

Second phase of £5 million ULEV-scheme

Up to 35 public sector organisations are being asked to bid for funding from a £5 million scheme to support ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEV), Transport Minister Baroness Kramer announced this week.

Organisations including the police, fire services and the NHS will be able to test their ULEV-readiness, as part of a drive to get electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles into the fleets of central government. The scheme was announced last year and today is being opened to the wider public sector. Winners will be offered a fully-funded fleet review to identify how to introduce greener vehicles. The first phase saw 15 government departments launch reviews of their vehicle fleets and will see around 150 vehicles begin to enter fleets from February. The second phase is expected to see more than 200 plug-in vehicles introduced to the fleets of other public sector organisations. The £5 million is in addition to £500 million for ULEVs announced by the Deputy Prime Minister in April 2014. (Source: DfT)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/second-phase-of-5-million-ultra-low-emission-vehicles-scheme>

DfT releases publications on road traffic usage trends

The Department for Transport has released a number of publications on road traffic usage trends in relation to the recently announced Roads Investment Strategy. The publications provide detail on issues such as road traffic demand elasticity, traffic levels in recent decades, whilst also exploring current trends in and factors behind roads use. Themes related to urbanisation, the increasing reluctance of young people to become car owners and the changes in demand for car use with links to public transport infrastructure are all developed. Moreover, specific focus has been placed on the usage of the Strategic Road Network in recent years with comparisons drawn on levels prior to the Recession. (Source: DfT)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?departments%5B%5D=department-for-transport>

EU Commission approves new rural fuel tax cut

17 of the UK's most rural communities are a step closer to getting up to a 5p per litre fuel price cut after the government's rural fuel rebate scheme cleared the major hurdle of European Commission approval this week, Chief Secretary to the Treasury Danny Alexander has announced. The scheme will allow 125,000 people living in the selected areas, who currently face some of the highest fuel prices in the country despite depending on cars for transport, to benefit from cheaper fuel. The UK's most rural islands already receive this discount, but it will be the first time ever that the Commission has approved a fuel discount in on the mainland in the UK. Commission approval means that the issue is now awaiting agreement from other member states through the Council of the European Union. With a view to implementing the scheme in the current Parliament, the government is pressing ahead with a formal consultation on the regulations necessary to implement the change.

(Source: HM Treasury)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/european-commission-approves-new-rural-fuel-tax-cut>

Government completes next stage in apprenticeship reform

This week, government published the response to the 'Future of Apprenticeships in England: Funding Reform Technical Consultation'. This document outlines the next steps on apprenticeship reform, making the pledge to give employers direct control of funding for the training of apprentices. However, the response highlights that there was no consensus among respondents over the best funding mechanism. Government has therefore concluded that further detailed design work is needed before a final decision can be reached on which mechanism will be taken forward. Government has stated that they will continue to undertake this further work with industry,

in an open and collaborative way. The funding reforms will continue to be developed alongside the trailblazer programme which is giving employers control over the design of apprenticeships. Over 1,000 employers, of all sizes, are now part of the trailblazers scheme in industries including engineering, legal services and health and social care.

(Source: BIS)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-completes-next-stage-in-apprenticeship-reform>

Low Emission Strategy for Scotland

A consultation has been launched on proposals aimed at improving air quality in Scotland. For the next 12 weeks, the Scottish Government is formally seeking views on its draft national Low Emission Strategy. It sets out action already being taken by the Scottish Government and its agencies, health boards and local authorities to tackle air pollution. It also contains proposals for improving air quality across the country by, for example, better co-ordinating policies at national and local level.

(Source: Scottish Government)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2015/01/3287>

£4 million for local transport in rural and isolated areas

Transport Minister Baroness Kramer has today (14 January 2015) announced that up to £4 million is being made available to pilot new and better ways of delivering joined-up local transport in rural and isolated areas. The Department for Transport fund aims to promote a better coordination and utilisation of all available transport services in local communities. Around £2 billion of public funding for transport services is currently provided each year by a number of agencies. However, this funding is often not co-ordinated or integrated at a local level, resulting in duplication and potential waste of public funding. The pilot funding will allow local authorities to show how transport resources can be used more efficiently by bringing organisations together, improving vital transport services in local areas. (Source: DfT)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/4-million-for-local-transport-in-rural-and-isolated-areas>



Week ahead

Commons Chambers

Thursday 22 January

- 9:30am: Transport questions (Topicals at 10:05am)
- 9:30am: Second reading of Private Members Bills:
 - Working Time Directive (Limitation) Bill
 - Zero Hours Contracts Bill
 - Parliamentary and Constitutional Reform Bill
 - Off-Road Vehicles (Registration) Bill

Commons Committee

Monday 19 January

- Transport Committee (4:05pm, room tbc) – smaller airports

Tuesday 20 January

- Business, Innovation and Skills Committee (9:30am, room tbc) – TTIP

Wednesday 21 January

- Environmental Audit Committee (2:15pm) – Climate change adaptation

Grand Committee

Monday 19 January and Wednesday 21 January

- Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill: Committee