

## WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 29 August

### Salmond and Darling debate Scottish independence

Scotland's First Minister Alex Salmond and Better Together head Alistair Darling met for their final TV debate ahead of the Scottish referendum. It was a very heated debate, with topics such as oil revenues, currency and the future of nuclear weapons being discussed. A snap poll following the debate, run by the Guardian newspaper and polling company ICM, suggested that Mr Salmond's score was 71% compared to Mr Darling's 29%. The referendum on Scottish independence will be held on Thursday 18 September.

(Source: BBC)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-28929057>

### Consultation launched on zero hours exclusivity clauses

Business Secretary Vince Cable has called on business, unions and individuals to help identify and close potential loopholes in plans to ban the use of exclusivity clauses in zero hours contracts. This consultation launched by government seeks views on the best method to prevent employers from attempting to circumvent the ban. It also proposes options such as civil penalties, which workers could use to seek justice if they are unfairly treated by their employer. Business Secretary Vince Cable said "We are looking closely at any potential loopholes that could arise from a ban, to ensure that there are closed off and no one can get round the new law." The consultation will close on 3 November 2014.

(Source: BIS)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cable-no-loopholes-in-zero-hours-exclusivity-ban>

### TfL to trial hybrid bus charging technology

Transport for London (TfL) has announced plans to trial innovative technology that will enable specially designed buses to wirelessly charge their batteries while they wait at bus stands. From next year the

inductive charging technology will be trialled on up to four extended range diesel electric hybrid buses in East London. The trial will utilise inductive charging technology that allows buses to top up their batteries without needing to be physically plugged in; a more convenient option for use on busy London bus routes. The buses have a diesel engine that will be used when the battery power on the bus is depleted, although it is expected that this will only be for short periods of time, meaning emissions on these vehicles will be greatly reduced. The trial will help TfL develop plans for greater use of electric buses in central London in the future.

(Source: TfL)

<https://www.tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2014/august/new-hybrid-bus-charging-technology-trial-announced>



### Conservative MP Douglas Carswell defects to UKIP

Conservative MP for Clacton, Douglas Carswell, has announced his decision to defect to the UK Independence Party (UKIP), and will stand down as MP in order to seek re-election through a by-election. Carswell told reporters at a news conference in central London, where he unveiled his surprise announcement that he did not believe Conservative leader and Prime Minister David Cameron was "serious about the change we need." Should he win the election, he will be the first UKIP MP to take a seat in Westminster.

(Source: BBC)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-28967904>

## Final chance to join freight capacity trial

Transport Minister Claire Perry has announced that more freight operators will be given the chance to join a trial to allow them to use longer vehicles to transport goods on UK roads, providing a boost to trade and industry. Government's 10-year longer semi-trailer trial was launched in 2012, and enabled freight operators to bid for a share of 1,800 vehicle allocations. Currently, there are around 1,400 longer semi-trailers on the road or under construction following another round of bids in 2013, with 400 allocations still available. Operators now have four weeks from Thursday 28 August to apply for the remaining allocation, and they must use their allocation within six weeks. The available bids are open to operators already in the trial and new hauliers, with the aim to get the full quota of 1,800 on the road as quickly as possible. Transport Minister Claire Perry said, "Longer trailers allow companies to transport more goods, more efficiently and can have significant economic and environmental benefits." The trial is expected to save over 3,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> over ten years, and the overall benefits are estimated at £33 million over ten years.

(Source: DfT)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/final-chance-to-join-to-boost-freight-capacity>

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## Rising number of students choosing maths and science

According to results published today by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), more students are taking A Levels in subjects that help secure jobs with the highest wages and lowest chances of unemployment. Since June 2010 entries in subjects such as maths and science have risen across the board:

- Physics is up 18.5%
- Maths is up 15.3%
- Further Maths is up 20.1%
- Biology is up 10.7%
- Chemistry is up 21.5%

Education Secretary Nicky Morgan also congratulated all students on their A Level results, specifically welcoming the rise in the number of women receiving top grades in maths and science. The results for JCQ show that since 2010 more women are taking exams in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects, with A Level entries rising in:

- Maths is up by 10%
- Physics is up by 16%

- Chemistry is up by 23%
- Biology is up by 16%

Education Secretary Nicky Morgan said "I'm delighted to see more students, especially young women, studying maths and sciences... This will help them secure the top jobs, regardless of their background, and secure a brighter future."

(Source: DfE)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/rising-numbers-of-students-turning-to-maths-and-science>



## Week ahead

### Houses of Parliament

Wednesday 3 September

10:50am: Science and Technology Committee –  
Practical Science in Schools