

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 14 February

Second set of Balance of Competences reports published

The Coalition Government has published the second set of reports in the Review of the Balance of EU Competences, this follows the publication of the first set of reports in July 2013. The Review of the Balance of Competences is part of a Coalition commitment to analyse and examine the UK's relationship with the EU. The reports published this week cover the free movement of goods; asylum and non-EU migration; trade and investment; environment and climate change; transport; research and development; tourism, culture and sport; and civil judicial cooperation. Another 18 reports are due to be issued before the end of 2014. The third semester reports are due to be published this summer and calls for evidence for the fourth set of reports will be launched this spring.

(Source: FCO)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/second-set-of-balance-of-competences-reports-published>

EPSRC awards grant for safer and more sustainable manufacturing materials

The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) has awarded a £10.3 million grant to researchers to find safer, more sustainable alternatives to the raw materials used in the manufacturing industries. The EPSRC stated that these materials are increasingly becoming rare, expensive, difficult to source and subject to regulation. The research teams will assess the viability of using different, replacement materials in the manufacturing supply chain, considering their properties, cost, performance, and scalability. They will investigate how production processes or technology will need to adapt to using these newer materials. By the end of the study the research will enable manufacturers to adopt alternatives. Projects include examining alternatives

for transparent conducting oxide materials, developing new active materials for photovoltaic solar cells based on abundant and low cost elements, synthesising and processing alternative thermoelectric and piezoelectric materials used in functional devices and investigating waste biomass and waste CO₂ to replace petrochemical feedstocks in the manufacture of polymers.

(Source: EPSRC)

<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/newsevents/news/2014/Pages/sustainablematerials.aspx>



UK and Ireland to introduce new marker to tackle fuel fraud

The UK and Ireland governments are to bring in a new product to mark rebated fuels, including the off-road diesel commonly known in the UK as 'red diesel', in a move that aims to boost both countries' fight against illegal fuel laundering. The marker will help HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) and the Irish Revenue Commissioners tackle the criminal market in off-road diesel, marked with a red dye in the UK and green in Ireland, and also kerosene primarily used for heating oil. The new marker will make rebated fuel much harder for fraudsters to 'launder' (i.e. remove the marker from it) and sell on at a profit. Launderers filter the fuel through chemicals or acids to remove the government marker. The chemicals and acids remain in the fuel and damage fuel pumps in diesel cars. The marker will be produced by the Dow Chemical Company. During a joint UK and Ireland evaluation, the chosen marker was proved to be significantly

more effective than the current markers, and highly resistant to known laundering techniques. It will be implemented in consultation with the oil industry and other affected sectors and will be used alongside the current marker mix.

(Source: HRMC)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-marker-to-tackle-fuel-fraud>

UK used car sales grow 0.94% in 2013

Figures released by SMMT and Experian show used car sales in 2013 grew 0.93% compared to the same period in 2012, reaching 1,531,366 units. Over the year-to-date, used car sales in 2013 increased 0.94% against the same period in 2012, to 6,806,187 units.

(Source: SMMT/Experian)

<http://www.smmt.co.uk/2014/02/used-car-sales-q4-2013/>

FSB: EU is good for business but needs more flexibility for the future

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) will deliver the message that the European Union is good for business, but needs more flexibility in the future at the European Parliament on Friday 13 February. At the launch of its European election manifesto, the FSB will highlight how UK firms have benefited from the lifting of trade barriers and free movement of goods and services that stem from the creation of the Single Market. However, the FSB believes the EU needs reform for UK businesses to compete in a global market. The manifesto also sets out what small businesses want candidates to do if elected in three months' time. FSB members want the next Parliament of the European Union to:

- Think Small First' throughout the whole policy cycle by breaking down barriers in the Single Market and reducing the effects of burdensome laws on the smallest businesses
- Give small firms the best chance to be successful by creating a culture of entrepreneurship
- Ensure important trade deals like the upcoming EU-US negotiations support the growth aspirations of small firms

(Source: FSB)

<http://www.fsb.org.uk/news.aspx?REC=8519>



Week ahead

Commons Chamber

Tuesday 25 February

Backbench business debate: Transatlantic trade and investment partnership (John Healey, Lab, Wentworth and Dearne)

Westminster Hall

Wednesday 26 February

11.00am - 11.30am: Future of motorsport tyre manufacturing in Birmingham and Britain (Jack Dromey, Lab, Birmingham Erdington)

Commons Committees

Monday 10 February

Transport Committee (4.05pm, Thatcher room)
Cycling safety

Tuesday 11 February

Consumer Rights Bill Committee (8.55am and 2.00pm, Boothroyd room)
To consider the Consumer Rights Bill

House of Lords

Thursday 27 February

External Affairs (EU Sub-Committee C) (10.00am, room 1) Transatlantic trade and investment partnership