

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 10 February

SMMT host reception to mark start of National Apprenticeship Week

Minister of State for Further Education and Skills, John Hayes MP, and senior politicians from both Labour and Liberal Democrat parties, attended a reception held at SMMT, to mark the start of National Apprenticeship Week. 31 apprentices from 12 companies attended the event, where they spoke to stakeholders, MPs and the media about their experiences of the wide range of training programmes available across the industry. The event was an opportunity for senior industry leaders and politicians to celebrate the wealth of opportunities open to automotive apprentices and, to build on the government and industry-led momentum that is guiding young people towards a rewarding career within the automotive industry. In his speech at the reception, Mr Hayes stated: "The automotive industry is a vital component of our economy and our national identity. By investing in growing numbers of apprenticeships, the sector is not just helping young people build productive careers and successful lives – it is making a sound investment in its own and our nation's future". (Source: SMMT)

<http://www.smmt.co.uk/2012/02/smmt-reception-celebrates-automotive-apprenticeships/>

Prime Minister announces new round of funding to support apprenticeships

Prime Minister David Cameron, has announced a new round of government funding to support thousands of apprenticeships up to degree equivalent, in a bid to safeguard future skills provision for industry. Open to a variety of sectors including aerospace, automotive, energy and renewable technologies, the new £6 million Higher Apprenticeship Fund is now inviting bids from businesses and training providers from across the UK. Mr Cameron also opened the bidding for the new Employer Ownership pilot, inviting employers in England to apply to access up to £250

million of public investment and secure more control over how skills training is designed and delivered. He also pledged that from this week, small firms will be offered an incentive of £1,500 to hire their first young apprentices. This is expected to support up to 40,000 new apprenticeships over the next year. Mr Cameron stated: "By making apprenticeships a gold standard option for ambitious young people, we are sending a message that technical excellence is as highly valued as academic prowess. And by focusing investment where it is most needed to deliver sustainable growth and offering real ownership of vocational training to employers, we are equipping businesses with the skills they need to rebalance our economy and distribute opportunity more widely". Data released on 31 January confirms record growth in apprenticeship starts, with some 457,200 starting an apprenticeship in the full 2010/11 academic year, representing a 63.5% increase on 2009/10 figures. According to the National Audit Office, every £1 of public investment in apprenticeships delivers a return of £18 to the wider economy. (Source: Number 10) <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/apprenticeships/>



First registration figures for 2012 published

Figures published by SMMT show that new car registrations rose 0.03% to 128,853 units in January 2012, demonstrating positive signs of stability in the market. The market outlook for 2012 is forecast to dip just 1% on 2011 to 1.92 million, before staging a stronger recovery in 2013. The commercial vehicle market has had a mixed start to the year, with strong

truck registrations outweighed by a fall in the van market, resulting in a 8.6% fall on January 2011. However, over the course of 2012 the CV market is expected to remain steady, ending the year marginally up on 2011. Commenting on the announcements, SMMT Chief Executive, Paul Everitt, stated: "Government support for business will be key to maintaining market stability. If confidence can be maintained through the year, we should see growth in 2013". (Source: SMMT)

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

Government announce changes to the Feed-In Tariffs scheme

Government has announced plans to make the Feed-in Tariffs scheme more predictable, stating that transparency, longevity and certainty are at the heart of the new improved scheme. The reforms aim to provide greater confidence to consumers and industry investing in renewable technologies such as solar power, anaerobic digestion, micro-CHP, wind and hydro power. Key changes for industry include a proposal to peg subsidy levels to cost reductions and industry growth to provide more certainty for future investments. This will ensure that subsidy levels keep in step with the market. This proposal builds on the best of the existing German system and will remove the need for emergency reviews. In addition the changes will allow the use of budget flexibility to cover the overspend resulting from high PV uptake this year, while still allowing £460 million for new installations over the Spending Review period. Commenting on the announcement, Climate Change Minister Greg Barker, stated: "I want to see a bright and vibrant future for small scale renewables in the UK and allow each of the technologies to reach their potential where they can get to a point where they can stand on their own two feet without the need for subsidy sooner rather than later". (Source: DECC)

http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/news/pn12_010/pn12_010.aspx



Week ahead

House of Commons

The House of Commons is in recess and will return on Monday February 20.

Lords & Joint Committees

No relevant activity