

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 31 August

Holt Review published

The Department for Business, Innovation & Skills has published the Holt Review, commissioned in February this year to review ways to make apprenticeships simpler and more accessible for SMEs. The review makes three key recommendations, around improving the awareness of the benefits of apprenticeships to SMEs; ensuring that SMEs get the best from their training providers; and simplifying the apprenticeships system and removing barriers to access. Following the publication of the report, Skills Minister John Hayes outlined a number of measures government will take to improve apprenticeships for SMEs. These include:

- Improving communication about schemes through groups who advise small and medium employers, including lawyers and accountants.
- Better information for businesses on getting the right type of training for their apprentices.
- New standards for training providers in order to improve their performance.
- Improving the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers, making it simpler and more accessible.

Changes to the Apprenticeship Grant will include delivering the £1500 payment in a single payment, rather than the current two, employers being able to claim grants for up to ten apprentices, with the scheme being opened to employers who have not hired an apprentice in the past year, and the grant to be made available to businesses with up to 1,000 employees.

(Source: BIS)

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/m/12-891-making-apprenticeships-more-accessible-to-smes-holt-review.pdf>

EEF survey highlights positive change to the cost of credit

The Employers Engineering Federation (EEF) has published a survey that shows that the balance of companies seeing an increase in the overall cost of credit has fallen to its lowest level since 2007. However the survey also reports that there is increasing evidence that companies are turning away

from financial providers altogether and choosing to rely on internal finance for investment. (Source: EEF) <http://www.eef.org.uk/publications/surveys/default.htm>

£3 million boost for Scottish Green Bus Fund

The Scottish Green Bus Fund has received a boost of £3 million, to be made available this financial year. The fund is hoped to facilitate around 40 more 'Green Buses' on the roads in Scotland, in addition to the 74 that have already been purchased through the scheme since 2010. (Source: Transport Scotland) <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/news/Green-Buses-to-aid-economy>



Week ahead

Commons Chamber

Thursday 6 September

10:30am - Business, Innovation & Skills questions

Commons Committees

Wednesday 5 September

Science & Technology Committee (9:15am –Room 8)
Bridging the 'valley of death', improving the commercialisation of research

Westminster Hall

Thursday 6 September

14:30 – 17:30 – Energy & Climate Change Committee's report on 'The UK's Energy Supply: security or independence'

Lords Chamber

No relevant activity