

Edinburgh MP wants a U-turn on bedroom tax

SCOTS SECRETARY URGED TO U-TURN ON BEDROOM TAX

Edinburgh East MP and Work and Pensions Select Committee member Sheila Gilmore today urged Scottish Secretary Michael Moore to u-turn on the bedroom tax.

At Westminster yesterday Sheila Gilmore challenged Michael Moore to urge the Chancellor to u-turn on the bedroom tax in the budget next month. From April 2013 Council and Housing Association tenants with a spare bedroom will lose housing benefit, or be forced to try to move. Sheila told the Minister that for most there just aren't the houses to move to:-

'Twenty-seven one-bedroom houses were available for let in the social sector in Edinburgh last week. Bids for them ranged from 30-odd to 300. New-build affordable starts in Scotland have fallen in the past two years from 7,900 to 3,400 because of cuts by the Scottish Government. Will the Secretary of State go to his Government in advance of the Budget and argue for a U-turn? His Government saved the trees; why not save the people?'

These changes were part of the Coalition's Welfare Reform Act passed last year. Those affected are council and housing association tenants below retirement age who get housing benefit. Many are in jobs, and others are disabled.

Speaking afterwards Sheila said:

'Couples who sleep in separate rooms for health reasons are affected. So are those in adapted homes. Or those who need someone to stay overnight sometimes when they are unwell. Edinburgh Council is hoping to put nearly £2 m towards helping some of these people to top up the £1.3 m coming from the Government. I welcome the Council's plans but it means the Council is having to make up for Government cuts.

'It's not too late for the Lib Dem Scottish Secretary and his colleagues to tell the Chancellor to cancel this plan. This is one u-turn which would be widely welcomed.'