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Weekly Monitoring
Friday 27th
October



Political Update

Parliament has been prorogued ahead of the King's Speech which will take place on the 7th of November, meaning there will be no more Parliamentary business until then. Following last week's history making by-election results, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak may be facing another two, as MP Peter Bone was suspended following sexual assault allegations, as well as Crispin Blunt MP having the whip removed following similar allegations.

Economically, the picture looks slightly better, with figures released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) showing levels of unemployment as slightly below previous economic predictions. However, some economists have raised questions over the accuracy of this data. Additionally, it has been reported that the Bank of England is likely to keep interest rates high and steady, with inflationary fears seemingly outweighing those of a recession.

News

Government planning to announce international advisory group on AI

The UK Government is set to unveil an international advisory committee on artificial intelligence during an upcoming summit, with the intention of establishing a global strategy for addressing the technology's associated risks. This new committee, resembling the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, will focus on enhancing knowledge regarding AI capabilities and risks.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak aims to position the UK as a leader in AI regulation, combating its competitive disadvantage compared to the US and China in the dynamic global technology sector. The advisory committee will feature a rotating roster of academics and geographical experts who will likely produce an annual report on AI's cutting-edge advancements.

This committee differs from the planned UK AI safety institute, which will assess national security risks linked to machine learning models and is expected to be officially announced in the near future. The Government envisions discussions at the AI summit exploring international collaboration for frontier AI safety and support for national and global frameworks.

Prime Minister's Business Adviser looks to tackle workforce inactivity

Franck Petitgas, a prominent business advisor to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, has shifted his attention towards addressing the issue of low workforce participation in the UK, in preparation for the upcoming election. Petitgas, a former Morgan Stanley executive who joined Sunak's team in April, recently met with the leadership of Employment Hero, a recruitment and payroll company, to provide guidance on strategies for reinvigorating the labour force.

Petitgas's focus on the labour market coincides with the government's efforts to enhance the UK's economic performance. Analysts anticipate a rise in unemployment and the possibility of an economic recession in the coming months, which is a source of concern for the ruling Conservative party, as they are trailing behind the Labour opposition in polls.

Prime Minister calls for global responsibility to take AI risks seriously and seize its opportunities

The UK Government officially published a report on capabilities and risks from frontier AI for the first time, drawing on sources including intelligence assessments. This will inform discussions at next week's AI Safety Summit at Bletchley Park, which aims to build a shared global understanding of the risks posed by frontier AI.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak will give a speech on how we have a global responsibility to understand and address the risks surrounding AI, in order to realise all its benefits and opportunities for future generations.

Energy Act 2023 receives Royal Assent

The Energy Act 2023 has received Royal Assent, marking a significant milestone in UK energy legislation. This act aims to strengthen energy security, support the path to net zero emissions, and ensure long-term affordability of energy bills. It introduces measures to create a more efficient energy system, enhance competition in onshore electricity networks, and establish a specific merger regime for energy networks to protect consumers. Additionally, the act includes provisions for Energy Smart Appliances, expanding Ofgem's role in heat networks, and introducing consumer protections, ultimately fostering the transition to low-carbon energy sources and smart meters.

Parliament

House of Commons

Work and Pensions Committee publish Government response to its report on Plan for Jobs and employment support programmes

The Work and Pensions Committee published a report in July calling for more focus on helping young people, the over 50s and people with disabilities and long-term health conditions find and stay in work.

While the Government responded positively to the Committee's call to pilot a more person-centred approach to support, based on the US Jobs Plus model, key recommendations on developing a new self-employment support programme and devolving support to groups of local authorities have been rejected.

The recommendation that DWP should publish results for each of its employment programmes on a quarterly basis were also rejected. The Committee's recommendation that eligibility for support programmes should be widened to those not on benefits is to be kept under consideration.

Written Question to the Department for Education on Unit for Future Skills

Seema Malhotra MP (Labour, Feltham and Heston) asked the Secretary of State for Education, "what meetings the Unit for Future Skills has held with external stakeholders in the last 12 months?"

Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education, Robert Halfon MP responded:

"Since its launch in May 2022, the Unit for Future Skills (UFS) has proactively set out to be outward facing and has met and worked with a wide variety of stakeholders across the skills system. As well as working across government departments to bring together data and evidence, the team have liaised with research and academic organisations, businesses and employer groups, training providers and local government.

"The UFS External Advisory Group, chaired by Sir Ian Diamond, National Statistician, meets every quarter to provide challenge and external views to the UFS's work, as well as expert support and guidance. The group has nine members including representatives from the West Midland Combined Authority, Unifrog, LinkedIn, Universities UK, the Association of Colleges, British Chamber of Commerce, the British Academy and two expert academics. The UFS also runs quarterly meetings with members of the devolved administrations who are working on similar skills and data issues.

"The UFS regularly discusses its findings at the Department of Education's Business meeting, involving MakeUK, the Federation of Small Businesses, British Chambers of Commerce and the Institute for Directors.

"The UFS engages with target users on the development of its products. For example, the team set up working groups with Employer Representative Bodies to support in the development of the local skills dashboard.

"The team also regularly meets with a variety of stakeholders on a one-to-one basis, as well as through events and conferences, including businesses and employer representative bodies, academics and research organisations, training providers and local and regional skills bodies."

**For any queries regarding this round-up
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