

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 23 November

TfL Congestion Charge consultation announced

Transport for London has launched a consultation on proposed changes to the Congestion Charge. TfL regularly reviews the Congestion Charging scheme to ensure it remains effective in reducing traffic and congestion in central London, and to improve the operation of the scheme. The consultation contains key proposals around the introduction of a new Ultra Low Emission Discount from July 2013, which looks to replace the current Greener Vehicle Discount and Electric Vehicle Discount. The new scheme proposes to provide 100% discount from the Congestion Charge for vehicles that are either pure electric or have emissions below 75g/km CO₂ and meet Euro 5 standards for air quality, with the discount applying to both car and vans. With the new scheme in place the Greener Vehicle Discount and Electric Vehicle Discount would be closed to new registrations on 28 June 2013, with owners of vehicles already registered for the Greener Vehicle Discount continuing to receive the 100% discount for their car for a further two years, until 26 June 2015, and vehicles registered for the current Electric Vehicle Discount automatically qualifying for the new Ultra Low Emission Discount. The consultation closes on 8 February 2013.

(Source: TfL)

<https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/roads/congestioncharging>

Backbench committee holds Industrial Policy & Manufacturing debate

The Backbench Business Committee held a debate on Industrial Policy & Manufacturing on Thursday 22 November. Jonathan Reynolds MP (Labour) noted that the UK needs to learn from the USA and emerging BRIC countries that the 'public and private sectors are interdependent, and only by working together and learning to understand each others' strengths and capabilities will we succeed'. Mr Reynolds went on to discuss the issue of the UK's ageing workforce stating that government should be looking at ways to devolve skills funding more directly to businesses, and in exchange business should

guarantee that they will provide high-quality apprenticeships. Adrian Bailey MP noted the positive involvement of trade unions in the West Midlands in securing investment, stating that these case studies could serve as a model for industrial communication for the purpose of promoting investment. Jeremy Lefroy MP noted that the automotive sector has shown that industrial policy can work but only as a result of a determined effort by the UK to establish a proper policy that is consistent, long term and based on competitive advantage. Mr Lefroy went on to provide more detail on the importance of government focusing on areas of competitive advantage, strengthening the supply chain, and ensuring that the skills system is closely integrated with the needs of such sectors. Shadow Business Minister, Iain Wright MP also noted the achievements of the automotive sector in recent years, highlighting the development of the Automotive Council as a catalyst for this change. Other key areas discussed included the need for improved and effective careers advice for young people and better access to finance for SMEs.

(Source: Parliament.uk)

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/backbench-business-committee/news/debate-on--industrial-policy-and-uk-manufacturing-industries/>



Manufacturing output expected to decline over next 3 months

Data from the CBI's latest Industrial Trends Survey has shown that only 19% of manufacturers expect to increase their volume of output over the course of the

next three months, while 28% expect it to fall. Motor vehicles and the transport equipment sub-sector are those expecting to increase output. The total order book (-21%) remained broadly flat in November and only slightly under the long-run average (-17%), despite an upturn in export orders. The export order book (-12%) moved back above its long-run average (-21%), rebounding from September's low (-22%). This upturn was driven predominantly by the mechanical engineering, food, drink & tobacco and motor vehicles and transport equipment sub-sectors. Chemicals – which represents the largest export sector in the survey – reported a sharp drop. Commenting on the figures, Anna Leach, CBI Head of Economic Analysis stated: "Business confidence continues to be undermined by uncertainty over events in Europe and the fast approaching US fiscal cliff. However, we expect UK growth to pick-up somewhat in 2013 as this uncertainty gradually subsides and global growth increases". (Source: CBI) <http://www.cbi.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2012/11/manufacturers-expect-modest-reduction-in-output/>

TRS and Which Way Now skills portals developed

The Talent Retention Solution (TRS) scheme, aimed at retaining and recruiting skills in the engineering sector, has been extended to include engineering students and graduates, who can now sign up to the website to match their skills and experience to job vacancies in the manufacturing and engineering sector. In addition, the TRS website has been redeveloped to make it more user friendly, with the new site due to be launched in the coming weeks. Secretary of State for Business, Vince Cable stated that 'by matching people with real jobs through TRS, we are ensuring there is a pipeline of talented engineers of all levels plugging the huge demand for a skilled workforce in the sectors at the forefront of driving our recovery'. The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) has also developed a new skills website, aiming to provide school leavers, adults and the unemployed with knowledge of the large variety of career, study, and apprenticeship choices available to them. 'Which Way Now' supplies information and resources on a variety of issues such as funding, CV writing, apprenticeships and university options, and is an attempt to collate the information from the vast network of careers advice websites into one online hub. (Source: TRS, Which Way Now) <http://www.talentretention.biz/single.htm?ipg=12275>
<http://www.whichwaynow.org/>



UK automotive manufacturing receives boost from 1,000 bus order for ADL

Alexander Dennis Limited (ADL) has won orders for almost 1,000 vehicles, worth £220m, all of which will be delivered in the next 18 months. The orders include more than 530 three-axle Enviro500 double-deckers for Hong Kong, 150 hybrid-electric buses for the UK, and 175 Enviro200 buses for both home and export markets. (Source: SMMT) <http://www.smmt.co.uk/2012/11/uk-automotive-manufacturing-receives-boost-from-1000-bus-order-for-adl/>

Week ahead

Commons Committees

Monday 26 November
Transport Committee (4:05pm , Thatcher room)
Transport Committee

Wednesday 28 November:
Education Committee (9:30am, Wilson room)
Careers guidance for young people

Lords Chamber

Monday 26 November
Oral questions: What steps they are taking to raise the status and quality of vocational education (Baroness Jones of Whitchurch, Lab)

Lords Committees

Wednesday 28 November
Agriculture, Fisheries, Environment and Energy (EU Sub-Committee D) (10.30am, room 3a): EU energy: decarbonisation and economic competitiveness