

# **Thompson wants a return to proxy voting at Westminster**

**Owen Thompson MP has called for a return to a proxy voting scheme for MPs who cannot attend the House in person for legitimate health reasons.**

The Midlothian MP is unable to register his vote in this week's crucial budget debates because he is self-isolating with Covid-19. Thompson will miss votes for ten days as a result of being unable to physically attend and being prevented from enabling another MP to cast a vote on his behalf.

During the pandemic eligibility for proxy voting was widened to ensure MPs could participate in votes when they were unable to travel, as well as introducing remote voting and a hybrid system for taking part in debates that has also been scrapped.

Owen said: "It is deeply frustrating that I cannot register my vote in the budget debates this week.

"I tested positive for Covid-19 and cannot physically be present for ten days while I self-isolate. Surely this does not mean I should be cut off from having a say in decisions with a massive impact for the people of Midlothian?

"We know the capability is there for both online and proxy voting at Westminster, it worked well during the pandemic. Covid has not gone away, but common sense seems to have abandoned this place. The old-fashioned Tory dinosaurs are

never too keen to move parliamentary procedures out of the dark ages.

“It is simply absurd that MPs with legitimate health reasons to stay away from the parliament are being prevented from registering their votes. This affects people with other health issues too, like my colleague Amy Callaghan who is recovering from a stroke.

“Ultimately this is not disenfranchising MPs, it is disenfranchising the people we represent. I look forward to the procedure committee considering this issue further, although have been frustrated that my isolation has also impacted in my ability to participate in that process.

“By refusing to enable proxy voting for health reasons, Westminster is proving yet again it’s a broken system that is determined to reduce democratic participation, not widen it. It is letting down the people it is supposed to represent. It’s time for a change.”



Owen Thompson MP