

## WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 23 May

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### Local and European elections

Thursday 22 May saw UK local elections take place, with results being published on Friday 23 May. The headline story from the elections is the rise in the number of UKIP seats, which has shown gains across the country. With 104 councils declared, Labour had gained 172 seats and UKIP 107 seats, whereas the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives have lost 155 and 140 seats respectively. Turnout for the elections is estimated to be around 36%. Elections for European Parliament took place in the UK on Thursday 22 May. Results for the European elections will be published on Sunday 25 May, after which the newly elected MEPs will take up office in June. The process of electing a new Commission will then begin, with the result being confirmed by the beginning of November.

(Source: BBC)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-27531094>

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### UK economy grows 0.8% in first quarter

Latest figures show that the UK economy grew by 0.8% in the first quarter of 2014. This latest rise marks the fifth consecutive period of GDP growth, which is the longest run since the financial crisis. The Office of National Statistics also noted that the economy is now 0.6% smaller than its 2008 peak. The Rt Hon George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer, commented on the figures saying "Britain is coming back", however he noted that this recovery could not be taken for granted. The Office of National Statistics placed UK manufacturing as one of the strongest performers in the latest figures, with output growing by 1.3%, showing its strongest quarter for nearly four years.

(Source: BBC/ONS)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-27203433>

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/naa2/second-estimate-of-gdp/q1-2014/stb-second-estimate-of-gdp-q1-2014.htm>



### UK to announce more powers for Scotland

The Rt Hon Alistair Carmichael MP, Secretary of State for Scotland, will deliver a speech promising that British government will begin talks on granting Scotland more powers within a month of an independence referendum later this year should Scotland chose to remain part of the United Kingdom. The speech is designed to persuade the Scottish people that they will enjoy even greater autonomy if they decide to stay part of the UK. This announcement is expected to be government's most detailed promise on greater powers for Scotland so far. According to advance extracts of the speech issued from the Minister's office, he will say that "in the event of a no vote, I will invite the representatives of Scotland's main parties to meet in October to begin that process." Scotland will vote on whether they will remain part of the UK on 18 September.

(Source: BBC)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-27500213>



## IoD add support to UK business voice on EU membership

UK manufacturers, concerned about the risks of relegating the UK to the political and economic sidelines in Brussels, have urged MEP candidates to commit to the UK playing a leading role in a future, reformed European Union. Reform within the EU is a key topic for businesses, with over 60% of Institute of Directors (IoD) members stating that their support for continued EU membership would be conditional upon successful reforms in certain areas. The IoD also noted that 31% of members would vote to remain a member in all circumstances, while only 6% claim they would vote to leave whatever happens. Members are clear that the feel UK parliament is best placed to negotiate on issues such as employment law, company law and corporate governance, and employment regulation such as directives on Working Time, Parental leave and Temporary Agency Workers. They have also voiced overwhelming support for tax settling powers to remain with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Simon Walker, Director General of the IoD said, "with the European Parliament now co-deciding on up to 70% of EU laws, British business is looking for the next wave of MEPs to focus on building a union based on innovation and competitiveness, as these are the forces that will bring prosperity and jobs to the people of Europe.

(Source: IoD)

<http://www.iod.com/influencing/press-office/press-releases/business-support-for-eu-membership-conditional-on-fundamental-reform-finds-new-iod-survey>

## NEET at lowest levels since 2005

New figures released today show that the number of young people aged 16 to 24 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is at the lowest comparable level since 2005. The percentage of teenagers NEET is also at its lowest since records began.

- There are 774,000 16 – 24 year olds who are NEET (13.1%) – this is down 135,000 (2 percentage points) on 2013, and is the lowest rate for the quarter since 2005
- There are 122,000 16 – 18 year olds NEET (6.7%) – this is down 29,000 (1.5 percentage points) on 2013, and is the lowest since comparable data began in 2001
- There are 652,000 19 – 24 year olds NEET – this is down 105,000 (2.3 percentage points) on 2013, and is the lowest since 2008

Figures also show that 94.2% of 16 and 17 year olds are participating in education and training, the highest comparable participation rate since consistent records began in 2001. In the first quarter of 2014, the number of 19 – 24 year olds who have been unemployed for more than six months decreased by 20,000 while those unemployed for less than six months also fell by 32,000 compared to figures from January to March 2013.

(Source: BIS)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/neet-in-england-at-lowest-level-since-2005>

## Week ahead

### Houses of Parliament

Parliament has been prorogued. The House will next sit on Wednesday 4 June with the State Opening of Parliament marking the formal start of the parliamentary year and the Queen's Speech setting out government's agenda for the coming session, outlining proposed policies and legislation.