

## WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 15 February

### Mayor announces plans for an Ultra Low Emission Zone in central London

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, has outlined proposals to create an Ultra Low Emission Zone in central London in a speech delivered at City Hall on Wednesday 13 February. The Mayor stated his belief that this will deliver dramatic benefits in air quality and provide a major spur for the further development and mass take-up of zero and low emission vehicles. Transport for London has been asked to prepare plans to look at introducing a scheme that would aim to ensure all vehicles driving in the centre of the capital during working hours would be zero or low emission, and the feasibility of introducing such a scheme from 2020. Key proposals include:

- Extra hybrid buses – earlier this year the Mayor committed to deliver 600 new Bus for London vehicles, which alongside a new commitment to deliver another 600 conventional hybrid buses over the next three years would increase the number of hybrid buses in the capital to over 1,600 by 2016.
- New Euro Standard 6 buses – the Mayor now proposes an £18m programme to retire the last 900 Euro 3 standard buses in London so that all of TfL's bus fleet will be of Euro 4 Standard or better for NOx emissions by the end of 2015.
- Measures to clean up construction sites – these sites are responsible for around 12% of London's NOx emissions and to tackle that the Mayor will introduce a new Low Emission Zone for construction machinery.
- A new zero emission taxi – the Mayor has asked his team to explore the potential of taxi designs that offer no emissions at the point of use.
- More energy efficiency measures – will be encouraged in homes, schools and public buildings.

(Source: London.gov.uk)

[http://www.london.gov.uk/media/press\\_releases\\_mayoral/mayor-london-announces-game-changer-air-quality-capital](http://www.london.gov.uk/media/press_releases_mayoral/mayor-london-announces-game-changer-air-quality-capital)



### Westminster Hall debate on Manufacturing in the East Midlands held

MPs debated the manufacturing sector in the East Midlands on Tuesday 12 February in a Westminster Hall debate led by Conservative MP Mark Spencer. Mr Spencer highlighted the long history of manufacturing in Nottinghamshire and the East Midlands, noting that the region was ideally placed geographically to trade with the rest of the country, but warned government to be mindful of pushing industries to other parts of the globe as a result of efforts to reduce the UK's carbon footprint. Mr Spencer also noted the issue of workforce skills, highlighting the importance of high quality engineers to the manufacturing sector. Labour MP Jonathan Ashworth stated his belief that the East Midlands had not benefited as much as it should have from government's Regional Growth Fund, and also raised concerns among exporters about the difficulties in accessing export finance. Business Minister Michael Fallon MP responded to the debate by echoing the praise for the tradition of manufacturing in the region, and highlighting that under the coalition government, the sector's share of GDP was growing again and increasing in quality. Addressing concerns about the regional growth fund, Mr Fallon stated that it was distributed by competition, not ministerial allocation, and that it was already helping to rebalance the economy, particularly by assisting areas that were historically over-dependent on the public sector.

Mr Fallon also noted that government had invested in the advanced manufacturing supply chain initiative to bolster capacity; and recent announcements of support for transport infrastructure would help enhance local economic growth in the East Midlands. Concluding, his remarks, Mr Fallon stated the government wanted manufacturers in the East Midlands to play their part in achieving an economic transformation across the UK. (Source: Parliament.uk) <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130212/hallindx/130212-x.htm>



## MPs debate engineering careers

Nadine Dorries MP hosted a Westminster Hall debate on Engineering Careers on Wednesday 13 February. Ms Dorries stated she called the debate following a visit to Autotech, a company specialising in supplying control systems for automated manufacturing and distribution operations, which has been forced to turn down millions of pounds worth of business in the past few years because of the lack of skilled engineers to employ to take on the orders. Ms Dorries praised Autotech who had responded by setting up its own Autotech academy, its own apprenticeship scheme within the business, and had forged links with local schools. Ms Dorries highlighted concerns that school leavers do not have the basic skills of numeracy and English that would enable them to achieve in design and technology and other subjects or give them the confidence they require to go into an engineering apprenticeship, and also noted that a key issue was students not seeing a career in engineering as an attractive proposition. Shadow Cabinet Office Minister Chi Onwurah MP urged MPs to support the 'Primary Engineer' scheme, whilst Chris White MP stated that "we need to focus even more resources on the early years of secondary education and perhaps even on the primary stage". Responding to the debate, Skills Minister Matthew Hancock MP stated that "many estimates have been made of the shortage of

engineers in the country, and although it is impossible to put a precise figure on that shortage, it is clear that we need more engineers". Mr Hancock noted the increase in engineering apprenticeships in recent years and the increase in participation in maths, physics and sciences at GCSE level. Mr Hancock highlighted government's Employer Ownership of Skills pilot, the new statutory duty on schools to provide independent and impartial careers advice and stated that he was looking forward to responding to the Richards review on apprenticeships". (Source: Parliament.uk)

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130213/hallindx/130213-x.htm>

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## Week ahead

### House of Commons

The House of Commons is on recess and will return on Monday 25 February

### House of Lords

The House of Lords is on recess and will return on Monday 25 February