



# FIRST STEPS

**SAFETY COMES  
FIRST IN BUSINESS  
TRAVEL'S RECOVERY**

## MODEL BEHAVIOUR

The industry response to the BTA's proposed 'baseline standards' for TMCs

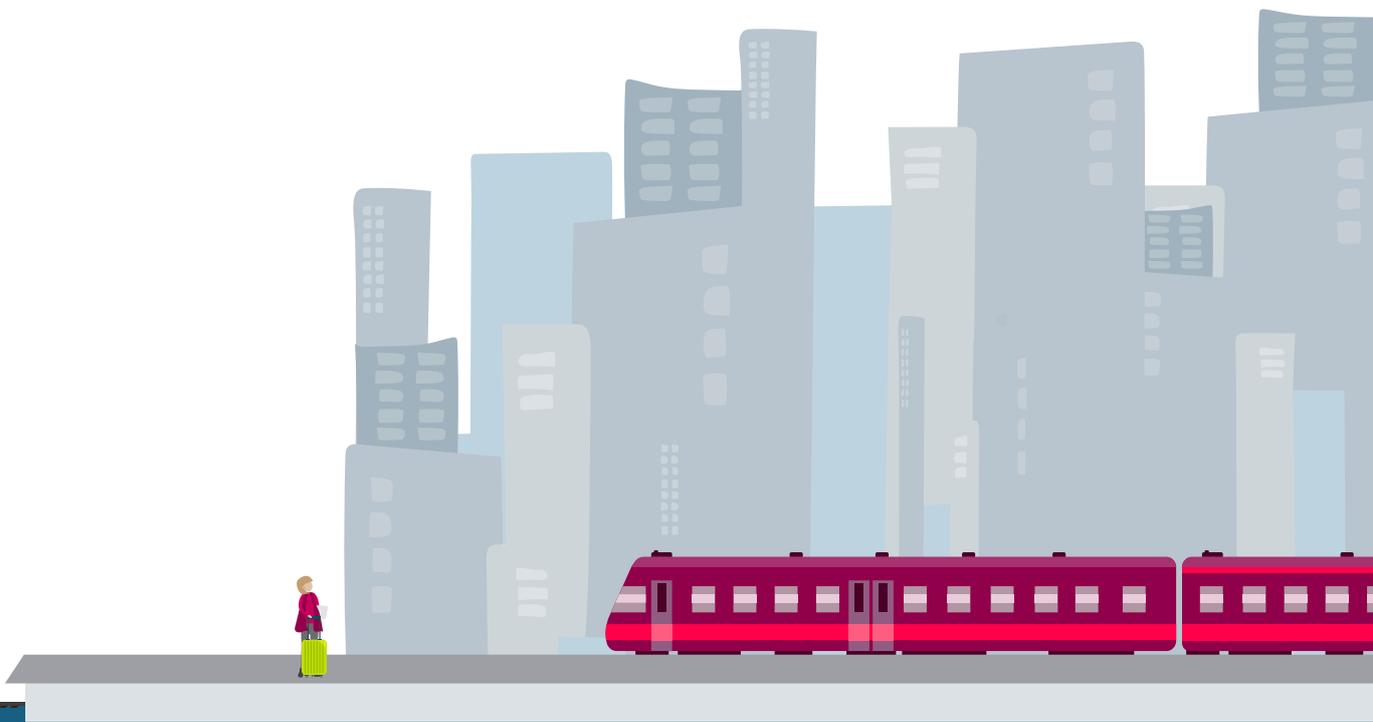
## TIME TO SHINE

Can rail travel across the UK and Europe live up to its post-pandemic potential?

## ALL TOGETHER NOW

Industry progress on diversity, equality and inclusion, but is it enough?

# Are you prepared for a return to travel?



As the prospect of connecting again becomes a reality, are you prepared with the solutions for safe and effective business connections? No matter where you are and when you need us; from face to face meetings and virtual events to policy, safety and wellbeing expertise, we've got your back.

Our team are here to help you and your people prepare for a safe return to travel.

 0330 390 0340

 [travevents@capita.co.uk](mailto:travevents@capita.co.uk)

 [capitatravevents.co.uk](http://capitatravevents.co.uk)

# Fresh hope

Will recent optimism around business travel's recovery finally play out this autumn, or will it prove just another false dawn?



BY ANDY HOSKINS  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, BTN EUROPE

Looking back at issues of *BTN Europe* from the last 12 months, a pattern quickly emerges: brief waves of hope for business travel's return seem to alternate with setbacks, added complexity and new restrictions. There was even a fleeting glimpse of recovery last September, but that was soon scuppered.

But with vaccine rollouts accelerating and 'road maps' out of the pandemic now being plotted, perhaps new-found optimism will not be misplaced this time. All eyes are on Q3 of 2021 which the majority of surveys and reports identify as heralding meaningful business travel growth, at least domestically.

By then, the adult population of the European Union and the UK should all have been offered vaccination against Covid-19. Even now, however, the positive news is tempered with reports of new mutations of the virus.

Whatever course the pandemic takes, when the time to safely resume business travel does arrive, it will be treated with caution and preparation the like of which have not been seen before. "Attitudes towards travel and risk have changed, perhaps irrevocably," says CWT's David Zimmer in our feature examining duty of care and attitudes to business travel in the

current environment (p26-29).

Travel management companies have been hit perhaps hardest of all in the business travel ecosystem by the pandemic, with the shortcomings of the common transaction model widely blamed for this sector's current plight.

The publication of proposed 'baseline standards' by the Business Travel

“

All eyes are on Q3, which the majority of reports identify as heralding meaningful business travel growth, at least domestically

Association is a manifestation of industry-wide discussion about the solution. Turn to pages 18-20 to discover analysis of the BTA report and wide-ranging industry responses to it.

Elsewhere in this issue you'll find features covering European rail travel's potential renaissance (p22-24), Brexit's impact on



business travel (p38-40), the evolving role of the travel manager (p42-43), privacy and equality concerns around vaccine or health passports (p34-36), and the industry's efforts to promote diversity and inclusion (p30-32).

The latter two subjects were key themes of the one-day virtual Business Travel Show Europe Kick Off which took place on 25 February (see p16). I had the pleasure of moderating a session featuring three supplier CEOs and three travel managers where all spoke candidly about the need for compassion and collaboration across our industry right now.

Perhaps that sentiment will be echoed at the two-day live Business Travel Show Europe at ExCel London this autumn, now scheduled for 30 September & 1 October. In the meantime, our BTN Group events continue on the virtual stage with the fifth annual Global Travel Risk Summit Europe on 21 April and the Sustainable Business Travel Summit Europe on 9 June. For more details, see [businesstravelnewseurope.com/events](https://businesstravelnewseurope.com/events).

• As ever, we welcome your feedback.  
Email me at: [ahoskins@thebtngroup.com](mailto:ahoskins@thebtngroup.com)

# CONTENTS

Want the news delivered to your inbox? Want to know when new podcasts are available? And to receive our monthly round-up? Sign-up to regular *BTN Europe* e-newsletters [businessstravelnewseurope.com/newsletter](https://businessstravelnewseurope.com/newsletter)



p26

## Regulars

### IN FOCUS

- 4SIGHT ..... 6  
Loud & Clear ..... 13  
Case study ..... 44

### INFORM

- Industry news ..... 7  
Transport news ..... 8-9  
Accommodation news ..... 10  
Technology news ..... 11  
Event report: Business Travel Show Europe Kick Off ..... 16

### INTEL

- Databank ..... 14-15

### OPINION

- According to Amon ..... 17  
by Amon Cohen  
Guest column ..... 33  
by William Francois, EHL  
Brussels Bulletin ..... 45  
by Jennifer Baker

## Features

### 18-20 TMCs: Model behaviour

How companies pay for their travel management services is back in the spotlight with the BTA's move to create 'baseline standards' for the sector

### 22-24 Rail travel: Time to shine?

Will the train be ready to take the strain of helping to lead Europe's business travel recovery when the Covid-19 crisis starts to ease?

### 26-29 Duty of care: Risky business

Risk management and duty of care is being taken to a whole new level as corporates prepare for the resumption of business travel

### 30-32 Diversity & inclusion: All together now

The business travel industry is making much-needed progress on diversity, equality and inclusion, but does it go far enough?

### 34-36 Health passes: Freedom to fly

The introduction of vaccination or health passports prompts questions around privacy and equity

### 38-40 Brexit: After the storm

The long-term impact of Brexit on UK business travel will only become clear as volumes return but the early implications are already emerging

### 42-43 Travel managers: Careers advice

Travel managers are being encouraged to diversify their role and develop their skillset to ensure job security



p18

Editorial Director Elizabeth West  
Editor-In-Chief Andy Hoskins  
Acting Digital Editor Mark Frary  
Contributors Donna Airoldi, Jennifer Baker, Michael Baker, Amon Cohen, Rob Gill, Dawit Habtemariam & Adam Perrotta

Art Director James Jarnot  
Design manager Claire Gates  
Designer Louisa Horton

Publisher Chris Mihalop  
Account Manager EMEA Adam Garside  
Sales Manager Charlotte Norville  
Group Publisher Louis Magliaro  
Managing Director UK David Chapple

Head of Events Emma Gordon  
Marketing Director Rochelle Jayawardena  
Advertising Production Amanda Ludman

Website [businessstravelnewseurope.com](https://businessstravelnewseurope.com)  
Front cover image: [123RF.com/rudall30](https://123RF.com/rudall30)

*BTN Europe* is published by Northstar Travel Group, Spaces, The Epworth, 25 City Road, Shoreditch, London EC1Y 1AA



Copyright ©2021 Northstar Travel Group and/or its subsidiaries and licensors. Corporate offices: 100 Lighting Way Secaucus, NJ, US. All rights reserved.

The magazine is entirely independent of all commercial interests within the travel industry. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be accepted for publication. The opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the publishers who cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions.

ISSN 2634-3053



## Virtual Travel and Expense Summit

Get ready for the new  
reality of business travel



[tripactions.com/destinations-europe](https://tripactions.com/destinations-europe)

**TripActions**

# 4 SIGHT

## THE TRAVEL BUYER

**Lisa Barnett**  
Commercial contract specialist,  
Bruker



At the moment, travel is being booked both offline and online, although slightly more online as confidence starts to come back. It has been mostly offline during the pandemic so we can check hotels are open and travellers have all the permissions in place. Online booking tools have a place but right now the service of people is still paramount for us all returning to travel. We're currently asking our TMC

to call all travellers 24 hours before departure to make sure they're happy, that no plans have changed and to provide the latest guidelines, so even if they book online they're getting offline support. We'll definitely be back largely online in the future though. Historically, we got up to 96 per cent online adoption. We're a tech savvy organisation, so I don't think we'll have trouble getting that back.

## THE TECH SPECIALIST

**Gavin Smith**  
Director, Element



I do not see it as one or the other. It is how we combine people and technology that will allow the TMC to deliver on the new needs of business travellers. A year ago, many booking tools did not provide sufficient information on Covid but this has changed and most do now supply a satisfactory level that supports duty of care requirements. They can only display what is available from the distribution channels

they plug into. An OBT will be one tool – along with policy, trip approval, traveller tracking and offline booking – that will help with business travel's recovery. It will be about people, process, technology solutions and demand that will decide where people and technology add the required confidence. The current situation is not sustainable – time is precious and time is a cost to TMCs and to corporates.

Online versus offline: where will business travel's recovery take place? TMCs and booking tools both face their own challenges in handling new layers of travel complexity

## THE TMC

**Nicola Cox**  
Director, Midas Travel  
Management



There's no doubt that booking travel has become more complex and is taking longer as a result of both Covid-19 and Brexit. It's more important than ever to ensure agents have the most up-to-date information, with renewed focus around duty of care among travel managers. Given there is such a fluid market right now and that absolute content is not sitting in one place, travel managers

are adopting a hybrid of both booking methods. Although online options have remained available throughout the pandemic, we've largely found travel bookers have come directly to agents. Online will, in my opinion, slowly recover and increase in accordance with travel confidence. One thing is for sure, the digital world will still need human expertise for the foreseeable future.

## THE BUYER ASSOCIATION

**Scott Davies**  
Chief executive,  
Institute of Travel Management



Online adoption has been hard won over many years but now booking tools have been switched off because we need extra levels of information and approval to travel. When OBTs are all switched back on for corporates is when we'll know we're really cooking again because that's when normal processes start to open up and travel can begin. I don't think it will take long to get adoption levels up to

where they were pre-pandemic. There will be a crossover point when bookings currently being made offline become too much to handle offline, both for corporates and potentially TMCs with reduced teams. As new information on travel restrictions and requirements is delivered by OBTs, there will definitely come a time when they have to start taking the strain and I don't think it's too far off.



BY MARK FRARY

**INDUSTRY NEWS**

TMCs are looking for light at the end of a very long tunnel

A GLIMPSE of optimism last autumn drained away towards the end of 2020 as new travel restrictions were imposed in a bid to avoid, or at least reduce, a second wave of Covid.

And now, as we move into spring, TMCs seem resigned to the fact they are not getting any specific support from governments to help them cope. Furlough schemes continue but many TMCs have already had to reduce their headcounts substantially.

There was some hope that roadmaps for getting out of lockdown in the UK might indicate when business travel might restart properly but it is clear that international travel is at the bottom of any priority list.

The health of the population must take priority, of course, but that does not mean that the devastating effect of the pandemic on the travel sector should be overlooked. A silver lining to this terrible pandemic is, if one can be observed, that companies are recognising the true value that their partners, such as TMCs, can bring.

## EY and Freshfields target travel emissions cuts

Consulting company EY and law firm Freshfield Bruckhaus Deringer have independently pledged to significantly reduce carbon emissions from their business travel activities. EY is targeting a reduction of 35 per cent by 2025 compared to a 2019 baseline as part of a broad range of measures to help it become carbon negative in 2021 and net zero by 2025. Air travel accounted for 75 per cent of its global carbon emissions in the financial year 2019. Freshfields, meanwhile, wants to reduce its travel-related emissions by 30 per cent by 2025, having already cut them by more than ten per cent since 2015/16.

### TapTrip adds marine and energy platform

TapTrip has launched a specialist booking tool for the marine and energy industries, following a £1.7 million investment. Vessul has been designed to manage the movement of essential workers from the marine and energy industries online; TapTrip claims that 98 per cent of travel booking for the marine sector is still handled offline. The Vessul tool, aimed at small to medium crew rotations, shows the availability of seats on chartered flights and offers empty seats out to companies within the industry. The company says that it also includes a multi-city departures function, which it claims is the first of its kind in the industry.



### IAG group airlines to distribute NDC content through Amadeus

Airlines in the International Airlines Group (IAG) are to make their NDC content available to Amadeus agents and corporations. The availability of British Airways and Iberia NDC content through the Amadeus Travel Platform is targeted for the second half of this year, with Vueling following in 2022. Aer Lingus content will follow "in due course". The deal will give Amadeus-connected agents and corporates access to "current and future personalised offers such as Additional Price Points (continuous pricing)".



### POST-JOB TRAVEL CONFIDENCE

Four out of five (79 per cent) business travel professionals feel 'comfortable' or 'very comfortable' about travelling for business after receiving the Covid-19 vaccination, according to a GBTA survey of its members. Almost half

of respondents support mandatory testing prior to travel to ensure the safety of customers and clients when meeting face-to-face, with the proportion in Europe (58 per cent) higher than in North America (44 per cent).

### BTA launches carbon offset initiative

The UK's Business Travel Association (BTA) is working with carbon offset organisation Trees4Travel as part of the TMC body's Planet Plan sustainability initiative. Trees4Travel plants and maintains forests and offers carbon offset schemes for international businesses.

The new arrangement will enable travel managers to monitor, audit and record their company's business travel-related carbon emissions through Trees4Travel's platform and balance or offset them with a range of tree-planting projects.

### ATG network names Ace UK partner

Travel management network ATG has named ACE Travel Management as its official UK partner. Utrecht-based ATG has more than 7,800 employees globally and is represented in more than 140 countries with a worldwide turnover of more than US\$7.2 billion. It also represents a global network of independent TMCs. ACE Travel was formed in 1992 and has offices in Brentwood, Essex and London.

Hans Trommel, executive director of ATG Worldwide, said, "ACE Travel's agility and ability to manage big business with bespoke requirements, enhanced by integrating with ATG's global technologies, gives us complete confidence as they serve our global and multinational clients with operations in the UK."

“  
We joined the ATG family to establish ourselves as part of a truly global company”

Sarah Wilson,  
Ace Travel Management



BY MICHAEL BAKER

**TRANSPORT NEWS**

Airlines are building momentum around New Distribution Capability despite challenges of the pandemic

AS COVID-19 decimated airline revenues, carriers have been forced to postpone or end several ongoing projects, but initiatives related to the New Distribution Capability standard don't seem to be among them.

At the CAPA Live virtual event in February, Qantas head of distribution Nadine Dawood Morgan acknowledged that NDC projects had slowed in the initial days of Covid-19.

"There was a pause across the industry, and some partners were in survival mode," Morgan said. "It was short-lived, that pause, and we've got quite a lot happening. We've had some partners that have had to slow down a bit, but we've had others that wanted to accelerate."

The Lufthansa Group, for example, recently announced a global NDC content agreement with American Express Global Business Travel, giving the TMC's clients fee-free access to NDC content via its Neo online booking tool and its travel consultants.

Around the same time, Singapore Airlines announced it would be making its NDC offers available through the Amadeus Travel Platform and its corporate travel and expense tool, Cytric. Emirates, meanwhile, just announced it is launching an NDC-enabled direct connect platform for agency partners – and a GDS surcharge to go along with it.

"Maybe there was a little slowing at the height [of the pandemic], and sure, we've seen some of the airlines pause some of their plans while we go through this period," said Travelport head of customer strategy and marketing Will Owen Hughes at the CAPA Live event. "But most airlines already invested in NDC, and they have been doubling down on that."

As such, travel buyers should not lose sight of what their airline, TMC and GDS partners are doing with NDC, so they can be fully prepared when business travel volumes begin to pick up again, hopefully sooner rather than later.

# Full recovery by 2025 'an ever more unlikely prospect'

A new report looking at the road to recovery for airports in the UK says that travel restrictions introduced in early 2021 mean 'a full traffic recovery by 2025 is an ever-more unlikely prospect'. The Airport Operators Association's Airport Recovery Plan was published as a pathway towards a restart for the aviation sector in the UK.

Business consultancy Steer produced a report for the AOA to guide the plan and, based on its analysis before the pandemic worsened, Steer estimated that passenger numbers would not return to 2019 levels any earlier than 2025 in the most optimistic scenario. The AOA says that restrictions introduced since the new year mean this now looks optimistic.

Commenting on the launch of the plan, AOA's chief executive Karen Dee said: "2020 was a devastating year and the start of 2021 has so far dashed airports' hopes that this year will be significantly better. This summer must be a success for aviation if airports are to survive in the coming years."



## French government pulls plug on Paris CDG's Terminal 4 project

The French government has asked the operator of Paris Charles de Gaulle airport to rethink its plan to build a giant new terminal because of concerns over the environment and fears that the business case no longer holds up in a post-Covid world. France's ecological transition minister Barbara Pompili said the proposed Terminal 4 is "obsolete" and that construction was not compatible with France's 'climate resilience' laws. The proposed new Terminal 4 was first conceived in 2018 and would have had capacity for 35 to 40 million passengers a year.



## United to fly daily between London Heathrow and Boston

United Airlines plans to commence a daily non-stop service between London Heathrow and Boston Logan International Airport, but the carrier has not confirmed a start date. The service will be operated with B767-300ER aircraft, featuring 46 Polaris business class seats, 22 Premium Plus seats, 43 Economy Plus seats and 56 economy seats. The route is already served by British Airways, Virgin Atlantic and American Airlines, while JetBlue has also announced its intention to fly between the cities. United says its service would offer "the highest proportion of premium seats on any widebody aircraft operated by a US carrier between London and the US".

## EasyJet offers new fare bundle

EasyJet has introduced a new fare bundle, Standard Plus, which will pull together a seat at the front of the plane, a large cabin bag, speedy boarding and dedicated bag drop. The new bundle sits between the airline's basic fare offering, Standard, and its business-focused Flexi Fare. Pricing for the Standard Plus bundle will reflect the existing variable pricing structure for easyJet's current Up front seat prices which start from £7.99.

## Finnair introduces one-way ticket pricing

Finnair has introduced one-way or parallel pricing, a practice common among the low-cost carriers with which it competes on European routes. “We want to offer our customers more choice and flexibility, and increase the transparency of flight pricing. In one-way pricing, the price for the flight is the same regardless of the duration of the trip. Many customers have wanted parallel prices,” says Ole Orvær, Finnair’s commercial director.

## JetBlue unveils premium transatlantic offering, Mint

JetBlue has unveiled the premium offering for its transatlantic services that are planned to launch later this year between London and New York and Boston. The airline’s Airbus A321LR single-aisle aircraft will feature 24 Mint ‘suites’ featuring Thompson Aero Seating’s VantageSOLO seat in a herringbone configuration with sliding doors for privacy, an enhancement of its domestic Mint offering which is now on 30 routes in the US. The Mint suite will also include a tilting 17-inch seatback screen, wireless charging capabilities, in-seat power, as well as laptop, shoe and handbag stowage and a Tuft & Needle adaptive mattress foam cushion.



## Emirates to introduce GDS surcharges

Emirates will introduce a surcharge of between US\$14 and US\$25 per ticket on all bookings made via global distribution systems (GDS) from 1 July 2021.

It will also launch exclusive rich content and services for travel agent partners on its NDC-enabled direct connect platform, Emirates Gateway, on the same day. Agencies not signed up to the Emirates Gateway, which launched in October last year, can continue to access Emirates’ legacy content through Amadeus, Travelport, Travelsky, Infini and Sirena.

From 1 July, the following NDC content will be available via Emirates Gateway: differentiated ticket pricing such as dedicated promotional fares and pre-sale; the ability to sell excess baggage; access to rich content; differentiated pricing for select ancillary services; and faster access to new ancillary products.

Emirates’ NDC content can be accessed through the Emirates Booking Portal, Emirates Gateway Direct APIs and Emirates Gateway Sync.

## IATA: 2020 officially the ‘worst year in history’ for travel demand

Global passenger traffic fell by 65.9 per cent in 2020 compared to the full year of 2019, by far the sharpest traffic decline in aviation history, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) reported in February.

International traffic was down 75.6 per cent on 2019 levels while domestic demand was down 48.8 per cent. “Last year was a catastrophe. There is no other way to describe it,” said Alexandre de Juniac, IATA’s director general and CEO.

The Middle East and Europe saw the biggest declines in traffic, at 72.2 per cent and 69.9 per cent respectively. Capacity on international routes for Europe’s airlines fell by 66.3 per cent year-on-year, with load factor falling 18.8 per cent to 66.8 per cent.

## AF-KLM makes €4.5 bn operating loss

Air France KLM made an operating loss of €4.5 billion in the year to 31 December 2020, a deterioration of €5.7 billion on 2019 as a result of the Covid crisis. On an Ebitda basis, the airline group made a €1.7 billion loss. Revenue for the group was €11.1 billion, down 59 per cent on 2019; the group’s airlines carried 28.9 million passengers, a drop of 67 per cent year-on-year.

## FREENOW’S ALL-ELECTRIC FLEET PLEDGE

Ride-hailing app FreeNow has pledged to offer an all-electric fleet of taxis in the UK by 2024, with all private hire vehicles to be similarly powered by 2025. Across Europe, the company has additionally set a goal of making all trips zero-emissions by 2030 and in the meantime will offset all emissions through a range of projects. FreeNow, which merged with

Kapten last year to bring black cabs and private hire vehicles together, already has the largest electric fleet in Europe and more than half of its taxi trips in London are already completed in electric vehicles. In November it became the first ride-hailing app provider to enable businesses to restrict employees to the use of only electric vehicles.



## Decisive action needed to deliver aviation net zero

Quick, decisive joint actions by governments and industry are needed to realise net zero CO2 emissions for all flights within and departing the EU, UK and the European Free Trade Association bloc by 2050, according to a new report. The report, *Destination 2050 – A Route to Net Zero European Aviation*, says the target can be achieved through four key measures: improvements in aircraft and engine technologies, which could achieve emission reductions of 37 per cent; using sustainable aviation fuels (yielding reductions of 34 per cent); implementing economic measures (8 per cent reduction); and improvements in air traffic management (6 per cent).

“We have an entire sector not just committing to decarbonisation, but actually charting the path to make it happen”



BY DONNA M. AIROLDI

**ACCOMMODATION NEWS**

Dismal 2020 earnings ...but there's optimism for 2021

**THE RECENT** hotel earnings season didn't yield many surprises. After performance improvements last summer and into Q3 of 2020, the recovery tapered off in Q4 due to new increases in Covid-19 cases, border closures and travel restrictions. These factors were particularly acute throughout the UK and the rest of Europe.

Accor reported a global 66.2 per cent drop in revenue per available room during Q4 and minus 62 per cent for the full year. For Europe, those declines were 73.1 per cent and 63.3 per cent respectively. Other major hotel groups, including Marriott, IHG and Hilton, did only moderately better.

Still, many CEOs saw hope on the horizon — some as early as the second quarter of this year. “The death of business travel has been exaggerated,” said IHG president and CEO Keith Barr, who was bullish on medium-term business travel returning. “Travel budgets will gradually increase as people have more and more confidence to travel.”

# Corporate rate savings eroded

Corporate hotel booking volumes in January were at 18 per cent of last year's levels for the same period, but that number is trending up, according to a new quarterly report from hotel reshopping platform Tripbam. The metrics included in the report are from the company's new dashboard which shows rate and other trends from its aggregated hotel bookings.

The report used data taken on 27 January for the previous 30 days and compared it to the same period in 2020. Tripbam found that, globally, the length of stay had increased by a little more than a day to 3.6 days globally, although in Europe it remains shorter, rising from 2.36 to 2.98 days.

Meanwhile, the average number of days that stays are booked in advance declined from 14 to nine globally and in Europe dropped from 16 to 13. And after peaking in March and April 2020, the overall cancellation rate is down to around 10 per cent.

Rates also dropped significantly. Globally, the average public rate fell 41 per cent year on year from \$205 to \$120, and across Europe it slumped from \$224 to \$166. Corporate booked rates, meanwhile, moved from \$175 to \$116 globally, and from \$182 to \$146 in Europe, showing the value of corporate programmes was significantly eroded. The figures mean average per-room savings globally (corporate versus public rates) went from \$30 to \$4 (or from 15 per cent to 3 per cent). The impact was felt less in Europe, where the difference moved from \$42 to \$20.



## Accor has the key to contactless stays

Hotel group Accor has begun the global roll-out of digital room keys as guests increasingly seek a contactless stay in light of the Covid pandemic. The launch of Accor Key will start in all new hotels opening in 2021 and extend to existing properties with an objective to equip 500 hotels this year, and at least 50 per cent of all rooms across its network within the next five years. The digital key app will give access to a guest's room, meeting rooms and lifts.



## SHERATON DEBUTS NEW DESIGNS

Sheraton Hotels & Resorts properties in Denver, Phoenix, Dubai, Tel Aviv, Guangzhou and Mianyang, China, are the first to complete the brand's new look and design. Parent group Marriott initially unveiled plans for the design refresh

in 2018. A key component of the overhaul is the redesigned lobby, for which the design team used the 'public square' as inspiration. New elements include a community table with built-in lighting, outlets and wireless charging stations.

## IHG unveils wide-ranging CSR programme

IHG Hotels & Resorts has unveiled a new corporate and social responsibility programme called Journey to Tomorrow. The group said the commitments it is making form part of the ten-year programme to “make a positive difference for our people, communities and planet over the next decade”. The measures include the implementation of a 2030 science-based target that delivers 15 per cent absolute reduction in carbon emissions from direct operations and a 46 per cent per square metre reduction in franchise operations.

## Marriott names Capuano CEO, succeeding Arne Sorenson

Marriott International has appointed former group president of global development, design and operations services Tony Capuano as its new CEO following the untimely death of Arne Sorenson in February. Capuano had previously been named as one of two Marriott executives to take over operational responsibilities from Sorenson when it was announced he would be stepping back from duties temporarily while fighting pancreatic cancer. Sorenson became the third CEO in the hotel group's history in 2012 – and the first without the Marriott surname – and oversaw the \$13 billion acquisition of Starwood Hotels and Resorts.

“Arne was a mentor, a champion and a friend to each member of his close-knit leadership team”

Tony Capuano, CEO, Marriott International



BY ADAM PERROTTA

## TECH & PAYMENTS NEWS

With progress on covid, pre-pandemic priorities reappear

**AS THE** Covid situation improves, other issues which the virus had largely relegated to the back burner are resurfacing.

Case in point: Strong Customer Authentication (SCA) requirements under the EU's new Payment Services Directive (PSD2).

Pre-pandemic, many in the industry had sounded the alarm about potential complications stemming from applying SCA in the context of corporate travel.

Those concerns – and conflicting guidance on how to address them – led to the implementation date of SCA being pushed back twice already. But the rules are due to go into place in September 2021 and uncertainty still abounds. The urgency of the situation has driven the ITM's recent call for industry collaboration to bring about essential clarity (see above right).

Along with the more obvious benefits, recent progress on the Covid front promises to afford industry stakeholders a much-needed opportunity to re-focus on solving SCA and other pre-pandemic industry issues.

## Buyers seek urgent guidance on PSD2

The Institute of Travel Management (ITM) has launched a campaign calling for industry collaboration in establishing consistent guidance for travel buyers on the significant implications of the EU's new Payment Services Directive (PSD2).

The ITM's industry affairs committee has established a taskforce to bring together corporate card issuers, TMCs and technology suppliers to provide unified information after buyer members revealed that they are facing a minefield of conflicting advice on which booking types and card products require Strong Customer Authentication.

SCA, part of the PSD2 regulations which will come into force in the UK in September 2021 despite the country's departure from the EU, requires cardholders to confirm their identity using more than one technique, such as PINs, one-time identifiers, biometric identifiers and ID fobs.

ITM's buyer members have identified several concerns about the implications of SCA in a corporate travel environment, including whether GDS, OBT or other aggregator bookings (including NDC) are in scope when transacted via a company credit card and have received conflicting advice on the subject.

The SCA verification process also presents challenges for corporate travellers where bookings are made by a PA or travel booker who may not have access to the identification methods required.



## Move away from cash accelerated by four years since Covid outbreak

New research has found the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the move away from cash by four years, with a surge in contactless payments. According to Amadeus, 84 per cent of respondents to a survey of 5,000 adults who have travelled since the Covid-19 outbreak began said they now pay with non-cash methods like contactless or mobile payments when travelling. And 14 per cent of travellers said that when contactless payment options were not available, they would rather abandon the purchase altogether than risk the physical contact required to pay with cash.



## ACCOR LAUNCHES HYBRID M&E CONCEPT

Hotel group Accor will launch a hybrid meetings concept in collaboration with Microsoft this April. All Connect is aimed at small meetings with between 8 and 50 participants. Meetings using the new platform will

take place in Accor meeting spaces and use Microsoft's Teams Rooms and Surface Hub 2S interactive whiteboard technologies. Accor says 55 per cent of its hotels with meeting rooms are already providing hybrid solutions.

## Wizme adds hygiene standards to its venue search platform

Meetings and events platform Wizme has added the ability to search venues according to their accredited hygiene standards. It is working with certification firm Global Secure Accreditation (GSA) to enable planners to filter and search based on the hygiene security information venues have provided, supported by external accreditation where available. Blue Cube Travel recently became the first TMC to adopt the Wizme platform.

## Concur bolsters Triplt with Covid-related requirements

SAP Concur has added a new Covid-19 guidance tool to its Triplt mobile travel management app. Powered by travel risk specialist Riskline, the feature includes destination-specific information including Covid infection rates, quarantine and testing requirements, mask-wearing and curfew orders and dining restrictions. Triplt users can access the data within their trip itinerary view on Triplt, and more than 200 countries and territories are covered. For some countries, including the US, Canada and Australia, state and territory-specific guidance is also included. The tool is being offered at no additional cost to all Triplt users, Concur said.

“We've seen increased demand for risk data on all aspects of travel and Covid, pointing to a heightened focus on duty of care”

Emanuele Scansani,  
Riskline

**BUSINESS  
TRAVEL  
SHOW  
EUROPE**

**RECOVERING  
WITH THE INDUSTRY**

**30 SEP – 01 OCT. EXCEL, LONDON**

PRESENTED BY:

**BTNGROUP**  
CONFERENCES & EVENTS

PUBLISHERS OF:

**BTN**  
BUSINESS TRAVEL NEWS

**Travel Procurement**

**The Beat**

**BTN**  
BUSINESS TRAVEL NEWS  
EUROPE

# LOUD & CLEAR

**Simon Talling-Smith,** president of CommonPass, explains how technology providers must convene around common standards for much talked about vaccination passports

## The vaccination passports challenge

“ This is a new space in which technology is coming in to try and fix the problem. In most of these cases many tech solutions will arise and eventually consolidate into a small number of solutions. The most important thing is that we standardise the output so it becomes interoperable. For example, in payment terms, you might carry a Mastercard or Visa or Amex card. We have a handful of well-known providers and there’s no sign of them consolidating into any fewer than there are. And yet they’re all tapped against the same payment terminal. The restaurant or store doesn’t get a different one out for your card type. They use the same one because there’s an interoperable standard. That’s the way this will end up and CommonPass, IATA etc... we will produce an interoperable output. But creating an overall ecosystem – a network of trusted labs, the passing of data to an individual and allowing them to hold that on their phone and only on their phone, not on a server, and being able to show it, checked against all the rules – that ecosystem is difficult to build but we’re well on the way. ”

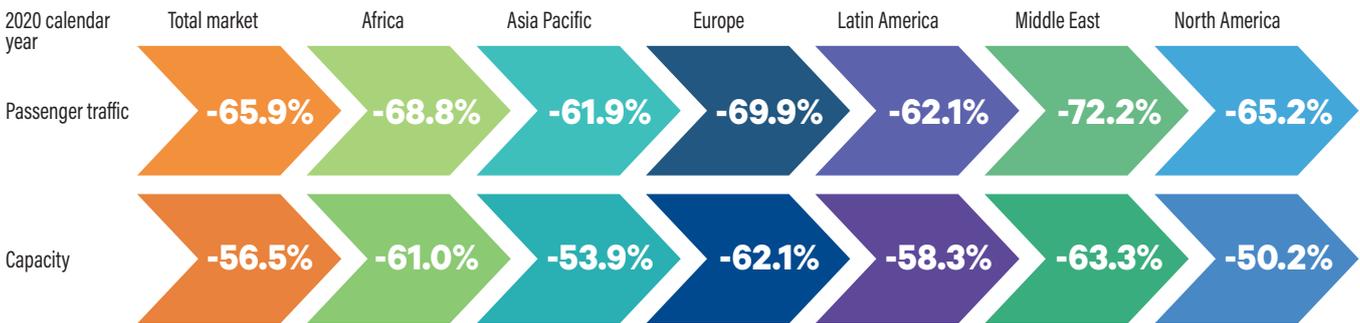


# RUIN & RECOVERY

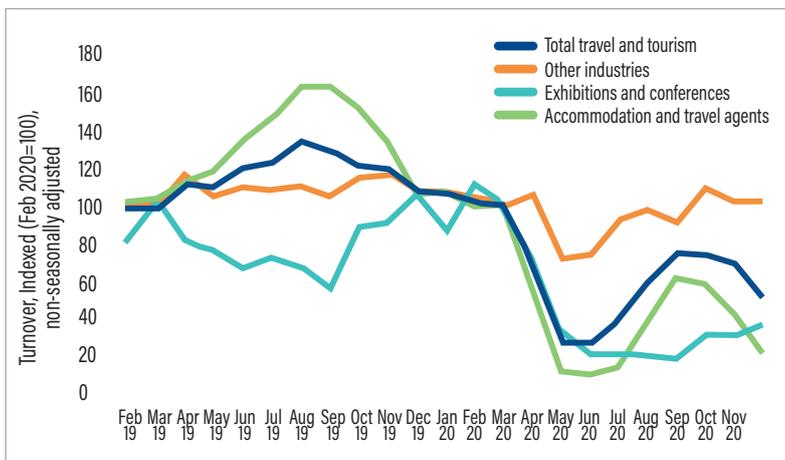
Full-year figures for 2020 reveal the sharpest decline in passenger traffic in aviation history and how business travel transactions went off a cliff edge. Against this backdrop, reports are now also emerging forecasting how long it might take the industry to recover

## ANNUS HORRIBILIS FOR AVIATION

In early February, IATA revealed its passenger traffic figures for the year of the pandemic, declaring it “a catastrophe” because of “by far the sharpest traffic decline in aviation history”. The chart below reveals the extent of that catastrophe



Source: IATA. Traffic in revenue passenger kilometres (RPK), capacity in available seat kilometres



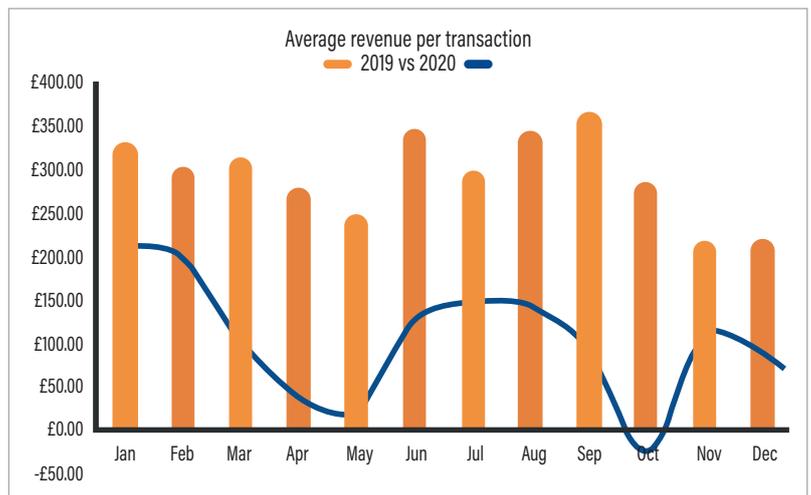
## HOW COVID DECIMATED UK TRAVEL TURNOVER

We knew that Covid has been bad for travel but just how bad it has been for business finances has been revealed in new government data. This shows that turnover for businesses in the travel and tourism industry had fallen to 27.8 per cent of February 2020 levels by April last year. What makes this dramatic fall all the more troubling is that turnover in other industries fell ‘only’ to 71.7 per cent

Source: Office for National Statistics

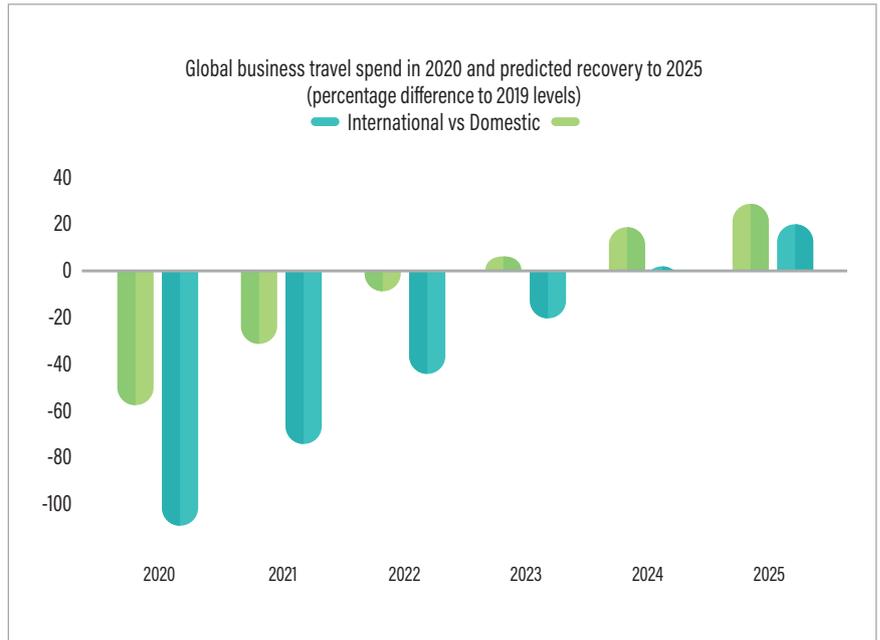
## AVERAGE TMC TRANSACTION VALUES TUMBLE

The plummeting turnovers in the travel agency sector were further evidenced in new research by Travelogix that looks at 10.97 million transactions made by 72 UK TMCs in 2019 and 2020. The average transaction value fell by 64.2 per cent from £296.50 in 2019 to just £106.12 in 2020. In October 2020, average transaction value fell below zero, reflecting the unsustainable effect of refunds on an industry that is based around transactions



# RECOVERY IN TWO YEARS?

There has been much crystal-ball gazing about when business travel spend will recover to pre-Covid levels with many looking back to previous crises to get some guidance. The European Tourism Commission in its Trends and Prospects 2020 report looked at business travel's recovery after 9/11 and the 2008 global financial crisis, using research from Tourism Economics. In both cases, the recovery happened just over two years after the economic shock. This time, Tourism Economics says things will be different and they expect domestic business spend to recover to pre-coronavirus levels by 2023, and global international business travel by 2024



Source: Tourism Economics

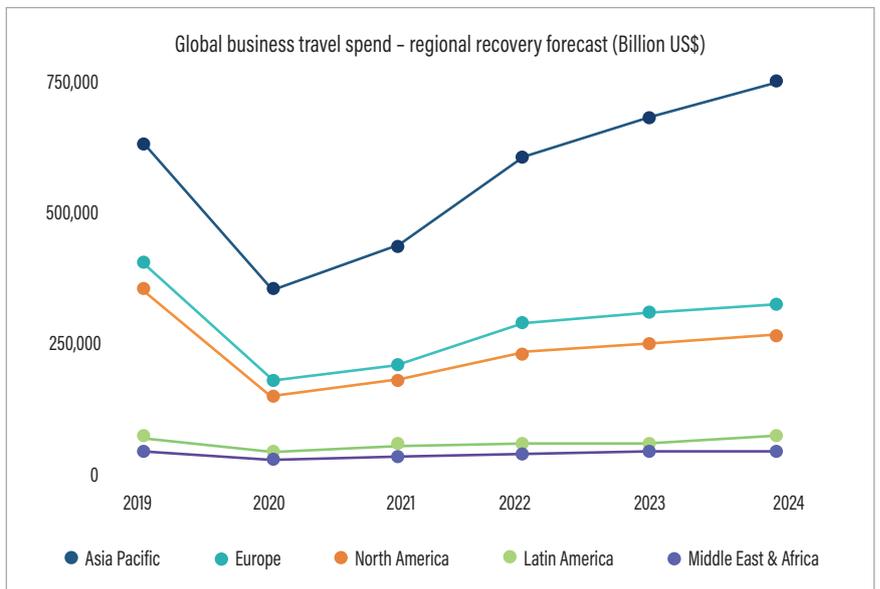
# WHAT BUSINESS TRAVELLERS ARE MISSING

With so few people travelling, many are missing business trips. A new survey of 2,000 travellers from the UK by IHG Hotels and Resorts found that people are particularly missing the connections they make while on business



# DIFFERENT SPEEDS OF RECOVERY

The Global Business Travel Association's annual BTI Outlook, published in February, also looked at the speed of recovery. While the GBTA says that overall global business travel spend will be back to 2019 levels by 2025, this will be driven by growth in Asia Pacific. In Europe, business travel spend will only have reached 75 to 85 per cent of 2019 levels by 2025



# BUSINESS TRAVEL SHOW EUROPE KICK OFF

The one-day virtual event took place on 25 February, with the two-day live Business Travel Show Europe taking place in London on 30 Sep & 1 Oct

## Corporate travel megatrends take centre stage

Health passports, sustainability, and diversity and inclusion were the three key themes of the opening session at Business Travel Show Europe Kick Off.

The Corporate Travel Megatrends session saw a diverse panel of speakers come together on the virtual stage to debate current focus points, with the concept of health passes, or 'vaccine passports', first up.

"There are some 18 organisations working on digital health certificates so it's going to be a chaotic way forward," said Bruce McIndoe, president of McIndoe Risk Advisory. "Vaccines and testing will be our path out of this [the pandemic], but vaccine passports will expedite it. But we have to have a dual system. Not everyone has a digital device so there will be a requirement for a paper-based system."

On the subject of sustainability, Gehan Colliander, global travel director at Boston Consulting Group, said that Covid has "allowed us to turn crisis into opportunity, and to build confidence in meaningful change". BCG's sustainability plans were already well-established, but Covid has "accelerated the journey". In September last year it pledged to cut business travel-related carbon emissions at least 30 per cent per full-time employee by 2025 from 2018 levels.

Colliander said that although the travel function is not necessarily the sustainability expert within an organisation, it is "a single source of truth for all data relating to emissions from business travel, and you must be able to provide meaningful input and scenario analysis for your business leaders."

She said the importance of buy-in and communication from senior leaders should not be underestimated, and that "individuals must have the right information in their hands when they make their travel decisions". Colliander also suggested introducing an element of competition between departments or regions within an organisation as they work towards carbon reduction targets.

Asked if suppliers are doing enough in this area, Colliander said: "Some say they are already carbon neutral but you should audit this. On the hotel side, many have new initiatives and it's good to see airlines



“

**The travel industry is doing ok on gender balance but we can do a lot more on to embrace diversity**

looking at sustainable aviation fuels. There's a long way to go but there is at least good dialogue around this right now."

Panelist Linda Bekoe, chief executive of APLBC, took up the reins on the subject of diversity and inclusion. "People have started asking a lot more questions around diversity and inclusion – about race, gender, sexuality," she said. "I think the travel industry has always thought it was diverse, but if you look at the top leaders and really break it down, it's actually not that diverse. We're doing ok on gender balance but we can do a lot more to embrace diversity."

She added: "D&I used to be a box-ticking exercise but now it's more about seeing the percentages across an organisation and in middle and senior management." Bekoe advised attendees to try and "meet more people who are different from you" and to seek out more diverse suppliers. "If you look at diverse organisations, you often get more creativity and innovation."

## D&I: create change and educate others

In a session entitled The Impact of Diversity, Equity and Human Rights on Travel Partnerships, Jafles Pacheco, head of indirect material spend at Oerlikon, said the response to George Floyd's murder and the Black Lives Matter movement should not be underestimated.

"The impact has been so strong, particularly coming from policy makers, and we see changes being infused into society," he said.

"A couple of years ago. I started including in my hotel RFP a question about diversity and inclusion, asking hotels to explain their D&I strategy and how they could guarantee a safe and inclusive place for their employees and customers. The answers could not have been more diverse. Big chains uploaded their D&I policies but others were completely lost – one property uploaded their fire escape plan."

Pacheco said poor answers to the question did not mean hotels were delisted. "They are long term business partners [so] we showed them what we were talking about. It is a baby step but it is about creating change and educating others."



# Blocked out

Post-Brexit travel's not 'Check, Change, Go' – it's more like Check, Stop, as the UK gets to grips with the reality of life outside the European Union



BY AMON COHEN

As a UK (one-man) company owner I regularly receive information from my government about adjustments I must make to my business following Brexit. All these communications begin with the slogan Check, Change, Go. But ever since I waded through the details of the UK-European Union Trade and Co-operation Agreement published just before Christmas, it's been clear to me that the reality for many business travellers is Check, Stop.

Let's take my own work as an example. I have been hired many times to travel to Germany to produce daily magazines at trade fairs. As best I, and experts I've spoken to, understand, any such assignments in future will require a work permit. I also moonlight as a double-bass player and my band once played a wedding in France. If we were to play that gig again, we would have to complete a large amount of paperwork to take in our equipment, and I would need extra certification to stop my 70-year-old bass being impounded on suspicion of being made from endangered tree species (I'm not making this up). We wouldn't need a work permit to perform in France, but we would in several other EU countries. The time and fees now required for these activities might make clients think twice about the viability of hiring me.

You may not lose much sleep over how these new constraints will affect me personally, but what goes for me goes for perhaps hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of others. If you work in business travel, you should be concerned

about what Brexit's shackles mean for everyone in our sector.

If you are a travel buyer, get ready for a whole new world of admin pain around business trips from the UK to the EU or vice versa that used to be utterly routine and required nothing more than a ticket and a passport. To oversimplify (so please don't act just on what you read here), if someone in your company travels for a meeting, additional paperwork is unlikely. But if the trip is to

“

**Visas for what were once routine trips are what you get when you reject freedom of movement**

carry out work for which a fee will be charged, consideration of visas and other bureaucracy comes into play.

As a result, it is now much easier for businesses to send employees or contractors who are EU passport holders on assignments around the EU than UK passport holders, something consultancy firms have already noted and are preparing to act upon. That will increasingly mean reduced employment opportunities for UK citizens. For this reason, if you are a travel supplier or service provider, you



might expect a reduction in the amount of travel you handle between the UK and the EU.

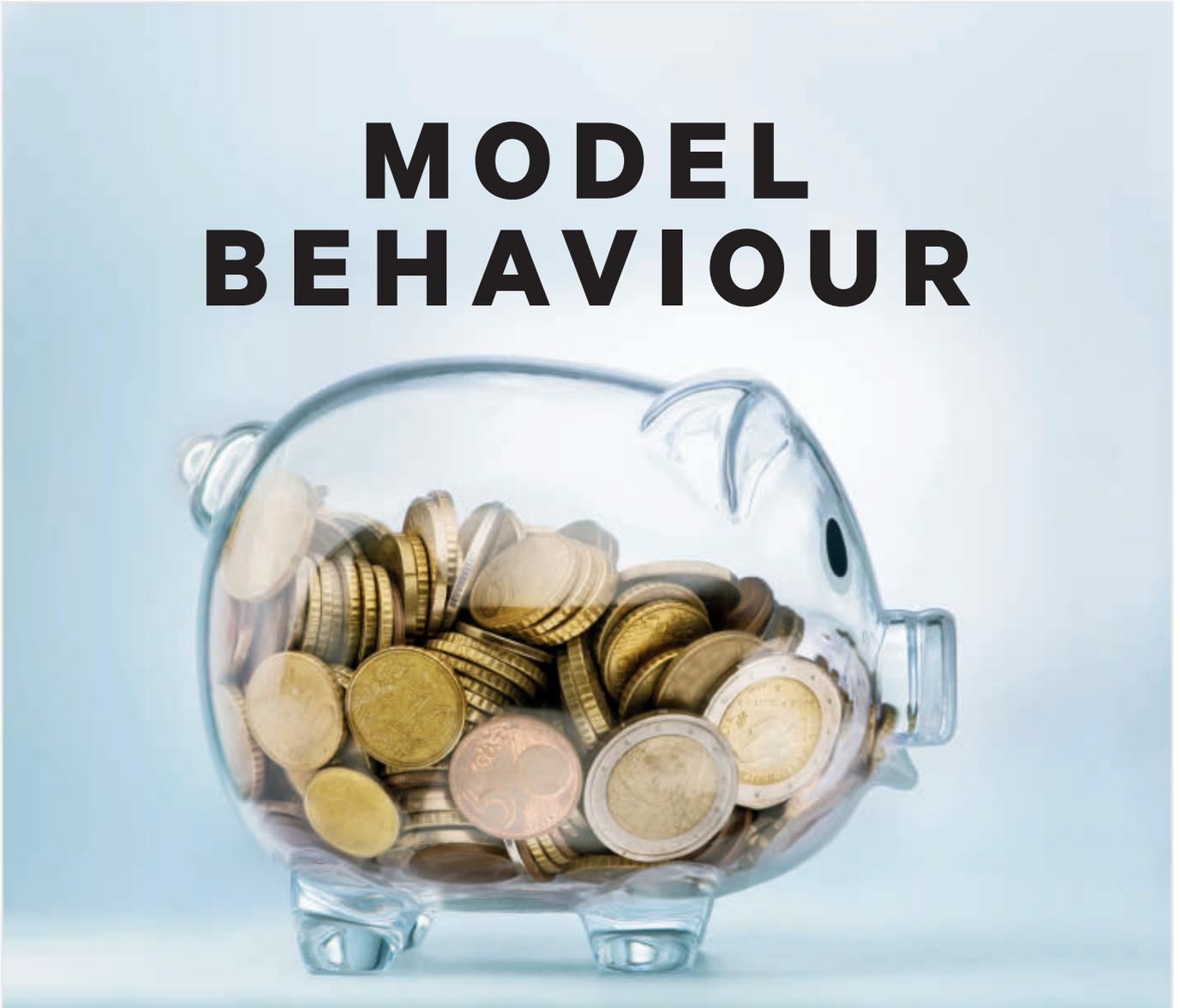
No one should be under any illusions that these problems are some kind of accidental collateral damage caused by Brexit. The UK voted to leave the European Union, and then its government, though not advertised at the time of the 2016 referendum, decided this also meant detaching entirely from the European single market, which ensures freedom of movement of goods, services, capital and people. Visas for what were once routine trips are what you get when you reject that freedom of movement.

The UK government has largely dodged the bullet over the new constraints on business visitors because Covid means few can travel abroad anyway. The problem will become more apparent as travel starts to open up again.

I wish I could suggest a constructive way forward, but I honestly can't see one, other than the UK deciding to reattach itself to the single market as is the case for other non-EU countries like Norway and Switzerland. However, I can't imagine that happening for many years until enough Brits realise they are missing out because Brexit is bad for business and it's bad for travel.

• *Amon Cohen is a specialist business travel writer, conference moderator and media trainer*

# MODEL BEHAVIOUR



How companies pay for their travel management services is back in the spotlight with the Business Travel Association's move to create 'baseline standards' for the sector. **Rob Gill** reports

**G**etting people to talk about issues such as mental health has been one of the few bright spots in the gloom of the seemingly endless pandemic. Perhaps it's this new mood of openness that has encouraged the Business Travel Association (BTA), which represents travel management companies (TMCs) in the UK, to launch its guidance on "baseline standards" for the ever-thorny issue of TMC payment models. Clive Wratten, CEO of the BTA, tells *BTN Europe* the move to publish the guidance is designed to "get the industry talking and having some honest conversations".

## MODEL GUIDANCE

The document, published in January, details three of the most common TMC payments models currently in operation: transaction fees, management fees and subscription fees (see panel opposite for

more details). It compares them to similar payment structures for mobile phone contracts. At a time when business travel has all but ceased and TMC revenues have crashed, the need for new remuneration models has become apparent, with subscription fees presenting the potential for sustained income regardless of any pauses in business travel activity.

"It's not a decree about which model people should use," emphasises Wratten. "There's been a stand-off and it's not really been discussed – we've got that classic elephant in the room. We want to remove the mystique and get that trust back between buyers and TMCs.

"The idea is that the baseline standards will help the industry on both sides in moving towards a different relationship," he adds.

Wratten says many corporates may choose to use a hybrid approach to paying TMCs, which he termed "transcription" – a combination of transaction and subscription fees.

The baseline standards were developed in consultation with the BTA's buyers' advisory group and Wratten says TMC sales teams are already using the document as a "demonstration of how the industry is working".

Scott Davies, CEO of the UK's Institute of Travel Management (ITM), says TMC pricing is particularly important as "corporates and TMCs will be re-evaluating their commercial agreements and alternative pricing models as the business travel sector emerges from the pandemic".

"But what is even more important is the need for transparency and equitable pricing models," adds Davies. "In order to see real progress in defining commercial standards, corporates will need to move away from allowing different pricing structures from TMCs as part of the bid process."

Davies says TMCs have previously been "over-competing" to win a corporate's business and urges both sides to "start to push back on bidding that results in a race to the bottom".

Chris Pouney, associate at GoldSpring Consulting, says: "It's really important buyers understand there are different payment options available, with each one delivering pros and cons in terms of overall cost, financial risk, transparency and bespoke services."

"Ultimately procurement should be like a mating ritual. There are processes that, however cumbersome they may seem to the outside world, are required in order to satisfy all stakeholders that the correct partner is being selected."

#### A NEW DAWN?

The recognition that TMCs face a tough battle to survive and need to rebuild post-Covid may help to foster a new mindset among travel managers who have historically often concentrated on securing the lowest transaction fees – that race to the bottom, as Davies says.

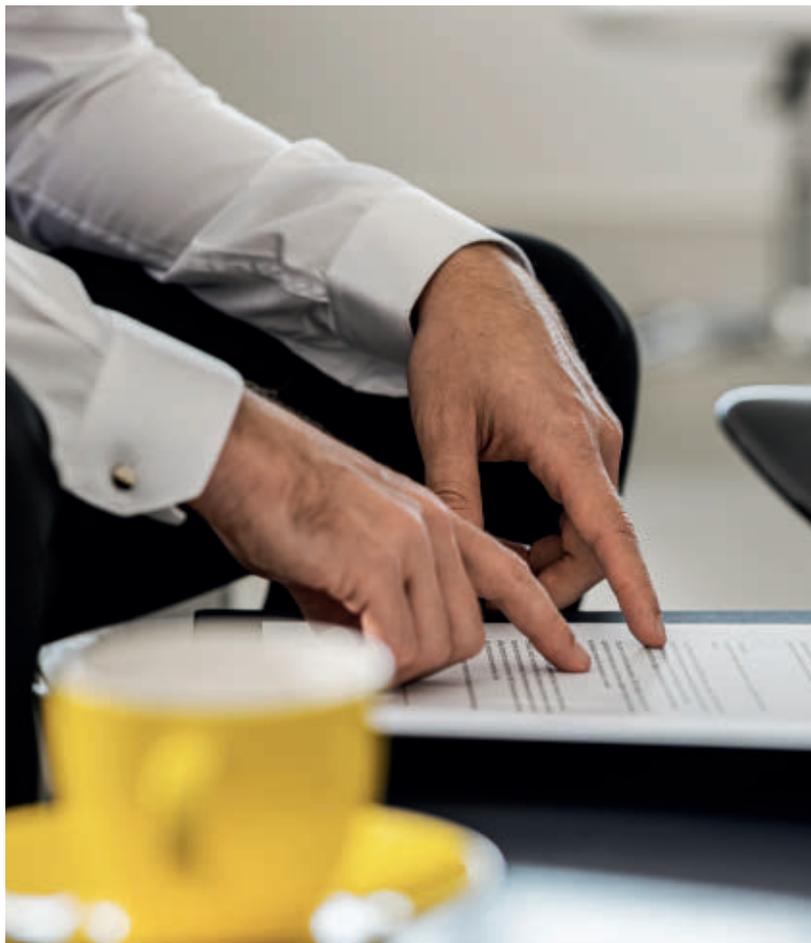
### TMC PRICING MODELS

**Transaction fees:** Particularly popular with SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises), this model is flexible because fees are based on activity and paid for at point-of-sale. It is comparable to a pay-as-you-go mobile contract.

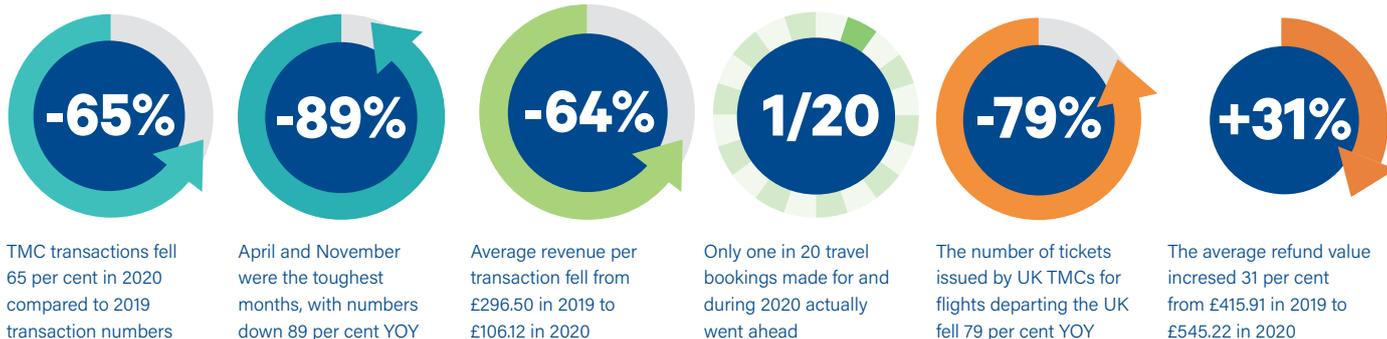
**Subscription fees:** Becoming more common as a way of paying for TMC services with the client paying a fee based on the number of transactions, travellers or services it commits to

buying over a set timeframe (month, quarter or year), with regular reviews of activity built into the contract.

**Management fees:** Mostly used by large organisations with a significant travel spend which requires dedicated support from a travel management company. This is more of a strategic partnership between both parties with an "agreed profit" for the TMC.



## 2020: THE PLIGHT OF TMCs



Source: *Travelogix Industry Report*, published February 2021. Data captured from 72 UK-based travel management companies

Buyers may instead now prioritise a more holistic assessment of the services and relationship they want from their TMC, particularly after seeing how their agency helped them and their travellers during the pandemic. The BTA guidelines are seen as a step along this path and have been welcomed by TMCs and industry experts both in the UK and Europe.

Bex Deadman, managing director of London-based Blue Cube Travel, says most buyers are already recognising the value that TMCs bring to travel programmes. “There is an understanding these days that we are providing a service and it needs to be paid for,” she adds. “It’s about honesty, truth and showing up as a partner, not someone to process a transaction.”

The issue of a lack of trust around pricing models is not just a UK problem and applies across Europe, particularly in the current climate when there is likely to be more TMC consolidation, says Pascal Jungfer, CEO of Areka Consulting. “Most suppliers of the value chain are working on a transaction-based model with variances,” adds Jungfer. “The strengths of this model are that the value is created at the point of sale and carries limited risk for corporates. We expect it to remain popular in the midterm. Moving forward, more transparency is needed concerning TMC financial models in order to restore trust on both sides.”

Although BTA is a UK-focused association, Clive Wratten has also spoken to counterparts in other



“  
It’s about honesty, truth and showing up as a partner, not someone to process a transaction

markets, including the Nordics and Netherlands, about the need for pricing transparency.

“It does apply globally,” he says. “We want to create baseline standards and benchmarks for the industry and raise the professional image of the business travel industry to the customer and the wider world.”

The pandemic has offered a rare chance to talk and reflect on issues which have been brushed under the carpet for years – more clarity and honesty can only help create better and more enduring relationships. And if your travel partner still isn’t right for you, it may be time to move on.

## TMCs’ TOTAL NEW TRANSACTIONS (2019 VS 2020)



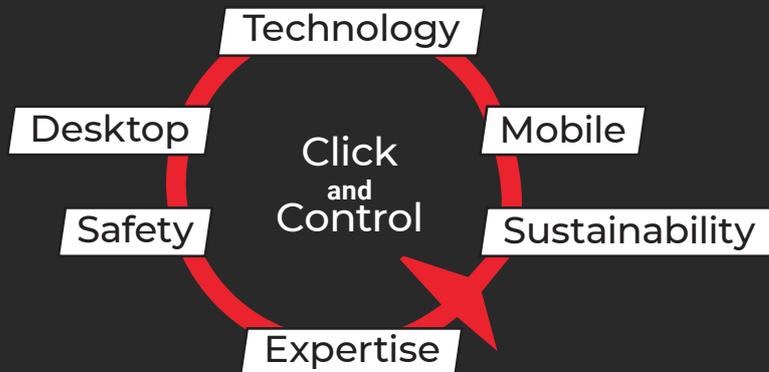
Source: Travelogix Industry Report, published February 2021. Data captured from 72 UK-based travel management companies

# RESTART AT FULL THROTTLE



**Travel Planet**

Time to change



**More than just a ticket**

Contact us: +44(0) 203 997 6140  
solutions@my-travelplanet.com  
www.my-travelplanet.com

# TIME TO SHINE?

Will the train be ready to take the strain of helping to lead Europe's business travel recovery when the Covid-19 crisis starts to ease? **Rob Gill** reports

**W**ith domestic and short-haul journeys likely to be the first type of business travel to resume when the sector finally emerges from the coronavirus pandemic, there will be plenty of focus on the role that the European rail sector plays in this recovery.

Train operating companies have benefited from being largely state-owned across the continent and close to the front of the queue when it came to government support to see them through the pandemic.

The UK government, which has pumped £10.1 billion into its rail sector over the past year, has even used the pandemic to scrap its long-running franchise system and effectively renationalised the train operators – at least for the short term.

## CAPACITY TO RECOVER

Train capacity in Europe has been maintained at much higher levels than in aviation during the pandemic, although this often has more to do with the ability to maintain social distancing in carriages than a rise in passenger demand and, of course, cost.

In any case, figures suggest that rail has only done marginally better than air travel during most of the crisis. However, travel management company CWT says that European train passengers outperformed airline traffic during summer 2020 when many markets lifted restrictions and allowed more domestic travel.

TMCs have also seen a trend among those clients who have continued travelling to switch away from trains to the seemingly less risky option



of car hire. But this move to car rental is unlikely to be sustained in the longer term, says David Sykes, corporate land product owner at Flight Centre's business travel divisions FCM and Corporate Traveller. This brings the train very much back into focus for buyers post-Covid.

"Rail often presents the most cost effective and time efficient mode of transport, especially domestically," says Sykes. "While traveller safety is a top priority right now, there will be a shift towards cost considerations becoming another priority, as travel resumes and corporates look for return on investment on their travel spend."

### SUSTAINABILITY REMAINS KEY

This seems to suggest that rail could be a beneficiary of the recovery in domestic and short-haul corporate travel. Another string to its bow is that rail offers a more sustainable method of travel – something that everybody agrees will continue to be a priority for corporates in the post-Covid world.

Consultant Raj Sachdave, managing partner of Black Box Partnerships and formerly head of rail product at Capita Travel and Events, adds: "Travel programmes are reflecting rail as a primary area of spend."

"With adjustments in travelling patterns and OBT (online booking tool) biasing to promote rail travel as a greener, smarter and more productive way to travel on business, we expect this focus to stay once we get back to travelling. Rail is a perfect bedfellow for the new travel patterns that will emerge from Covid."

There are also hopes that more long distance and cross-border rail services will be introduced in Europe post-pandemic, as a more environmentally friendly alternative to flights.

This includes plans by four major European train operators to add extra cross-border Nightjet overnight train services from late 2021. Other proposals to re-establish former rail links between European capitals have also been suggested.

Rob Coomer, senior director customer management UK and Ireland at CWT, adds: "Long distance intercity traffic will continue to grow, and we are pleased to see increasing cross-border long distance rail services being introduced. Even overnight sleeper services are starting to make a comeback across Europe."

### EUROSTAR'S UNCERTAIN FUTURE

The benefit of state ownership has helped many of Europe's large train operators to secure financial support during the pandemic, but the future of Eurostar remains unclear. The cross-Channel passenger service has admitted it is "fighting for survival" – with demand



SNCF omakine-huriez

### CHANGING HABITS CALL FOR CHANGING TICKETS

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the rise of remote and home working, making the concept of season tickets between two set destinations – intended for use five days of the week – temporarily redundant and, in the longer term, outdated.

Commuters are unlikely to return to their pre-pandemic travel habits in the same numbers, and that's why the clamour for 'flexible' or 'part time' season tickets is growing.

Among those campaigning in this direction is the independent Rail Future group, which recently published its proposal for a flexible ticket that would provide ten single journeys to be used within two weeks and would be priced the same as a weekly season ticket.

"This will meet the needs of the hybrid worker who post-Covid will split their time between home and the workplace," it said.

The group noted that a number of UK train operating companies already offer Carnet tickets but that these do not reward regular or long-term travel in the manner of season tickets, nor does their discount vary according

to distance. The group also said such a development should "not be seen as a long term solution", with 'pay as you go' options with discounts based on recent spend or frequency of ticket purchase likely to be a better way forward in the long term.

Similarly, in a report on the rail industry published last December by American Express Global Business Travel, one of its five key recommendations was to "give modern commuters a better deal" to reflect the shift to more remote working habits. "With remote working now mainstream, modern commuters need more flexible, less complex, pricing models," says the report.

The report also called for an improved and consistent passenger experience; the creation of a single strategic body to oversee the industry's evolution and innovation – an 'IATA for UK rail'; greater data sharing across the industry to help improve traveller interfaces and experience; and investment in improving reliability, extending connectivity and boosting regional growth.

slumping 95 per cent – and pleaded for support from the UK government.

UK transport secretary Grant Shapps has insisted Eurostar is “not our company to rescue” because it is majority owned by French state railway SNCF. The UK sold its Eurostar shareholding in 2015.

Shapps added the UK government would be “as helpful as possible” and he would continue talking to his French counterpart about Eurostar’s future.

The way European governments have supported railways during Covid could also become more of an issue. There has already been a complaint to the European Commission about the German government’s state aid to Deutsche Bahn.

And in France, the government’s financial aid for Air France was contingent on the airline not competing on domestic rail routes of up to four hours.

Many believe that for most business travellers there is a limit of between four to five hours’ journey time on a train before the option of jumping on a flight is hard to beat for both time and cost.

Rail appears to be in a good position to facilitate a return to business travel when current lockdowns are eased. But nobody is quite sure how much “pent up” demand there will be from business travellers. As with most things in these Covid times, we will just have to wait and see.



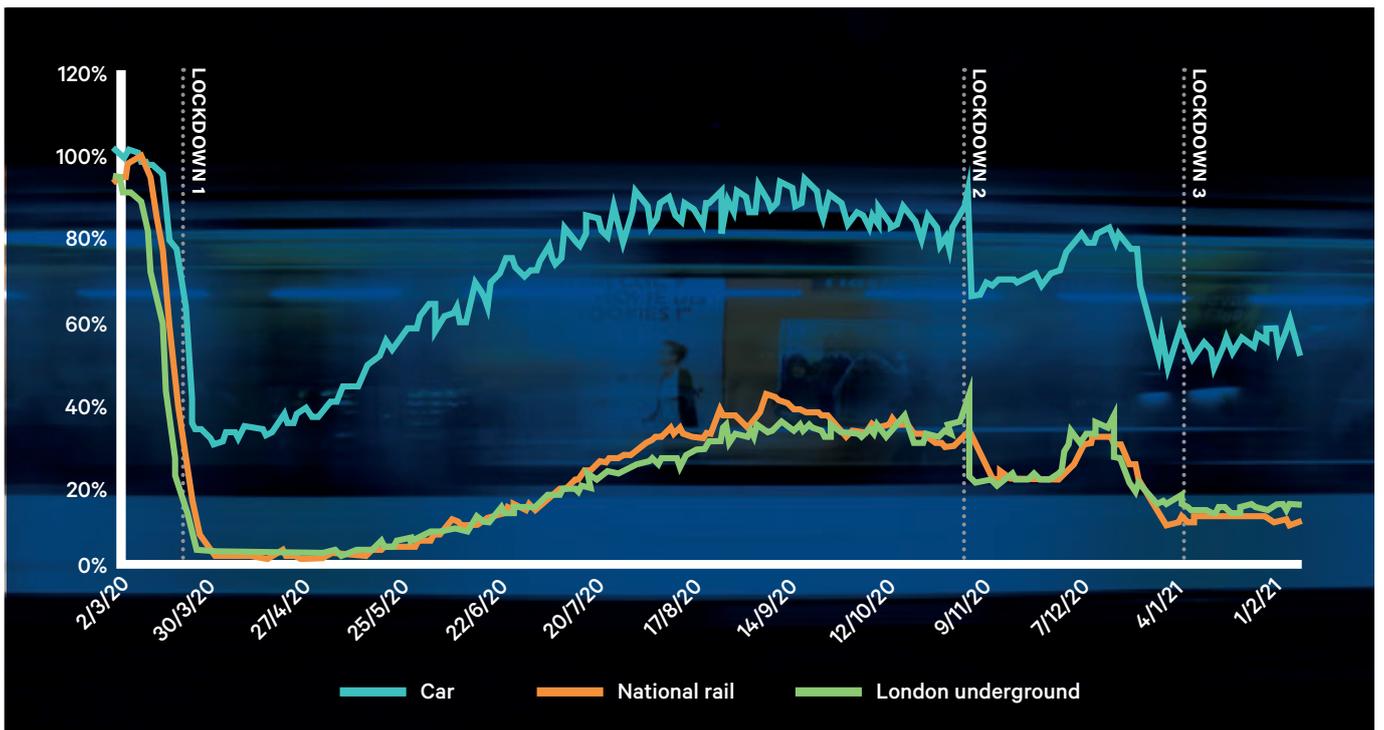
**NEWS IN BRIEF...**

- The UK’s Business Travel Association and Focus Travel partnership have both signed strategic rail partnerships with business travel consultancy Black Box Partnerships in order to enhance and advise on TMCs’ rail programmes.
- Five French regions, rail network SNCF and train manufacturer Bombardier are investing €38 million to develop bi-modal trains for use on the French TER regional rail network that can use either electric or battery power.
- The re-establishment of a rail link between Oxford and Cambridge is a step closer after the UK government announced £760 million

of investment in the delivery of the next phase of the East West Rail project. The passenger rail link between the two university cities, called the Varsity Line, was severed in 1968.

• Heathrow Express has unveiled a fleet of 12 ‘new’ trains. The new fleet, fully refurbished Class 387s that have been ‘up-cycled’ from GWR, marks the first fleet refresh since Heathrow Express launched in 1998. The trains have more space for wheelchair users and double the number of toilets. In addition, Business First passengers have work tables and extra legroom.

**UK TRANSPORT USE DURING THE PANDEMIC**



Source: UK Department for Transport

**SAVE THE DATE**

**9 JUNE 2021**

# sustainable **BUSINESS TRAVEL** SUMMIT

**EUROPE 9 JUNE 2021**

**10:30 – 16:30 CET**

This new one-day virtual event will focus on advancements in sustainability and climate action policy adoption along with actions taken by companies to align their business travel programme with corporate objectives and strategies to advance sustainability practices.

Contributing to the conversation will be industry visionaries, corporate practitioners, analysts, and leading suppliers.

## **SESSIONS INCLUDE:**

**Industry Visionaries**

**Measurers and Goal Setters**

**Corporate Travel Sustainability Pioneers**

**Pushing the Green Envelope**

## **VIEW THE FULL AGENDA**

**[www.btngroupconferences.com/sbtseurope](http://www.btngroupconferences.com/sbtseurope)**

**GOLD SPONSOR**



business travel by **expedia group**™

PRESENTED BY

**BTNGROUP**  
CONFERENCES & EVENTS

PUBLISHERS OF

**BTN**  
BUSINESS TRAVEL NEWS

**BTN**  
BUSINESS TRAVEL NEWS  
EUROPE

**Travel Procurement** The Beat



# RISKY BUSINESS

Risk management and duty of care is being taken to a whole new level as corporates prepare for the resumption of business travel, writes **Andy Hoskins**

**T**he pause in travel enforced by the Covid-19 pandemic has afforded corporates the opportunity to reconsider many processes and systems but, as travel returns, arguably there is none more pressing than risk management and an organisation's duty of care to its travellers.

Corporates must consider not only the logistical barriers as travel resumes – are borders open? Are flights available? What are the testing and quarantine requirements? – but also Covid infection rates, vaccine roll-out programmes, suppliers' health and safety protocols, traveller confidence versus traveller caution and the sharing of personal health information, as well as the 'everyday' risks associated with a location or destination. Moreover, a new international standard setting a benchmark for the management of travel risks, ISO31030, is being introduced this year and, in the case of an incident, questions will be asked if corporates are found not to be meeting it.

The foundations have at least already been set for addressing risk management in the post-pandemic environment. As the Covid-19 outbreak unfolded and in the ensuing months, the travel function in

many organisations worked closely alongside HR and security teams to bring travellers home. Now they must work together again to safely get employees back on the road.

"Having clear policies for the welfare of staff in place has never been more vital," says Karen Abbott, head of corporate account management, ATPI. "Having clear lines of communication, emergency response procedures and medical support – say for a possible Covid-19 diagnosis on the road – and traveller risk monitoring, are fundamentals for all well-managed businesses."

Travel approval systems were one of the first things corporates reviewed as the extent of the pandemic became clear, says Abbott, adding that some are now taking a more personalised approach to duty of care. "Some policies have changed from a company-wide programme to a more flexible approach," she says. "Corporates are reluctant to tackle holistic programmes right now with so much uncertainty surrounding the future of travel. A flexible duty of care service can instead be added per journey, per project or per person as and when required. It provides corporates with a more cost-effective approach to duty of care, while still ensuring that traveller safety, health and wellbeing is taken care of first and foremost."

Kerrie Henshaw-Cox, global category lead at Astra-Zeneca, agrees. “One of the main things we’ve done is to look at the travel programme and say it’s not about travel management but traveller management. It’s very specific now; it’s about the individual. It’s really important to work with our health and safety team and global security team to ensure travellers have the right information at the right time.”

ATPI’s Abbott also highlights the increasing overlap between duty of care and traveller wellbeing, with more customers including questions about the traveller’s mental health in post-trip surveys. Such surveys can help identify any risk areas that can be alleviated for the rest of the workforce as travel becomes more mainstream and to help manage any reticence to travel.

As well as more stringent approvals processes and booking tools enhanced with information about suppliers’ new health and safety measures, corporates are now also armed with a stronger case for pushing policy compliance and the booking of preferred suppliers through preferred channels.

“Non-preferred channels often don’t have the same level of capability in terms of automated trip approval processes, traveller safety alerts and notifications, and traveller support, all of which are critical to a safe and effective return to travel post-Covid,” says David Zimmer, senior vice president and global head of product at CWT.

## ATTITUDES TO TRAVEL

Opinions vary as to whether pent-up demand for travel or concerns about hitting the road will be more prevalent, but the reality is corporates will experience both viewpoints among employees. One thing is clear, no organisation is going to force a reluctant employee to travel and it also seems unlikely – but not impossible – that a business will require its employees to be vaccinated.

“You cannot force anyone to travel and this will remain the case beyond the end of the pandemic,” says Emanuele Scansani, director of partnerships and strategic relations at Riskline and a member of GBTA Europe’s Risk Committee.

Tom Stone, European travel director at Sony Pictures Entertainment, says any travel occurring currently must be business critical, approved by a line manager and have the blessing of both security and HR.

“No one is told they must travel,” he said at a recent event hosted by the Institute of Travel Management. “There will be some people that are reluctant to travel. It is very much a personal thing. It’s about making sure those who want to travel can do so safely and that they are well informed before they make the decision.

“Travel managers’ concerns are about clear, concise and consistent advice and information,” he said, adding that some buyers also have questions around potential

## DUTY OF CARE RFPs

### 16 questions to ask in your next travel RFP

- Can you advise on how best to educate our travellers on their own responsibilities regarding duty of care when travelling for business?
- Do you inform the traveller about testing, vaccination, entry requirements or other regulations prior to the trip – particularly in relation to Covid-19? If yes, how?
- Do you have access to information from professional and independent medical and security providers?
- How is your organisation staying up to date with governmental responses and travel restrictions regarding Covid-19?
- Please outline your standard emergency procedure. How can this be tailored to our requirements?
- What criteria do you use to determine that an incident has occurred which requires a formal response? How would you communicate with our travellers?
- What types of support do you offer travellers during an emergency? Is this available 24/7?
- Please outline your post-emergency review procedure.
- Can you share the emergency response procedures you deployed during the Covid-19 pandemic?
- Please describe any traveller tracking tools that you provide. How do these work and what do they show? Can they integrate with third-party tools?
- How is travel risk assessed for high-risk locations and how are recommendations for travellers provided?
- How do you manage travel to locations which may only be possible via black-listed airlines?
- Do you offer any risk management services such as country profiling, in-country support or active monitoring of travellers?
- Do you have the ability to highlight any potential high-risk destinations at the time of enquiry and/or booking and advise of any potential security/travel issues?
- Describe your ability to equip our travellers with planning and informative material before travelling.
- How have you recommended that organisations amend their travel policy in light of the outbreak of Covid-19?

Source: ATPI, January 2021

“  
No one is going to be told they must travel. There will be some people that are reluctant to travel – it is very much a personal thing



liability considerations; whether it's viable or even desirable to try and mandate vaccinations to travellers (see panel below); and potential insurance impacts.

Many commentators cannot see newly heightened duty of care concerns subsiding for many years – if at all. “There is an overarching consensus that attitudes towards travel and risk have changed, perhaps irrevocably,” says CWT’s Zimmer. “A more moderate safety and security approach towards travel will eventually return, but maybe not to pre-Covid norms. And while it’s likely that cost and value-for-trip will once again become more important, we expect they will be in greater balance with traveller wellbeing and risk management.”

In the meantime, he says: “The most powerful tool to help travellers feel comfortable is information. That’s been at the heart of our return to travel approach.”

Making a trip a simple and safe experience is about providing transparent information that allows companies and their employees to have more control over their trip environment, Zimmer believes.

Trust is also crucial for travel to get back underway smoothly, says Maura Geertsma, CCO of GoPass Global which works with TMCs, booking tools and directly with corporates. “We are all trying to get this pandemic under control and it still might take a while before we all feel safe again. Vaccines will help, but it will take time to rebuild trust. It’s going to be a key factor as we emerge from the pandemic.”

### TOO MUCH INFORMATION?

There is of course a delicate balance when it comes to information: provide too much and attention wanes or a traveller could be overwhelmed; too little, and shaky confidence could be lost altogether.

“What’s shone through for us is to try and keep things as simple as possible,” says AstraZeneca’s Henshaw-Cox. “We’ve worked with our TMC on a single source of infor-

### VACCINES AND HEALTH PASSPORTS

Businesses could face difficult questions if employees refuse to be vaccinated when one becomes available to them, particularly with regards travelling overseas in their role.

Dr Adrian Hyzler, chief medical officer for risk management and medical assistance company Healix, thinks employers would be put in a very awkward position. “They will find it difficult to tell their people they must get vaccinated,” he says. “There would be huge publicity. You would have lawyers queuing up to say employers weren’t letting them do their job.”

For employees who are willing to travel and to be vaccinated, Hyzler says there is no reason to forbid them from travelling before receiving their jabs, if local laws permit.

Each potential trip, according to Hyzler, needs to be assessed on the basis of the infection rate in the destination country, the quality of its healthcare service and the health risk profile of the individual traveller. “Companies could say they won’t allow business travel until the employee is vaccinated but they could be waiting a long time,” says Hyzler.

Nina Marcello, principal, global hotel practice line lead at Amex GBT, adds: “It’s a complex issue, and data privacy and rights will be factors in policymaking. For any decision-making around health policies going forward, it’s important to engage with key stakeholders across your organisation, such as security, HR and legal.”



“

**We are living in an overwhelming situation. There are infinite amounts of information out there but this in itself does not build trust**

mation. You need that reliable, updated, live, correct and appropriate source of information. It’s been an essential tool for us while travel has continued.”

Riskline’s Scansani says business travellers currently face an ‘infodemic’. “We are living in an overwhelming situation right now. There are infinite amounts of information but this in itself does not build trust,” he says.

Riskline taps into more than 100,000 sources of information including government agencies, media, social media and people on the ground, and uses AI to monitor them. “The system alerts our analysts as there must be human verification [of a potential issue]. It’s essential to debunk misinformation.”

The organisation has seen an increase in demand for risk data on all aspects of travel and Covid, but also reports increased concern for older travellers who might be at greater health risk while travelling. As a consequence, “there will be a demographic shift towards more younger staff travelling,” he believes.

### WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

At its most basic level, traveller tracking means corporates knowing where their travellers are – or should be – on any given date by virtue of access to employees’ travel schedules and accommodation bookings.

Incorporating automated alerts and messaging for travellers potentially affected by an incident is the next step, and best practice is some form of geolocation – being able to pinpoint a traveller’s location in real time via an



electronic device and to communicate with them. This does of course come with privacy concerns attached.

“In reality, many geolocation tracking platforms can be configured to activate in background mode, and only in the case of a high-risk event occurring in the same location of an employee will the employer or employee be notified of the potential risk,” says Scott Sunderman, managing director of medical and security assistance at Collinson.

While the risk of catching and transmitting Covid is perhaps uppermost in minds currently, there are new hazards pertaining to the pandemic that should not be overlooked.

“The low-risk neighbourhood I went into 2019 may not be a low-risk neighbourhood in 2021,” says International SOS director of security solutions Jeremy Prout. “Restaurant activity and people openly walking around at night brings about a level of safety. Now, all those people aren’t out, so the dynamics of neighbourhoods have changed.”

Prout also points to an increased likelihood of civil unrest or violence. Lockdown protests in the Netherlands recently turned violent, for example. “Emotions are running high,” he says.

Rodger Cook, regional security director at World Travel Protection, says the fact business travellers are among the few people on the road at the moment makes them a bigger target for fraud, muggings, hotel room theft and, in certain locations, possibly even kidnappings. “Increased precautions should be taken if you’re travelling to an area which has typically been heavily dependent on tourism,” he advises. “The economy in these destinations almost disappeared overnight.”

## RAISING THE STANDARD

“Covid-19 has had a major impact on travellers’ perception of safety and corporate duty of care to travellers. This, along with heightened

international tensions, civil unrest and intensifying crime and terrorism means travel managers and travel risk professionals must have a strong, tested, formalised risk management process – one that not only fulfils their company’s duty of care to its travellers but that also gives travellers confidence and the knowledge and resources to stay safe,” says Bob Quick, executive director and founder at Global Secure Accreditation.

ISO 31030, the much-talked about new international standard relating to travel risk, will set corporates a new benchmark when published later this year. It will cover all aspects of corporate travel including authorisations, planning, policy, traveller assessment, transport, accommodation and much more, says Quick.

“The guidance is written so that it can be applied to a full range of organisational contexts, travel requirements, threat and risk environments or risk appetites. So whether travellers are visiting a low- or high-risk country, ISO 31030 will serve as actionable good practice guidance that can be applied to any travel programme.”

The standard will, for example, ensure corporates use hotels that meet appropriate health, safety and security standards, that TMCs only offer such hotels, and that the hotels themselves meet those standards and in doing so help their partners adhere to the standard.

“It is not a legal standard, but speaking to lawyer friends, it’s very likely once this is published that when something goes wrong litigants are very likely to point to ISO31030 and ask if you were compliant,” says Quick. “That shouldn’t be your sole motivation but it is a risk you need to consider. It reinforces a discipline most organisations already have. There’s no legal requirement to comply per se but I think most courts would take seriously a standard issued by a world-renowned organisation like ISO.”

Simon Harris, executive director for security, safety and sustainability EMEA & APAC at Sony Pictures Entertainment, appearing alongside colleague Tom Stone at the ITM event, said: “Like most multinationals we have robust policies and procedures in place already but this standard pulls everything together nicely. There’s a good opportunity to work more collaboratively internally as this encompass a lot of departments. The benchmarking allows Tom and myself to easily and quickly see how seriously potential vendors are taking it.”

Stone adds: “We’re already doing much that is covered by the standard but it helps consolidate different projects and, more importantly, reinforces to the internal customer base how seriously we take their wellbeing as the company’s most important assets.”

He continues: “The TMC partner is very important in this. We can’t expect them to assume the responsibility but they are critical in terms of assisting with the delivery of this both in terms of monitoring suppliers and liaising with the internal customer base.”

Despite the hiatus in activity across so many areas of business and life in general, risk management professionals and their travel management colleagues have rarely been busier as they prepare for the return of travel – and their work is likely to continue, says Nina Marcello, principal, global hotel practice line lead at American Express Global Business Travel.

“As vaccine roll-outs progress around the world, customers are wanting to be in a state of readiness for the return in demand [for travel] and the quick changes to policies this requires. Travel and risk policies need to be agile, continually monitored to make sure they’re meeting health and safety requirements, and adjusted as and when necessary. We are going to be in a fast-changing environment for some time.”



# ALL TOGETHER NOW

The travel industry is making much-needed progress on diversity, equality and inclusion, writes **Amon Cohen**

In January this year, the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) announced it had launched a diversity, equality and inclusion committee. It followed a similar initiative by the fledgling Travel and Meetings Society (TAMS) in 2020.

Some corporate travel professionals might wonder whether such groups are needed in an industry where, those interviewed for this analysis agree, overt racial, sexual or gender discrimination is rare.

But even if less obvious than a white police officer's knee squeezing the life out of a prone black man's neck, that doesn't mean that there isn't a problem – either in the corporate travel sector or for minority business travellers.

In fact it was last year's protests in the United States over the death of George Floyd which prompted travel manager Carol Fergus, European lead for the new GBTA D&I committee, to start thinking about diversity in her work for the first time.

"I raised my head and realised there were very few people like me," says Fergus. "A lot of organisations will say they are non-discriminatory but when I look at the number of people of colour in the travel industry, they are not doing enough." In particular, Fergus adds, there aren't enough people of colour at senior levels.

"Companies need to ask what they can do as an organisation to create the ability for people to move up the ladder," she says. "They have to open up that Pandora's box and ask what it is."

The explanations – and one of Fergus's priorities for the GBTA committee is to research the subject properly – are likely to prove complex. Some may result from unconscious privilege and bias on the part of employers. But there is also the need to overcome the impostor syndrome felt by some communities.

"You sit in the corner. You don't want to rock the boat," says Linda Bekoe, who runs hotel representation company About Partners and is one of the leaders of the TAMS D&I committee.

"People don't come with their whole selves to work. It's to do with how you are brought up. There are certain questions you wouldn't ask because you are grateful for that opportunity just to be there. When I worked in hotels, I felt I had to sound a certain way because it fitted in."

Impostor syndrome extends well beyond race or gender. Fergus says a drive for inclusivity should aim at people from all backgrounds whose opportunities are limited and need support. She is particularly keen to encourage internships and apprenticeships for any young person "who would normally walk past a building and think 'someone like me wouldn't be able to work there'."



Fergus also wants the GBTA committee to focus on inclusivity for people with mobility and mental health issues. “I don’t think that’s been as big a discussion as it needs to be,” she says. “There’s still a discomfort talking about it.”

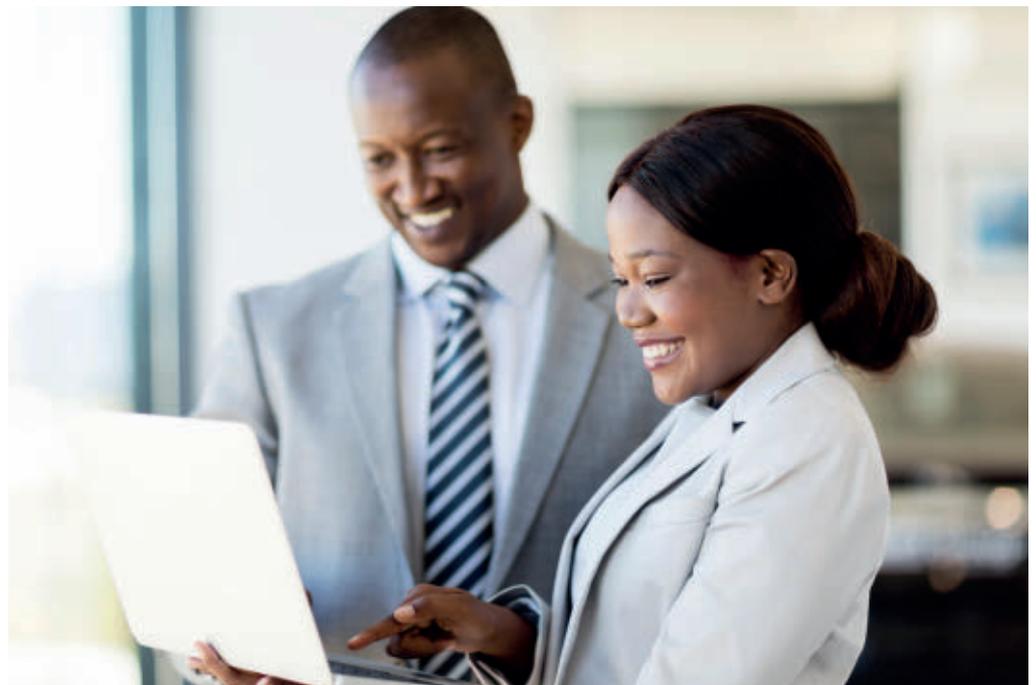
The big question is how to convert these worthwhile intentions into action. With the corporate travel sector devastated by the coronavirus pandemic, nothing will happen overnight, says Fergus.

Looking farther ahead, however, she believes that when the sector does eventually recover, there will be an opportunity to rebuild with diversity and inclusion baked in from the beginning, including a different attitude to recruitment.

Travel buyers can play their part in advancing the agenda even though they are not the company CEO, says Jafles Pacheco, the Switzerland-based head of indirect material spend management for Oerlikon. They can make smaller, incremental differences through recruitment decisions over which they have influence and by drawing attention to D&I in supplier requests for proposal.

“You can ask a question like: ‘Please explain your D&I strategy towards guests and employees’,” says Pacheco. “At least if you raise awareness, the sales manager might Google ‘What is D&I?’. If others ask the same question, then they will say ‘there is an interest here’.”

Travel managers also have a responsibility to mitigate the risks for travellers facing discrimination during business trips, says Carolyn Pearson, CEO of Maiden Voyage, a company which offers training in looking after diverse travellers.



“

A lot of organisations will say they are non-discriminatory but when I look at the number of people of colour in the travel industry, they are not doing enough



However, it is a topic which needs approaching with some sensitivity. “You can’t ask an employee if they are worried about going to Russia because they are a black gay man,” says Pearson. “But you can ask all employees if they are worried about going to a destination.”

Beware a misplaced sense of care as well. “An executive at a major bank told me he wouldn’t send a woman to Saudi Arabia because it wouldn’t be safe for her,” Pearson says. “It should be the woman herself who decides that. It might be important for her career that she goes. She may need to meet certain clients in the region. If she isn’t taking some opportunities, she may gain a reputation that she can only go so far in her role. It’s better to ask ‘are you comfortable taking this trip and do you have any special requirements?’”

There are other ethical complexities. For example, Pearson says companies should inform travellers about destinations where homosexuality is illegal and even punishable by death. As a result, they might take preventive action, such as removing photos of themselves with partners from mobile phone home screens, or rainbow stickers from laptops, for example.

Yet doesn’t that mean some travellers are effectively being advised, in Bekoe’s words, to suppress presenting

---

**“**  
**You can’t ask an employee if they are worried about going to Russia because they are a black gay man, but you can ask all employees if they are worried about going to a destination**

“their whole selves”? Again, says Pacheco, it’s a question of informing travellers so they can make their own choices. “As a traveller I would be less flamboyant in the Middle East or China because I could be imprisoned,” he says.

“But you’re not going to say to travellers: ‘be less flamboyant’. You’re going to say: ‘be aware of local sensitivities around gender and diversity’. That’s enough to tell me to scan my environment.”

Travel managers will also want to ensure none of their travelling employees is made to feel uncomfortable by preferred suppliers. Most directly, that probably means checking amenities are appropriate for travellers with mobility issues.

But, after encountering passive hostility during a weekend at a hotel in Glasgow, Fergus knows that even in the 2020s racism can still haunt the travel sector. It’s why she believes suppliers need to revisit D&I within their own HR strategies, because if employers do right by their employees, they will also do right by their customers.

“You used to get signs up at accommodation saying ‘No dogs, no Irish, no blacks’,” says Fergus. “It’s not as obvious as that any more. But if suppliers such as hotels get their own house in order, then by default problems such as unconscious bias and white privilege will go away.”

# Survival of the fittest

Which hotel types will thrive in 2021 and which will simply survive?



**BY** William Francois, lecturer at Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne and head of research activities at the Institute of Customer Experience Management

**W**hilst the UK's tentative roadmap to recovery has been laid out, there is undoubtedly a long route back to normality. Before the widespread availability of vaccinations, cheaper PCR testing and the reopening of international borders, the biggest travel markets will be domestic. The question of how to maintain and maximise revenues will be hospitality's top priority.

Some hotel types are better placed to take advantage of the opportunities available in the short term, but survival and adaptation is something all hoteliers are good at. Innovative thinking will have a key role to play in rebuilding hospitality, particularly in cities.

Budget hotels can look for quick wins by entering the extended stay market. Offering long-lets with self-catering or hotel style services will keep hotel rooms occupied. Brands like Marriott and IHG are dealing with the industry-wide debt deficit by renting out rooms for up to 24 days at a time. Many of these guests are working in health care, construction and logistics.

A more attractive scenario for hoteliers could be hybridisation of hotel spaces – including transforming unused event rooms into brand-appropriate, pop-up shops ('co-retailing') or offering upscale office lets ('co-officing'). This allows them to ensure stable revenues whilst maintaining their customer service advantage.

Even before the crisis, lifestyle hotels were ahead of hybridisation by offering affordable

luxury, open spaces for co-working and an offering based on customer needs. Beyond the very advanced digitisation of these hotels, their business model was already more flexible and they attracted a mid- to high-class clientele.

By dint of their design of social spaces and informal attitude, lifestyle hotels will continue to be well-placed to offer domestic markets a venue for all-day F&B, remote working and meetings. In 2021, lifestyle brand citizenM is set to open a fourth Parisian outpost on the Champs Elysees and has another opening in London Victoria in 2022. French area manager, Alex Perper believes that returning to the old, traditional models is neither valuable nor viable in the long run. "CitizenM's model of training multi-role staff and incorporating technology seamlessly into the guest experience streamlined costs, which is a huge advantage."

For luxury hotels, service design strategies will be critical. Typically the luxury brands can find it harder to pivot radically as they have high capital costs and considerable staff commitments. Taking a customer-centric approach to clearly differentiate hotel offerings will attract high-value guests.

The Peninsula Hotels have done something interesting with their new 'Peninsula Promise' pledge to their customers, for example. This comprises a consistent 'package' of services that have a direct value to bookers, including almost a free-day's worth of check-in, touch-



free technology, preferential rates and flexible conditions across all their hotels. Luxury hotels are likely to raise the bar on ever more customised services, entertaining experiences and exclusive access for a demanding and more environmentally conscious clientele.

Hotel locations will play a notable part in short-term success. The predicted slow return of business travel and the future of work practices will directly impact occupancy in prime city centres. Though hotels in gateway cities are likely to remain relevant for international business travellers when borders reopen, visits will likely be less frequent.

The expectation is that hotels in tertiary locations will be more appealing to remote employees for accessible meetings and co-working. Meetings and events bookings are expected to migrate to more rural and remote locations, with sole-use arrangements affording delegates supremely controlled environments for long-awaited gatherings.

In all cases, leadership will be key to driving changes and maintain resilience for hotels to survive. The team management skills required to adapt, to be resilient, to respond to opportunities and to reinvent offerings are a huge challenge for hoteliers, but it's something they are born to do.

# FREEDOM TO FLY

The introduction of vaccination or health passports prompts questions around privacy and equity, writes **Amon Cohen**

**C**ompanies should avoid requiring or even asking employees to adopt digital travel health passports until they have conducted extensive data-privacy impact assessments – that is the verdict of the global head of privacy for travel management company CWT. Initiatives to introduce such ‘passports’, registering whether travellers have been vaccinated and/or tested, could prove vital to faster travel resumption. At least ten passport schemes are actively being promoted and/or trialed, but records of this kind raise a whole new set of challenges relating to data protection.

Health data is treated under the European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation as “sensitive data”, which may be processed only if a clear legal basis has been established to do so. Such a legal basis has yet to be clarified for travel health passports, says CWT’s Christel Cao-Delebarre, who added that GDPR is emerging as a global standard for data-privacy practice. Companies also will need to carry out due diligence on the security of the different passport products under development by the many providers and establish whether

they, as employers, would face liability in the event of any breaches.

One travel manager who has already investigated health passports told *Business Travel News* his company is very wary of introducing them. “Our head of privacy reconfirmed that we must find a way this is never mandated as the company might be liable for data breaches,” said the travel manager, requesting anonymity. “If employees adopt a passport voluntarily because it makes their life easier, that’s OK.”

In addition to the privacy issues raised, some commentators point to the potential polarising effect of health passports. “There is an element of discrimination attached to them,” says Emanuele Scansani, director of partnerships and strategic relations at Riskline, highlighting both the variance in speed of vaccination rollouts around the globe and the right of an individual to decline the job.

“I am absolutely against the idea that vaccination should be mandated and proof of vaccination necessary to be allowed in an aeroplane cabin. Having said that, I think it’s impossible to imagine any consistent return to travel without having to show your vaccination record. In other words,



if immunity passports or health passports are part of the solution to going back to travel, then so be it. We need to encourage any kind of standardisation and tech integration that will speed this process up.”

A survey of business travellers published in January by BCD Travel found their top criterion for acceptance of health passports was satisfactory data protection.

“Every new proposal to help people get out of their homes we’ll welcome and we’ll look at in compliance with privacy, but it needs to be done in compliance with fundamental privacy rights to ensure trust,” says Cao-Delebarre. “There’s more work to do right now before the passports can be issued.

“In terms of corporate communication, employers can actively promote their position towards vaccination campaigns and engage staff in a constructive discussion. However, asking or insisting that employees sign up to health passports would carry legal risk.”

For travel managers and the companies they work for, Cao-Delebarre says, “Don’t rush into it before making sure you have carried out an in-depth privacy impact assessment. What are the consequences if you have mandated health passes as an organisation? What are you really saying to your employees? It has bigger implications in terms of potential discrimination or categorising your employees.

“I would really encourage them not to rush into this until there is much more certainty from governments and policymakers, and make sure that privacy and local employment law matters are checked and rechecked.”

Cao-Delebarre adds that travel managers should collaborate with their in-house legal and privacy teams. She also urged travel managers to take the matter to board level to resolve the balance of legal and privacy risks with the business continuity risk presented by not resuming travel.

Several obstacles block the path to finding a legal basis for either mandatory or compulsory enrolment of travellers. The first, said Cao-Delebarre, is that “as a general rule, the legal basis for employees to be required to be vaccinated and obtain a health passport lies in substantiating an employer’s obligation to invoke or comply with a specific law, regulation, governmental approach or decree, applicable in the field of employment. Currently, in most countries, governments have not made it a legal obligation to be vaccinated against Covid-19.”

A related topic is whether employers can ask employees to disclose they have obtained a health passport and whether employers could, as a result, process this information. The answer varies, said Cao-Delebarre. Under Europe’s GDPR, consent must be given freely, but it’s generally considered impossible for employees to give free consent to employers owing



## WIDENING THE GAP BETWEEN THE ‘HAVES’ AND ‘HAVE NOTS’?

*By Elizabeth West*

CommonPass, The Mayo Clinic, Microsoft and Oracle – among other participants – have joined together as the Vaccine Coalition Initiative. The objective of the initiative is to provide a digital health passport for travel, but could they be used as a ‘free pass’ to participate in any group-oriented activities? Think meetings and conferences or large public event or venues, for example – or even simply attending the office.

The travel industry already has a form of health certification. Immunisation against infectious diseases like yellow fever or malaria is required to travel to certain global markets. Graduating from that kind of certification to a broader digital health pass that is less vulnerable to fraud than a paper certificate sounds like an advance. And it is, particularly in the face of a pandemic. But there are also some negatives.

Limited immunisation that is required for voluntary travel to certain locations is quite different from being required to present proof of immunisation to board any plane or enter any meeting or conference.

The result of such a system would bifurcate access to these activities not only to the “will” and “will nots” in some cases, but also to the

“haves” and “have nots.” Both are important issues. It’s arguable that the “will nots” should not have access blocked because they can’t or won’t be immunised.

There are models for these issues. For example, school systems provide immunisation exceptions for school-age children who are not vaccinated for flu, chicken pox, measles and other infectious diseases. As larger numbers of the population opt out, however, it does endanger herd immunity.

The “have nots” are another issue. Vaccine rollouts will not be standard around the world – rich countries have secured access to the vaccines much faster than poorer nations, while financial and distribution issues could require poorer countries to use different vaccines to richer countries. This issue will likely precipitate debate over which vaccines meet government standards, and those will differ among nations.

Assuming digital health passports are broadly rolled out – and they surely will be in some form or another – differences in which vaccine versions countries will accept on these platforms will imbed broad inequities in where global business travellers will be allowed to travel and which ones may not be able to travel anywhere at all.

to fear of the potential consequences of refusal. In the Asia-Pacific region, however, it is generally allowed for employers to ask for this data.

“All in all, it is unlikely there will be scope for a global policy, which can make it challenging for global employers,” says Cao-Delebarre. “Privacy risk assessments will be on a case-by-case basis, taking into account, in addition to local law, the sector in which employers have their activity and the specific employment duties and role of a particular employee.”

If companies succeed in identifying an appropriate legal basis, significant due diligence still would be required to avoid liability if employees’ sensitive data were breached or mistreated in other ways, such as through unauthorised sharing. The impact assessment would consider which parties, including the employer, airlines, governments, booking platforms and the digital passport provider, would bear responsibility as controllers or processors of the data.

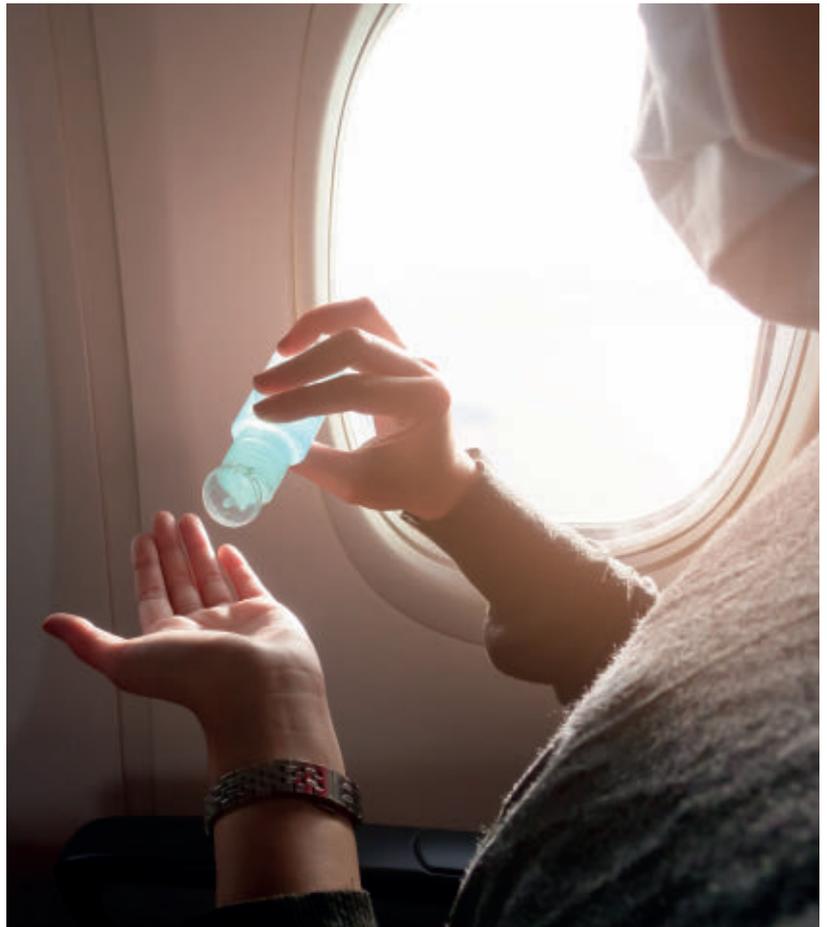
The assessment would also have to vet the competence of the digital passport provider to protect sensitive data adequately, a task not helped by the number of competitors on the market, each offering a different approach. Schemes including the IATA’s Travel Pass, or ICC AOKpass – whose backers include the International Chamber of Commerce and risk management company International SOS – claim they avoid many privacy pitfalls by not maintaining a central database to store traveller data.

AOKpass, for example, places each record on its own blockchain. “In theory, you could have a server that takes all this information from around the world and have one hard drive, and everybody recognises that server as the authenticated data, but that would be very dangerous,” says Co-founder Dr. Chester Drum. “One of the biggest dangers to compromising privacy is when you take a lot of sensitive information and put it in one place. That’s why decentralisation by itself is one of the most powerful security measures you can take.”

Drum acknowledged there remains an initial challenge of finding a legal basis for employers to move employees onto travel health passports. But, he says, “the flip side of the coin is that companies have an obligation to protect employees.”

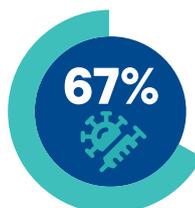
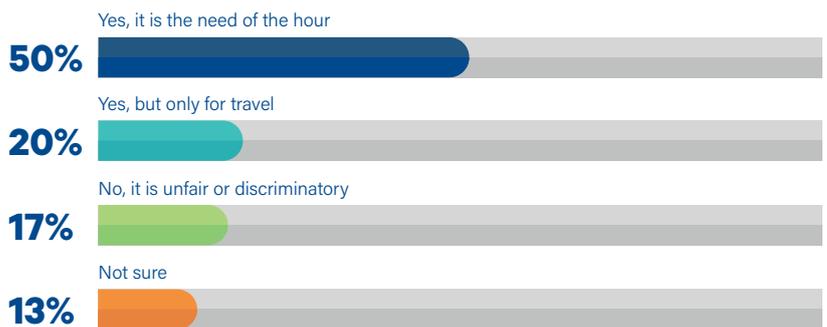
Cao-Delebarre says better cooperation is essential. “Sharing and tracking health data really requires an in-depth privacy assessment, and for the travel ecosystem it would be a good idea to come together and decide who is doing what,” she says.

“It’s not an overnight thing. It has to be well thought through to make sure the liabilities that could take place following a hacking or other security event are well identified and distributed, and at the end of the day that the traveller is protected.”



## ATTITUDES TO VACCINE PASSPORTS

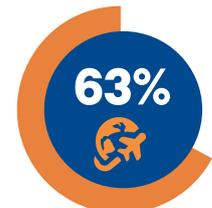
*Do you support the idea of access based on one’s health status?*



...of respondents were aware of the concept of a vaccine passport



...have reservations about vaccine passports. 13 per cent of those have data privacy concerns



...believe vaccine passports will make travelling less stressful

Source: Piplsay poll of more than 6,000 people across the UK, February 2021

# Allow life to unfold

Opening soon in  
Amsterdam, Newcastle, Liverpool and Luxembourg!

## Stay Curious



## INNSiDE

BY MELIÀ

Aachen | Berlín | Bremen | Frankfurt | Dresden | Düsseldorf | Hamburgo | Leipzig | Lima | Manchester | Múnich | Milán  
New York | Palma de Mallorca | Praga | París | Saigón | Wolfsburg | Yogyakarta | Zaragoza | Zhengzhou

[insidebymelia.com](https://www.insidebymelia.com)



# AFTER THE STORM

The long-term impact of Brexit on UK business travel will only become clear as volumes return, writes **Andy Hoskins**, who assesses the early implications

**W**elcome to the Brexit, sir” – those were the words now famously uttered by a Dutch border official to a British driver as he confiscated his ham sandwiches upon arrival in the Netherlands earlier this month. The subtext might have been: “your nation voted for this folly – deal with it”.

Following the completion of the transition period at 11pm on December 31, when ties between the UK and European Union were severed, the exchange became an early symbol of Brexit’s impact – however trivial the moment captured by a Dutch TV crew appeared.

With the freedom of movement for the UK’s people, goods, services and capital to and within the 27 states of the EU coming to a shuddering halt, many had feared significant disruption and chaotic scenes at airports and borders, but that wasn’t to be. How different things might have been had people – holidaymakers and businesses – been going about their usual travels rather than being almost entirely grounded by the Covid-19 pandemic.

There were 1,645 days between the UK referendum in June 2016 – in which the nation voted 51.9% in favour of leaving the EU – and the striking of a trade deal on 24 December last year, just a week before the UK said au revoir, auf wiedersehen and adios to its neighbours’ union.

With little actual detail set out in advance, it was not surprising that in the months since – and despite severely suppressed business travel activity – TMCs and corporates have reported complications and confusion at borders.

One travel management company told *BTN Europe* that the British employee of a customer was denied boarding on a flight from Amsterdam to Budapest in January for not having a work permit – a document not required when the UK was part of the EU. “The challenge that we have seen is inconsistency in terms of rules and regulations and paperwork required,” says Donna Joines, regional operations manager for Corporate Traveller UK.

“This is becoming increasingly frustrating for our clients in the energy sector and food and beverage industries, whose business travel is essential right now. Our consultants check four different information sources to

advise clients of the latest regulations, but an airline supplier may only be using one source. The rules can differ depending on which source is being used.”

On another occasion, Joines says a client sent travellers on successive days from the UK to Budapest via Amsterdam. “One traveller on Monday had no issues at immigration and made the connecting flight,” she explains. “Then on Tuesday, the other traveller was stopped in Amsterdam and told he wasn’t allowed to board the flight to Budapest because he needed a work permit to enter Hungary.”

The TCA states that, for entry to Hungary, Cyprus and Denmark, a “work permit, including economic needs test, [is] required in case the short-term business visitor supplies a service.”

Joines continues: “The problem was exacerbated because in normal times, if there is an issue with a traveller missing a connecting flight, there would be an alternative flight later the same day. But at the moment flight schedules are vastly reduced, meaning the only alternative was for the traveller to return to the UK.”

On the other hand, several TMCs *BTN Europe* spoke with said they had witnessed very little disruption. The ITM reported a similar picture among its buyer members, but all pointed to the exceptionally low numbers of people currently travelling on business.

Abby Penston, chief executive of the Focus Travel Partnership, which comprises more than 40 small and mid-market TMCs, says Brexit has not caused “undue issues” for its members’ clients but that this is down to the “massive amounts of time and effort” invested in checking new procedures.

“Partners are reporting that they have had to send a great deal more information and advice to clients because of Brexit,” she says, and that “detailed information on visas and permits for long-stay workers, seafarers and engineers are still lacking”.

Even corporates that aren’t travelling must prepare for the new levels of complexity they will face as European business assignments return. And while pages 770-771 of the 1,276-page Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) provide details on what activities short-term business visitors can engage in, there is likely to be inconsistent application on a country-by-country basis.

## THE LEGAL VIEW

By Amon Cohen

An immigration specialist has warned that companies should assume any work activity not explicitly included on the list of permitted activities for short-term business visitors published on pages 770-771 of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) between the EU and UK will require additional paperwork.

Broadly speaking, travel for meetings and events is unlikely to require additional paperwork – but be warned that this is not a hard and fast rule.

The agreement includes additional unilateral restrictions on UK business visitors imposed by individual EU states. But the immigration expert and a lawyer both confirm that there are likely to be complex interpretations of the main list on a country-by-country basis.

Raquel Gómez Salas, a global immigration counsel for London-based visa and immigration service provider Newland Chase, warned business travel from the UK to the EU now involves substantial paperwork and equally substantial confusion, in many cases.

“Any short-term activity not included in the TCA will require work authorisation unless it is work permit-exempt by the national immigration rules of the particular EU country where the activities take place,” she says. “But there is still uncertainty around how each EU country will interpret the list of permitted activities.”

Similar challenges will complicate business trips to the UK from the European Economic Area (the EU plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway), according to Robert Houchill, an

associate with law firm Kingsley Napley, also based in London.

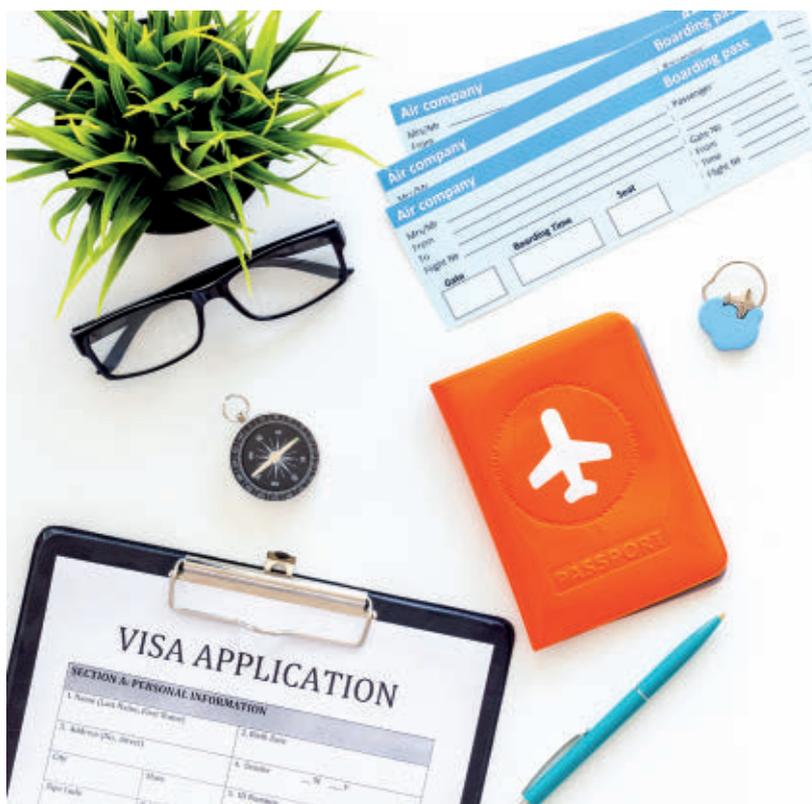
“Often a visitor’s planned activities do not fall neatly within the terms of the ‘permitted activities’ and it can be difficult to determine what is and is not allowed,” says Houchill. “Perhaps the more common permitted activities are attending meetings or conferences, negotiating and signing deals and contracts, carrying out site visits and inspections, and gathering information for employment overseas.”

“The rules for intra-corporate visitors (overseas employees of a UK-based company) are a bit more generous and allow for some training, advising, consulting and sharing skills or knowledge for an internal project, providing the visitor is not dealing directly with clients.”

“When engaging with EEA nationals in the UK, companies now need to use the same thinking as with US, Chinese or Indian nationals – namely, what type of activities will the individual be doing and is a work visa required?”

Meanwhile, a London-based travel manager at a global consulting firm told *BTN Europe* his in-house lawyers have advised him that all consulting assignments by the firm’s UK passport holders travelling to the EU and vice versa will require work visas in future.

“The lawyers are telling me that we need to go and get visas,” he says. “London is a net exporter of consultants to the rest of the world, especially the European Union. All of a sudden, those consultants will need a visa to work in France or Germany, and will need a different visa for each of them.”



“

Our TMC partners are reporting that they have had to send a great deal more information and advice to clients because of Brexit

Furthermore, requirements for activities and scenarios not covered in the TCA, as well as red tape for longer stays, now varies from nation to nation for UK passport holders.

“It’s an unprecedented deal in that it’s designed to separate two markets. It’s about managing divergence. It’s also unprecedented in its depth and breadth,” says Clare Moody, former MEP and political director at Grayling. She continues: “There are teething problems without doubt. Some are systems related – particularly delays at borders – and some is because that’s just how it’s going to be. There is just more friction now. We’ll have queues at airports and more checks.

“You could argue the pandemic and reduction in travel have made it easier to do this transition at this point in time. We don’t yet know what the new normal is post-pandemic and how much less travel there will be in general.”

Where previously UK travellers could hop on a plane to an EU nation without barely a second thought, the business travel industry must now familiarise itself

“

**If you’re outside the EU you’re looking at 27 member states and what each requires of you to get in**

with the particular requirements of 27 different nations. “If you’re inside the EU it’s a single entity,” says Moody. “But if you’re outside you’re looking at 27 member states and what each requires of you to get in.”

It is a reality that one UK-based travel manager is coming to terms with. “My biggest issue is how different the rules can be for each country,” they told *BTN Europe*, explaining that their travellers now require visas to carry out a particular business service in Denmark but do not need one to do so in Sweden.

They continue: “Even then, it is all well and good knowing the answers but it is another matter getting the information to the traveller. Where do they look for it? Do they consult with the Brexit hub we’ve set up? Do they check with the TMC? Do they ask the travel department? TMCs are there to save time when booking travel – among myriad other reasons – but this is now going to add a lot of time checking and educating.”

Another major source of concern, they explain, is the permissible length of stay in the EU – 90 days in any six-month period, applicable to both leisure and business travellers. “Who keeps track of the number of days business travellers have been out of the country [in the EU] – the TMC? The traveller? HR?”

They add: “What if business requires them to be in different [EU] countries out of our region for, say, 80 days. Does that mean that they cannot then travel on to Spain for a two-week holiday without a visa?”

Mark Colley, managing director of Sunways Business Travel, says one client that provides engineering support across Europe has travellers that will almost certainly fall foul of the 90-day cap and instead require visas.

“The hope is that this process will not be marred by too much red tape, otherwise the client will not be able to confidently tender for contracts within the EU,” he says.

Global Travel Management’s managing director Scott Pawley says his TMC has the tools to track travellers’ time spent in the EU, while FCM says corporates must have access to assessment tools to define the requirements of a proposed trip. The TMC has worked with its visa partner to provide clients with an integrated self-assessment tool within its FCM Hub.

The added complexity, and who this falls upon to cut through and manage, is likely to become part of a wider debate around TMC service and remuneration structures. For now, however, corporates and TMCs have the compounded complications of travelling both in the aftermath of Brexit and in the midst of a pandemic.

As Corporate Traveller’s Joines says: “Those individuals currently travelling for business already have comprehensive paperwork and the appropriate permits. If these travellers are facing issues now, then what’s going to happen when other industry sectors resume business travel?”





# CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION IN BUSINESS TRAVEL

The 26th annual Business Travel Awards will be returning in 2021. Join us on Thursday 9 September as we bring the business travel community together for a much-needed celebration.

Entries open in March.

Visit [businesstravelawards.com](https://businesstravelawards.com) for further information.

**BUSINESS TRAVEL AWARDS**  
2021

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**THURSDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2021**  
GROSVENOR HOUSE HOTEL LONDON

PRESENTED BY:

**BTNGROUP**  
CONFERENCES & EVENTS

PUBLISHERS OF:

**BTN**  
BUSINESS TRAVEL NEWS

**Travel Procurement**

**The Beat**

**BTN**  
BUSINESS TRAVEL NEWS  
EUROPE



# CAREERS ADVICE

Job security? Travel managers must diversify for that, writes **Amon Cohen**

**B**usiness travel is not the ideal career choice in 2021 for anyone craving job security. According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), international passenger demand fell by 75 per cent in 2020 and domestic demand by nearly half.

Small wonder, then, that sector specialist C&M Travel Recruitment reports the number of roles it handled plummeted 94.8 per cent between March and November 2020.

The US-based consultant, Scott Gillespie, one of business travel's most respected commentators, wrote a much-read commentary for *Business Travel News* recently in which he stated "fewer travel suppliers and fewer travel managers" will be "an unavoidable consequence of a shrinking industry".

There is growing belief that shrinkage will persist even after the coronavirus pandemic passes. Last week, EY became the latest in a string of professional services firms to commit themselves to cutting business travel emissions (35 per cent below 2019 carbon emissions in EY's case) as they target company-wide sustainability goals.

Although impossible to measure objectively – and some jobs have

been lost for sure – bloodletting appears not to have been substantial among travel managers. "It's not been as widespread as you would imagine," says Lynne Griffiths, CEO of business travel recruitment company Sirius Executive Search. "There have been far more casualties among travel management companies, hotels and other suppliers," she adds, with reports of 75 per cent contractions in employee numbers common among TMCs.

"In Q4 of 2020 we started to see some impact on the buyer side, which was mainly reduced headcount from larger teams, but it's settled again for now," says Scott Davies, CEO of the UK's Institute of Travel Management (ITM). "We'd like to think travel management roles won't be affected too much more because businesses will be focusing on their return to travel."

However, Griffiths warns that travel managers will struggle to survive the crisis if they do little more than sit tight. "Travel managers have to make themselves proactive," she says. "If you are waiting for the storm to pass and it all to be the same again, your job will be at risk. Make yourself visible. Don't wait to be asked to deliver a report. Take what's happening in the industry to senior management with ideas for what to do when travel starts again."

Her views are echoed by Caroline Strachan, managing partner of Festive

Road and a long-time career mentor to others in corporate travel. “Do you want to be a travel manager being told what to do or the one who tells others what you recommend?” Strachan asks. “I’ve seen some travel managers really step up. If you show you can have high-level strategic conversations, you will be recognised for the value you bring.”

Strachan believes travel managers have much to contribute to senior management. Supply management is always a key issue and, in the present environment, risk management even more so. But in future, demand management could be the most important element of all. In his article, Gillespie predicted that senior management will ask, “How do we know if we are travelling too much or too little?” and ‘How can we get more from all of our meetings?’ New career paths [will] open for those who relish finding answers to these daunting questions.”

It was with similar objectives in mind that Festive Road recently launched a Purposeful Travel Framework around which travel managers can build a strategy for determining how much their business should be travelling. The framework encourages travel managers to answer that question by considering appropriate levels of travel for the good of not just the organisation but also employees and the planet.

“Our starting point is that people don’t need to travel,” says Strachan. From that point, scenarios are built in which travel is the only or most productive form of interaction to achieve specific business purposes.

Working in the strategic manner championed by Strachan, Gillespie and Griffiths creates valuable connections between the travel manager and many different senior executives within a company, including chief purchasing information, operating and finance officers, and increasingly important departments like security and sustainability.

There are also new operational roles emerging. ITM’s Davies says travel managers’ skill sets are well suited to helping employers prepare for an eventual return to the office, while another related growth area is the management of virtual meetings.

Jef Robinson was one casualty of the wave of travel manager redundancies in the final quarter of 2020. Robinson says he was axed “due to reduced volumes of travel my employer was managing.” However, he adds, “If I’d had experience in virtual meetings, I might have hung on to my job. It’s a really important skill to focus on for the future.”

Robinson hoped to stay within travel, but with so few vacancies in the sector he was obliged to look elsewhere and just a few weeks later he landed a procurement job buying other categories. His experience of transitioning

“

**There are plenty of employers that would appreciate the skill set a travel manager brings. You can very quickly find yourself in a new position**

outside travel was an encouraging one for other travel managers who may be compelled to leave the sector. “There are plenty of employers that would appreciate the skill set a travel manager brings,” says Robinson. “All is not lost. You can very quickly find yourself in a new position.”

Qualifications certainly help. Robinson has several from the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply. “The fact I had them was instantly recognised by the organisations to which I was applying,” he says.

Griffiths, Davies and Strachan all endorse Robinson’s positive view of the employability of travel managers. Griffiths points to skills including negotiation, communication and managing contracts, while Davies cites specific areas of knowledge travel managers have to acquire, including GDPR, employee wellbeing and, most recently, the mobility implications of Brexit.

“Travel management is like a general manager role: it covers demand management, supply management, HR, finance, risk and IT. It’s a really transferable set of skills that could go into any industry,” says Strachan.

With such handsome attributes, the hope is that any travel manager losing a job won’t be out of work for long. Just in case, there is help at hand for those made redundant. ITM currently offers four months’ free membership to any travel manager who is furloughed or jobless, and as of 8 February will offer six- as well as 12-month membership, useful for those who worry their job may be unsafe. Membership includes access to a jobs board on which recruiters are allowed to post for free.

ITM has also launched an informal partnership with mental health charity MIND to point travel managers distressed by employment and other anxieties toward professional counselling.



# KEEP ON MOVING

Travel for the oil and gas industries has not slowed during the pandemic, nor has it for sector specialist recruitment company **AGR**, which has remained on the road throughout



**F**or some industries, the Covid-19 pandemic has had little impact on the need to travel but rather more on the way it is managed. Border closures, Covid testing, quarantine and fewer flights have created complexity like never before.

Advance Global Recruitment (AGR) can testify to that. It operates in the oil and gas sector, securing last-minute roles and full crew change rotations for leading global energy companies. In a highly regulated industry where time, shift patterns and safety are paramount, the need to move people around the world quickly and efficiently has not ceased – it has just been made tougher, says AGR operations manager Neil Hogg, who describes its biggest challenges over the last year.

Travel regulations seem to change on an almost daily basis and AGR and its travel management company, Corporate Traveller, monitor the situation with a particular focus on its main travel destinations: Egypt, Azerbaijan, Philippines and Russia. It also keeps track of all live bookings for any changes or news that might impact travel plans.

With many regional UK airports all but closed, AGR has turned to car hire to connect the dots. Vehicles are sent to crews' home addresses for them to drive to an appropriate airport, with car hire completing the journey at the other end. As a result, journeys take much longer. "To travel from the UK to Alicante in order to board a vessel – which would normally involve a three-hour direct flight from a regional airport – can now take three days with overnight stays required at both ends of a flight between London Heathrow and Barcelona, plus the car journeys," says Hogg. In another example, it had to arrange a charter flight from London to Baku because flights were suspended between the UK and Azerbaijan. In addition, crews first had to travel into London from Russia, Egypt, Estonia and across the UK to join the flight.

AGR's travel policy and duty of care procedures have also been reviewed, adding another layer of support through enhanced traveller

tracking, reporting and vital business updates. All travellers are issued with essential information regarding PPE requirements in airports and on aircraft; entry documents/medical certificates where required; and a letter proving they are key workers.

With many hotels closed, AGR's TMC keeps track of which properties are open to its key workers. In addition, its volumes were sufficient to secure a preferential rate at the Sheraton Skyline at Heathrow and several other hotels in key locations. The rate incorporates online check-in and breakfast delivered to the room so crew members do not have to use communal areas.

"Arranging travel during the pandemic has been and continues to be logistically complex," says Hogg. "Regular communication between AGR, our TMC and our travellers has been absolutely key to keeping us moving."

Lyndsey Gilmour, senior manager for Scotland at Corporate Traveller, adds: "Keeping up high standards and service level agreements whilst having fewer staff was a challenge for the team, especially as simple tasks like booking a flight took three times longer due to checking various restrictions."

## TESTING TIMES

The need for pre- and post-travel Covid tests has led to further complexity for AGR, who leans on Corporate Traveller to provide details on the latest requirements and to secure or book the necessary tests. There are some exemptions in place for seafarers, but these are becoming fewer and fewer, says the organisation. Date and time stamps for negative tests are of critical importance, so timing is of the essence – long-haul flights, time differences and multi-leg flights complicate matters. On occasion, AGR travellers have needed to take tests at transit airports in order to meet certain requirements – an express test centre in Istanbul has proved particularly useful for its travellers. As well as providing proof of negative tests at borders and to meet airline requirements, its travellers staying at a hotel in Manila have also been asked to provide evidence of a recent negative test.

# The EU divide on vaccination passports

Not so much will they or won't they, but when and how?



BY JENNIFER BAKER

**H**igh on the agenda at a meeting of EU leaders in February was the thorny issue of vaccination passports, about which the bloc remains hugely divided.

In January, the President of the European Union Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said she broadly supported the idea of a common vaccination certificate. Of course in her view such a move should be established and coordinated at EU level before member states could issue them to citizens who have been fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

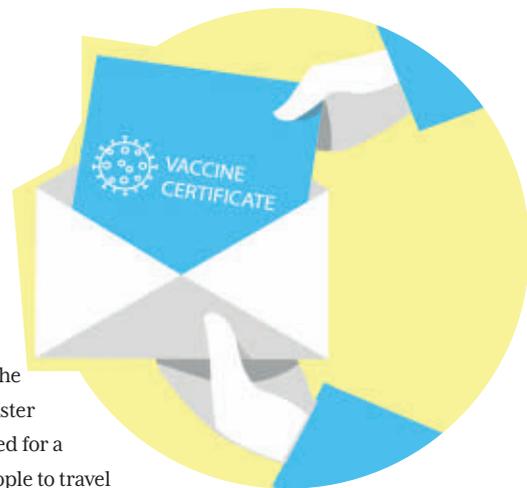
It makes sense in the current situation given that many countries have unilaterally closed their borders and require proof of a negative Covid-19 test upon arrival as well as quarantine restrictions. The EU already uses a traffic light map from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control as a guideline to high-risk countries. As vaccines roll out, a common approach would make logistical sense. Outside the EU other countries look to be moving to such as position as well, so why the turmoil within the European Union?

According to the Global Business Travel Association, Europe comprised 27 per cent of global business travel spend in 2019, and the six largest markets in the region are Germany, UK, France, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands. But it's the key leisure travel markets that are driving the calls for vaccination passports – Greece, Malta, Spain, Italy.

Perhaps the loudest voice in the “pro” camp is Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. He has called for a common document to allow people to travel more easily and, along with others, pointed to other vaccination travel documents such as those required for Yellow Fever. Greece has already come to an arrangement with Israel – which has a high vaccination rate – to allow their citizens to travel between the two countries without restrictions, provided they have been vaccinated.

Despite European Council president Charles Michel warning countries not to “jump the gun” and introduce such passports too soon, some governments within the EU have already decided to go ahead, including Estonia, Denmark and Sweden. The national schemes all work slightly differently, again putting pressure on the Council to find a common EU solution sooner rather than later.

Beyond the EU's borders, Iceland – which is a member of the Schengen common travel area – started issuing digital documents at the end of



January that exempt travellers from having to undergo a Covid-19 test.

However, many other countries are taking a more cautious approach. The French government, for example, has set up an online consultation for people to have their say which runs until 7 March.

Scientific advice is also somewhat cautious on the efficacy of vaccines in limiting the spread of the virus, particularly of new variants. Meanwhile, others have suggested that vaccination should not be the only criteria for a “Covid-free travel pass” as those who have already had the disease and recovered from it may also have antibodies, whether or not they have been vaccinated.

Nevertheless, there is a feeling of inevitability about an EU Covid pass. Businesses such as airlines, event organisers and accommodation providers may start to ask for proof of vaccination without any state-level rules and it would be shortsighted of the EU to get left behind without a clear unified strategy. So, expect the big arguments not to be about ‘if’ but rather ‘when’ and ‘how’.

• Jennifer Baker is a Brussels-based journalist reporting on European affairs, including transport and politics.

“

It's Europe's key leisure markets that are driving the calls for vaccination passports

**"Comprehensive up-to-date  
review of the current situation  
with expert opinions."**

Alan Chalmers, Director,  
Pharma International



5<sup>th</sup> Annual

# GLOBAL TRAVEL RISK SUMMIT EUROPE

Virtual Event

21 April 2021

12:30 – 16:30 CET

Corporate Travel Buyers/  
Risk & Security  
Professionals

**REGISTER**  
as our complimentary  
guest using code:  
**BTNGROUP2021**

## READY TO GET YOUR TRAVEL PROGRAMME BACK ON THE ROAD?

The BTN Group and HospitalityLawyer.com will host the 5th Annual Global Travel Risk Summit Europe, featuring uniquely formatted original content and hands-on engagement.



**During this one-day virtual event attendees can:**

- Participate in immersive real-world scenarios
- Explore best practices & benchmark current policies
- Learn from experts on meeting legal obligations and executing safe and secure travel

[www.btngroupconferences.com/gtrseurope](http://www.btngroupconferences.com/gtrseurope)

GOLD SPONSORS



BRONZE SPONSORS



PRESENTED BY **BTNGROUP**  
CONFERENCES & EVENTS

PUBLISHERS OF

**BTN**  
BUSINESS TRAVEL NEWS

**BTN**  
BUSINESS TRAVEL NEWS  
EUROPE

**Travel Procurement**

**The Beat**

**HL HospitalityLawyer.com**  
worldwide legal, safety and security solutions