

Mark speaks out about EU's bookkeeping

The European Union ought to be held to account over its accounts.

That is according to a Mark Lancaster who was shocked to learn the EU's spending has not been signed off by its auditors.

Last week it was announced that, for the 16th year running, its auditing body the European Court of Auditors (ECA) has refused to give EU spending a clean bill of health.

The MP for Milton Keynes North, who did not vote for the increase during the vote on the draft EU bill on October 13, 2010, described it as 'unacceptable' that auditors found 'payments from the budget continue to be materially affected by error'. It follows the Prime Minister's victory earlier this month in keeping an EU budget increase for 2011 down to 2.9 per cent, when it was originally set to rise by around 6 per cent.

But while David Cameron has staved off a massive increase, the UK is still paying into a pot of money whose destination Mr Lancaster believes is 'dubious'.

Last week the EU's bizarre spending was put under the media spotlight, namely a reported Â£350,000 spent on a 'dog hydrotherapy project' in Hungary and Â£14,000 going to Austrian farmers to help them emotionally connect with their cultivated land.

The Milton Keynes North MP said: "Although I am glad that the Prime Minister secured a lower increase in the EU budget, it is worrying to see that the body can't get its accounts signed off. What other publicly funded organisation would get away with this? Despite the PM's interventions we will still be forking out an extra out an extra Â£453 million to Brussels each year. Back in the UK, families, businesses and public bodies are tightening their belts. But over in Europe, we have a well-funded organisation wantonly haemorrhaging money."

The ECA found that 'Research, energy and transport', 'External Aid, development and enlargement' and 'Education and Citizenship' are all "materially affected by error" and it has therefore refused to sign them off.

The two biggest areas of the EU budget, agriculture and regional spending, have not been signed off and remain 'materially affected by error'.

The only two areas to receive a clean bill of health were 'Economic and financial affairs' and 'Administrative expenditure'.