

UK Parliament bill to exempt some from 'bedroom tax' is welcome says Edinburgh MP

Mark Lazarowicz MP has joined Labour colleagues in giving a partial welcome to a Private Members' Bill being debated today in the UK Parliament designed to exempt some people from the bedroom tax which means that social tenants can see their housing benefit cut severely where they are deemed to be occupying a property larger than they need.

The Bill is being introduced by Andrew George, LibDem MP for St Ives, and although committed to abolition of the bedroom tax the Labour Opposition is aiming to strengthen it as a step towards that.

Mark said: "The Bill is welcome in so far as it goes in seeking to exempt some people hit by the bedroom tax and in encouraging the building of new affordable housing but the real answer is simple: scrap the bedroom tax as Labour is committed to do.

"This unfair and vicious policy has left vulnerable tenants like disabled people and their carers under threat of having to move and the Government has been forced to apply sticking plaster to the wound it has caused by increasing discretionary housing payments in dribs and drabs

"It is all very well for some LibDem MPs to be calling for the bedroom tax to be modified to exempt them a few months before the UK General Election – if they had opposed it from the start, the government would not have been able to bring it in at all!

"The real answer to the desperate shortage of affordable housing is not to victimise existing social tenants but to

tackle it at root, by building more of it.”

After strong pressure from Scottish Labour MPs the UK Government offered to transfer the power to set the cap on the level of Discretionary Housing Payments in Scotland to the Scottish Government so that it could be set at a level that would prevent anyone being forced to move as a result of the bedroom tax.