

## WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 29 July

### £25 million boost for new apprentices

Prime Minister David Cameron has announced details of a £25m fund that will support up to 10,000 advanced and higher apprenticeships in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, engineering and IT. The Higher Apprenticeships Fund will support the expansion of apprenticeships up to degree equivalent in companies, particularly SMEs, where there is unmet demand for the higher level skills that are necessary to create additional jobs and growth. On a visit to the Jaguar Land Rover plant in the Midlands, Mr Cameron said: "It is crucial that we build up the skills in this country that our businesses need and that will fuel long term growth. We are investing in apprenticeships because we know they work – they are good for people who want to get ahead, good for business and good for the country". The Fund is part of a package of additional investment in apprenticeships totalling £180m, announced in this year's Budget. The government is already committed to funding some 360,000 apprenticeships this financial year. The Fund will build on support offered to business through the Growth and Innovation Fund and the Growth Review, which are designed to target government support on firms and sectors which will benefit most from additional investment in skills training. Paul Everitt, Chief Executive of SMMT, stated: "I am delighted to see government continuing to support and promote apprenticeships with this initiative, highlighting the need to ensure that the next generation has both the expertise and skills to help drive and shape the future of our business".

(Source: Number10)

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pm-announces-25m-boost-for-higher-apprenticeships/>



### London Assembly Lib Dems call for London's buses and taxis to go electric

London Assembly Liberal Democrats have put forward a programme to convert high mileage buses, taxis and light goods vehicles to electric power by 2020. "The Big Switch" was launched at City Hall with support from the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Rt Hon Chris Huhne MP. Mike Tuffrey the Liberal Democrat London Assembly environment spokesman stated: "Electric cars are welcome, but bang for buck the biggest benefits come from electrifying the vehicles that clock up the most miles and generate the most pollution. Look at the facts and it is a no brainer that the top priority is to electrify buses, taxis and vans". (Source: GLA LibDems) <http://glalibdems.org.uk/en/article/2011/504093/the-big-switch-london-assembly-lib-dems-call-for-london-s-buses-and-taxis-to-go-electric>

### UK GDP increases by 0.2% in the second quarter of 2011

Figures published by the Office of National Statistics show that GDP increased by just 0.2% in the UK in the second quarter of 2011, following an increase of 0.5% in the first quarter. Manufacturing decreased by 0.3% compared with an increase of 0.7% in the previous quarter. Analysis by the ONS indicates that Q2's special events, such as the additional bank holiday and the after effects of the Japanese tsunami, may have had a net downward impact on Q2 2011 GDP of 0.4% in the services sector and 0.1% in the production sector. Lee Hopley, Chief Economist at EEF, stated: "The mediocre expansion in the second quarter was largely anticipated with temporary factors weighing heavily on business in April. But after a tough start activity in manufacturing and services looks to have gained ground in May and June". (Source: ONS)

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=192>

**Due to parliamentary recess and an office move within SMMT, this week's newsletter is briefer and will return to usual next week**