evidence that underpinned the need for a quarantine if judges allow a judicial review to go ahead. Britain's chief scientist said earlier in June that politicians decided the policy, adding quarantines worked best for restricting travel from countries with high infection rates. The quarantine came into force on Monday. In their statement, provided by BA's parent company IAG, the airlines said there was no scientific evidence for such a severe policy. They also dismissed the alternative of "air bridges", the name given to bilateral deals between countries with low infection rates, which the government has presented as a potential alternative to the quarantine. "The airlines have not yet seen any evidence on how and when proposed 'air bridges' between the UK and other countries will be implemented," they said.

15th June 2020, source TravelMole

Air bridges could be announced in 10 days

The aviation industry is becoming increasingly hopeful that the Government will make an announcement on travel corridors before the quarantine is due to be reviewed on June 29. The Telegraph has cited sources saying the Department of Transport had 'intimated' to airlines that air bridges could be announced on June 25 or 26, allowing travel from select destinations without the mandatory 14-day quarantine. This would give airlines and travel

companies a bit more time to restart their operations and salvage some business for the peak months of July and August. A House of Commons report on the impact of the coronavirus crisis on the aviation industry, published on Saturday, has called for the UK quarantine to be abandoned. The report, by the cross-party Transport Select Committee, says the quarantine will 'damage the recovery of the sector and the wider economy'. It said: "We support a more targeted and nuanced border control policy that would allow people travelling from countries where the infection rate of Covid-19 is relatively low to enter the UK on a less restrictive basis." MPs also called for the UK Government to publish the scientific evidence that is backing the quarantine, which is yet to be seen. Ryanair said it welcomed the report's call to end the damaging measure and added: "Thousands of UK families are ignoring this useless quarantine and booking their well-deserved family holidays in July and August." Meanwhile the pilot's union BALPA said it was pleased the Transport Select Committee report highlights the lack of evidence for the 'botched' quarantine policy. General secretary Brian Strutton said unless it was reversed very soon, it will be 'hugely damaging' for the long-term health of the industry. Ryanair, British Airways and EasyJet have begun legal action against the Government over the quarantine. The quarantine came into force on June 8 and, according to reports, there have not yet been any fines issued. Meanwhile France opened up its borders today, no longer requiring visitors from the UK and other European countries to demonstrate their travel to the country is essential. UK visitors are still being asked to quarantine for 14 days on arriving in France but this will not be policed. Spain is to allow free travel for visitors from the UK and EU countries from June 21, although its border with Portugal will remain shut until July 1 on request of the Portuguese Government. Spain is also allowing some German holidaymakers to visit its Balearic islands from today as part of a pilot scheme.

16th June 2020, source Travel Daily Media JetBlue for London

Talking in a webinar sponsored by the World Aviation Festival last week Joanna Geraghty, COO and President of JetBlue, was very positive regarding a London start-up in 2021 writes Malcolm Ginsberg of Business Travel News, the London based weekly. www.btnews.co.uk "Our plans have definitely been delayed somewhat, but we're still looking at a launch next year. We're very excited about that," she said. What she did not say was which London airport the Airbus A321s would use. With many airlines not likely to require as many slots next year they could fall foul of the 'use them or lose them' rules with Heathrow likely throw up positives for new users. In the past the airline has confirmed a relationship with Norwegian which would rule out Gatwick with that airline's services well established to US destinations. That leaves Luton and Stansted as further possibilities with an easyJet or Ryanair linkup. Whilst many have said that narrow-bodied aircraft do not work on seven plus sectors, which would be the norm, Geraghty was confident that JetBlue's product will work. "I think that the narrow-body might actually give customers a bit more comfort. There's less people actually on board the aircraft. I'm confident that the narrow-body experience will be almost like a private jet experience ... it's a much more private experience than you would get on a wide-body."

17th June 2020, source Travel Weekly Poll finds favourite post-lockdown destinations

Spain, Italy and Greece top the list of foreign holiday getaways as Covid-19 lockdown measures begin to ease. A survey of more than 3,000 people found that almost half (47%) saying they would head to the continent as soon as possible. Top choices were Spain (9%), Italy (8.3%), Greece (5.3%) and France (3.3%). North America continues to be the favourite

long-haul choice, with 11% opting for the US or Canada as their next trip. However, UK domestic holidays came out top of the poll of intended destinations, taking almost 17% of the votes – 11.3% for breaks in England. Other top performing regions were Asia (8%) and the Caribbean (6%). Three per cent of those polled said they would consider ‘anywhere’ as a possible holiday destination, such was their desire to get away. The results of the study by new holiday search engine inspiremyholiday.com come as the government is expected to confirm travel corridors to low risk countries to enable travellers to avoid new UK quarantine restrictions. Company founder and director Oliver Lomas said: “It’s probably no surprise that people have spent the lockdown period dreaming of making their escape and planning where they want to go next.”

18th June 2020, source TravelMole

Travel Counsellors reports upswing in June bookings

Travel Counsellors is reporting a week-on-week increase in sales, with bookings made in the first two weeks of June surpassing the total made in the month of April. It said 60% of its business owners converted new enquiries to bookings in the last seven days, with half of enquiries for UK breaks. The figures come as Travel Counsellors latest customer survey revealed over 50% of customers feel optimistic about booking a UK or international trip departing later this year or next, with 30% of those with an international trip booked later this year still hopeful they will travel. The survey of nearly 400 respondents further highlighted customer concerns for travel, with 70% saying that they're seeking clarification on quarantine restrictions in both the UK and their outbound destination, as well as further information on the health and safety measures being implemented by airports, airlines and accommodation providers in resort. Around 60% of Travel Counsellor customers also said they would like to hear more details on flexible options when making a booking for later this year. Travel Counsellors UK MD and CCO, Kirsten Hughes said: "We're seeing positive signs that as lockdown eases in destinations across the globe, customers are considering their options for travel this year and next, with many telling their Travel Counsellor they're craving something to look forward to and the opportunity to see extended family and friends again on UK breaks and further afield. "It's clear that customers still have concerns over the current quarantine restrictions in the UK and in other countries, and as trusted travel advisers we're supporting our business owners to show care to their customers and a highly personalised service with the latest advice and guidance on travel restrictions, keeping traveller health, safety and wellbeing at the heart of everything we do."

18th June 2020, source Travel Weekly

Travel 2 and Gold Medal set to merge as dnata launches consultation

Dnata Travel Group is to begin a formal consultation with staff about a significant restructure of the business, including proposals to reduce headcount, merge Travel 2 and Gold Medal and close its Glasgow office. The restructure to “right-size the organisation for the future and maximise opportunities to reduce complexities and duplications” would see the Gold Medal and Travel 2 functions merged under the single brand entity of Gold Medal, with the sub-brands Pure Luxury, Cruise Plus and Incredible Journeys retained. The merger, if accepted following a 45-day consultation process, will see the centralisation of all operational, marketing and management functions in dnata’s Leyland office, along with the majority of the sales team. The move would result in the closure of the Glasgow office, although the company said a number of homeworking roles would be created in Glasgow as a result of the changes. Dnata said the proposals were the result of a wide-ranging strategic review started at the turn of the year and accelerated by the Covid-19 crisis. They cover both the B2B and B2C brands within the group. All dnata Travel Group staff were briefed on the proposals by

video conference on Thursday afternoon. Suppliers, travel agent partners and consortia members of dnata Travel Group's B2B brands, Gold Medal and Travel 2, and The Global Travel Group, have been notified of the proposed changes today, the company said. Chief executive John Bevan, said: "The need for us to improve the efficiency of our organisation, create and build on synergies, simplify processes and reduce duplications has been evident to us for some time, and was the subject of a review we started late last year. "However, we now find ourselves faced with an unprecedented set of circumstances that have forced us to accelerate the implementation of that review's conclusions, and actually go even further. It is now critical we right-size our organisation and make ourselves stronger and more focused in the delivery of exceptional travel products and services to consumers and trade partners alike as our industry rebuilds." Commenting on the proposals regarding the B2B brands, managing director Lisa McAuley said: "We believe that the proposed consolidation of Travel2 with Gold Medal, and Simply Luxury to Pure Luxury, and the retention of the Cruise Plus and Incredible Journeys sub-brands, will create a number of exciting opportunities for us and our travel agent partners, while reducing costs and complexity. It will mean we retain our market-leading position, while enabling us to be more agile and focused on what we do best." She added: "The proposal will be given due consideration over the coming weeks and I want to reassure our travel agent and industry partners that our commitment to the trade will remain a cornerstone of the brands, and the unrivalled product portfolio and award-winning service for which we are renowned will stay at the forefront of our future plans. "Our team has proactively reached out to all our partners today and will continue to keep them updated. In the meantime, things stay as they are and we will continue to work with them as we navigate the current disruption and eventual recovery." Dnata said there had been "a number of synergies and shared services representing both brands since the two became sisters under the ownership of dnata in 2014", despite each retaining its own contact centre and brand identity. McAuley continued: "The Gold Medal and Travel 2 teams in Leyland and Glasgow have always had a strong bond so this is a difficult day for them. Our priority at this point is supporting those team members who are directly affected by the implications of this proposal. Our people are our greatest assets and it is of the utmost importance to me that we are doing everything possible to assist them through the consultation process, and that it is conducted in a professional and sensitive manner." Bevan added: "This has been an incredibly difficult time for our people and they've risen to the challenge magnificently. They remain our primary focus and during the formal consultation that we launched today, we will be listening hard to their feedback to these proposals, providing them every opportunity we can to speak up, and giving them whatever support is necessary. "We will continue to proactively engage with our valued agent partners, suppliers and consortia members to inform them of our plans, and how we expect to work with them in the future. I want to thank all those parties in advance for their support during this process, as well as their continued professionalism as we work to fulfil our obligations to customers whose travel plans have been disrupted by the pandemic, or who are keen to discuss future holidays with us."

23rd June 2020, source Travel Daily Media

Where do Brits want to go on holiday post-lockdown

Mallorca, Spain is the most popular holiday destination for Brits post-lockdown period. This was revealed by a recent research by Loveholidays. They used anonymous data to analyse more than 850,000 holiday bookings made in 2019. This was to figure out where Brits are most likely to travel next. The research has further revealed that Mallorca is the destination where Brits of any size want to go (solo, in pairs and in groups). The map also reveals which Brit is most likely to go where on holiday and which generation is most likely to go where on holiday. As many as 10% of group travellers went to Mallorca in 2019 with five other

Spanish island and mainland destinations all appearing in the top 10. It is equally popular with solo travellers and people travelling in pairs too, with 6.4% of solo travellers going there and 6.9% of couples. Liverpoolians are more likely than Brits from any other hometown to travel to Spain, Portugal and France. People from Dundee in Scotland prefer Germany. People from Luton, Sutton and Croydon would head to Scandinavia. It has also been revealed that baby boomers will most likely flock to Spain and Portugal. While millennials favours staycations in the UK and exploring the Nordics. Gen Z will head to France, Germany and Poland.

23rd June 2020, source Travel Weekly

Tui to begin reopening shops from July 6

Tui will begin a “staggered re-opening” of its retail network on July 6. About 80 shops will open initially across all parts of the UK, with more than 750 retail staff starting to work from home at the same time. About 50% of the estate will be open by the end of July, according to commercial and business development director Richard Sofer, who said that larger branches would be brought back first. Belinda Vazquez, retail director, said: “We’re really excited to be getting ready to re-open some of our retail stores so that we can support as many of our customers as possible. From July 6, we will gradually begin a staggered reopening of a selection of more than 80 stores with a fairly even split across the regions. We’ll also have more than 750 retail staff working from home available on the phone.” Speaking on a Travel Weekly Webcast, Sofer added: “By about the end of July, we’ll have about 50% of all of the stores back open. So it will be on a phased basis. “I think we’ve got about another thousand people starting work very soon. And that will take us to about 2,000 people overall by maybe about mid-July.” He said that would represent about 50% of the retail workforce. Sofer added: “We’re going to be opening up the very biggest stores first because clearly, they’re the stores that are the easiest to have social distancing for customers. We’ve got a complete range of stores from very small to very large so we need to do that on quite a considered and phased basis but it’s really important for those customers that being in a retail store is important to.” Asked if the plan was to re-open all its branches at some point, or whether Tui might leave some permanently closed, Sofer replied: “As at any point, we’re constantly reviewing the locations of our stores and where that makes sense, so those plans and those reviews are ongoing, but very much the focus is about a phased basis of reopening those stores to serve our customers.” He added: “To be fair, we have to review in a post-crisis, post-virus world. So the plan very much is to open them on a phased basis. We need to review that on an ongoing basis, how that phasing of the re-opening goes.” Vazquez revealed new health & safety measures would be put in place in the branches that are due to re-open on July 6. “As always, we’re putting the health and safety of our customers and our people first, which means things may look a little different when people head back into our stores. We’ll have Perspex screens at desks, social distancing markers on the floor and there’ll be extra cleaning and disinfecting. We’ll continue to follow government advice and we plan to reopen more of our stores throughout July and August as the demand for holidays returns.”

23rd June 2020, source TravelMole

Virgin pushes back relaunch of Shanghai and Orlando routes

Virgin Atlantic has pushed back the planned restart of its Heathrow to Orlando and Shanghai routes from July to the following month. The airline revealed the changes as it announced it will start more routes in August. Orlando had been earmarked as one of the first two routes scheduled for July 20, when Virgin announced earlier this month it was to resume services in July. The route from Heathrow is now planned to recommence at the end of August, while Orlando services from Glasgow and Belfast will not operate until next year. Shanghai, which

had been due to restart on July 21 will now resume on August 4. Virgin said: "Following travel restrictions in many destinations, coupled with uncertainty around when customer demand will return, Virgin Atlantic is continually reviewing its flying programme. "As a result, we have taken the decision to delay restarting some of our services. Our Heathrow to Shanghai service will now restart on August 4 and our Heathrow to Orlando service will resume on August 24. "For customers impacted by these changes, there's no need to contact us right now, we'll be in touch with more information within the next 10 days on what these changes mean and to discuss options, including rebooking on to a different service. Any customers who made their bookings through a third party or travel agent, should contact them to discuss options. "Seasonal services from Glasgow and Belfast to Orlando will resume for selected dates in summer 2021. We will continue to monitor our network on an ongoing basis and expect more flights from London Heathrow and Manchester to resume in September and October 2020." The other July relaunch routes will go ahead as planned. Hong Kong will recommence on July 20, New York JFK and Los Angeles will follow the day after. Virgin has now announced 17 other relaunch dates for Heathrow services, in addition to the new schedules for Shanghai and Orlando. Barbados will start on August 1, followed by Shanghai and San Francisco on August 4 and Tel Aviv on August 9. Later in the month, Miami, Lagos and Atlanta will launch. Virgin is planning to restart its Orlando service from Manchester and Heathrow on August 24, subject to CDC approval. Washington, Seattle, Las Vegas, Mumbai, Delhi and Johannesburg will restart in September, Boston, Montego Bay, Antigua, Grenada and Tobago will start in October, as will the airline's Manchester-Barbados service. To comply with health and safety, Virgin will provide a personal health pack containing medical-grade face masks as a requirement to be worn onboard, surface wipes and hand gel. A simplified hot food service in Economy and Premium Economy will be served, while, in Upper Class, customers will receive a choice of hot meals, desserts, including cheese and biscuits, which will be delivered to seats on a tray. A 'temporary limited alcohol offering' will be available in all cabins. Chief commercial officer Juha Jarvinen said: "As countries around the world begin to relax travel restrictions, we look forward to welcoming our customers back onboard and flying them safely to many destinations across our network. "We are monitoring external conditions extremely closely, in particular the travel restrictions many countries have in place including the 14-day quarantine policy for travellers entering the UK. "We know that as the Covid-19 crisis subsides, air travel will be a vital enabler of the UK's economic recovery. "Therefore, we are calling for UK Government to continually review its quarantine measures and instead look at a multi-layered approach of carefully targeted public health and screening measures, including air bridges, which will support a successful and safe restart of international air travel for passengers and businesses.

24th June 2020, source Travel Weekly

Many long-haul destinations to remain out of bounds

Much of the world beyond Europe will remain out of bounds to UK travellers until Covid-19 testing is introduced at airports, with travel restrictions set to remain in place. Prime minister Boris Johnson told MPs on Tuesday: "Every serious country that has this disease under control has brought in quarantine for people coming into their country. We don't want to see our country re-infected by travellers." Industry sources expect restrictions to remain into next year despite travel companies' demands to scrap quarantine. An aviation source said: "We're trying to get the government to remove the blanket quarantine and replace it with a risk-based approach and a system of checks. Why can't we have long-haul travel to places with lower infection rates than here? Hopefully, we'll see some long-haul at the six-week review [of quarantine]." But travel to the US will remain unlikely "given the infection rates in the country", said the source, and "there will definitely be quarantine restrictions to countries in a

very different place to us". Restrictions are likely to remain for countries not only with higher infection rates than Britain, but also those with significantly lower rates, such as New Zealand, which will retain their own quarantine measures. The source said: "The government will have to impose restrictions to a large part of the world, but could do testing at airports." An airline source said: "We know there is no chance of certain destinations opening. "If you rely on long-haul, it will be extremely difficult. "Testing could be useful, but it would need to be a robust system so people couldn't cheat. "Testing everyone on arrival is not feasible. The volume of travel to Britain means you could not do it [and] it's expensive." Airport ground-handler Swissport and management services firm Collinson plan a trial of Covid-19 tests on arriving passengers at a UK airport next month. The results should be available within seven to 24 hours, removing the need for 14-day quarantine for those testing negative.

25th June 2020, source Travel Weekly

The Travel Network Group to acquire Global Travel Group

The Travel Network Group is set to acquire rival travel agency consortium Global Travel Group from dnata Travel group. Global will remain as a separate proposition within the Travel Network Group, alongside its other brands Travel Trust Association (TTA), Worldchoice and Independent Travel Experts (ITE). More than 200 Global members will become part of TTNG in addition to the existing network of more than 1,000 members including retail and homeworking travel agencies. The deal, expected to be finalised in the coming weeks, comes after dnata announced a company-wide review that would see Global "right-size" its business. Gary Lewis, chief executive of The Travel Network Group said: "We are delighted to be welcoming the Global members into our Group. Our longstanding partnership with dnata and Gold Medal is one of the key reasons why we have put together this proposition. One of our core strategies as a Group is to have scale in the market and be relevant, to ensure we can inspire, grow and protect our individual travel members.' John Bevan, chief executive of dnata Travel Group, added: "As part of the proposed organisational changes that we've started to consult with our team on, it seemed appropriate that we gave strategic direction for the Global Travel Group to be supported by owners whose focus is solely around their membership proposition. "We're confident that the many friends we have within Global will continue to thrive with The Travel Network Group and we wish them the very best wishes for the future." Global members were sent an email at 10am this morning advising they needed to be present for an urgent call at 10.45am, and told of the deal on a Zoom video call. In a letter to existing members, TTNG said adding scale was one of its "core strategies". The letter added: "The impact of having an additional 200+ existing travel businesses join will help us drive the clear vision and purpose we have as an organisation, to be relevant for each and every one of you as individual members."

25th June 2020, source Selling Travel

Virgin Atlantic to restart flights to 17 more destinations

Virgin Atlantic plans to restart flights to 17 additional destinations from August 2020, including Barbados, San Francisco, Shanghai, Tel Aviv, Miami, Orlando and Atlanta. The carrier had previously announced that it would restart flights from Heathrow to Hong Kong on July 20 and to New York JFK and Los Angeles on July 21. Flights to Barbados will resume on August 1, to San Francisco and Shanghai on August 4 and to Tel Aviv on August 9. Miami services will restart on August 18, Lagos on August 23, Orlando on August 24 - when flights from Manchester to Orlando should also resume (although these flights are subject to approval by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - and Atlanta on August 25. September is earmarked for the resumption of services to Washington

DC, Seattle, Las Vegas, Mumbai, Delhi and Johannesburg, and October the restart of flights to Boston, Montego Bay (Jamaica), Antigua, Grenada and Tobago Manchester to Barbados services are also expected to start in October. However, the airline said the above schedule depends on the travel restrictions many countries have in place including the current 14-day quarantine policy for travellers entering the UK. Juha Jarvinen, Chief Commercial Officer, Virgin Atlantic commented: "As countries around the world begin to relax travel restrictions, we look forward to welcoming our customers back onboard and flying them safely to many destinations across our network." He again called on the UK Government to "review its quarantine measures and instead look at a multi-layered approach of carefully targeted public health and screening measures, including air bridges, which will support a successful and safe restart of international air travel for passengers and businesses". Jarvinen said the carrier expected more flights from Heathrow and Manchester to resume in September and October 2020. All flights will operate temporarily from Terminal Two until consumer demand necessitates the re-opening of Terminal Three. Safety measures include enhanced cleaning practices at check in, boarding gates and onboard and safe distancing at check-in and boarding. Virgin will also provide passengers with a personal Health Pack, which will contain medical grade face masks which must be worn onboard, surface wipes and hand gel.

26th June 2020. Source Travolution

Icelolly.com prepares for summer bookings rush as research reveals pent up demand

Icelolly.com is anticipating a release of pent up demand when the expected lifting of the UK quarantine on arrivals is confirmed with days. Air bridges with countries deemed safe to travel between are expected to be announced imminently prompting a change in government advice not to travel overseas. This week the holiday deals search site conducted research with 3,200 of its customers indicating high levels of desire to go on holiday in the next year. The vast majority (90.83%) said they intend to go on holiday, while of those that said they do three quarters cited coronavirus as the reason why not. However, three quarters of those who answered said the pandemic had changed their holiday plans, over half say they would prefer to avoid crowded places like resorts and theme parks. Just over a fifth (22.67%) said they would rather avoid airports, while 13.37% said they would rather drive and 8.29% would prefer not to stay in hotels. Asked about the UK's two-week quarantine imposed on June 8, 51.67% said they agreed with it with 37.81% disagreed, indicating significant continued support for the government's stance. In a positive sign for travel firms 70% of respondents said they would book once the quarantine is lifted and destinations are deemed safe to travel to. The research backs up icelolly.com's weekly Pulse customer search and booking data barometer which last week showed a further significant shift to demand for this August. The month is now the most popular among icelolly.com users, followed by July 2020 and September 2020, suggesting increasing optimism that this year's summer holiday will happen. The research found a slightly different picture with winter 2020/21 the period most people said they would book when quarantine is lifted (32.25%) followed by summer 2021 (29.1%). Summer 2020 came next on 23.81%, Easter 2021 (12.12%) and winter 2021/22 (2.72%). Just over two third of the respondents to the research said they would book a short-haul European holiday, with long-haul, UK breaks and city breaks the next most popular. A further 78.32% said they would consider a UK break in the next 12 months, with cottage breaks coming out as the most popular for just under half of respondents (42.79%). Around three quarters of respondents had cruised before and three quarters of them said they would do so again. Just over half (56.32%) of all respondents said they would not consider a cruise. Richard Singer, icelolly.com chief executive said: "It is clear from the results that there is caution but with nearly 60% of respondents having the intention to travel in 2020 there is pent up demand. "Surprisingly the introduction of a quarantine is well supported, however

90% intent to travel within the next 12 months with Spain leading as the country of choice. “The UK also appears to be a highly sought-after holiday type with a whopping 75% intending to travel domestically in the next 12 months. “And despite the negative headlines around cruise during the pandemic it neither seems to have put off regular cruisers and there is also a strong appetite for new to cruise. “What is quite clear is that when quarantine lifts and FCO advice is changed we’ll see a significant surge in bookings, even for this Summer.”

29th June 2020, source TravelMole

Travel companies report 'busiest weekend since lockdown'

Travel companies saw a surge in enquiries over the weekend, following the Government's announcement it is to replace the travel quarantine rules with a traffic light system for overseas destinations. TravelSupermarket said this was the 'busiest weekend since lockdown', while Eurotunnel said more customers used its online booking system this weekend than 'ever before'. TUI has reported a 50% increase in bookings this week, with Spain and Greece looking the most popular this summer. Westoe Travel owner Graeme Brett said: "Enquiries are up but everyone is waiting to see which countries have the green light. I have seen reports that bookings are up but that must be for direct bookings. "We have told our customers that the advice is changing constantly and by booking with an independent travel agent who is a member of ABTA, they will get the latest travel advice as well as being informed of any changes in the advice after they have booked. "If they book online they will not get that information." Homeworker Martin Sandland-Owens, who runs Martin's Holiday Village, said: "This weekend has been one of the busiest I've had since peaks, with bookings for August and September to Ibiza and Spain, and a number of booking for 2021. "The interest is certainly peaking but some people are waiting for announcements on destinations open and quarantine being lifted. "I feel once people see pictures of flights and accommodation and what a holiday now looks like, the demand will hopefully increase further. "I have been advising that holidays are subject to confirmation of air bridges, that they may be subject to change, due to consolidation of flights and accommodation and that there is a risk of cancellation. I am only using operators that are supporting clients with options for change or refunds and are completing these in a timely manner. "We have discussed the traffic light system and what it could look like, but all this is subject to confirmation from the Government this week." Price comparison site TravelSupermarket commentator Emma Coulthurst said: "This weekend has been the busiest for TravelSupermarket since lockdown. "With the confirmation this weekend of the quashing of the blanket ban for UK 14 day quarantine being replaced by a traffic light system to enable us to return and not have to quarantine for some popular European destinations, we've seen 100% more price comparison searches for holidays and 50% more click outs and bookings this weekend compared with last. "These are the first real green shoots of recovery and the bookings offer glimmers of holiday hope for the outbound travel industry. "However, these shoots are obviously coming much later than they normally would for summer outbound travel. The hope is that these bookings will enable the industry to salvage something of the summer and start reinvigorating. "It was later in the year and next year when people were searching for holidays most of lockdown. But people are now searching most for overseas package holidays for this summer. Bookings are creeping up.” Eurotunnel has urged people wanting to travel this summer to 'book sooner rather than later' after reporting a rise in sales. John Keefe, director of public affairs at Eurotunnel said: "The recent Government announcement is great news for holidaymakers, bookings have surged since Friday; in fact we have had more customers accessing our online booking system this weekend than ever before. "We urge anyone who is planning to travel this summer to book sooner rather than

later." Geoffrey Kent, founder of Abercrombie & Kent, said: "We're anticipating a spike in demand when air bridges are implemented, for our European villas and other holidays closer to home on the continent. This is exactly what the travel industry needs and of course, will help the mood of the nation."

30th June 2020, source TravelMole

Agents refuse to book holidays for July and August

Independent travel agents are turning away bookings for this summer due to the ongoing uncertainty around travel restrictions. They fear they'll be forced to issue thousands more refunds - essentially working for free - if the holidays are subsequently cancelled. Many also fear that even if the holidays go ahead, customers will be disappointed to find they're not what they were expecting. Deben Travel MD Lee Hunt said: "There are far too many uncertainties at the moment. You wouldn't catch me going on holiday at the moment and I'm desperate to go away. "Customers are asking us questions that we quite simply don't have the answers to or, indeed, give guarantees or assurances. "If someone wants to book, and they are asking me questions that I can't give a knowledgeable and truthful answer to, then that doesn't sit right with us a business. It's going to lead to complaints, bad publicity and yet more refund requirements." Reputation vs money "No-one more than me wants to book last-minute holidays and make money. We desperately need the money and I want to see bookings coming in. But at the same time, we can't book people's holidays and not know what is going on. "We are in a small town. Everyone talks. I think that people would look on us more favourably if we do the right thing. "Questions people are asking include: 'Will all the facilities be open?' 'Will the spa be open?' 'Can I go on excursions?' 'Who pays if something goes wrong?' 'What if our local area goes on lockdown - will my holiday be cancelled and will I get my money back? "We need to have our own little traffic light system and at the moment it's firmly on red." Lee said he won't even make a booking if the client understands all the issues and is prepared to take the risk. "We are not comfortable about taking people's money and not knowing what they are getting. If they want to go online and risk it they are more than welcome to book elsewhere. "We started at the beginning of the Covid crisis with getting travellers back home - that was a nightmare. Then we've had three months of refunds that we are struggling to get money for. "We don't need any more aggravation. Once we explain to customers, they are fine." Greig Ewins of West Lothian said it was a sensible decision. "Who in their right mind trusts this government to get this right when they announce [air bridges] on Wednesday. "I would worry I sell a holiday that the customers can't travel due to restrictions to there not being lifted. "I have a couple of enquiries for late deals but I've told them hang on until Wednesday when they make the announcement." Westoe Travel director Graeme Brett said: "We have eight bookings 'on hold' waiting for the travel corridors advice and the FCO non-essential travel ban to be lifted". Travel giants such as TUI have reported a surge in interest in overseas holidays since Friday evening when the government revealed it would announce quarantine-free travel to certain countries later this week. The list of quarantine-exempt destinations is expected to include holiday favourites Spain, Greece, Italy and France, along with possibly Turkey and Croatia and a few other destinations with a low number of Covid-19 cases. But Karl Douglas of independent travel agent Inspiring Journeys in Beverley said: "We are not accepting July/August bookings unless there are extenuating circumstances, e.g. if they have a property or family abroad. "It's case-by-case, but we are taking details for when the advice and quarantine changes. With the guarantees we have to give, I need to be able to look our customers in the eye at booking and afterwards." Gillian Luxon of D&G Travel in Marlow said there are 'too many mixed messages out there on travel and in the news'. She said the local lockdown in Leicester, with possibly more lockdowns to follow, made booking

anything far too risky. Fear of abuse Many agents are afraid that accepting new bookings now could lead to a backlash from customers. One said that she couldn't face taking any more abuse from clients if their holidays were cancelled and they couldn't get refunds quick enough. She warned agents could also find themselves dealing with complaints from clients after their holidays if they weren't what they'd expected. "I don't think they realise they are exchanging one lockdown for another," she said. However, one agent said it was hard to turn new business down. "As a small business we are desperate for bookings and will probably take them on and hope for the best."