



## BRIEFING PAPER

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# House of Lords Reform in the 2017 Parliament

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## Summary

In its manifesto for the 2017 General Election, the Conservative Party said that “comprehensive reform” of the House of Lords was “not a priority”. The Government has reiterated that position, with, on 15 July 2017, Chris Skidmore, the Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office, telling the House of Commons that:

The Government have been clear, in the previous Parliament and in their manifesto, that reform of the House of Lords is not an immediate priority. However, a Lord Speaker’s Committee in the other place is looking at the size of the House of Lords and we are determined to consider its recommendations. The situation relates to legislation passed by a previous Labour Government in 1999. We are determined to ensure, above all, that the House of Lords is an effective revising Chamber.

During the 2015 Parliament, Members of the House of Lords continued to express frustration with the size of the House through questions and debates in the House.

### **e-petition calling for a referendum on the abolition of the House of Lords**

The Petitions Committee has scheduled a debate on an [e-petition](#) calling for a referendum on the abolition of the House of Lords to take place on 18 June 2018:

Give the electorate a referendum on the abolition of the House of Lords

The House of Lords is a place of patronage where unelected and unaccountable individuals hold a disproportionate amount of influence and power which can be used to frustrate the elected representatives of the people.

By 13 June 2018, the e-petition had received over 168,000 signatures.

The Government has responded to the e-petition, stating that comprehensive reform of the House of Lords is not a priority. It noted the work of the Lord Speaker’s Committee on the size of the House of Lords and that following a response to the Committee’s report from the Prime Minister, the Committee had been reconvened.

### **Lord Speaker’s Committee on the size of the House of Lords**

In a debate on 5 December 2016, members of the House of Lords called for the establishment of a select committee to explore how the size of the House of Lords could be reduced. Following that debate, on 20 December 2016, the Lord Speaker, Lord Fowler, announced that he had established a Lord Speaker’s Committee drawn entirely from the back benches to “examine possible methods by which the House could be reduced in size”.

The Lord Speaker’s Committee’s [report](#) was published on 31 October 2017. It recommended:

- The capping of the size of the House of Lords at 600 – until this is reached, only one new peer should be appointed for every two leaving;
- Members of the House of Lords should serve a 15-year non-renewable term;
- A proportion of seats should continue to be held by crossbenchers (approximately 22% of all seats), with the number allocated to parties determined by the seats and votes won at the preceding general election.

This would mean approximately 40 appointments per year, as the number of bishops would not be reduced but would count towards the total of 600 members in the House of Lords.

#### 4 Parliamentary assistants working for individual Members: Rules in place to deal with conflicts and harrassment

The House of Lords debated the Lord Speaker's Committee's report on 19 December 2017. During the debate members of the House of Lords gave the report a broad welcome.

There was a little dissent. Some peers considered that there was no problem; and others that the 15-year term limit would cause problems. A number of speakers called for a firm commitment from the Prime Minister that she would limit the number of appointments that she made.

The Prime Minister responded to the Committee's report in a letter to the Lord Speaker in February 2018. She said that further consideration needed to be given to the mechanism proposed to maintain a steady and smaller state of the House of Lords. She welcomed the widespread call to limit the size of the House of Lords and committed to continue with restraint in making new appointments.

# 1. The Government's position on Lords reform

The [Conservative Manifesto](#) from the 2017 General Election stated that:

Although comprehensive reform is not a priority we will ensure that the House of Lords continues to fulfil its constitutional role as a revising and scrutinising chamber which respects the primacy of the House of Commons. We have already undertaken reform to allow the retirement of peers and the expulsion of members for poor conduct and will continue to ensure the work of the House of Lords remains relevant and effective by addressing issues such as its size.

The Government has reiterated that position, with, on 15 July 2017, Chris Skidmore, the Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office, telling the House of Commons that:

The Government have been clear, in the previous Parliament and in their manifesto, that reform of the House of Lords is not an immediate priority. However, a Lord Speaker's Committee in the other place is looking at the size of the House of Lords and we are determined to consider its recommendations. The situation relates to legislation passed by a previous Labour Government in 1999. We are determined to ensure, above all, that the House of Lords is an effective revising Chamber.<sup>1</sup>

This is very similar to the commitments it made at the 2015 General Election. The [Conservative Manifesto](#) from the 2015 General Election stated that:

**We will ensure that the House of Lords fulfils its valuable role as a chamber of legislative scrutiny and revision**

While we still see a strong case for introducing an elected element into our second chamber, this is not a priority in the next Parliament. We have already allowed for expulsion of members for poor conduct and will ensure the House of Lords continues to work well by addressing issues such as the size of the chamber and the retirement of peers.<sup>2</sup>

As discussed in section 3, the size of the House of Lords caused concern amongst peers, throughout the 2015 Parliament. In a debate about the size of the House of Lords on 5 December 2016, Baroness Evans of Bowes Park, the Leader of the House, acknowledged these concerns. She indicated that there was an opportunity to make progress and suggested that a small back bench-led group could be convened to consider options. Subsequently, the Lord Speaker announced the establishment of such a group, which reported in October 2017. Its recommendations; a subsequent debate in the House of Lords; and the Government response to the report and debate are reported in section 2 of this Briefing Paper.

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<sup>1</sup> [HC Deb 5 July 2017 c1155](#); see also [HC Deb 2 November 2017 c979](#)

<sup>2</sup> [The Conservative Party Manifesto 2015](#)

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## 1.1 Debates on House of Lords Reform in the House of Commons

A debate on the [\*Report of the Lord Speaker's committee on the size of the House\*](#) took place in Westminster Hall on 15 November 2017.<sup>3</sup>

The Petitions Committee has scheduled a Westminster Hall debate on 18 June 2018, on the following e-petition:

Give the electorate a referendum on the abolition of the House of Lords

The House of Lords is a place of patronage where unelected and unaccountable individuals hold a disproportionate amount of influence and power which can be used to frustrate the elected representatives of the people.<sup>4</sup>

A list of debates on Lords reform in the 2015 Parliament can be found in the Library Briefing Paper [\*House of Lords Reform: debates and issues in the 2015 Parliament\*](#) (CBP 07844, 30 March 2017).

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<sup>3</sup> [HC Deb 15 November 2017 cc133WH-158WH](#)

<sup>4</sup> [E-petition 209433](#), closes 17 July 2018

## 2. Report of the Lord Speaker's Committee on the size of the House of Lords

### Summary

The Lord Speaker's Committee recommended that the size of the House of Lords should be capped at 600.

It recommended that, until this target was met, there should be a "two-out, one-in" approach. In the longer term, the number of new members joining would be limited to the number of vacancies arising – approximately 40 per year.

It recommended that all new members should serve a non-renewable fixed term of 15 years. This would ensure that vacancies arose to renew and rebalance the House.

The crossbenchers would continue to make up the same proportion of the House as at present (currently 23% of peers are crossbenchers – 184 of 800).

New political appointments would be shared between the parties in line with the results of the previous general election: "defined as the average of a party's percentage share of Common seats and its percentage share of the national vote".

The committee considered that these changes could be implemented without any changes to legislation.

Because legislation would be needed to end by-elections to choose hereditary peers and to reduce the number of bishops, by-elections would continue and there would be no reduction in the number of bishops.

The House of Lords debated the Lord Speaker's Committee's report on 19 December 2017. During the debate members of the House of Lords gave the report a broad welcome.

There was a little dissent. Some peers considered that there was no problem; and others that the 15-year term limit would cause problems. A number of speakers called for a firm commitment from the Prime Minister that she would limit the number of appointments that she made.

The Prime Minister responded to the Committee's report in a letter to the Lord Speaker in February 2018. She said that further consideration needed to be given to the mechanism proposed to maintain a steady and smaller state of the House of Lords. She welcomed the widespread call to limit the size of the House of Lords and committed to continue with restraint in making new appointments.

### 2.1 Introduction

On 31 October 2017, the Lord Speaker's Committee on the size of the House of Lords published its [report](#).

The Lord Speaker announced the establishment of the Committee on 20 December 2016 (see section 3 for background to its establishment).

## 2.2 The size of the House of Lords

In October 2017, the Lord Speaker's Committee reported that 800 peers were eligible to sit in the House of Lords. A further 25 are disqualified because they are members of the judiciary, Members of the European Parliament or on leave of absence. In addition, one of the bishops' seats is vacant.

The Committee recommended that the size of the House of Lords should be capped at 600.

It commented that this is "lower than the current size of the House of Commons".<sup>5</sup> Under the *Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011*, after the next scheduled general election, the House of Commons is set to comprise 600 Members.

The Committee acknowledged that there was "no scientific way of calculating the ideal level of a cap". It continued:

In line with the weight of opinion among consultees and others, we propose a cap of 600. The figure could be higher, but it seemed to us that the momentum in the House behind this initiative required a reduction in the membership of at least that magnitude, and that there was a widespread feeling that the Lords should be no larger than the Commons. Equally the cap could be lower, but perhaps not much lower if the House is to maintain its current activity levels. Continuing to allow members to undertake careers and activities outside politics is necessary if they are to maintain and update their expertise and apply it to their parliamentary work—a key strength of the House.<sup>6</sup>

On 13 June 2018, 780 members of the House of Lords were eligible to sit in the House of Lords. A further 24 are currently disqualified or on leave of absence.

## 2.3 Fixed-term appointments

In order to maintain a cap on the size of the House, the number of peers joining the House has to be limited to the number of vacancies arising, once the cap has been reached.

Until the cap is reached, the Committee recommended that "there should be a guiding principle of two-out, one-in" – half of departures reduce the size of the House.<sup>7</sup>

To ensure that vacancies arose to renew and rebalance the House, it recommended that all new members should serve a non-renewable term fixed term of 15 years.<sup>8</sup> If the 15-year term limit had applied when the Coalition Government was formed in 2010, it would not have been possible to make a number of ministerial appointments, and others would have had to be curtailed. In all 24 members of the House of Lords were appointed to the Government in May 2010. Six had joined the House of Lords before May 1995 and would already have left under the Lord Speaker's Committee's proposed arrangements. A further six

<sup>5</sup> [Report of the Lord Speaker's Committee on the size of the House](#), 31 October 2017, p1

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, para 14

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, para 18

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, para 48

continued to serve as ministers, in their initial position, beyond the 15th anniversary of their joining the House of Lords.<sup>9</sup>

The Lord Speaker's Committee proposed a rate of reduction that would see the House reaching its target size of 600 in about 11 years and showed that the introduction of fixed-term appointments would ensure a "steady state" from then onwards (see Table 1).

From then on, there would be an annual turnover of 40 members.<sup>10</sup> This compares to approximately 34 new life peers per annum, on average, between 1997 and 2016 (see Table 2).

**Table 1: Proposed aggregate reduction to House of 600**

| Target Date                     | 01-Oct-17 | 2017-2022 | 2022-2027 | 2027-2032 | 2032-2037 | 2037-2042 | 2042-2047 |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Departures of existing peers    |           | 150       | 250       | 200       | 150       | 50        | 0         |
| Retirements of fixed-term peers |           | 0         | 0         | 0         | 75        | 125       | 174       |
| New appointments                |           | 75        | 125       | 174       | 225       | 175       | 174       |
| Net change in size of House     |           | -75       | -125      | -26       | 0         | 0         | 0         |
| Total peers                     | 800       | 725       | 600       | 574       | 574       | 574       | 574       |
| Size of House*                  | 826       | 751       | 626       | 600       | 600       | 600       | 600       |

\* Total peers plus 26 bishops

Source: [Report of the Lord Speaker's Committee on the size of the House](#), 31 October 2017, p3

The Lord Speaker's Committee provided the following commentary on Table 1:

The first five years show a slower rate of departures than for subsequent years, with members who are ready to retire able to do so and others being given time to reflect and make any necessary adjustments to their plans. There is a more ambitious rate in the following five years, reflecting both the increasing age and service of existing members and the need to accelerate the number of new appointments to ensure a smooth flow of vacancies in the future. From 2032, departures of existing members are supplemented by the first retirements of fixed-term members and, by 2042, all serving peers would be on a 15 year fixed term.

Once the House has agreed the overall rate of reduction, it will be necessary to agree how the aggregate target departures should be divided between the groups. We believe that the only fair way of doing this is on an "equal contribution" basis, whereby each group would be required to persuade the same proportion of its 2017 membership, adjusted for the number of deaths, to retire

<sup>9</sup> The Lord Speaker's Committee suggested that "it might be desirable to allow serving ministers (within the cap set by the Ministerial and Other Salaries Act 1975) whose fixed term was due to expire to see out their governmental period of office" (*Ibid*, para 33)

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, paras 37-39

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each year. In return for meeting its targets, each political party would receive a share of the available appointments based on how it fared in the last general election. The Crossbenchers would receive one appointment for every two departures. A group which fell short of its targets would face a corresponding reduction in its appointments.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 2: Number of life peerages created, 1997-2016**

| Prime Minister | Period of office   | Peerage creations |                  |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|
|                |                    | Total             | Average per year |
| Tony Blair     | May 1997-June 2007 | 374               | 36.8             |
| Gordon Brown   | June 2007-May 2010 | 34                | 11.8             |
| David Cameron  | May 2010-July 2016 | 245               | 39.7             |
| Total          |                    | 653               | 34.0             |

Source: derived from House of Lords Library, [Life Peerages Created Since 1958](#), LIF 2016-0040, 5 August 2016

### Required to voluntarily retire

In order to limit terms of appointment to 15 years, the Lord Speaker's Committee recommended that:

New life peers should be offered their peerages by the Prime Minister on the understanding that they will retire after 15 years in the House. Standing orders should be amended to require hereditary peers wishing to stand in a by-election to declare that, if elected, they will retire after 15 years' service in the House.

The Code of Conduct should be amended so that all new life peers and new hereditary members would be required, on joining the House, to sign an undertaking to retire after 15 years' service. The Code of Conduct should also state that a failure to abide by the undertaking to retire would constitute a breach of the Code in itself.<sup>12</sup>

Appointments to the House of Lords are currently made either through the Queen conferring a life peerage on an individual, under the *Life Peerages Act 1958*, an hereditary peer being elected to one of the 90 places reserved for hereditary peers in the House of Lords, under the *House of Lords Act 1999*, or as a bishop, under the *Bishoprics Act 1878* and the *Lords Spiritual (Women) Act 2015*.

Under the *House of Lords Reform Act 2014*, members of the House of Lords are able to retire voluntarily but it is a personal decision. The same Act also requires members who did not attend the House of Lords during a session lasting at least six months to cease their membership.

Under the *House of Lords (Expulsion and Suspension) Act 2015*, the House of Lords has the power to suspend members beyond the end of a session and to expel members in accordance with the Standing Orders of the House of Lords.

The Lord Speaker's Committee proposal to introduce a time limit is unusual in that the size and composition of the House of Lords would

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, pp3-4

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, paras 48-49

be determined other than through a statutory change to the Royal Prerogative to appoint members of the House of Lords.

Additionally because it is a non-statutory proposal, the reduction in numbers would not affect the number of bishops or hereditary peers in a smaller House of Lords, as their numbers are prescribed in statute. This would give both groups larger proportions of the membership in a smaller House:

- Bishops would increase from 3.25% to 4.3% (26 out of 800 to 26 out of 600); and
- Hereditary peers would increase from 11.5% to 15.3% (92 out of 800 to 92 out of 600).<sup>13</sup>

A change to the rules on the appointment of members of the House of Lords, however achieved, would affect the constitution of the United Kingdom. When English votes for English laws was introduced in the House of Commons, in October 2015, it was considered by some to be an issue of constitutional importance. Chris Grayling, then Leader of the House of Commons, acknowledged the House of Lords Constitution Committee's interest:

I do recognise the concerns in the other place about constitutional change. I have therefore written to the Chair of the Lords Constitution Committee in response to those concerns. I am grateful that the Committee has responded to say that it has agreed to undertake its own review of the impact of the proposals, including their effect on the House of Lords and their wider implications for the constitution as a whole.<sup>14</sup>

Later in the same debate, Chris Bryant, then Shadow Leader of the House, argued that "We cannot make these changes merely by altering the Standing Orders of this House. That is a thoroughly disreputable way of changing the constitution of this country".<sup>15</sup>

## Changing the Code of Conduct

By making failure to abide by an undertaking to retire a breach of the Code of Conduct, it would be possible to expel anyone who refused to retire under the *House of Lords (Expulsion and Suspension) Act 2015*.

During the passage of that legislation, Christopher Chope expressed concern that conduct was not defined in the legislation.<sup>16</sup> The Bill's sponsor in the House of Commons, Sir George Young, said that the legislation could not be used for matters not relating to conduct.<sup>17</sup>

The House of Lords would need to agree to change scope of its Code of Conduct before retirements could be required.

The Lord Speaker's Committee presented legal advice on fixed terms and the 2015 Act.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> One hereditary peer is currently on leave of absence

<sup>14</sup> [HC Deb 22 October 2015 c1180](#)

<sup>15</sup> [HC Deb 22 October 2015 c1186](#)

<sup>16</sup> [PBC Deb 4 February 2015 c6; cc9-10](#)

<sup>17</sup> [PBC Deb 4 February 2015 c12](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Report of the Lord Speaker's Committee on the size of the House](#), 31 October 2017, Appendix 2

## 2.4 Party balance

### Political appointments

The Lord Speaker's Committee argued that "the inflow of new members to the House should reflect changing political opinion across the country". It continued that:

... it makes sense to link the allocation of seats between the parties to general election results. With new members serving fixed terms of 15 years, such a link would cause the overall composition of the House to reflect the election results over the preceding 15 years. This would provide the stability desirable in a second chamber and avoid challenging the primacy of the Commons.<sup>19</sup>

It considered that there were two measures of how a party performed:

- the number of seats it won in the House of Commons; and
- its percentage share of the national vote.

It examined the pros and cons of these measures. It did not believe that the composition of the House of Lords should replicate the House of Commons so discarded purely seats as a measure. However, using the percentage vote share, the House of Lords would be "more proportional and distinctive from the Commons. But arguably it would be too far removed from the reality of majority government and would make it difficult for ruling parties to assert themselves in the Lords".<sup>20</sup>

It recommended combining the two measures, finding that this would draw on the strengths and mitigate the weaknesses of the other two systems:

We recommend that vacancies during a parliament should be allocated to each of the parties according to an average (mean) of their percentage share of the seats in the House of Commons and their percentage share of the national vote at the most recent general election.<sup>21</sup>

### Crossbenchers

The Lord Speaker's Committee noted that:

The Crossbench element of the House is one of its main and most distinctive strengths. Nearly all reform initiatives since 1998, as well as the overwhelming weight of opinion amongst our consultees, have settled on a minimum Crossbench element of 20 per cent (120 peers in a House of 600).<sup>22</sup>

It concluded that, in line with the current proportion of crossbenchers, 134 of the 574 peers in the capped House of Lords should be crossbenchers (574 peers exclude the 26 bishops).<sup>23</sup>

It expected that most crossbench appointments would continue to be made by the House of Lords Appointments Commission. But in line with pledges from Prime Ministers Blair and Cameron to make no more

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, para 57

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, para 62

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, para 66

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, para 67

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, para 68

than 10 direct appointments to the crossbenches in each Parliament, the Committee proposed

no change to the agreement allowing prime ministers to appoint Crossbench peers, but we recommend that the maximum should be 10 every five years rather than every parliament, and that there should be greater clarity about who is eligible for such appointments.<sup>24</sup>

## Hereditary peers

Under the *House of Lords Act 1999*, 92 hereditary peers remain in the House of Lords. Of these, 90 are elected by party groups or appointed by the House, the remaining two are Royal Officers of State. The 90 hereditary peers are shared among the parties and the crossbenches on the basis of historic proportions.

The Lord Speaker's Committee commented that without changes to the existing rules, both the Conservatives and Crossbenchers would be able to nominate fewer life peers.<sup>25</sup>

## 2.5 Comments on the Committee's report

The **Constitution Unit, UCL**, commented briefly on the Lord Speaker's Committee's proposals in the November 2017 issue of *Monitor*, its quarterly newsletter. It said that:

The proposals are carefully crafted in order to be implemented through House of Lords standing orders, rather than requiring a bill – given the potential difficulties of passing new legislation. However, they will stand or fall on whether the Prime Minister makes a commitment to adhere to the new appointments regime.<sup>26</sup>

David Beamish, the former Clerk of Parliaments and an adviser to the Lord Speaker's Committee, blogged on the proposals on the Constitution Unit's blog.<sup>27</sup>

The **Electoral Reform Society** (ERS), which is campaigning for a democratically elected House of Lords,<sup>28</sup> commented on a leak of the Lord Speaker's Committee's proposals in mid-October.

The ERS welcomed peers recognising "the need the cut down the size of the upper house". But it argued that "the proposed reforms avoid dealing with the real problem in the Lords – a total lack of democracy and transparency in how it is composed".

It expressed concern about the proposed timescale for the reform:

At the same time, the light-touch reforms only apply to new peerages, meaning any substantial reduction in size could take decades. And with it the risk that we are back into the kind long

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, para 74

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, para 79

<sup>26</sup> Constitution Unit, "Proposals on shrinking the Lords", *Monitor*, No 67, November 2017, p7

<sup>27</sup> David Beamish, "[Report of the Lord Speaker's Committee on the size of the House of Lords: a real opportunity for progress on reform](#)", *Constitution Unit Blog*, 1 November 2017

<sup>28</sup> Electoral Reform Society, [Elected House of Lords](#).

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grass territory politicians prefer for the reform and modernisation of their profession.

It also considered that 15-year terms would not necessarily address the age of peers, the fact that almost half of peers lived in London or the South East, nor their voting behaviour – it commented that “contrary to claims of independence – almost all vote solely along party lines”.

Despite its concerns, the ERS concluded that:

So often we see words but no action on Lords reform. And while these reforms should be implemented, they have to be seen as the first step towards the effective, accountable revising chamber the UK deserves.<sup>29</sup>

**Unlock Democracy**, which campaigns for democratic reform, including a democratically elected second chamber, was disappointed by the piecemeal approach taken by the Lord Speaker’s Committee:

While the report proposes long-needed reforms and is a step in the right direction, it deliberately ignores the issue of how members of the second chamber should be selected. Disappointingly therefore, it only offers a piecemeal approach to reforming the second chamber rather than offering the radical, wholesale solutions we need to make the chamber fit for a twenty-first-century democracy.

[...]

These recommendations are a clear step in the right direction. However, it is disappointing that once again fundamental issues of democratic legitimacy - such as maintaining reserved places, or that the House of Lords is not elected by voters - are left untouched. Under the proposed system, hereditary peers and bishops still get to keep their places in the House of Lords, continuing a system that selects on the basis of bloodline or religious beliefs - practices which are not fit for a modern democracy.<sup>30</sup>

## 2.6 House of Lords debate on the report (19 December 2017)

The House of Lords debated the Lord Speaker’s committee’s report on 19 December 2017. Towards the end of the debate, Baroness Smith of Basildon, winding up for Labour, summarised the feeling of the House towards the report:

Tonight’s debate has been more than a broad welcome. With very few exceptions there has been clear support for this report around the House.<sup>31</sup>

Shortly before Baroness Smith, Lord Kerr of Kinlochard had also detected a consensus that:

- “Lord Burns [the chair of the Lord Speaker’s Committee], and his committee have done an admirable job”;

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<sup>29</sup> Electoral Reform Society, [The proposed Lords reforms are sticking plaster politics: Peers are writing their own rules](#), 19 October 2017

<sup>30</sup> Unlock Democracy blog, [House of Lords reform: A piecemeal solution to a seismic issue is not good enough](#), 7 November 2017

<sup>31</sup> [HL Deb 19 December 2017 c2101](#)

- “their proposals are the only show in town”;
- “we should seize this opportunity that may not recur”; and
- “it all depends on the attitude taken by No.10 and the three great parties”.<sup>32</sup>

There was a little dissent. Concerns were raised about the 15-year fixed term: it would be a disincentive for younger people to seek to be appointed mid-career;<sup>33</sup> and it would have prevented some existing members from serving in Government.<sup>34</sup> Concerns were raised that without legislation a reduction in numbers would lead to an increasing proportion of bishops and hereditary peers. A number of peers suggested that Lord Grocott’s [House of Lords \(Hereditary Peers\) \(Abolition of By-Elections\) Bill 2017-19 \[HL\]](#) should be supported to overcome the latter issue.<sup>35</sup>

A number of speakers sought, in Lord Newby’s and Lord Hope of Craighead’s words “a cast-iron assurance” that the government would reduce the flow of people into the House of Lords.<sup>36</sup> However, Lord Morris of Aberavon, a former Attorney General, cautioned that:

As no legislation is proposed this undertaking would be no more, at its very best, than some sort of emerging convention. But a convention is hallowed only by many years of acceptance. In the most unlikely event that I might be asked, as a law officer, to advise an incoming Labour Prime Minister I would advise him that this commitment is not worth the candle.<sup>37</sup>

Lord Strathclyde, a former Leader of the House of Lords, noted that a cap on the size of the House would prevent the Prime Minister from threatening to increase the number of Peers. This he suggested could lead to an even more assertive House.<sup>38</sup>

Some thought that focusing on the number of peers was unnecessary, either arguing that discussion needed to start with the role of the House,<sup>39</sup> saying that numbers were generally not an issue,<sup>40</sup> or suggesting that a cap of 600 would lead to a higher average daily attendance.<sup>41</sup>

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park, the Leader of the House of Lords, spoke immediately after Lords Burns opened the debate. She said that the Government would not respond at the end of the debate but that she would listen to what the House had to say. She restated the Government’s position that legislation to reform the House of Lords was not a priority:

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<sup>32</sup> [HL Deb 19 December 2017 cc2092-2093](#)

<sup>33</sup> e.g. [HL Deb 19 December 2017 c2080](#); [c2081](#)

<sup>34</sup> [HL Deb 19 December 2017 c2000](#)

<sup>35</sup> e.g. [HL Deb 19 December 2017 c1972](#); c1973

<sup>36</sup> [HL Deb 19 December 2017 c1973](#); c1975

<sup>37</sup> [HL Deb 19 December 2017 c1988](#)

<sup>38</sup> [HL Deb 19 December 2017 c2000](#)

<sup>39</sup> [HL Deb 19 December 2017 c2024](#)

<sup>40</sup> [HL Deb 19 December 2017 c2000](#)

<sup>41</sup> [HL Deb 19 December 2017 c2029](#)

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The Government have been clear that comprehensive reform of this House which requires legislation is not a priority for the current Parliament.<sup>42</sup>

### 2.7 Government response to the Lord Speaker's Committee

On 20 February 2018, the Prime Minister, Theresa May, wrote to the Lord Speaker, who had sent her a copy of the Committee's report and of the 19 December debate.<sup>43</sup>

To the Prime Minister's mind, the reports recommendations divided into two separate areas:

The first includes those steps which are necessary to achieve a reduction in the size of the House of Lords. The second set of recommendations would establish mechanisms by which the House would thereafter be maintained at a steady and smaller state.

In her view the constitutional issues associated with the second set of recommendations "require further careful thought and wider engagement, particularly with the House of Commons, before those steps can be progressed. These proposals would have a significant impact on the composition and, therefore, the character and functions of the House of Lords, which have always been linked to its role and relationship with the elected House".

She also noted that the non-statutory mechanism to introduce fixed terms raised some legal questions which would need to be "carefully explored".

However, the need for further consideration did not prevent action to reduce the size of the House of Lords, and the Prime Minister welcomed the desire in the House for progress in this regard.

In addressing the need for "an assurance from Prime Ministers to exercise restraint over new appointments", she noted that she had not recommended a significant number of people for peerages. She also noted that as a result of this and retirement, removal and death, the size of the House of Lords had decreased since she had become Prime Minister.

Theresa May then acknowledged that restraint over new appointments and a sustained commitment to reduce the size of the House through retirement were connected. She said that she planned to propose a small list of new party-political peers. (The new list of 13 party-political peers was issued on 18 May 2018;<sup>44</sup> and the House of Lords Appointments Commission recommended three new crossbench peers on 8 June 2018 (see Box 1).)

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<sup>42</sup> [HL Deb 19 December 2017 c1969](#)

<sup>43</sup> The Prime Minister, [Letter to the Lord Speaker on the Report of the Lord Speaker's Committee](#), 20 February 2018

<sup>44</sup> HM Government new, [Queen confers peerages](#), 18 May 2018

The Prime Minister used her letter to make a statement of intent on further appointments over the remainder of the current Parliament:

I intend to continue with the restraint which I have exercised to date and, when making appointments, to allocate them fairly, being in mind the result of the last general election and the leadership shown by each party in terms of retirements. I will also operate on the basis there is no automatic entitlement to a peerage for any holder of high office in public life.

She concluded by saying that:

After a period of evaluating the success or otherwise of this first, important step, I would hope that consideration could then be given by all parties as to whether it should be formalised and whether any of the additional mechanisms recommended in the Burns report would be necessary.<sup>45</sup>

During the debate, on 19 December 2017, Lord True argued that there would be no need for a 15-year limit if restraint was shown in the number of appointments made to the House of Lords.<sup>46</sup>

### Box 1: House of Lords Appointments Commission, press notice, 8 June 2018

08 June 2018

#### Three new non-party-political peers – House of Lords Appointments Commission

Three new non-party-political peers recommended by the independent House of Lords Appointments Commission were announced today.

The new peers are:

- David Anderson QC, an expert in EU-related law and human rights who, as Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, influenced law and practice in the fields of counter-terrorism and national security
- Rosie Boycott – an expert in food policy, former journalist, Editor and women’s rights campaigner
- Deborah Bull – a former dancer and leading authority on public engagement with, and the impact of arts, culture and the creative industries.

They will sit on the crossbenches.<sup>47</sup>

## Concern at new appointments in May 2018

Following the announcement of new party-political peerages on 18 May 2018, Lord Adonis asked a private notice question in the House of Lords:

... what is [the Government’s] policy on the future size and composition of the House of Lords in the light of the list of new Peerages published on Friday 18 May.<sup>48</sup>

The following day, Lord Harries of Pentregarth asked about the Government’s plans to reduce the size of the House of Lords. He was told that “the Government are committed to working with others in

<sup>45</sup> The Prime Minister, [Letter to the Lord Speaker on the Report of the Lord Speaker’s Committee](#), 20 February 2018

<sup>46</sup> [HL Deb 19 December 2017 c2097](#)

<sup>47</sup> This press notice was issued by the House of Lords Appointments Commission on 8 June 2018. It can be accessed online via a [press notice from Brick Court Chambers](#), David Anderson’s Chambers

<sup>48</sup> [HL Deb 21 May 2018 cc875-878](#)

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your Lordships' House to address the question of its size" and referred to the Prime Minister's response to the Lord Speaker's Committee.<sup>49</sup>

The Lord Speaker issued the following statement in response to the announcement of new peerages in May 2018:

Commenting on the announcement Lord Fowler, the Lord Speaker, said:

"When the Prime Minister wrote to me in February, she made it clear that the new peerages announced today are a long-planned list arising from the dissolution of Parliament before the June 2017 general election. In that letter, she also committed herself to restraint when making new appointments to the House of Lords. The relatively modest size of today's list when compared with those under several previous Prime Ministers has demonstrated a welcome commitment to that pledge.

I established a committee under the chairmanship of Lord Burns to reduce the size of the House which reported last October. Their report was supported by the House of Lords itself. Today's appointments in no way undermine those recommendations: indeed, the number of new peers announced today is about a third of the 35 peers who have left the House since the 2017 election. The size of the House is falling, and our aim is to continue that progress."<sup>50</sup>

### 2.8 Committee reconvened

In light of the Prime Minister's letter, the Lord Speaker has asked the Committee to reconvene to consider next steps.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> [HL Deb 22 May 2018 c980](#)

<sup>50</sup> Lord Speaker, [Lord Speaker comments on appointment of new members of the Lords](#), 21 May 2018

<sup>51</sup> [E-petition 209433](#), Government response

## 3. Background to the establishment of Lord Speaker's Committee

### Summary

Throughout the 2015 Parliament, members of the House of Lords expressed frustration with the size of the House through questions and debates in the House.

In a debate on 5 December 2016, members of the House of Lords called for the establishment of a select committee to explore how the size of the House of Lords could be reduced. Following that debate, on 20 December 2016, the Lord Speaker, Lord Fowler, announced that he had established a Lord Speaker's Committee drawn entirely from the back benches to "examine possible methods by which the House could be reduced in size".

### 3.1 Concerns early in the 2015 Parliament

On 21 July 2015 Lord Campbell-Savours asked "why do we not avoid public ridicule, bite the bullet and ask the Prime Minister to freeze the size of the House by adopting a new formula: one retirement or one death equals one new appointment?"<sup>52</sup>

In an oral PQ in the House of Lords on 25 June 2015, Lord Campbell-Savours had asked what proposals the Government had for the appointment system in the House of Lords. In response, Baroness Stowell of Beston, the Leader of the House of Lords, said that appointments to the Lords remain a matter for the Prime Minister, and that:

If and when a Dissolution Honours List marking the end of the previous Parliament is published, it would be surprising if it did not reflect the fact that there were two parties in government. More importantly, the message I want to direct to all noble Lords is that, regardless of party balance, this House has a very important role in the legislative process, and in doing our work, this House is not, and should not become, an alternative platform for party politics.<sup>53</sup>

The creation of 45 new peerages in the Dissolution Honours list announced on 28 August 2015 caused further disquiet.<sup>54</sup> On 22 October 2015 Alan Brown MP said that:

Since I was elected in May, 44 new Lords have been sworn in to the other place, despite this Government's pledge to cut the cost of politics. Given that, yesterday, even the hon. Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg) expressed his concern about the performance of the other place, will the Leader of the House now agree, on the second time of asking, to bring forward a debate in Government time on the merits, performance and value for

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<sup>52</sup> [HL Deb 21 July 2015 c1000](#)

<sup>53</sup> [HL Deb 25 June 2015 c1694](#)

<sup>54</sup> Gov.uk, [Press Release: Dissolution Honours](#), 27 August 2015

money of the other place—because we might now all agree on abolition?<sup>55</sup>

### 3.2 House of Lords debate on reforming the House of Lords: September 2015

In a debate on House of Lords Reform in the House of Lords on 15 September 2015, Baroness Stowell of Beeston said that “this Government are clear that the House cannot keep growing indefinitely”. She said that “As Leader I am conscious of our responsibility to examine and address the question of our size”.<sup>56</sup>

She stressed the importance of ensuring any approach to answering the question of the size of the House was as simple as possible. She suggested that approaches such as age and term limits deserved further consideration.<sup>57</sup>

She also said announced that cross-party discussions were to begin after the Conference Recess.<sup>58</sup>

In the same debate Lord Steel of Aikwood suggested having a “cut-off” age at which members of the Lords had to retire.<sup>59</sup>

Following David Cameron’s resignation as Prime Minister, in July 2016, a resignation honours list was published in August 2016.<sup>60</sup> It included a total of 16 new life peerages.

### 3.3 The new Lord Speaker’s concerns about the size of the House of Lords

In early September 2016, after his election as Lord Speaker, Lord Fowler, argued that:

“I don’t think we can justify a situation where you have over 800 peers at the same time as you’re bringing the Commons down to 600.

“The principle, it seems to me, is that we should have fewer Lords. We should certainly not have more peers than there are Members of Parliament. I think that’s a principle that would find agreement amongst most of the House”.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> [HC Deb 22 Oct 2015 c1155](#)

<sup>56</sup> [HL Debate 15 September 2015 cc1748-1749](#)

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, c1750

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, c1750

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, c1754

<sup>60</sup> Cabinet Office, *Resignation Honours 2016*, 4 August 2016

<sup>61</sup> Daniel Bond, “[Lord Fowler: Time to axe more than 200 peers](#)”, *PoliticsHome*, 5 September 2016; see also, Lord Fowler, ‘[The Lords cannot justify its current size](#)’, *PoliticsHome*, 16 September 2016; Jon Stone, ‘[House of Lords size should be cut by 200 peers, Lords Speaker says: Lord Fowler said it was difficult to justify the size of the upper house](#)’, *Independent*, 6 September 2016

### 3.4 Proposals for reducing the size of the House of Lords

Later in September 2016, Lord Cormack, a founder of the Campaign for an Effective Second Chamber,<sup>62</sup> suggested that in order to reduce numbers, those who “barely attend” would have to be excluded. He also acknowledged that the question of political representation needed to be addressed. He suggested that, following a general election, either party groups or the House acting as an electoral college “should decide who sat in the next Parliament”.<sup>63</sup>

In a blog post on 6 October 2016, Meg Russell, Director of the Constitution Unit, UCL, suggested how the size of the Lords could be reduced:

I argue that this requires four interconnected things: a large number of departures before 2020, a long-term cap on the size of the House, limitations on future appointments, and an agreed principle of balance between the parties (and other groups).<sup>64</sup>

### 3.5 House of Lords debate on the size of the House: December 2016

On 5 December 2016, the House of Lords debated a motion on the size of the Lords. The motion was moved by Lord Cormack:

To move to resolve that this House believes that its size should be reduced, and methods should be explored by which this could be achieved.<sup>65</sup>

In introducing his motion, Lord Cormack reviewed the growth in the size of the House of Lords, since its reform in 1999. He also noted the criticisms and pressures that the Lords faced because of its size. He referred to the Campaign for an Effective Second Chamber’s discussion paper (produced “last autumn”) that explored ways in which the size of the House could be reduced.<sup>66</sup> He argued that the House of Lords should agree that it needed to reduce its size and then put in place a process to examine methods to reduce the size of the House of Lords. He also noted that the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee “has decided to conduct an inquiry into the size and composition of your Lordships’ House”.<sup>67</sup>

A large number of peers, who spoke in the debate, supported the call for a select committee (or another similarly constituted group) to be

The Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee’s inquiry “[Is the House of Lords an effective second chamber?](#)” was launched on 9 November 2016 (see section 4)

<sup>62</sup> A group that argues against the introduction of elections to the second chamber [Second Chamber, *The Campaign*]

<sup>63</sup> Lord Cormack, “[Lord Cormack: Here’s how we reduce the size of the House of Lords](#)”, *PoliticsHome*, 29 September 2016; Tom Peck, ‘[Absentee Lords could lose their seats](#)’, *Independent*, 30 September 2016

<sup>64</sup> Meg Russell, “[Reducing the size of the House of Lords: here’s how to do it](#)”, *Constitution Unit blog*, 6 October 2016

<sup>65</sup> [HL Deb 5 December 2016 c500](#)

<sup>66</sup> Campaign for an Effective Second Chamber, *Latest News*, see Press Release, 10.11.15

<sup>67</sup> [HL Deb 5 December 2016 c503](#)

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established to give consideration to how the size of the House of Lords could be reduced.

In responding to the debate, Baroness Evans of Bowes Park, the Leader of the House of Lords, said that the debate had demonstrated that many members believed that the size of the House presented problems for the Lords in terms of how it performed its scrutinising and revising role and in relation to the public's perception and understanding of the House of Lords.

She acknowledged that feeling and the strong desire to work constructively to make progress on the issue of size. However, she stressed that "any reform must not be simply about numbers; it must result in this House working better in fulfilling our role effectively, as well as serving the public at large".

She then considered what should happen next. She noted that there was "an opportunity to make progress" and that there was a desire to continue discussions.

Although she did not rule out the establishment of a select committee, she said that she would consider "whether a more immediate, practical step could be taken in convening a small, Back Bench-led consultative group whose work could be overseen, for instance, by the Lord Speaker". She accepted that progress on the issue depended on working together as a House, saying, "The way forward will not be instigated, led and imposed by government alone".<sup>68</sup>

At the conclusion of the debate, Lord Cormack agreed that the idea of a committee convened by the Lord Speaker deserved "serious consideration".<sup>69</sup>

### 3.6 Lord Speaker's Committee on the Size of the House

At the beginning of business on 20 December 2016, the Lord Speaker made a statement announcing the establishment, membership and remit of a new committee – the first Lord Speaker's Committee – to consider how the size of the House could be reduced:

I am setting up a six-member Lord Speaker's Committee, drawn entirely from the Back Benches, to examine the possible methods by which the House could be reduced in size. I am pleased to announce that the noble Lord, Lord Burns, has agreed to chair the committee and that the other members will be the noble Lord, Lord Beith, the noble Baronesses, Lady Browning, Lady Crawley and Lady Taylor of Bolton, and the noble Lord, Lord Wakeham.

He said that "The committee will get down to work as soon as the House resumes after the Christmas Recess".<sup>70</sup>

Further details of the Committee's work were given in a written statement by Lord McFall of Alcuith, the Senior Deputy Speaker:

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<sup>68</sup> [HL Deb 5 December 2016 cc588-591](#)

<sup>69</sup> [HL Deb 5 December 2016 c592](#)

<sup>70</sup> [HL Deb 20 December 2016 c1541](#)

The Lord Speaker has asked the committee to examine practical and politically viable options that might lead to progress on this issue; analyse their implications; and set out any outstanding questions that may need to be answered in order for any proposals to command broad consensus across the House. The committee will then offer advice to the Lord Speaker as to potential next steps.<sup>71</sup>

The Lord Speaker's Committee issued a consultation paper and it called for written submissions by 20 February 2017.<sup>72</sup>

Speaking in a debate on 28 March 2017, on hereditary peers, Chris Skidmore, Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office, discussed the Lord Speaker's Committee's work. He said that the Committee's remit meant that it could not consider change to the House of Lords' role and powers nor to the primacy of the Commons. It also accepted that Members would continue to be appointed, but with a ceiling on the total size of the House; that the cost of the House would not increase; that there would be a guaranteed percentage or minimum number of crossbench peers; and that no single party is to have a political majority.

Chris Skidmore said that the Committee, in its consultation exercise, sought suggestions about how to achieve two overarching aims: first, to reduce the House from its current size to a target number or range; and secondly, to keep the House at that target size or range afterwards.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> [HLWS386](#) [on Lord Speaker's Committee on the size of the House], 20 December 2016

<sup>72</sup> House of Lords, [Consultation Document](#)

<sup>73</sup> [HC Deb 28 March 2017 c94WH](#)

## 4. Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee's work

### 4.1 Inquiry: is the House of Lords an effective second chamber?

On 9 November 2016, the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) launched an inquiry "[Is the House of Lords an effective second chamber?](#)" By way of background it noted the Strathclyde Review (see section 4 of the Library Briefing Paper [House of Lords Reform: debates and issues in the 2015 Parliament](#) (CBP 07844, 30 March 2017)) and the Prime Minister's resignation honours list. It also noted that the House of Lords was the largest second chamber in the world. The Committee "will seek to identify the 'unarguable next steps' for reform of the House of Lords". It issued a call for evidence that addressed:

- What function and role should the House of Lords have within the UK's system of Parliamentary Government
- Given that successful Lords reform has generally been on the basis of incremental, small steps, what is the next most urgent reform needed in order to allow the House of Lords to perform its functions most effectively
- How the size of the House of Lords can be most effectively managed, including whether there should be a fixed size for the House of Lords, with a phased reduction in the number of peers towards that maximum size
- How a reduction in the size of the House of Lords can co-exist with renewal of the different groupings in the chamber
- Whether there should be greater oversight of the patronage the Prime Minister exercises over appointments to the House of Lords
- What role the House of Lords Appointments Commission should play in the appointment of all new peers and what additional powers and resources are required for it to play such a role
- How it might be possible to ensure that peers, when appointed, will contribute to the function and role of the House of Lords
- The effectiveness of the new retirement system, provided by the House of Lords Reform Act 2014, and the potential scope for reform of leaves of absence.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, [Is the House of Lords an effective second chamber?](#) 9 November 2016

The Committee held two oral evidence sessions and received over 40 written submissions.<sup>75</sup>

The Committee commented on the evidence it had received in its final report of the 2015 Parliament: [\*The work of the Committee during the 2015-17 Parliament\*](#) (2 May 2017, HC 1151 206-17, paras 16-29).

## 4.2 Evidence from Lord Burns

In January 2018, PACAC took evidence from Lord Burns, the Chair of the Lord Speaker's Committee on the size of the House of Lords.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, [\*An effective Second Chamber? The House of Lords inquiry\*](#)

<sup>76</sup> Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, [\*Oral evidence: Report of the Lord Speaker's Committee on the size of the House\*](#), HC 662 2017-19, Tuesday 30 January 2018

## 5. Retirement from and new appointments to the House of Lords

Voluntary retirement from the House of Lords was placed upon a statutory basis by the [House of Lords Reform Act 2014](#). In effect, this replaced the non-statutory voluntary retirement scheme in place since 2011. Members can retire under the 2014 Act by giving written notice to the Clerk of the Parliaments specifying a date upon which they want to retire. Over 80 members of the House of Lords have retired under the Act. A list of retirees is available [here](#).

The House of Lords Library Note, *Statistics on the Size and Composition of the House of Lords*, published in November 2017, reported that since 1 January 2015 more members had left the House of Lords than had joined:

- Since 1 January 2015, there have been 82 life Peers created.
- Since 1 January 2015, the number of Members who have left the House was 110 (excluding Bishops).

Of the 110 who had left the House of Lords, at that time, 67 retired, 37 died and six ceased to be members under section 2 of the *House of Lords Reform Act 2014* by virtue of not attending a sitting of the House during a session lasting six months or longer.<sup>77</sup>

Since Theresa May became Prime Minister in July 2016, a total of 40 new life peerages, with places in the House of Lords, have been announced.

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<sup>77</sup> The House of Lords Library Note, [Statistics on the Size and Composition of the House of Lords](#), 2 November 2017. House of Lords, [Non-attending Lords](#)

## 6. E-petition calling for a referendum on the abolition of the House of Lords

The Petitions Committee has scheduled a debate on an e-petition calling for a referendum on the abolition of the House of Lords to take place on 18 June 2018:

Give the electorate a referendum on the abolition of the House of Lords

The House of Lords is a place of patronage where unelected and unaccountable individuals hold a disproportionate amount of influence and power which can be used to frustrate the elected representatives of the people.<sup>78</sup>

By 13 June 2018, the e-petition had received over 168,000 signatures.

The Government responds to e-petitions that receive over 10,000 signatures. Its response to the e-petition is set out in Box 2.

### **Box 2: Give the electorate a referendum on the abolition of the House of Lords – Government response**

The Government is committed to ensuring that the House of Lords continues to fulfil its constitutional role as a revising and scrutinising chamber which respects the primacy of the House of Commons.

As set out in the manifesto, the Government is committed to ensuring that the House of Lords continues to fulfil its constitutional role as a revising and scrutinising chamber which respects the primacy of the House of Commons.

Whilst comprehensive reform is not a priority, the Government will also continue to work to ensure that the House of Lords remains relevant and effective by addressing issues such as its size.

The Lord Speaker's committee on the size of the House of Lords, chaired by Lord Burns, made recommendations in October 2017 on ways of reducing the size of the House without requiring legislation. In response, The Prime Minister has written to the Lord Speaker and agreed to continue with the restraint she has shown so far when making appointments to the House. It is incumbent on all sides of the House to consider what they can do to further promote the culture of retirement. In light of the Prime Minister's letter, the Lord Speaker has asked the Committee to reconvene to consider next steps. Cabinet Office<sup>79</sup>

During the course of debates on the *European Union (Withdrawal) Bill 2017-19* (EUW Bill), in the House of Lords, there were calls in the media and from politicians for the powers of the House of Lords to be curbed.

Sky News reported that "Peers are "playing with fire" by trying to thwart Brexit and could end up "burning down" the House of Lords, Jacob Rees-Mogg has warned".<sup>80</sup> The Daily Mail reported that "Leading Tory MPs on a 'complete and total overhaul' of the House of

<sup>78</sup> [E-petition 209433](#), closes 17 July 2018

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>80</sup> Sky News, [Rees-Mogg: peers risk 'burning down' House of Lords by thwarting Brexit](#), 24 April 2018

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Lords after its votes to thwart Brexit".<sup>81</sup> The *Financial Times* asked, "Did the Lords overstep the mark on Brexit?"<sup>82</sup>

However, other commentators have argued that in suggesting amendments to the EUW Bill, the House of Lords has been doing its job as a revising chamber and asking the House of Commons to think again. Meg Russell, Director of the Constitution Unit, at University College London, wrote:

The fact that the Lords is now derided by some who previously supported it does not necessarily indicate that its behaviour has worsened, just that the politics have changed.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> John Stevens, "[Leading Tory MPs on a 'complete and total overhaul' of the House of Lords after its votes to thwart Brexit](#)", *Mail Online*, 9 May 2018

<sup>82</sup> James Blitz, "Did the Lords overstep the mark on Brexit?", *Financial Times*, 18 May 2018

<sup>83</sup> Meg Russell, "[Lords Brexit defeats are forcing MPs to face crucial choices](#)", *The Conversation*, 14 May 2018

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