

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 16 December

Government publishes response to Road Transport Red Tape Challenge

The Department for Transport has published government's response to the Road Transport theme of the Red Tape Challenge. The initiative looks to identify regulation that can be scrapped or improve to reduce regulatory burden. Included within the response, government looks to scrap regulations requiring motorists to hold a paper counterpart to their driving licence by 2015, improve the regulation surrounding the notification process for vehicles that are not in use on the road (Statutory Off Road Notification or SORN), where drivers will no longer have to declare their vehicle off the road annually, as well as proposals to only issue hard-copies of V5C vehicle registration certificates for fleet operators when needed, with the potential to be rolled out to private motorists. Transport Secretary Justine Greening MP said: "Motorists shouldn't have to keep numerous bits of paper just to prove they can drive and have bought insurance – we live in digital age and we need to embrace that. Reducing the number of rules and regulations in our life is absolutely vital to removing barriers to economic growth and increasing individual freedoms. This whole process just proves that there's so much sitting on our statute books that at the very least needs a good spring clean or can be scrapped entirely." Other proposed measures include removing the need for an insurance certificate, abolishing the requirement for drivers to prove they have insurance when applying for tax, and ensuring Local Authorities seek that business interests are considered as part of future proposed Workplace Charging Levy schemes. The response also confirms that the MOT review will take place. (Source: DfT) <http://www.dft.gov.uk/news/press-releases/dft-press-20111215>

UK vehicle production up 8% in November

Figures published by SMMT show UK vehicle production increased by 8% in November 2011

compared to 2010 figures. Car production rose by 8.5% in November and was up 6.1% over the first eleven months of 2011. Commercial Vehicle output also rose, by 2.2% in November, but was down 2.3% over the January-November period. UK engine production increased by 1.7% in November and was up 5.3% over the year-to-date. The CBI published its latest monthly Industrial Trends Survey, reporting that UK manufacturers expect further slight weakening in total order books in December, while export orders remained well below their long-run average. As a result, firms expect production to fall over the coming quarter. (Source: SMMT)

<http://www.smmt.co.uk/2011/12/november-van-and-truck-market-continues-upward-trend-growing-19-1/>



All-Party Motor Group discusses lower carbon choices

The All-Party Parliamentary Motor Group has met to discuss ways in which to encourage lower carbon choices. Chaired by Richard Burden MP, the meeting provided senior parliamentarians, policy influencers and industry stakeholders with the opportunity to share views on consumer incentives, taxation regimes and the future of low carbon innovation. Norman Baker MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport addressed the group, outlining government's priorities for low carbon growth and its intention to increase the UK's market share of low and ultra-low carbon technologies and automotive innovations. David Quarmby, Chairman of the RAC

Foundation, spoke on behalf of consumers, emphasising the need for a technology neutral, market-led approach, with consumers being well-informed to make the best choices to meet their needs. (Source: SMMT)

<http://www.smmt.co.uk/2011/12/smmt-delivers-low-carbon-choices-paper-at-cross-parliamentary-motor-briefing/>



Green Investment Bank priorities up until 2016 announced

Government has announced the priorities for the Green Investment Bank up until 2016. Business Secretary Vince Cable MP indicated that offshore wind power generation, commercial and industrial waste processing and recycling, energy from waste generation, non-domestic energy efficiency and support for the Green Deal will be the first priority sectors for the Bank. Government also announced the criteria for the where the Bank should be located, with a decision due before the end of March 2012. As part of the announcement, a new team within the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills will be set up to administer £100 million of funds under 'UK Green Investments' (UKGI), before the Bank is formally established for investment in smaller waste infrastructure projects. A further £100 million has been provided for investment in the non-domestic energy efficiency sector for next financial year. UKGI will also be available to co-invest in offshore wind projects. (Source: BIS)

<http://nds.coi.gov.uk/content/detail.aspx?NewsAreaId=2&ReleaseID=422445&SubjectId=2>

Government launches Foresight project to assess the future of manufacturing

A new Foresight project investigating the future of manufacturing out to 2050 has been launched by Business Secretary Vince Cable. Launched at the Financial Times Future of UK Manufacturing Conference, the two-year project will call on industry and academic expertise from the UK and abroad to look at the long-term picture for the manufacturing sector, investigating global trends and drivers of change. It will explore how the UK can maximise opportunities and provide an evidence base to help inform policy-makers. The project will be led by the Foresight team in the Government Office for Science under the direction of the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Sir John Beddington, sponsored by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. Executive Chairman of McLaren Group and McLaren Automotive, Ron Dennis CBE spoke alongside Dr Cable at the FT conference and outlined their commitment to helping the UK rebalance its economy and also to key initiatives such as See Inside Manufacturing. (Source: BIS)

<http://nds.coi.gov.uk/content/detail.aspx?NewsAreaId=2&ReleaseID=422473&SubjectId=2>

Taskforce appointed to look into non-bank lending

Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills Vince Cable MP, has announced the creation of a taskforce to explore how to further develop access to non-bank lending channels. The announcement follows an action highlighted in the Autumn Statement as part of government's credit easing plans. The taskforce will be led by Tim Breedon, Legal and General Chief Executive and Chairman of the Association of British Insurers. The taskforce will report to government ahead of Budget 2012. Dr Cable said: "Businesses across the UK are still in many cases unhappy with the way they have been treated by banks. We have secured a rise in new lending from the biggest banks this year and credit easing is designed to provide another immediate boost. But I want to see as much competition in the market as possible and for businesses to have access to a wide range of finance sources." (Source: BIS)

<http://nds.coi.gov.uk/content/detail.aspx?NewsAreaId=2&ReleaseID=422478&SubjectId=2>

DVLA launches consultation on centralising services

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency has launched a consultation announcing proposed changes to services from the Agency. Included within the consultation are proposals to close 39 regional DVLA offices, 10 of which include regional enforcement centres, by 2013, centralising services at the DVLA HQ in Swansea. Transport Minister Mike Penning MP said that the changes will make dealing with the DVLA easier and quicker for motorists. He said: "Centralising the DVLA's services is the first crucial step towards making more of its transactions available online, allowing people to deal with the DVLA at their chosen time and place. This will mean quicker turnarounds and meet our customers' growing needs." The consultation is open until 6 March 2012. (Source: DVLA)

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/dvla/pressoffice/pressreleases/13122011.aspx>

Week ahead

House of Commons

Monday 19 December

General debate on apprenticeships

Tuesday 20 December

Westminster Hall debate: 2.30pm-4.00pm, Effect of transport policies in jobs and growth (Ian Mearns, Lab, Gateshead).

The House rises for Christmas Recess on 20 December and will return on 10 January 2012.

House of Lords

Tuesday 20 December

Oral Question: What additional fiscal measures they will take to encourage private capital to invest in manufacturing or tradable services in the United Kingdom (Lord Empey, UUP)

Science and Technology: Sub-Committee I, Subject: Higher education in STEM subjects.

The House rises for Christmas Recess on 21 December and will return on 10 January 2012.