

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 24 May

Vince Cable meets with business leaders of the G8

Business Secretary Vince Cable has met with the leaders of the business federations from the G8 countries to discuss Britain's approach to industrial strategy. This followed a meeting with the Prime Minister on the G8 agenda on Trade, Tax and Transparency, and was the first major event in the run up to the G8 summit at Lough Erne in June. The leaders were interested to hear about Britain's approach to creating a long-term vision for business confidence. Dr Cable talked about developing strategic partnerships for targeted sectors, as well as ensuring support for issues that affect all businesses, such as skills, access to finance, technologies and procurement. The group shared their experiences of working with governments in their own countries. All highlighted common challenges in ensuring that education provides the right technical skills for jobs and growth in a fast changing world. The G8 issued a supportive statement, thanked the British government for consulting with business and said they hoped this would become standard practice in the future.

(Source: BIS)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/vince-cable-meets-with-business-leaders-of-the-g8>

MAS Barometer reveals 12-month high in manufacturing SME confidence

The Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS) Barometer has stated that growth prospects among manufacturing SMEs in England is at a 12-month high, with the report revealing that nearly two thirds (64%) of the 700 companies surveyed are expecting to increase sales over the next six months. There was equally positive news on recent performance with 47% of respondents reporting a rise in sales turnover (+4% on Q4 2012), while 93% of manufacturers are looking to take staff on or maintain current workforce levels. Appetite for investment has also seen an upturn, with 39% planning to boost spending on new technologies and 48% intending to invest in new

machinery and premises – both 4% up on the same period last year. Commenting on the figures, Business and Energy Minister Michael Fallon stated: "We have a strong manufacturing base here in the UK. As we see through the latest MAS Barometer, business confidence is on the rise, particularly among SMEs, indicating that manufacturers are becoming more optimistic about their future growth plans. The report also indicates that challenges remain for manufacturers. MAS works with businesses to maximise their efficiency, reduce waste and grasp new commercial opportunities – all key drivers for growth. I would encourage SMEs seeking to improve their operations and increase their bottom line to contact their local MAS." (Source: SMMT)

<http://www.smm.co.uk/2013/05/latest-mas-barometer-reveals-12-month-high-in-manufacturing-sme-confidence/>



Labour Party publish Skills Taskforce Interim Report

The Labour Party has published an interim report on its Skills Taskforce entitled 'Talent Matters – why England needs a new approach to skills'. Chaired by Professor Chris Husbands, Director of the Institute of Education, and comprising business and education experts, the Skills Taskforce aims to identify major problems in the current skills system. The report states these problems as: an increasingly fragmented education system; low levels of employer involvement in the skills system; the lack of high quality apprenticeships; and poor quality advice to navigate the transition between education and work. The Taskforce interim report finds that Further Education

colleges are crucial to developing a high quality skills system but states that in order to play their part, standards in colleges must be raised. Labour has stated that in order to address this issue it will ensure that all new FE teachers will be required to have at least level 2 (GCSE A*-C) English and Maths, and that a Labour government will work with business and FE to ensure all vocational teachers spend time every year in industry to keep their skills and experience fresh. Commenting on the report, Shadow Business Secretary Chuka Umunna MP stated: "Through our One Nation Skills Taskforce Labour is working with employers on how we can create a skills system which meets the needs of businesses and which leaves no one behind."

(Source: Labour)

<http://www.labour.org.uk/driving-up-standards-in-fe-colleges,2013-05-21>

Balance of Competences review: second round of consultations launched

The Minister for Europe, David Lidington MP, has launched the second round of consultations on the Balance of Competences review. The Balance of Competencies Review is a two-year process, taking place between autumn 2012 and autumn 2014 that seeks to inform the debate on EU reform. Thirty-two individual reports covering all areas of EU competence are due to be completed over four semesters. The first six reports will be published in summer 2013 and departments are gathering evidence now for the nine reports being produced in the second semester. The nine second semester reports will cover the Internal Market: Free movement of goods (HM Revenue & Customs); Internal Market: Free movement of persons (Home Office); Asylum and Immigration (Home Office); Trade and Investment (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills); Environment and Climate Change (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs); Transport (Department for Transport); Research and Development (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills); Tourism, Culture and Sport (Department for Culture, Media and Sport); Civil Justice (Ministry of Justice). The deadline for evidence submission for the second semester reports is early August 2013. Commenting on the announcement, Mr Lidington stated: "After forty years of EU membership, now is the right time to take a rigorous but constructive look at how our relationship with the EU impacts on our national interest. The Balance of Competences Review is a vital opportunity for you to make sure that

your views are heard as part of what is the most extensive objective and evidence based analysis of our relationship with the EU ever undertaken."

(Source: Foreign Office)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/minister-for-europe-hosts-balance-of-competences-event>



DVLA appoint interim Chief Executive

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) has appointed Malcolm Dawson OBE as its interim Chief Executive. Commenting on the announcement, Department for Transport Permanent Secretary, Philip Rutnam, stated: "Malcolm has a strong background in leading and managing organisations across government. This extensive experience will be very valuable at the DVLA as the agency continues to transform the services it offers to motorists."

Source: (DVLA)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/malcolm-dawson-obe-appointed-interim-chief-executive-of-dvla>

Week ahead

The House of Commons is in and will return on Monday 3 June

The House of Lords is in recess and will return on Thursday 23 May to Monday 3 June