

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 13 March

Consumer campaign on latest low-emission car technology

SMMT launched a nationwide consumer campaign to raise awareness about the latest low-emission car technology and challenge the increasing demonisation of diesel on Wednesday 11 March. The campaign comes as new consumer research reveals widespread confusion about diesel technology that could limit the adoption of the latest low emission vehicles, and undermine the UK's efforts to meet strict air quality and climate change obligations. SMMT also urged policy makers and those considering imposing local measures to avoid confusing motorists by penalising one fuel technology over another. SMMT is calling for policy makers to adopt a consistent technology-neutral approach towards vehicle incentives and penalties to encourage the uptake of the latest technologies and maximise the benefits for air quality. A Diesel Facts myth-busting guide is available at dieselfacts.co.uk and in leaflet form via car makers and dealers.

(Source: SMMT)

<http://www.smmt.co.uk/2015/03/smmt-puts-record-straight-on-diesel-cars-with-new-nationwide-consumer-campaign/>

Highways England to take over motorways

Government has confirmed that new company Highways England will run motorways and major A roads from 1 April 2015. Highways England is a new arms-length government company that will take over running motorways and major trunk roads from the Highways Agency. The new company will have new longer-term funding, which will mean it can plan ahead and invest in skills and equipment to speed up essential work. The move is part of a package of road reform. Legislation underpinning the new Highways England company was passed in the Infrastructure Act, which was given Royal Assent on February 12.

(Source: DfT)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/highways-england-to-take-over-motorways-and-major-a-roads>

Government departments sign up to 'green revolution'

Government has announced that over 100 plug-in cars and vans will join the government vehicle fleet as part of a commitment to green transport. Fifteen government departments and agencies, including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence and the Home Office, will benefit from adding 140 ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs) to their fleets as part of a £5 million investment to reduce emissions. The fleet includes cars and vans used by government when transporting staff and equipment. The introduction of plug-in cars puts UK automotive technology at the heart of government. This announcement is the first phase in a project designed to illustrate the effectiveness of the vehicles, and encourage fleets to commit to greater take-up over the coming years. The £5 million investment will also fund take-up by the wider public sector – including councils, police forces and the NHS – of plug-in vehicles and pay for charge-points to be installed to allow the vehicles to be charged at work.

(Source: DfT)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-departments-sign-up-to-green-revolution>

£65 million funding for ultra-low emission cities and buses

Twelve cities bidding for a share of a £35 million fund to become centres of excellence for low emission vehicles have been announced by Transport Minister Baroness Kramer and Business Minister Matt Hancock this week. The Go Ultra Low city scheme will reward cities that demonstrate the most potential to become internationally outstanding examples for the adoption of ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs) in a local area. The funding has been announced alongside an additional £30 million to enable local authorities and bus operators to replace existing vehicles with greener, cutting-edge alternatives to help clean up air quality. (Source: DfT)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/65-million-funding-for-ultra-low-emission-cities-and-green-buses>

£3 million green bus funding

Nearly 150 buses across the country are to be fitted with pollution-reducing technology, following an announcement of over £3 million funding. Seven towns and cities have been awarded government grants to fit green technology to existing buses to help improve air quality. The funding is the latest tranche of support from the Clean Vehicle Technology Fund, which has retrofitted more than 1650 vehicles with green technology. This round of awards will see technology suitable for the stop-start nature of bus travel fitted, including exhaust gas treatment and flywheel hybrid technology, developed originally for Formula 1. The successful projects will monitor the effectiveness of the technologies to provide vital information on the working life of green vehicle upgrades.

(Source: DfT)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/3-million-green-bus-funding-to-help-clean-up-town-and-city-air>

Environmental Audit Committee: Report on air quality

The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee has published its third report on air quality since 2010. The main recommendations for government in 2010 and 2011 have not been implemented. The Committee calls on government to:

- update the 2007 Air Quality Strategy, adopting a cross-Government approach
- Meet EU nitrogen dioxide targets as soon as possible
- Engage with local authorities to establish best practice in tackling air pollution
- Introduce a national framework for low emission zones
- Adjust planning guidance to protect air quality in local planning and development
- Build in air quality obligations to transport infrastructure
- Examine fiscal and other measures to gradually encourage a move away from diesel vehicles towards low emission options
- Close legal loopholes to end the practice of removing filter systems from existing vehicles
- Apply pressure at European level to ensure effective EU legislation and emission standards backed up by a robust testing regime

- Institute a national public awareness campaign to increase understanding, publicising the UK-AIR forecast website and encourage measures to reduce air pollution

(Source: Commons Select Committee)

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environmental-audit-committee/news/air-quality-a-follow-up-report/>



Week ahead

Commons Chamber

Thursday 17 March

- Modern Slavery Bill: Consideration of Lords amendments

Wednesday 18 March

- Budget Statement and Debate

Friday 20 March

- Continuation of Budget Debate
- EU membership (Audit of Costs and Benefits) Bill

Lords Chamber

Tuesday 17 March

- Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill: Third Reading