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PRESS NOTICE

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Survey shows peers ready for limited Lords reform

A survey of peers by UCL's Constitution Unit shows that a majority of peers favour some limited Lords reforms. This news comes as Jack Straw prepares to make a statement on Lords reform to the Commons, and a day before peers debate a bill on reform.

The survey results show that an overwhelming 89.5% of peers support moves to put the House of Lords Appointments Commission on a statutory basis, and 69.4% believe that the right for hereditary peers to sit in the chamber should be ended. Both of these proposals are included in a bill, proposed by former Liberal leader David Steel (now Lord Steel of Aikwood) which will be debated in the House of Lords tomorrow. However, only a minority of peers believed that the link between membership of the House and the peerage (for example so that members would become "MLs" rather than peers) should be broken, and an even smaller minority (32.2%) supported the introduction of some elections.

Commenting on the findings, Senior Research Fellow Dr Meg Russell said "We already know from the votes in March that members of the Lords are not in favour of moves to an elected or largely elected second chamber. Progress in this direction will require, at the very least, difficult negotiation. But our survey shows that the peers are ready for some more limited reform – to put appointments on a more transparent footing, and to remove the rights of hereditary peers to sit. These proposals are both included in Lord Steel's bill, which is likely to receive strong support in the House tomorrow. Whatever the plans for more large scale reform, the government would be well advised in the meantime to consider proposals such as these, which could move things on, whilst improving public trust in parliament."

The Constitution Unit has recently called on Gordon Brown to reform the appointments process to the Lords, giving the Appointments Commission control over how many peers are appointed and when, and what the share of appointees is between the parties. **Meg Russell said:** 'A reform of appointments, as an interim measure, would also have the advantage of avoiding the new Prime Minister getting involved in the kind of 'cash for peerages' allegations that dogged his predecessor".

NOTE TO EDITORS

- The full figures from the survey questions are attached. The survey was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, and the response rate amongst peers was over 50%.
- Dr Meg Russell is author of *Reforming the House of Lords: Lessons from Overseas* (Oxford University Press, 2000) and numerous reports and papers on the Lords. She was formerly special adviser to Robin Cook and an adviser to the Royal Commission on House of Lords reform. She can be contacted on 07759 534160.
- The Constitution Unit is a specialist think tank working on the implementation of constitutional reform. It is independent and non-partisan, based in the School of Public Policy at University College London. For details of the Unit's research on the Lords see: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/research/parliament/house-of-lords.html>

Other phone numbers: Brian Walker, Press Officer 07802 176347, Administrator Victoria Spence 020 7679 4977.

If appointments continue, the Appointments Commission should be made statutory							
Party	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	Total % agree
Lab	49	39	7	1	2	99	88.9%
Con	42	51	9	5		108	86.1%
Lib Dem	28	16	1			45	97.8%
Crossbench	47	51	5		2	109	89.9%
Bishop	2	5		1		8	87.5%
Other	4					4	100.0%
Total	172	162	22	7	4	373	89.5%

There should no longer be automatic rights for hereditary peers to sit in the chamber							
Party	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	Total % agree
Lab	75	17	2	4	1	99	92.9%
Con	13	35	20	22	14	108	44.4%
Lib Dem	34	9		2		45	95.6%
Crossbench	29	41	15	15	4	109	64.2%
Bishop		3	3	2		8	37.5%
Other	2	1			1	4	75.0%
Total	153	106	40	45	20	373	69.4%

The link between the peerage and membership of the House should be broken							
Party	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	Total % agree
Lab	35	18	11	20	14	99	53.5%
Con	9	23	11	37	25	108	29.6%
Lib Dem	17	16	4	5	1	45	73.3%
Crossbench	17	22	24	29	9	109	35.8%
Bishop		2	2	4		8	25.0%
Other				1	2	4	0.0%
Total	78	81	52	96	51	373	42.6%

There should be at least some elected members in the chamber							
Party	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	Total % agree
Lab	28	12	3	19	37	99	40.4%
Con	5	14	4	33	48	108	17.6%
Lib Dem	27	5	2	6	4	45	71.1%
Crossbench	9	16	11	41	26	109	22.9%
Bishop		3	1	3	1	8	37.5%
Other	1				3	4	25.0%
Total	70	50	21	102	119	373	32.2%