WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 28 February

SMMT DRIVING THE MOTOR INDUSTRY

Government accepts all of Review of the DVLA's recommendations

Stephen Hammond MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, has published the report on the review of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). This review was conducted by Mary Reilly, a non-executive director of the Department for Transport, and looked into how the DVLA can deliver better services and save money for the taxpayer. Stephen Hammond has accepted all the recommendations of the report, outlined below, and has asked the DVLA's Chief Executive, Oliver Morley, to prepare a strategic plan which prioritises those measures which will bring the greatest advantage to customers. The report's recommendations are:

- **Accelerate and expand digital transformation**. A significant number of DVLA services and transactions are still predominantly paper based. A modern IT platform, developing the skills of staff and changing processes are all needed.
- **Reduce burdens on customers and allow others outside of government to deliver some services.**. Ensuring that customer needs are properly understood is key and DVLA should consider whether non-core activities could be delivered better by or through others.
- **Introduce a governance and management structure fit for future challenges.** The review recommends consideration be given to the appointment of a Non-Executive Chair with responsibility for the strategic direction of DVLA.
- **Optimise DVLA's value as a service provider for government.** Significant experience will be gained through delivery of IT transformation and further development of digital services. DVLA should use this experience to create a centre of digital excellence, in line with the government's overall strategy for sharing functions and services across departmental and agency boundaries.

(Source: DVLA)
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/283795/review-of-dvla.pdf

CBI Growth Indicator rises at record levels

The latest CBI Growth Indicator shows that output volumes in the three months to February grew at their fastest pace since records began. It comes as official figures confirmed that GDP grew strongly in the fourth quarter of 2013. The Growth Indicator provides further evidence that economic momentum has carried through at a healthy pace into the beginning of 2014, as consumer and business confidence continues to build, global growth strengthens and monetary policy remains supportive. The survey of 639 respondents across manufacturing, retail and services registered 32% growth in output volumes with growth broad-based and slightly faster than the three months to January (+30%). Firms are also extremely optimistic about the outlook for output growth over the next quarter with the expectations balance also at a record (+41%), a significant jump on last month results (+28%). Commenting on the figures, Katja Hall, CBI Chief Policy Director, stated: "The recovery is gaining real momentum with growth in output volumes at the highest since our records began and growth broad-based across manufacturing, retail and service sectors. The surge in confidence among firms for the next quarter suggests the recovery will continue to gain traction. Looking ahead, strengthening global growth and supportive monetary policy should continue to bolster a broadening and deepening recovery in the UK."
(Source: CBI)
http://www.cbi.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2014/02/cbi-growth-indicator-rises-at-fastest-levels-since-records-began/

SMEs set to invest in capital equipment to meet demand

The latest Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS) Barometer's special focus revealed that 86% of respondents were planning to invest in capital equipment over the next twelve months, with companies looking to spend £121,000 on average. With over 80,000 firms making up the English SME manufacturing community, MAS have stated that this could equate to hundreds of £millions of fresh industry investment between now and 2015. Two thirds of the firms questioned are looking to purchase new plant and machinery, just over half are focused on upgrading IT/communications infrastructure and nearly a third on improving premises. The main reasons driving these investment plans were boosting efficiency and quality (31%), followed by developing new products/processes (30%) and extending existing capacity (22%). Fewer than one in five companies (19%) said they planned to approach banks to fund capital equipment purchases in the next year, with manufacturers instead choosing to secure money via grants (27%) and the Regional Growth Fund (21%). A record 864 SME manufacturers responded to the latest MAS Barometer, which provides an overview of economic conditions and issues faced by the sector during October to December 2013.62% of companies reported an increase in sales over the last six months (a 6% rise on the last report), whilst over three quarters of businesses (76%) expect to boost sales between now and June 2014.
(Source: MAS)
http://www.mymas.org/news/mas-barometer-english-manufacturing-smes-set-to-invest-in-capital-equipment

DCMS launches consultation on authorising motor sport events on public roads

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has launched a consultation seeking views on a proposal to permit motor sports events, including stage rallies, hill climbs and trials of speed, on public roads in certain circumstances. The consultation closes on 10 April 2014 5:00pm.
(Source: DCMS)
https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposal-to-authorise-motor-sport-events-on-public-roads

Week ahead

Commons Chamber
Tuesday 4 March
Consumer Rights Bill Committee
(8.55am and 2.00pm, room 10)

Westminster Hall
Wednesday 26 February
11.00am - 11.30am: Future of motorsport tyre manufacturing in Birmingham and Britain (Jack Dromey, Lab, Birmingham Erdington)

House of Lords
Wednesday 26 February
Science and Technology Committee (10.30am, room 4) International STEM students

Thursday 6 March
External Affairs (EU Sub-Committee C) (10.00am, room 1)
Transatlantic trade and investment partnership