

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 2 February

UK new car registrations off to strong start in 2015

New car registrations

January marked a positive start to the new year as new car registrations grew 6.7% to 164,856 units – the strongest January since 2007. The record growth period for the whole market continues with January marking the 35th consecutive month of rises. Growth in company car registrations was particularly strong, up 18.1% on January 2-14. Overall, 4,598 alternatively-fuelled vehicles were registered in January, up 60.8% on last year's figure of 2,859.

Commercial vehicle registrations

In January, the commercial vehicle market continued to grow for the ninth consecutive month, up 23.3% to 24,567 units. Truck registrations increased by 38.6% to 2,518 units, lead by pent-up demand in the market. The van market also continued its trend of impressive growth with a 21.7% rise to 22,049 units.

(Source: SMMT)

<http://www.smmt.co.uk/2015/02/uk-new-car-registrations-january-2015/>

<http://www.smmt.co.uk/2015/02/cv-registrations-january-2015/>

Rise in road casualty figures

In reported road traffic accidents for the year ending September 2014, [DfT figures](#) showed an overall rise in road casualties in the 12 months ending September 2014 compared with the previous year. This prompted calls from motoring and road safety groups for the government to take action, with the [Institute of Advanced Motorists](#) pointing to cuts in traffic police numbers and in road safety spending as possible factors. The provisional figures from the DfT not only gave the rolling-year figures but also those for last summer (July to September).

(Source: DfT, IAM, the Guardian)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/05/figure-for-child-road-deaths-and-serious-injuries-rises-for-first-time-in-20-years>

New powers for business groups to tackle late payment

Government is bringing in new laws and bulking up existing codes of practice to tackle the issue of late payment. New proposals to give business groups further powers to challenge unfair payment terms and practices on behalf of their members were unveiled this week. The announcement followed a Downing Street summit on payment practices, co-chaired by Matthew Hancock and Sir Win Bischoff, Chairman of the Financial Reporting Council. Attendees also included representatives from FTSE 350 and international companies, as well as suppliers and small businesses. The new [consultation](#) seeks views on how to provide business representative bodies with wider powers to challenge 'grossly unfair' contractual terms and practices as set out in the 2011 EU Late Payment Directive. This consultation will close on 9 March 2015. (Source: BIS)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-powers-for-business-groups-to-tackle-late-payment>

Encouraging start to the year for apprenticeships

Government has welcomed figures showing that the number of young people taking part in apprenticeships and traineeships continue to rise. The provisional figures for the first three months of this academic year show that there were more than 573,000 people participating in apprenticeships – including more than 353,000 16 to 24 year-olds. The provisional figures also show that, despite being a relatively new development, the number of people participating in higher apprenticeships now stands at over 15,000. Higher apprenticeships allow learners to develop high level technical skills that employers want and need up to post-graduate level. (Source: BIS)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/encouraging-start-to-the-year-for-apprenticeships-and-traineeships>

New Air Quality Campaign in London

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, has launched a major new air quality public awareness campaign aimed at helping Londoners make small changes to reduce their exposure to pollution and help improve air quality. The “Breathe Better Together” campaign encourages Londoners to sign up to receive free regular email and text alerts about pollution levels and encouraged to walk or cycle using less polluted routes. (Source: Greater London Authority)

<http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/environment/breathe-better-together?source=vanityurl>

London: HGVs without safety equipment to be banned

The Mayor of London, Transport for London (TfL) and London Councils have given the go-ahead for a London-wide ban on any lorry not fitted with safety equipment to protect cyclists and pedestrians. Traffic orders implementing the scheme are currently being published and the installation of road signs at the London boundary, training of police officers and information campaigns with drivers and hauliers have all started. The scheme will commence operation on 1 September 2015. All roads in Greater London (except motorways) will be covered by the scheme. It will require vehicles of more than 3.5 tonnes to be fitted with sideguards to protect cyclists in the event of a collision, along with Class V and Class VI mirrors giving the driver a better view of cyclists and pedestrians around their vehicle.

(Source: TfL)

<https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/buses/safer-lorries>



DCMS: Radio listeners to benefit from major digital radio expansion

Ed Vaizey, Minister for Culture and the Digital Economy, announced the single biggest expansion of local digital radio coverage at the Drive to Digital: NOW conference held by Digital Radio UK and the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) at BBC Broadcasting House. Mr Vaizey confirmed that:

- Latest figures released show that 61 per cent of new cars came with digital radio fitted as standard – more than 1.37 million new cars sold in 2014;
- 182 new digital transmitters will be built by 2016 – this will double the network of local digital transmitters and increase coverage of local DAB from 72 per cent to 91 per cent – in line with commercial radio FM coverage;
- Ofcom has received competing bids from two major broadcast consortia – Sound Digital and Listen2Digital – for the new national commercial network (D2) – this will provide radio listeners with an extra 15 or more digital new stations which could be on air in early 2016; and
- Radio listening figures – Rajar – show that digital listening has reached 37.9 per cent of all listening hours, compared with 20.9 per cent in Q4 2009.

(Source: Dods)

Week ahead

Commons Committee

Monday 9 February

- Political and Constitutional Reform Committee (5.15pm, room tbc) – Constitutional implications to draft Scotland clauses

Tuesday 10 February

- Environmental Audit Committee (5.15pm, room tbc) – A 2010-15 progress report

Wednesday 11 February

- European Scrutiny Committee (2:30pm, room tbc) – Scrutiny enquire follow up: Scheduling of EU business

Westminster Hall

Thursday 12 February

- 1:30pm: Effect of national infrastructure projects on local redevelopment