

Edinburgh East MP criticises number of peers in Lords

SNP MP Tommy Sheppard has spoken out against the increase in the number of peers in the House of Lords in the past year.

UK Parliament statistics show that 22 new Lords were appointed between January and December 2018, bringing the number of peers in the second chamber to nearly 800 – far exceeding the elected House of Commons chamber of 650 Members and making the Lords the world's second largest legislative body after China's People's Congress.

The SNP spokesperson on the House of Lords has branded the institution as 'absolutely absurd' and an affront to democracy. Under Parliamentary rules, peers are able to claim an allowance of £300 per day without saying a word in debates.

He also claims that at the beginning of 2018, during the reading of the EU Withdrawal Bill, unelected peers had the power to amend the Bill, including aspects on Scotland's devolution settlement, whilst the will of the Scottish Parliament was ignored.

On principle, the SNP do not take seats in the House of Lords and have consistently called on the unelected chamber to be abolished.

As SNP spokesperson on the House of Lords Mr Sheppard said: "The idea of an unelected legislature in the 21st century is ridiculous enough, but for successive governments to continue to pile the Lords chamber full of chummy political appointments is inexcusable. The argument to consign this

archaic and undemocratic chamber of political has-beens to the dustbin of history is long overdue.

“Last year, figures showed that each peer costs the taxpayer £83,000 per year and since then, no less than 22 Lords have been stuffed into the House. Whilst many households and families across the UK spend the festive season worrying how to pay their food and fuel bills, unelected peers enjoy a £300 tax-free daily allowance for as little as 45 minutes attendance.

“The SNP will continue to press the UK government to chuck the donors and cronies because, for taxpayers as well as democrats, the sooner this unaccountable financial drain is abolished, the better.”