

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 3 February

Government retains MOT test regime and backs codes of practice

Transport Secretary, Justine Greening MP, has announced that government will retain the existing MOT test regime, following suggestions that Ministers within DFT were seeking to consult on lessening the frequency of the test in 2012. In addition government has announced that it will seek to encourage the take up of industry codes of practice, such as the OFT-approved Motor Codes, and expand them to include MOT testing. Government will also change MOT certification, so that they carry the last three years' mileage information to assist motorists in spotting "clocked" second hand vehicles. Commenting on the announcement, SMMT Chief Executive, stated:

"Industry welcomes the decision by government to retain the existing MOT test regime, supporting the need to keep road safety a top priority. Government will encourage garages to take up industry codes of practice to ensure a consistent and high quality approach to testing, thereby building consumer confidence and satisfaction. Industry will continue to work with the OFT-backed consumer protection scheme, Motor Codes, to play its part in improving standards across the service and repair sector".

(Source: SMMT)

<http://www.smmt.co.uk/2012/02/government-retains-mot-test-regime-and-backs-codes-of-practice/>

Edward Davey MP to become Energy & Climate Change Secretary

Edward Davey MP has been named as the new Energy & Climate Change Secretary, following Chris Huhne MP's resignation. Norman Lamb will take over Mr. Davey's brief within the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, and Jenny Willot MP will become an Assistant Government Whip. (Source: Number 10)

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/new-ministerial-appointments/>

BIS launch independent review of professionalism in the FE and skills sector

Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, John Hayes MP, has launched an independent review to investigate ways to improve the professional status of the further education (FE) and skills workforce. The review will be chaired by Lord Lingfield, working with an expert panel led by David Sherlock CBE, former head of the Adult Learning Inspectorate, and is due to report in spring 2012. The review is set to look into a number of issues including, reviewing the progress made in professionalising the FE and skills workforce in recent years, investigating what lessons can be learnt from the way professional status is facilitated and regulated in other sectors, examining the appropriateness and effectiveness of the current regulations, examining the role, functions, benefits for members and governance of the Institute for Learning as the sector's professional membership body, considering what is the fairest, most efficient and appropriate way of meeting the costs of facilitating a professionalised FE and Skills workforce, and making recommendations for any changes and improvements required to continue progress on raising the professional standards and status of the FE and Skills workforce. (Source: BIS)

<http://nds.coi.gov.uk/content/Detail.aspx?ReleaseID=423102&NewsAreaID=2>



Mayor of London announces new clean air initiatives

Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, has announced more bus routes across London are set to benefit from vehicles fitted with innovative technology to reduce pollution. In addition, a second 140m² green wall is set to be installed in central London in a bid to trap road transport emissions. The Mayor and Transport for London (TfL) have been trialling two types of technology that is fitted to bus exhaust pipes to reduce either PM10 or NOx pollution. Results have shown reductions in emissions on buses piloting the equipment with PM10 reduced by 77% and NOx reduced by 88%. Following these successful trials, the Mayor has now confirmed the wider introduction of the technology. 155 buses will be fitted with equipment to cut PM10 levels and the equipment will start to be installed in March to complete by September 2012. In addition, up to 1,000 older buses are set to receive the NOx reducing equipment. This is the largest retrofit of this type of equipment in the UK. TfL will target around 50 bus routes where concentrations of NOx are highest, with the first converted buses expected by summer 2012 and is currently in consultation with bus operators on finalising routes. (Source: TFL)

<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/media/newscentre/22791.aspx>

BIS publish apprenticeship 2010/2011 figures

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has published apprenticeship figures for the full 2010/11 academic year. 457,200 apprenticeship starts were delivered in this period, an increase of 63.5% on 2009/10 figures, with a success rate of 76.4% of learners completing their apprenticeship. Commenting on the figures, Skills Minister, John Hayes, stated: "Thousands of higher apprenticeships will open up new pathways to excellence for the brightest and best learners. A zero tolerance approach to unnecessary red tape, and new financial incentives for small firms will enable more employers to offer gold standard training to match and beat our international competitors". (Source: BIS)

http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/statistics/statisticalfirstrelease/sfr_current/

UK manufacturing PMI shows surprise rise

The Markit/CIPS Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for the manufacturing sector registered an eight-month high in January. The figure reached 52.1, up significantly from November's below 50-mark of 49.7 (50 equalling no growth). Output growth also rose quickly as input costs fell and inflation slowed.

Commenting on the figures, David Noble, CIPS CEO stated: "The UK manufacturing sector has sprung to life in the first month of 2012 to defy any economic gloom, but it is too early to say whether this trend is sustainable. The marked decline in input prices is good news for the sector's overall profitability. The boost in output is also welcome, but in reality is bolstered by manufacturers working through existing backlogs, which can only be a short-term fix".

(Source: PMI)

<http://www.cips.org/en-GB/homepage/>



Week ahead

Commons Committees

Tuesday 7 February

Transport Committee (10:05am, Thatcher room)

Road Safety

Lords & Joint Committees

No relevant activity