

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 18 May

Vauxhall commits to UK manufacturing at Ellesmere Port

Vauxhall has confirmed that it will invest £125 million to continue manufacturing at its Ellesmere Port plant in Cheshire, creating 700 new jobs directly and 4,000 indirectly in the supply chain. The decision follows the conclusion of a new labour agreement, which was approved by the Vauxhall workforce. The agreement comes into force in 2013 and runs through the life of the next-generation Astra, into the early 2020s. As part of the agreement, the plant will improve flexibility and reduce fixed costs, significantly improving its competitiveness. Manufacturing of the new model is scheduled to start in 2015 with the plant running at full capacity on three-shifts and the plan will see a minimum of 160,000 vehicles produced each year. Vauxhall will also increase the local supply content for the Ellesmere Port-built Astra to at least 25%, creating further employment locally and across the UK. Commenting on the announcement, Prime Minister David Cameron stated: "This is excellent news for Ellesmere Port and for UK manufacturing. Once again we have seen the success of the UK automotive industry and the crucial role it plays in growing and rebalancing our economy. This has been a real team effort with the government, the company, unions and workers all focused on keeping production in the UK. And the workforce at Ellesmere Port should take great pride in their skill, hard work and commitment which has proved vital to ensuring this great result today". (Source: BIS)

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/news/topstories/2012/May/gm-new-investment-vauxhall-ellesmere-plant>

UK automotive output sustains growth run in April

Figures published by SMMT show that car manufacturing rose by 9.3% in April, and was up 11.8% over the first four months of the year. Commercial vehicle output rose by 3.2% in April, but was down 9.2% over the January to April period. UK engine production rose by 1.2% in April and was up

1.7% over the year-to-date. Commenting on the figures, SMMT Chief Executive, Paul Everitt, stated: "Sustained investment is delivering desirable products to markets around the world and efforts by employees, trades unions and government are helping ensure the UK remains one of the most competitive locations for global automotive companies". (Source: SMMT)

<http://www.smmt.co.uk/2012/05/smmt-uk-automotive-manufacturing-april-2012/>



BIS surveys show high value of apprentices

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has published the 'Apprenticeship Learner Survey' which indicates that Britain's apprentices are getting promoted, improving their confidence and taking on more responsibility in the workplace. The study surveyed 5,000 apprentices with key findings including: almost nine in ten apprentices (89%) were satisfied, rising to 92% amongst completers; one third of individuals who had finished their apprenticeship had received a promotion (32%), and of those in work, three quarters reported taking on more responsibility in their job (75%); one third of individuals who had finished their apprenticeship had received a promotion (32%), and of those in work, three quarters reported taking on more responsibility in their job (75%); nearly two thirds (62%) agreed that the course had improved their overall quality of life. A second survey of over 4,000 employers also shows high satisfaction rates among businesses. Key findings included: 88% of employers were satisfied (with 69% being very satisfied) with the relevance of the training (just 4%

were dissatisfied on this measure); 85% were satisfied (with 66% being very satisfied) with the quality of the training provided by their provider (only 7% were dissatisfied); nearly half (47%) had already recommended apprenticeships to other employers. Commenting on the report, Skills Minister, John Hayes, stated: "We are succeeding in making apprenticeships a gold standard option for ambitious young people and sending a crystal clear message that technical excellence is as essential and highly valued as academic prowess". (Source: BIS)
<http://news.bis.gov.uk/Press-Releases/Surveys-show-high-value-of-apprentices-679fb.aspx>



Labour Party front bench reshuffle

Labour Party leader, Ed Miliband MP, has called a minor reshuffle of his frontbench team. Jon Cruddas MP has been promoted to become Coordinator of the Labour Party Policy Review, whilst Lord Adonis will advise the Policy Review on industrial strategy. Other changes include Owen Smith MP to replace Peter Hain MP as Shadow Secretary of State for Wales, and Angela Eagle MP recommended as new chair of Labour's National Policy Forum. (Source: Labour Party)
<http://www.labour.org.uk/new-frontbench-team,2012-05-15>

£100 million fund to boost university and private collaboration opens

The Research Partnership Investment Fund a new £100 million fund to support research partnerships between universities, businesses, charities and philanthropic donors has opened for bids. The fund will open to UK universities for investment in long-term capital projects that leverage in significant private

funding. Universities will be able to bid for between £10 million and £35 million per project and must be able to demonstrate that they can attract at least double the amount in private investment. Applications will be judged on value for money and how much they build on existing strong research capability. The fund will be managed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), working with its counterparts in the devolved administrations. It will be a competitive two stage process with an initial call for expressions of interest followed by an invitation for those selected to work up more detailed proposals, with HEFCE hoping to announce the successful bidders in the autumn. Government has also announced that it received 269 bids from employers looking to take part in the Employer Ownership pilot, a £250 million fund which will route public investment directly to employers – enabling them to invest in the training and skills development they need to grow their business. (Source: BIS)
<http://news.bis.gov.uk/Press-Releases/Hundreds-of-employers-bid-for-250m-skills-training-pilot-67a09.aspx>

Week ahead

Commons Chamber

Thursday 24 May

10:30am – Business, innovation and skills questions

Commons Committees

Monday 21 May

4:30pm, room 9 - Second Delegated Legislation Committee – To consider the draft CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme (Allocation of Allowances for Payment) Regulations

Tuesday 22 May

10:30am, room 6 – BIS Committee – Trade & investment in Brazil

Westminster Hall

No relevant activity

Lords Chamber

No relevant activity