

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 2 March

Government and opposition call for a UK industrial policy

Secretary of State for Business, Dr Vince Cable MP, has called for a industrial policy in Britain, in order to effectively rebalance the economy away from financial services and provide the country with real growth. In his speech to the IPPR (Institute for Public Policy Research) in London, Dr Cable stated that Britain needs an economy that is able to benefit from the growth in Asia, be led by business investment, and spread prosperity across the whole country, not just the financial hub of London and the City. His speech highlighted government's continued commitment to deficit reduction, but noted that alongside this, real growth needs to be encouraged in order to raise the country out of debt. Dr Cable went on to state that manufacturing is central to achieving this aim, through the business investment and internationally trade that the sector brings. He specifically highlighted the automotive industry, and the work of the Automotive Council as a positive example of what can be achieved through agreed long-term strategies and collaboration within industry, but acknowledged that there was still much more to be done by both government and industry to further the growth of the sector. Dr Cable highlighted several key areas that government will focus on in order to best drive manufacturing in the UK. Firstly, government is keen to "re-energise supply chains" in the UK, and help SMEs grow. Secondly, government intend to provide a clearer vision of how they intend to support technological innovation, with Dr Cable stating that the US, France, Germany and China have all responded to the global recession by investing additional resource in science and innovation, increasing the competitive pressures on the UK. Finally, government is keen to focus on the role played by public procurement on supply-chains and securing growth, with Dr Cable highlighting government's pledge in the Autumn Statement to produce public procurement pipelines for each industry sector, to be updated twice a year. Iain Wright, Shadow Minister for Competitiveness and Enterprise, has also delivered a speech to the IPPR, calling for an industrial strategy, demonstrating cross-party support. (Source: BIS) <http://www.bis.gov.uk/news/speeches/vince-cable-industrial-strategy-next-steps-2012>



Apprenticeships Minister outlines plans to safeguard apprenticeship quality

In a statement to the House of Common, Skills Minister, John Hayes MP, outlined plans to scale up government's efforts to safeguard and improve the quality and standards of apprenticeships. Following the introduction of the first ever statutory standards for apprenticeships last Autumn, Mr Hayes announced a series of major reforms to drive up quality and standards, including asking the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) to develop an action plan to ensure every apprenticeship meets the standards apprentices and employers expect. The latest developments in the apprenticeships scheme include; from August 2012, all apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds will be for a minimum of 12 months; new safeguards being put in place to strengthen monitoring, reporting and subcontracting arrangements, including making public a list of all sub contracted provision over £100,000; new contracts to ensure that training providers not only act according to regulations, but also within the spirit of the apprenticeship programme; the establishment of a new 'enquiry panel', reporting directly to the Minister, to manage poor quality providers as soon as they are reported. Mr Hayes also stated that over the coming months a number of new measures will be taken to improve quality, these include; new measures to ensure all adult apprenticeships are of sufficient length to deliver the training employers need; NAS to undertake a review into apprenticeship frameworks that have been deemed a cause for concern; new

guidance on the implementation of quality standards to be published; government to take forward measures to ensure all apprentices are given the opportunity to get Level 2 English and Maths. (Source: BIS)

<http://nds.coi.gov.uk/content/Detail.aspx?ReleaseID=423473&NewsAreaID=2>



UK manufacturing PMI shows slight dip in February

The Markit/CIPS Purchasing Managers' Index for the UK manufacturing sector showed a slight drop to 51.2 in February, down from 52.0 in January. In addition, input costs registered the first rise in four months, whilst new orders remained largely unchanged. David Noble, CIPS CEO, noted that the manufacturing sector consolidated on January's sharp increase in growth, but that the return of rising oil prices and weak demand is a cause of anxiety. Noble also noted the small boost in employment as a sign of increased confidence in the sector, although he warned that this is likely attributed to efforts to fulfil the growth in new orders seen at the beginning of the year. (Source: CIPS)

<http://www.cips.org/en-GB/News/news/UK-manufacturing-PMI-shows-slight-dip/>

BIS hold 'One year on' Trade and Investment White Paper event

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has held an event to note the progress made since government launched its Trade & Investment White Paper a year ago. The paper set out government's plans to encourage UK exports and inward investment into the UK, and to strengthen international trading systems. The event was led by Lord Green, Minister of State for Trade & Investment. The event noted

government's work with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to agree Russian accession, the securing of the Government Procurement Agreement at the WTO, and the EU-South Korea Free Trade Agreement, which has now come into force, whilst highlighting the challenges of securing an effective agreement at Doha, and the impact and implications of the debt crisis in the eurozone. (Source: BIS)

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/news/topstories/2012/Feb/uk-trade-and-growth-one-year-on>

Week ahead

Commons Chamber

Thursday 8 March

Energy & climate change questions (10:30am)

Commons Select Committees

Tuesday 6 March

Transport Committee (10:05am, Wilson room)
Road safety

Tuesday 6 March

Energy and Climate Change Committee (10:15am, Grimond room)

Low carbon growth links with China

Tuesday 6 March

Business, Innovation and Skills Committee (10:30am, AMRC, Sheffield)
Apprenticeships

Wednesday 7 March

Public Accounts Committee (3:15am, room 15)
Adult apprenticeships

Westminster Hall

Tuesday 6 March - 9:30am – 11:00am

Government policy on manufacturing and engineering (Neil Carmichael, Con, Stroud)

Wednesday 7 March – 11:00am – 11:30am

Effect of DVLA closures in Scotland (Frank Doran, Lab, Aberdeen North)

Lords Committees

Tuesday 6 March

Science & Technology: Sub Committee 1 (3:15pm, room 3) – Higher education in STEM subjects

It has been announced that the Queen's Speech will take place on Wednesday 9 May where the government's legislative agenda for the next parliamentary term will be presented.