



WEEK IN WESTMINSTER



Week ending Friday 15 August 2008

1. **CBI call for science to be encouraged to close skills gap**
2. **Major Government investment in UK manufacturing**
3. **Initial LEZ results show signs of improvement**
4. **Bank cuts growth forecasts and warns on rising inflation**
5. **Top grades in A-levels met with universities' complaints**
6. **Jail sentences for distracted drivers who kill**
7. **Week ahead**

1. **CBI call for science to be encouraged to close skills gap**

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has called for all 14-year-olds achieving a Level 6 score in national SATs tests to automatically be entered for 'Triple science' at GCSE. This would help to address the shortage of science graduates that has resulted in three-fifths of the firms having trouble recruiting people with skills in science, technology, engineering and maths. At present around 40% of 14-year-olds gain the necessary SATs level for triple science, but only 7% of them actually take this option. Government argues that increasing the number of pupils choosing to study science at university is a priority but believes an entitlement to study is better than opting-in pupils. (Source: CBI)

www.cbi.org.uk/ndbs/press.nsf/0363c1f07c6ca12a8025671c00381cc7/45ffc17c462d50c38025749c002fe81c?OpenDocument

2. **Major Government investment in UK manufacturing**

On Thursday, the Government announced a £20 million investment in projects that will develop technologies, products and systems incorporating clever technology and know-how in manufacturing. The funding, made available through the government-sponsored Technology Strategy Board, will help companies maintain and develop their international competitiveness. The projects include research and development in mouldable auto parts from sustainable resources and energy efficient and environmentally friendly recycling of composites, among others. (Source: Technology Strategy Board)

www.innovateuk.org/content/news/uk-manufacturing-to-receive-20-million.ashx

3. **Initial LEZ results show signs of improvement**

This week, Transport for London (TfL) has released its first monitoring report examining the impact of the Low Emission Zone (LEZ). The report shows that 96% of vehicles affected by the first phase of the scheme introduced in February, lorries over 12 tonnes, are compliant with the emissions standards of the Zone compared to 70% during 2007. The second phase, introduced in July 2008, which included lighter goods vehicles over 3.5 tonnes, buses and coaches, show a similar trend with compliance rate at 91%. TfL says that "While it is too early to quantify the emissions and air quality impacts of these recent changes, the signs so far for the success of the scheme are highly encouraging." (Source: TfL)

www.tfl.gov.uk/roadusers/lez/about/2027.aspx#impact

4. **Bank cuts growth forecasts and warns on rising inflation**

Speaking at the launch of the bank's quarterly Inflation Report, the governor of the Bank of England, Mervyn King, predicted a year of "difficult and painful adjustment" and said the bank had cut its forecast for UK growth this year and next. Despite avoiding the term "recession", King conceded Britain could suffer two consecutive quarters of negative growth by the end of the year, while

inflation is forecast to reach 5% in the autumn. July also saw the sixth successive monthly rise in unemployment, which currently stands at 1.67 million, a rate of 5.4%. (Source: Bank of England)

www.bankofengland.co.uk/publications/inflationreport/irlatest.htm

5. Top grades in A-levels met with universities' complaints

A-level results have broken achievement records again this year, with more than a quarter of students achieving A grades. With record numbers of A-level students meeting universities' offers, there is an intense competition for places whilst universities complain about the lack of knowledge and skills of A-level students. In response, the Government is planning an overhaul of the A-levels from September with reforms set to include a dissertation, worth the equivalent of half an A level, to give university admissions officers a new criterion to help to identify the brightest students. (Source: Department for Children, Schools and Families)

www.dcsf.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2008_0173

6. Jail sentences for distracted drivers who kill

Under The Road Safety Act 2006, that comes into force on Monday, causing death by driving while unlicensed, disqualified or uninsured will merit a maximum of two years in prison. Causing death due to careless driving will carry custodial sentences of maximum five years. (Source: Sentencing guidelines)

www.sentencing-guidelines.gov.uk/docs/causing_death_by_driving_definitive_guideline.pdf

7. Week ahead

Both Houses are in summer recess until Monday 6 October.