Written evidence from Lord Curry of Kirkharle and Lord Trees – RIS0080

The House of Lords is facing an unprecedented volume of legislation - especially secondary legislation - a challenge that has frequently been mentioned in recent Crossbench meetings and elsewhere in the House. But the way we constitute committees has not reflected the new and serious challenges we face.

Appointed through the Appointments Commission route, we are committed to the work of this House. In our own areas of interest and expertise, we confess a feeling of frustration having had to demit from the EU Sub-Committee on Energy and Environment after three years -yet DEFRA has arguably the biggest legislative challenge of any government department over the immediate future (although Don has enjoyed being on the ad-hoc Rural Economy Committee which has almost concluded its business).

We fully understand that time-limited appointments to committees are an attempt to enable more peers to have a chance to serve on committees. But in most spheres of activity one would compose committees to include those individuals who might best contribute to the specific remit of a given committee. I realise that there must be political balance on parliamentary committees but in the House of Lords we have the unique cadre of non-partisan Crossbench Peers, specifically appointed to bring expertise to parliamentary scrutiny.

Putting aside our personal situations, there are many more peers, particularly on the Crossbenches who are also unable to contribute to legislative scrutiny. At this unique time can we ask that there be serious and immediate consideration to institute a more flexible, pragmatic and needs-must approach to the constitution of committees in order to ensure all available expertise can be harnessed for the public good to ensure optimal scrutiny of legislation.

We would be pleased to discuss this with you and others if possible. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

January 2019