

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Week ending Friday 15 November

Optimism rises at record pace among UK's smaller manufacturers

The CBI's latest SME Trends Survey has shown that optimism about business conditions rose at the fastest pace since records began in 1988 among small and medium-sized manufacturers. Total new orders increased in the three months to October for the first time since July 2012, driven by domestic orders which rose at their fastest rate since January 1995. Export orders rose at their fastest rate since April 2011, while optimism around export prospects for the next twelve months increased strongly. Alongside the improvement in demand, output rose modestly and is expected to pick up at a faster pace over the next three months, accompanied by a further improvement in orders. The survey demonstrates that greater optimism and activity among SMEs has led to a step change in investment plans for the year ahead, with forecasts for spending on buildings, plant and machinery, product innovation and training all in positive territory.

(Source: CBI)

<http://www.cbi.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2013/11/optimism-rises-at-record-pace-among-uks-smaller-manufacturers/>

UKCES report shows that technology is outpacing training provision

A report produced by Semta for the UK Commission for Employment and Skills shows that the pace of development driving technological progress and new processes is outstripping the nation's ability to skill its workforce, with SMEs having a particularly acute challenge ahead of them. The report found that the adoption of Additive Manufacturing technologies is expected to have a major impact on the demand for design engineers and therefore designing courses and apprenticeship frameworks to incorporate additive manufacturing techniques will be important to help address the general lack of training currently available

in this area. The report also found that the increasing use of composite technologies will create demand for R&D roles such as scientists and test engineers, as well as design engineers and people with CAD skills. Forming strategic partnerships between industry and further/higher education will be critical to firm-level innovation by ensuring composite technologies are fully exploited in the production process. The report concludes that there is scope for more collaborative initiatives to bring further and higher education provision closer to industry need. Understanding more about the profile of UK companies and their supply chains adopting these new technologies will help assess workforce training requirements in different localities.

(Source: UKCES)

<http://www.ukces.org.uk/assets/ukces/docs/publications/evidence-report-76-aerospace-and-automotive-exec-sum.pdf>



Jaguar Land Rover launches new scheme to tackle youth unemployment

Jaguar Land Rover has launched a new work experience scheme to boost the prospects of young people in search of work. The company's 'Inspiring Tomorrow's Workforce' scheme is targeted at 16-23 year-olds not currently in employment, education or training, and aims to develop their skills so they can enrol in sustainable employment within the automotive industry. The programme, designed in collaboration with Birmingham Metropolitan College, is being piloted this week at JLR's Castle Bromwich plant, and will use the site's new Education Business Partnership Centre.

150 young people in all will take part over the next nine months. Those embarking on the programme will take on a wide range of activities, from community projects to outdoor team-building pursuits, and will receive specialist maths and English support. In addition, there will be the opportunity to gain a manufacturing qualification. Commenting on the announcement, Mike Wright, Executive Director, Jaguar Land Rover, stated: "Youth unemployment is at a record level yet there is a skills shortage in the UK. It makes sense therefore for a responsible business like Jaguar Land Rover to use its success for good and develop a programme that will engage and inspire those who may feel they have no employment prospects for the future. This programme forms part of our Business in the Community 'Responsible Business of the Year' legacy and I am confident with the support of our delivery partners we can make a tangible difference to the lives of all participants."

(Source: SMMT)

<http://www.smmt.co.uk/2013/11/jaguar-land-rover-launches-new-scheme-tackle-youth-unemployment/>

Week ahead

Please note that the date of the Autumn Statement has moved from Wednesday 4 December to Thursday 5 December

Commons Committees

Monday 18 November

Science and Technology Committee (4.00pm, Thatcher room) Women in STEM careers.

Witnesses: David Willetts, Minister of State for Universities and Science

Tuesday 19 November

Foreign Affairs Committee (2.30pm, Grimond room) Government foreign policy towards the United States.

Witnesses: Jeffries Briginshaw, managing director (London) and Elisabeth Roderburg, transatlantic trade and investment partnership adviser, BritishAmerican Business; Sir Nigel Sheinwald GCMG, visiting professor, Department of War Studies, Kings College London, UK Ambassador to Washington 2007-2012 (at 3.15 pm).

House of Lords

Tuesday 19 November

Economic and Financial Affairs (EU Sub-Committee A) (10.00am, room 3) Genuine economic and monetary union and its implications for the UK.

Witnesses: Nicky Morgan, Economic Secretary to the HM Treasury

Thursday 21 November

Debate to take note of the EU Sub-Committee B (Internal Market, Infrastructure and Employment) report on the effectiveness of EU research and innovation proposals

External Affairs (EU Sub-Committee C) (10.00am, room 1) Transatlantic trade and investment partnership. Witnesses: Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint