

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 20 January

Government commits to ultra-low carbon cars and vans

Government has reaffirmed its commitment to ultra-low carbon vehicles with the announcement that the Plug-In Car Grant will be retained, and the creation of a new Plug-In Van Grant – reducing the cost of eligible vans by 20% up to the value of £8,000. The early development of a low carbon market in the UK will bring with it vehicle trials, engineering and development functions – crucial elements that will help the UK to remain at the forefront of this emerging market. In addition, extending funding to the commercial vehicle world is a significant step. Each van qualifying for the Grant must emit less than 75g/km CO₂, be capable of at least 60 miles between charges (10 miles in electric mode for hybrid vans), more than 50mph and to ensure safety, be approved by ‘European Vehicle Type Approval’. Commenting on the announcement, SMMT Chief Executive, Paul Everitt stated: “The Plug-In Car Grant and the new Plug-In Van Grant send a strong signal to the global automotive industry about the UK’s determination to be a leading market for ultra-low carbon vehicles. We will reap significant industrial and environmental benefits from establishing an early and flourishing ultra-low carbon vehicle market, attracting high value investment in R&D, innovation and automotive manufacturing”. (Source: DFT)

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/news/press-releases/dft-news-20120117/>

Government and industry map path to hydrogen vehicle future

A new initiative to ensure the UK is well positioned for the commercial roll-out of hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles has been launched by Business Minister, Mark Prisk MP. UK H₂Mobility, a consortium of 13 automotive companies, government organisations and energy companies, will consider the actions needed to secure the UK’s global role in the manufacture and use of hydrogen fuel cell vehicles, ahead of an anticipated roll-out to consumers in 2014/15. The new

programme aims to; analyse in detail the specific UK case for the introduction of hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles as one of a number of solutions to decarbonise road transport and quantify the potential emissions benefits, review the investments required to commercialise the technology, including refuelling infrastructure, and identify what is required to make the UK a leading global player in hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicle manufacturing thereby paving the way for economic opportunities to the UK, through the creation of new jobs and boosting of local economies. (Source: BIS)

<http://nds.coi.gov.uk/content/Detail.aspx?ReleaseID=422877&NewsAreaID=2>



Record exports drive UK manufacturing growth in 2011

Figures released by SMMT, show that UK car manufacturing rose 5.8% to 1,343,810 in 2011 and ended the year with a 1.6% rise in December, UK engine production rose by 4.9% to 2,504,054 in 2011, despite a modest 1.3% fall in December, and CV output fell by just 1.4% to 121,312 in 2011 and was down 2.7% in December. Commenting on the figures, Business Minister, Mark Prisk MP, stated: “The global vehicle market grew by around four per cent in 2011. At the same time, UK vehicle production grew by nearly six per cent demonstrating how the UK has outperformed the market this year. Exports of UK-made cars and commercial vehicles have also risen from 75 per cent to over 80 per cent of total production to meet this growing demand. We have some of the best plants in the UK that are amongst the most productive in Europe. Multi-billion pound investment and the

creation of new jobs in the automotive sector demonstrates that the UK can successfully compete for business across the world". (Source: SMMT) <http://www.smmt.co.uk/2012/01/smmt-uk-automotive-manufacturing-december-2011-full-year/>

Government launch consultation on statutory register of lobbyists

Mark Harper MP, Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform, has launched a twelve week consultation on a statutory register of lobbyists, inviting views from the public and industry on how such a register should work. The consultation seeks views on a number of issues, including; the definition of a lobbyist, who should be required to register, what information should be collected, and how the register should be funded. The consultation document can be found [here](#). (Source: Cabinet Office) <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/proposals-register-lobbyists>

Business Secretary praises Talent Retention Solution service

Business Secretary, Vince Cable MP, has praised the development and progress of the of the Skills and Jobs Retention Group's Talent Retention Solution (TRS) service, a government supported redeployment and recruitment website which holds details of engineering staff at risk of redundancy and vacancies in the engineering sectors. The Skills and Jobs Retention Group was set up to help redeploy and retain vitally needed engineering skills as a result of changes arising from the Strategic Defence and Security Review. The system is now available to companies and employees in all of the advanced manufacturing and engineering sectors across the UK. The development will support engineers looking for work, as well as companies looking to recruit, as a way of retaining vital skills for the benefit of growing sectors in engineering such as aerospace, automotive, renewables, marine and nuclear. The TRS service is free to use for SMEs with less than 500 employees. (Source: SMMT) <http://www.talentretention.biz/single.htm?jpg=12275>

Green bus fund in Scotland gets additional £2m boost

The Scottish Government has announced that a second round of its Green Bus Fund will be launched, enabling more bus operators across Scotland to invest in low carbon technology. As part of the Scottish government's future transport strategy, outlined at the 2012 Transport Conference in Glasgow, Transport Minister Keith Brown confirmed that a second round of the Fund would go ahead, and pledged an additional £2 million to support public bus operators as they seek to add eco-friendly vehicles to bus fleets. Building on the success of last year's Scottish Green Bus Fund that saw five bus operators introduced 48 new low carbon buses, the second round of the scheme provides further opportunities to increase the take-up of low carbon buses across Scotland and will help stimulate demand for green technology. (Source: Transport Scotland) <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/public-transport/Buses/Bus-Fund>



Week ahead

Commons Committees

Tuesday 24 January
Transport Committee – Road Safety (10:05am, room 18)

Lords & Joint Committees

Monday 23 January
European Union Committee – Euro area crisis and the fiscal compact treaty (4:00pm, room TBC)

Tuesday 24 January
Science & Technology: Sub-Committee I- Higher education in STEM subjects (3:15pm, room 3)