

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 7 March

Phase 1 Trailblazer apprenticeship standards published

Government has published the first new Apprenticeship standards developed by the eight Phase 1 Trailblazers. This follows the announcement in October 2013 to reform Apprenticeships so that they are more rigorous and responsive to the needs of employers. Amongst these eight standards is the automotive Trailblazer 'Mechatronics Maintenance Technician' developed by the Automotive Trailblazer group. This new standard ensures world class levels of training for the maintenance occupation with training in the first year off-the-job phase up from 214 guided learning hours to 1400. The Prime Minister has also announced the businesses involved in the second phase of the apprenticeship trailblazer programme which includes standards for automotive retail (Light Vehicle Maintenance and Repair) and emerging technologies (High Value Manufacturing Technician).

(Source: BIS)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-businesses-blazing-the-way-for-apprenticeships>

UK automotive supply chain gains £13m boost

Business Secretary Vince Cable MP has announced that the UK automotive sector has secured a share of government-backed Advanced Manufacturing Supply Chain Initiative (AMSCI) funding worth £45.5m to UK-based suppliers. The SMMT bid, submitted on behalf of the sector, has delivered £13.3m in government funding, which leverages £32.2m of industry contributions. The project, Long Term Advanced Supply Chain (LTASC), will provide funding for a four year programme of support for research and development, skills training and capital investment among 38 UK suppliers. It will create nearly 1,000 jobs and safeguard 1,600 existing jobs throughout the supply chain. The programme aims to boost the international competitiveness of UK automotive suppliers using an innovative approach to addressing Quality, Cost, Delivery (QCD), R&D capability,

management and employee development. Many aspects of the programme will be delivered by SMMT Industry Forum, which supports manufacturing companies in the UK and abroad in delivering maximum operational performance.

(Source: SMMT)

<http://www.smmt.co.uk/2014/03/uk-automotive-supply-chain-gains-13m-boost/>



Skills Minister attends SMMT and Semta National Apprenticeships Week event

SMMT and Semta, the Sector Skills Council for the Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering sectors, hosted an event marking the start of National Apprenticeships Week on Monday 3 March. The event was in two parts: firstly, a seminar event where an audience of automotive executives and key skills stakeholders discussed the ongoing reforms to apprenticeships being delivered by the Trailblazers initiative with an expert panel. Sitting on the panel were Jennifer Coupland, Deputy Director of the joint DfE/BIS Apprenticeships Unit, Ian Eva, Jaguar Land Rover and Chair of the Automotive Trailblazer group, Bill Twigg, Development Director Semta and chaired by Konstanze Scharring, Director of Policy SMMT. There was a lively debate with questions around the quality and availability of training provision, new funding mechanisms and the challenges of rolling out the Trailblazer programme to all occupations. Following the seminar, a drinks reception was held in SMMT's showroom where Skills Minister, Matthew Hancock MP provided the keynote speech, reaffirming

government's commitment to apprenticeships and praising the sector for its hard work on the Trailblazer scheme. The reception was also attended by a wide variety of parliamentarians including Shadow Transport Secretary Mary Creagh MP, Shadow Transport Minister Richard Burden MP and Andrew Miller MP, Chair of the Science & Technology Select Committee. Allan Cook, Chairman of Semta, also spoke at the event, and later in the week was announced as the Lead Non-Executive Board member at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (non-executive board members are experts from outside government who assist in the delivery of policy using relevant experience from business). (Source: SMMT)

<http://www.smmt.co.uk/2014/03/uk-auto-manufacturers-join-smmt-launch-national-apprenticeship-week/>

February sees growth in new car and commercial vehicle registrations

Figures published by SMMT show that new car and commercial vehicle registrations both posted strong growth in February 2014, whilst the bus and coach sector fared less well.

New car registrations

New car registrations were up 3% in February to 68,736 units marking two full years of continuous month-on-month growth and up 17.4% over the 24 month period. Commenting on the sector's future prospects, SMMT Chief Executive Mike Hawes stated: "While February is typically a quieter month ahead of the March registration plate change, we expect the arrival of the new 14-plate and increasing economic confidence to maintain a steady rate of growth."

Commercial vehicle registrations

Commercial vehicle registrations grew 17.5% in February to 13,320 with the rolling year up 15.1% to 330,283 units. SMMT Chief Mike Hawes commented: "Growing van registrations supported the February vehicle market as middle and heavy-weight vans enjoyed healthy registration rises, reflecting improving economic activity. Registrations of trucks over six tonnes continued to decline as the market adjusts to new Euro-6 legislation. We anticipate this rebalancing act to be a factor for some months yet while van volumes should remain on an upward trend."

Bus and coach registrations

The bus and coach sector fell 12.1% in February to 356 units, which was primarily attributed due to a decline in the purpose-built bus and coach sector. Industry believes that the forthcoming plate change in March should help the sector improve overall performance.

(Source: SMMT)

<http://www.smmt.co.uk/smmt-membership/member-services/market-intelligence/vehicle-data/monthly-automotive-data/>

Technical consultation on apprenticeship funding announced

Government has announced a technical consultation on apprenticeship funding reform. Building on the results of the funding consultation last summer and the funding principles announced in the Autumn Statement, this consultation sets out a core model that could be implemented either through PAYE or an Apprenticeship Credit, and seeks views on these two payment mechanism options. The deadline for the consultation is 29 April 2014.

(Source: BIS)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/apprenticeship-funding-reform-in-england-payment-mechanisms-and-funding-principles>

Week ahead

Commons Chamber

No relevant activity

Commons Committees

Tuesday 11 March & Thursday 13 March
Consumer Rights Bill Committee (8.55am and 2.00pm, room 10) - To further consider the Consumer Rights Bill

Lords Committees

Tuesday 11 March
Science and Technology Committee (10.30am, room 4) - International STEM students

Thursday 13 March
External Affairs (EU Sub-Committee C) (10.00am, room 1) - Transatlantic trade and investment partnership