

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 9 May

New car and bus and coach registrations register strong April performance

Figures published by SMMT show that new car and bus and coach registrations showed strong increases in April. Van registrations remained stable for the month, whilst registrations for new trucks decreased as the market continues to feel the effects of emission standard changes (Euro VI).

New car registrations

New car registrations grew by 8.2% in April to 176,820 units, seeing the 26th consecutive month of growth. Volumes for the year-to-date saw an increase of 12.5%, reaching 864,942 units. Chief Executive of SMMT, Mike Hawes, commented, "As UK economic confidence improves still further and the market continues its upward trend, we have revised our 2014 forecast up from 2.3million to over 2.4million registrations. This represents an increase of more than 6% versus last year".

Commercial vehicle registrations

The demand for vans in 2014 has remained stable with 20,620 registrations, consistent with April 2013, and maintaining the year-to-date margin of +12.2%. Truck registrations, however, continue to feel the effects of the new emissions standard changes with volumes down 24.9% in the month although the rolling year to April remained up 22.3%. Overall, total commercial vehicle registrations dipped 4.2% in April to 23,338; rolling year up 13.0% to 334,808. Continuing the year-to-date trend in line with SMMT's revised van forecast for 2014, should see the market grow more than 11% on 2013.

Bus and coach registrations

April saw a recovery for the bus and coach market, with new registrations up 35.5% to 843 units. The purpose-built sector posted growth of 50.0% in the month, with year-to-date down 5.8%. The converted bus market continued to rise, up 21.9% in April to 390 units.

(Source: SMMT)

<http://www.smmt.co.uk/>

Reports on better roads and national policy statement on national networks published

The Transport Select Committee has published two reports, "Better Roads" and the "National Policy Statement on National Networks", conveying MP's beliefs that joined-up planning for passenger and freight traffic across rail and road infrastructure is crucial for UK prosperity. The reports also conclude that effective regulation and long-term funding plans are essential for investment in the strategic roadwork and highlight that the Transport Minister has reiterated the decision not to introduce charging to the road network (apart from the recently implemented Heavy Goods Vehicle user charging scheme). Other key conclusions from the reports include:

- Government must demonstrate an integrated transport approach in developing and assessing improvements to strategic routes.
- DfT should develop a transparent system of road planning as part of a wider national transport strategy.
- The Transport Committee are unconvinced by the case for establishing the Highways Agency as a government company.

(Source: House of Commons Transport Committee)

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/transport-committee/news/roads-and-nps---substantive/>



Growth in orders and output increases optimism

The CBI's latest SME Trends Survey has shown that optimism amongst the UK's smaller manufacturers has surged to its highest levels since records began in 1988. These positive figures coincide with small and medium-sized manufacturers stating that total orders and output rallied in the three months to April, and that employment numbers also enjoyed a sharp boost and are expected to continue growing at an even stronger pace during the next quarter. The survey of 366 SME manufacturers showed that export orders bounced back from a fall in the previous quarter, and domestic orders rose strongly. Output grew solidly for the third consecutive quarter, with output expectations for the next three months at their highest level since January 1995. The key findings from the survey in the three months to April are:

- 39% of firms reported an increase in total new orders and 19% decreased, giving a balance of +20%.
- 36% of firms said domestic orders increased and 18% said they decreased, giving a balance of +18%.
- 25% of firms reported an increase in export orders and 16% said they fell, giving a balance of +9%, jumping back from a fall in the previous quarter where the balance was -7%.
- 33% of firms said output increased and 16% said it decreased, giving a balance of +17%, with growth next quarter predicted to rise to its fastest pace since January 1995 (23%).
- 46% of firms said they were more optimistic regarding their business situation, while 10% said they were less optimistic, giving a balance of 36%. This is the fourth consecutive rise in business optimism.

(Source: CBI)

<http://www.cbi.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2014/05/optimism-soars-amongst-smaller-manufacturers-on-back-of-strong-growth-in-orders-and-output/>



Leading STEM organisations offer over 2,000 new jobs and apprenticeships

Government has announced that over 170 leading businesses have offered more than 2,000 new jobs and apprenticeships to boost participation in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects in school and beyond at the launch of the 'Your Life' campaign. Organisations have pledged to do more to highlight the career opportunities open to those studying STEM subjects, committing to create over 2,000 new entry level positions including apprenticeships, graduate paid jobs and paid work experience. George Osborne MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was present at the launch, stated "Backing growth in sectors such as science, tech and engineering are part of our long term plan to deliver economic security and sustainable growth for a more resilient economy". The campaign also aims to encourage more women into this sector, with several organisations prioritizing introducing more women apprentices and recruits into science, engineering, maths and technology based subjects and careers. (Source: gov.uk)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/over-2000-new-jobs-and-apprenticeships-from-leading-stem-organisations>

Week ahead

Commons Chamber

No relevant activity

Commons Committees

Monday 12 May

3.30pm: Science and Technology – Practical science in schools (Thatcher room)

Tuesday 13 May

4:05pm: Transport – Government motoring agencies – a user perspective (Thatcher Room)

Wednesday 14 May

1:30pm: Scottish Affairs – The referendum on separation for Scotland (Room 8)

Westminster Hall

No relevant activity

House of Lords

No relevant activity