

# Political Monitor for IRC

*Week commencing 9<sup>th</sup> August 2010*

## Contents

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Westminster .....  | 2 |
| Government .....   | 2 |
| Local Better Regulation Office to be reviewed .....          | 2 |
| Sir Philip Green to examine government spending .....        | 2 |
| David Cameron pledges crackdown on cheap alcohol sales ..... | 2 |
| Stakeholder .....  | 3 |
| Retail sales growth slows on fears of government cuts .....  | 3 |
| Barclays rejects small business lending targets .....        | 3 |

# Westminster

## Government

### Local Better Regulation Office to be reviewed

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has today confirmed that a review of the Local Better Regulation Office (LBRO) will be carried out.

The local regulation of businesses by environmental health, fire safety, licensing and trading standards services can place unnecessary burdens on them, hampering economic growth. The LBRO was set up to address this issue, combining an independent, expert perspective on local regulation with the statutory powers required to drive progress.

<http://nds.coi.gov.uk/content/detail.aspx?NewsAreaId=2&ReleaseID=414950&SubjectId=2>

### Sir Philip Green to examine government spending

Billionaire Topshop owner Sir Philip Green is to lead a review of government spending - amid criticism from unions.

Sir Philip, owner of clothing retailer Arcadia Group, will examine expenditure from the past three years to try to identify potential savings.

Green said:

"We need to get ourselves focused on the big spending, where is the money actually being spent. I think in the past, occasionally having had discussions on this, there is not central procurement.

"So the thought process of us having an individual buyer in each one of our stores without centralising the purchasing, will give you some idea, hopefully, of the opportunity. But it's about process as well, so we need to understand the process, how it's done, who does what and how we can quicken all of that up."

### David Cameron pledges crackdown on cheap alcohol sales

A crackdown on supermarkets and other stores selling alcohol at "below-cost" prices is needed, David Cameron says.

Action was needed to stop Britain's town and city centres "resembling the wild west" in the evenings as a result of drink-fuelled disorder, the PM said.

The Department of Health said the government was committed to taking tough action over problem drinking but supply and price were far from the only factors driving alcohol misuse.

"Demand and attitudes are crucial. We need to understand much better the psychology behind why different groups of people drink alcohol in excess. No legislation or initiative will work unless we have a better understanding of what drives people's decisions," a spokesman said.

"We will work across government, society, communities and families to challenge negative social norms and promote the positives."

## **Stakeholder**

### **Retail sales growth slows on fears of government cuts**

Retail sales growth slowed down sharply in July as fears over government spending cuts knocked consumer confidence, a trade body has said.

Like-for-like sales rose 0.5% compared with July 2009, down from a growth rate of 1.2% in June, the British Retail Consortium (BRC) said.

Food sales growth picked up, though the growth was flattered by a smaller gain a year ago. Clothing sales growth was boosted by clearance deals but footwear was more difficult. Homewares fell back, with big-ticket items in particular hit by consumer uncertainty over job cuts and income prospects.

<http://www.brc.org.uk/details04.asp?id=1783>

### **Barclays rejects small business lending targets**

The head of Barclays' small business unit has criticised the idea of industry-wide government targets for lending to small firms. Steve Cooper told the Financial Times that it could result in banks agreeing loans to meet targets rather than on the merits of applications.

The government is exploring the option of extending targets to all banks, not just ones in which it owns a stake. There are fears that insufficient bank lending is holding back recovery. The government already places gross lending targets on the two banks in which it has a shareholding - Lloyds Banking Group and Royal Bank of Scotland - which they have been meeting.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b674b3ec-a63e-11df-8767-00144feabdc0.html>