

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 7 September

Government reshuffle

Prime Minister David Cameron has ordered his first major government reshuffle since the formation of the coalition in 2010. Key appointments for the automotive sector are detailed below:

- Patrick McLoughlin replaces Justine Greening as Secretary of State for Transport
- Michael Fallon replaces Mark Prisk as Minister of State for Business and Enterprise
- Stephen Hammond replaces Mike Penning as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport
- Sajid Javid replaces Chloe Smith as Economic Secretary to the Treasury
- Matthew Hancock replaces John Hayes as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business and Education
- Owen Paterson replaces Caroline Spelman as Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- John Hayes replaces Charles Hendry as Minister of State for Energy

(Source: Number 10)

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/the-coalition/the-government/>

August new car market remains stable

Figures published by SMMT show that new car registrations remained stable in August growing 0.1% to 59,433 units whilst year-to-date figures are up 3.3% to 1,260,997 units. Accounting for around 3% of the total market, August represents a small volume month ahead of the September plate change that typically accounts for around 17% of the year's total.

Commercial vehicle registrations fared less well in August, down 10.2% to 11,716 units but still up on the rolling year by 1.6%. The bus and coach market also fell in August, down 27.8% however strong performance throughout the year ensures that registrations are up 54.4% from January-August.

(Source: SMMT)

<https://www.smmt.co.uk/members-lounge/member-services/market-intelligence/vehicle-data/monthly-automotive-data/>



Multi-million boost for UK electric vehicle battery technology

Government has announced the creation of a new 'UK Energy Storage R&D Centre' for the advancement of electric and hybrid vehicle batteries. Co-funded by government (£9 million) and industry (£4 million), the £13 million centre will be created to capitalise on the growing electric and hybrid vehicle battery market, which has been estimated to be worth £250 million for the UK by 2020. The Centre will be based within the High Value Manufacturing (HVM) Catapult at the University of Warwick, and aims to build on the UK's world class research base in electrochemistry. It will focus on the development of a new generation of high performance batteries for electric and hybrid vehicles designed to be more economic and stable, yet boast higher energy density levels than those currently available on the market. The Centre will focus on the immediate priority of batteries for the low and ultra-low carbon vehicles, but it will have the potential to extend to storage for other transport applications including commercial and off-road vehicles, rail and marine, and to other technologies such as fuel cells. Announcing the creation of the Centre, newly appointed Business Minister Michael Fallon stated: "This £13 million facility will help accelerate the development of battery cells for the next generation of vehicles, and is a vital investment in the future of the automotive sector.

(Source: BIS)

<http://news.bis.gov.uk/Press-Releases/Multi-million-boost-for-UK-electric-vehicle-battery-technology-67f95.aspx>

'Predistribution' policy plan unveiled by Labour

Labour leader Ed Miliband has outlined his party's plans to fix the economy at a speech in the City of London. The plan calls for more 'predistribution' with the cutting of the welfare bill to ensure that poorer workers are paid better, aligned with stronger vocational training in schools and a change in attitude from business. Mr Miliband stated that this signifies a change in philosophy from the Labour Party as "the redistribution of the last Labour government relied on revenue which the next Labour government will not enjoy". The Shadow Chancellor, Ed Balls, shared the platform with Mr Miliband and reiterated calls for cross-party talks on a "mansion tax" and called for a further bank bonus tax to fund 25,000 new low-cost homes. (Source: Policy Network)

<http://www.policy-network.net/uploads/media/27/8053.pdf>

Business Secretary visits Honda manufacturing site

Business Secretary Vince Cable has visited Honda's Swindon plant to mark the launch of the new CR-V model, as part of a £267 million Honda investment programme supporting new models and engines. Mr Cable stated: "This multi-million pound investment by Honda in its twentieth year of car production in the UK is great news for Swindon and the automotive sector. Having created a host of new jobs, the investment supports government's ambition to encourage new investment and exports as a route to renewed growth and a more balanced economy". (Source: SMMT)

<http://www.smmmt.co.uk/2012/09/honda-confirms-267-million-investment-programme-in-swindon/>

OFT issues call for information into petrol and diesel prices

The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) has issued a call for information on the UK petrol and diesel sector, in light of public concern over pump prices. The OFT plan to identify whether or not there are competition problems that it can tackle in the sector and is inviting the industry, motoring groups and consumer bodies to submit information, with plans to publish findings in January 2013. (Source: OFT)

<http://www.oft.gov.uk/news-and-updates/press/2012/76-12>

Manufacturing output up 3.2% in July

The Office for National Statistics has published its Index of Production for July. The results show that the index of production fell by 0.8% in July 2012 compared with July 2011, whilst the index of manufacturing fell 0.5% in July 2012 compared with 2011. However, production rose by 2.9% between June and July with manufacturing rising by 3.2%. (Source: ONS)

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/iop/index-of-production/july-2012/stb-iop-july-2012.html>

Week ahead

Commons Chamber

Thursday 13 September
Business questions

Commons Committees

Tuesday 11 September
Foreign Affairs Committee (10:15am –Wilson Room)
The Future of the European Union: UK Government Policy

Tuesday 11 September
Business, Innovation and Skills Committee (10:30am – Room 6)
Progress on Local Enterprise Partnerships and the Regional Growth Fund

Wednesday 12 September
Science & Technology Committee (10:00am – Thatcher Room)
Bridging the 'valley of death', improving the commercialisation of research

Wednesday 12 September
Transport Committee (2:05pm – Room 8)
The work of the Department for Transport

Westminster Hall

No relevant activity

Lords Chamber

No relevant activity