

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 1 April

Government to consult on proposed changes to the length of lorries

Some lorries could be allowed to use longer trailers after independent research showed that this could potentially cut carbon without compromising safety. The research has been published by Roads Minister Mike Penning alongside a consultation seeking views on the proposed changes. The consultation proposes allowing a two metre increase in the total length of articulated lorries operating within the existing weight limit of 44 tonnes. This would take the maximum permitted length of an articulated lorry to 18.75 metres but would not allow any increase in overall weight. The Department for Transport estimates that this move could increase capacity for hauliers transporting lightweight goods by up to 13% and cut carbon emissions by around one hundred thousand tonnes each year. Mike Penning said: "These proposals would allow haulage firms to use one larger truck where previously they may have needed to send two vehicles. This will help to make our haulage industry cleaner and greener as well as allowing businesses greater flexibility without compromising safety. I hope that everyone with an interest in this issue will take time to look at this consultation and let us know their views on this proposed change." The consultation will run until 21 June 2011. (Source: DfT)

www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/freight/research/longersemitrailer/

Government wants to unlock the EU's growth potential

Government has published a pamphlet, entitled 'Let's Choose Growth' setting out a growth strategy for Europe. In the pamphlet, there is a warning that if current trends continue, by the middle of the century, leading EU nations could fall out of the world's top-10 most powerful economies. The pamphlet comes as a growing number of EU countries are making the case for action on growth, deregulation and completing the single market. The European Council on 25 March endorsed much of this approach and agreed on the need for action to promote economic growth. To

secure sustainable growth, Prime Minister David Cameron is calling for action to be taken to complete the Single Market. By prioritising areas such as services and energy and modernising the Single Market, the Prime Minister believes growth can be encouraged by unlocking the benefits of trade, reducing the costs of doing business and making Europe number one global innovator. (Number10)

www.number10.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/EU_growth.pdf



Dealerships could save up to £10,000 a year by cutting energy use

The SMMT, in conjunction with the Retail Motor Industry (RMI) and the Carbon Trust, has published a 'Dealer Energy Efficiency Guide' showing ways dealers can become more energy efficient, thereby saving money and improving environmental performance. The key findings in the study show that the average dealership could save as much as £10,000 a year by cutting its energy use, which equates to annual saving of 25% spend on energy use with zero or low cost measures. The study concludes that a potential saving of £50 million and 300,000 tonnes of CO₂ could be made across the retail network per year. SMMT Chief Executive, Paul Everitt said: "Reducing energy costs will help dealerships sustain their businesses and improve the motor industry's carbon footprint. Our study shows some great work is being done, and highlights that more than £4,000 of savings are possible without

spending a penny. Using the seven step action plan, outlined in the 'Dealer Energy Efficiency Guide', we will be working closely with retailers to encourage them to take action now and cut energy use for immediate energy bill savings." (Source: SMMT) www.smmt.co.uk/2011/03/dealerships-could-save-up-to-10000-a-year-by-cutting-energy-use/

Small businesses need to do more to protect their ideas - IPO

Small businesses need to do more to protect and exploit their innovations, according to research published by the Intellectual Property Office (IPO). The Intellectual Property Awareness Survey of Business study has shown that 15% of small companies have sought advice on safeguarding their ideas. 11% of firms overall assign responsibility for managing intellectual property (IP) rights, compared to 43% of larger companies, meaning that smaller enterprises risk missing out on valuable income from their creativity. This is the second awareness survey commissioned by the IPO. It involved 20,000 businesses of all sizes and from all industry sectors across the UK, and aimed to find out their level of awareness about intellectual property including trademarks, patents, copyright and designs. (Source: BIS) nds.coi.gov.uk/content/detail.aspx?NewsAreaId=2&ReleaseId=418943&SubjectId=2

Further Education boosts economy by £75 billion - BIS

Further Education participants generate an additional £75 billion for the economy over their lifetimes, with Apprenticeships generating around £40 for each pound of government investment, new research shows commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). The study examined the economic value generated by government funded post-19 qualifications – including Apprenticeships, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) undertaken in college and workplace settings and Basic Skills Qualifications. The estimates were calculated using data from the cohort of learners that started qualifications in 2008 / 09. (Source: BIS) nds.coi.gov.uk/content/detail.aspx?NewsAreaId=2&ReleaseId=418914&SubjectId=2

Electric vehicles essential to reducing UK's carbon emissions - WWF

New figures released by WWF-UK have shown that at least 1.7 million electric vehicles (EV) will be needed by 2020 and 6.4 million by 2030 if the UK is to achieve its climate change targets and even higher numbers of EVs would enable us to reduce the UK's dependency on oil. Findings from the report Electric avenues: driving home the case for electric vehicles, show that a rapid introduction of EVs is needed if the UK is to reduce 80% of carbon emissions by 2050. The study, which examines three different scenarios, finds that the highest levels of EV uptake would lead to reductions in UK fuel demand representing over £5 billion a year in avoided oil imports. WWF feels that government subsidies and other incentives will be needed to help get the necessary number of EVs on the road - a minimum of 1 in 17 cars by 2020 and 1 in 6 by 2030. These incentives will have to be attractive enough to overcome consumers' concerns over price, range anxiety and lack of charging points. David Norman, Director of Campaigns, WWF-UK says "It is vital that people start consuming and travelling less to make a transition to a low-carbon economy and reduce our dependency on oil and emissions from cars. Road transport accounts for 40% of petroleum products consumed in the UK so a switch from conventional cars powered by petrol or diesel to EVs would have a much needed impact on reducing fuel demand." (Source: WWF)

assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/electric_avenues_fullreport.pdf

Campaign for Better Tyres launched by EP-UK

A new campaign by Environmental Protection UK (EP-UK) aims to convince drivers that they can save money on fuel and cut emissions by as much as 10% by choosing better tyres. The Campaign for Better Tyres, which was officially launched by Transport Minister Norman Baker, is dedicated to encouraging drivers to choose energy efficient, low noise and safe tyres. EP-UK believes these tyres are widely available and can reduce fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions. They can also cut vehicle rolling noise almost in half and reduce braking distances on wet roads by up to 18 metres. Transport Minister Norman Baker said: "Tyre legislation sets minimum safety and environmental standards but the consumer is still faced with a wide

range of products to choose from. This new information will enable consumers to make an informed purchase decision and to choose safer, quieter, and more fuel efficient tyres." (Source: EP-UK)

www.environmental-protection.org.uk/news/detail/?id=2792

Week Ahead

House of Commons

No relevant activity

Tuesday 5 April - House of Commons rises for Easter and returns on Tuesday 26 April

Lords Chamber

Monday 4 April

3.30pm: Grand Committee

Question for short debate for 16-18 year olds in full time education (Lord Willis, Lib Dem).

Lords Committees

No relevant activity

Wednesday 6 April - House of Lords rises for Easter and returns on Tuesday 26 April