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Devolution and the Union

A higher ambition

Inquiry into better devolution for the whole UK

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Foreword



Lord Bob Kerslake

Chair of the Inquiry into Better Devolution for the Whole UK

I am delighted to introduce this report. The Inquiry into Better Devolution was commissioned by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution to look at how we could better achieve devolution across the whole of the United Kingdom.

This is a timely and important inquiry. The United Kingdom is at a point of pivotal change. As we lead up to the EU referendum and contemplate our identity within Europe, the broader debate around what defines the relationship between our four nations, how we better empower our local areas and the manner in which we choose to govern ourselves is being rehearsed across the country. Whatever the result in June, these questions will remain.

The Government has sought to address some of these issues since taking office in May, and I am pleased to see that devolution to both local and national governments has gained momentum. However, there is a long way to go. A more coherent and ambitious approach is required if we are to tackle the constitutional challenges this country faces. If we want to reduce the gap between those who govern, and those who are governed, then it is time for a bigger conversation.

In conducting this inquiry, we have not intended it to be an academic exercise in constitutional affairs, nor did we seek to achieve complete unanimity amongst the panel on all the issues presented. Rather, we wanted to tell a wider story, to set out a more coherent approach to devolution, and point the way to the next stage of the debate. We have made some ambitious proposals because we strongly believe there needs to be a bolder vision for devolution if we are to navigate our way through the multiple challenges that we face.

I would like to extend my thanks to all members of the panel, and also to those who gave evidence to this inquiry. The level of expertise presented and the liveliness of the debate has, I believe, yielded important results. We look forward to future conversations with the Government about how to take these proposals forward.

A handwritten signature in white ink, reading "R W Kerslake".

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Summary

This is a significant moment of change. The UK is fast approaching a crossroads in national identity and constitutional development. This inquiry has set out to examine these interconnected issues and how they should define the future of governance and devolution within the United Kingdom.

It is time for a higher ambition for devolution from all levels of government if we are to strengthen the relationships within the Union whilst ensuring areas reach their full potential. Progress to date has been piecemeal; devolution arrangements emerging through bilateral conversations and narrow constitutional amendments that fail to take a view in the round.

We are clear that this will no longer be enough. The devolution of powers and the broader governance considerations that sit across the United Kingdom must be examined and tackled together to bring about sustainable reform and long term stability.

We are an asymmetrical Union. The different sizes, identities and aspirations of our component nations should be both acknowledged and facilitated through devolution arrangements that are transparent but variable. We must become comfortable with the differences in governance, policy and service delivery that arise through greater empowerment at a local level.

However, we also need to articulate our shared identity, making clear what it means to be part of our Union by establishing a set of guiding principles. These principles would articulate the rights of all citizens, without hampering the development of local governance and devolved policy.

Devolution needs to happen at different speeds for different places, but the ultimate offer must be equally available to all. Devolved nations should be free to pursue the freedoms and fiscal levers that they deem appropriate within a reserved powers model. It is time to reach a consensus on what remains at the centre, and apply a principle of subsidiarity to all else in order to safeguard against future tensions and the destabilising effect of uncertainty.

As powers are devolved they should be passed down as appropriate beyond national governments; they cannot all remain in Cardiff Bay, Stormont, Holyrood and, in the case of England, Westminster. The principle of subsidiarity must apply to all levels of government, with decisions taken as close to local people as possible. We encourage devolved administrations to choose to respect this principle.

We are seeing a new impetus for devolution to local government in England. The pragmatism of the 'deal-based approach' has brought about progress that is to be welcomed and extended, but is not without its challenges.

The Government should follow through on its commitments of bespoke, locally driven devolution, broadening out from the initial starting focus of cities and growth to meet the aspirations of all places across a variety of policy areas and geographies.

The fullest range of powers, fiscal and otherwise, must be made available to local government to call down from, when they feel able, to suit the particular requirements of the authority concerned. As part of this vision, local government must be clearer in its long-term aspirations for devolution.

Better devolution cannot happen without reform of the UK Civil Service, as well as local government. Devolution has not been adopted consistently across all areas of Government, which should work harder to demonstrate that it is able and prepared to progress devolution at a faster rate.

At a political level, devolution can only succeed if the electorate perceive a shift in accountability from national politicians to local. The temptation for central government to step in when something goes wrong at a local level must be resisted if we are to see this shift occur. There needs to be a new legal basis for the independence of local government, made through primary legislation.

We must now engage the whole of society if we are to ensure the legitimacy of devolved arrangements and that what is enacted does not further exacerbate tensions within our respective national identities. A 'nationwide conversation' is required to involve all citizens in this debate about the way that we should govern ourselves in the future.

Introduction

The UK has one of the most over-centralised systems of government in the OECD¹. Concern over this imbalance has grown gradually in the last 15 years, but the call for reform has broken out with considerable force in recent times. The Scottish Referendum, Scotland Bill, Wales Bill, English Votes for English Laws, the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act, and now the EU referendum, are all significant markers in constitutional change, coming about in quick succession. This is telling. A multi-faceted debate on our identity as a Union and the governance that underpins it is live.

The drivers for devolution are not uniform. In England, the agenda has been largely defined as an exercise in increased productivity and growth – building on initiatives such as the ‘Northern Powerhouse’ or the ‘Midlands Engine’ to enable jobs, industry, trade and investment. A second driver is that of service reform, characterised by areas seeking to use devolution settlements as a way of galvanising and enacting changes in service delivery. In the devolved nations, the primary driver has been that of identity, whilst regional disquiet across England from an electorate that has often expressed feelings of disconnection and difference from Westminster has also played its part.

The differing extent to which these motivators are in play across territories and tiers of government is indicative of the need to now examine constitutional arrangements wholesale. Tackling just one part of the devolution agenda will not address the wider question.

There is a distinction between decentralisation and devolution, although often these terms are used somewhat interchangeably by commentators.

Both involve the redistribution of powers and functions away from the centre, but devolution goes further, enshrining this in statute.

This inquiry, whilst touching on matters of decentralisation, has ultimately concerned itself with devolution, examining the transfer of statutory powers and functions from the centre to more local tiers of government.

As a panel we are unified in our support for devolution, but we are clear that there are many questions that need to be answered: how do we achieve an equal starting point in terms of resources; when are we willing to accept unequal outcomes and when are we not; what is the impact on areas who have not secured devolution deals in England; how are local authorities not yet ready to take on additional powers supported to do so.

These are issues we have sought to raise throughout the inquiry, and it is critical that these continue to be examined as the agenda progresses. Indeed, we make several assertions about the need for greater clarity or consistency concerning devolved arrangements. This does not mean that progress must halt whilst agreement around these issues is sought. The panel is confident that the Government can continue in its pragmatic approach to devolution and at the same time give consideration to these broader matters.

We acknowledge the significant body of work that has been produced on this subject ahead of this particular inquiry, and the ongoing work of the Lords Constitution Committee and the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee. In total, we heard from 21 witnesses and received over 40 written submissions. The panel extend their thanks to those who gave evidence to this particular inquiry.

¹ OECD, ‘Government at a glance,’ available at: <http://www.oecd.org/gov/govatagance.htm>

Devolved nations

Since the establishment of the devolved administrations in the 1990s, the question of territorial governance, the extent of devolution and the uneven distribution of devolved powers across the UK has formed an important strand of political debate. This is ongoing, accelerating in the wake of the Scottish Referendum, and with consideration being given to Bills for further devolution to Scotland and Wales and through the Stormont House Agreement in Northern Ireland. Examination of these matters has, in turn, also given rise to further contemplation of English representation and the so-called West Lothian question.

A federal United Kingdom

The question of how to govern effectively a union of devolved nations has brought forth recent attention to the concept of a federal UK. In examining this issue, the panel took federalism to mean an arrangement whereby each home nation would comprise a sub-national state or tier of democratic governance, as seen in other countries like Germany and Canada. In this model, a uniform allocation of responsibilities across the two tiers would be laid out through a new, formal arrangement.

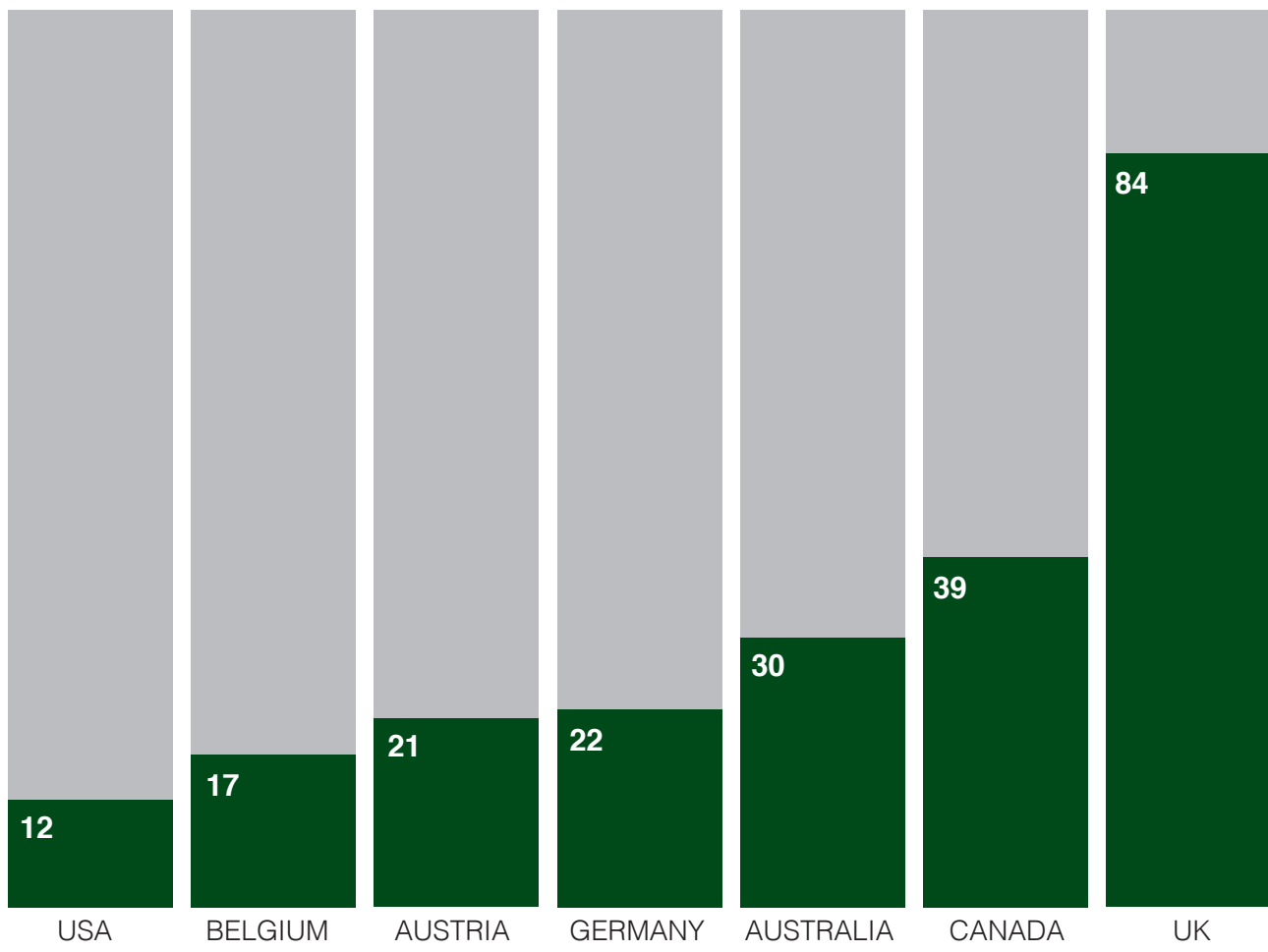
We understand the initial appeal of such an approach, which provides a seemingly 'neat and tidy' territorial solution to the current governance and constitutional challenges we face. However, the consensus of the evidence received is that, in a UK context, the respective size of the nations renders federalism in its purest form impracticable and unstable.

'The fundamental difficulty is that England is 85 per cent of the UK population, so if the UK became a federation for the four nations then it won't succeed. No nation in the world has succeeded when one unit is so large.'

Professor Robert Hazell

Participants laid out that a federal model of this nature, for which there is no international precedent, would pose the inherent risk of further asserting English dominance, owing to its respective size. Thus the UK can adopt a more federal approach, but a fully federal model would not work.

Largest state by population in federal models (%)



Australia's federal model dates back to 1901, when the six self-governing colonies federated as the Commonwealth of Australia following a series of constitutional conventions that culminated in a draft Constitution. It is a model in which the states determine what powers may be reserved by the centre, rather than the centre determining what powers may be devolved. The state governments also have their own constitutions, as well as a structure of legislature, executive and judiciary. The constitutional responsibility for local government lies with the state and territorial governments, and therefore local government's role varies from state to state.

UK map adjusted for population size



‘I believe [a federal model] would annoy the non-English people in the UK by replicating English dominance. It would be a bureaucratic nightmare if one imagines an English parliament sitting in, shall we say, Bristol or Newcastle, and the various conflicts of jurisdiction that would occur with a United Kingdom Parliament sitting in Westminster.’

Professor Vernon Bogdanor

A full federal model of this type does not provide any alternative, workable solution to the English question. Whilst a strong regional approach as previously proposed might achieve more equivalence, there is little appetite at present in England for returning to this. There is certainly no appetite to see devolved legislative powers across England, with different laws being made in Birmingham to those in Bristol, and participants pointed out the bureaucratic challenges establishment of an English parliament would present.

The recent devolution deals and associated combined authority areas demonstrate an emerging footprint on which places can build their representation at a national level, although these are organic and currently still forming. Clearly the Union is asymmetrical, both in size and identity: methods of appropriate representation will vary across the nations accordingly. In short, ‘asymmetry is the price we pay for keeping the Union.’²

² Professor Vernon Bogdanor

‘I think the trouble is that, in England, regions do not attract the kind of emotional allegiance as do Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, or regions on the continent. If you were to ask somebody in Bristol or Canterbury what region they belong to, they would look at you rather oddly and say they live in Canterbury which is a town, and in Kent, which is a county. They do not think of themselves as living in a region. So I do not believe that regional devolution is really an option. This means that federalism in either form is not really suitable for England.’

Professor Vernon Bogdanor

Government has sought to address the English question through the introduction of English Votes for English Laws (EVEL). Whilst the motivations for EVEL are well understood, there has been much debate concerning precisely how it should be implemented.

The model at which we have arrived is a compromise, and in reviewing the evidence the panel conclude it is too early to determine the extent to which the current approach to EVEL will provide a workable solution. However, we are clear that any mechanism likely to replicate the challenges presented by a full federalist model would be very problematic.

That said, as devolution to and within the home nations progresses and areas take greater control of their own affairs, a more federal form may well evolve over time. This is a possibility that the panel is happy to entertain.

‘England does have to be recognised in the territorial constitution of the United Kingdom, but its position as the dominant partner in the Union requires a quite different approach to that for Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. The UK will never be a fully formal federal state.’

Professor Jim Gallagher

Principles for a stable Union

Differences in how the respective nations of the UK are governed are part and parcel of devolution. However, participants voiced concerns around the extent to which this divergence can be accommodated in light of two emerging issues.

Firstly, the matter of equity. This was summed up by Shadow Secretary Jon Trickett MP in his call to examine ‘how we reconcile a multiplicity of governing models with the underlying principle of equity’.

A variety of outcomes and differing areas of focus across public services is a likely result of devolution, and to a certain extent must be accepted. Indeed, releasing local capability from what may, on occasions, be the lowest common denominator of over-centralisation could lead to higher, though not uniform, standards across services. In addition, devolution need not mean doing away with national levels of inspections, such as Monitor or Her Majesty’s Inspectorate. However, the panel noted evidence which suggested that formally articulating which principles of equality are regarded as fundamental to UK identity may be a positive way of underpinning cooperation on an UK level.

‘The United Kingdom is best seen now as a voluntary association of nations which share and redistribute resources and risks between us to our mutual benefit and to advance our common interests.’

Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM, First Minister of Wales

‘I have no objection if Wales decides on free prescriptions charges, or Scotland free university places, but suppose that the Scottish Government were to say, ‘We are strapped for cash at the moment, we want to charge for a visit to the doctor.’ Is this something that should be within the hands of the Scottish Parliament, or the hands of Westminster? There are some fundamental matters which need to remain at the centre to maintain the social union.’

Professor Vernon Bogdanor

The second issue put to the panel was that of choice. If we are to understand the UK as a ‘voluntary union of nations’³ then clarity is needed as to what each of the nations are choosing to be part of.

‘People need to know what holds the UK together, in terms of both the principles and powers that the governments have. Basic rights need to apply to all citizens in the UK.’

Rt Hon Gordon Brown

The panel recommends establishing a set of principles that unite the citizens of the UK, on the basis of it being a voluntary union of nations. These principles would serve to underpin our cohesive identity by making clear the rights of all citizens, without hampering the development of local governance and devolved policy.

3 Rt Hon Gordon Brown

These principles should also be given consideration as part of a nationwide, citizen-based conversation, although, in giving evidence to this inquiry, Gordon Brown provided an initial indication as to what these could be:

‘The social and economic rights of a British citizen are the right to free healthcare, the right to education, the right to help [for] the unemployed and disabled, and finally the right to a pension. These should be common rights across the whole of the UK.’

Rt Hon Gordon Brown

Devolved functions

Devolution of legislative competence to the home nations has, to date, proceeded separately and at variable speeds. What is emerging is a model of reserved powers, whereby certain functions are retained at the centre with all remaining competencies becoming the responsibility of the devolved institutions: Scotland already operates on this basis, and, like Wales, is seeking to build on this approach through the Scotland and Wales Bills respectively.

We view this as the correct direction of travel. However, the evidence we have heard highlighted that these are bilateral arrangements, subject to debate and ongoing negotiation that represent further instability for the Union. The case was made that there is now a greater need for clarity and consensus around what functions are suitable for devolution, a marker to inform future debate and establish uniform buy-in across all nations regarding what should remain at UK level.

‘We do need a clear criterion of what is suitable for devolution and decentralisation and what is not.’

Professor Vernon Bogdanor

A consensus should now be sought amongst the devolved nations as to what functions should remain at a UK level through a reserved powers model, in order to provide transparency and stability in the relationship between the nations of the United Kingdom.

The refinement of a reserved powers model does not require all nations to proceed with devolution at the same pace. In practice, what is appropriate for one nation may not at any given time yet be right for another, but it should be for the local administration to decide what is appropriate.

Individual nations should be free to pursue those functions agreed as available to them at a rate that is reflective of local will and circumstance, whilst reflective of the principles of the UK.

‘What we have learnt from devolution is that one can proceed in different ways and at different paces in different places. You can reflect local circumstances.’

Professor Jim Gallagher

Fiscal devolution to the devolved administrations

‘Devolution is likely to continue to proceed in each country at a different pace and in different ways. Inevitably this will impact on the fiscal frameworks, and increasingly we must expect differences in the arrangements. There can be no question of a ‘one size fits all’ approach. However, it is important that there are clear and agreed principles underlining the arrangements for all countries. It will remain essential that we ensure consistency and fairness in the fiscal framework.’

Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM, First Minister of Wales

As with devolved functions more broadly, national administrations are pursuing revised fiscal arrangements through bilateral negotiations with Whitehall. This has brought progress, but the process for agreeing powers with HM Treasury has often proved opaque and protracted. As is the case with broader functionality, what is required is greater transparency for all nations in their pursuit of fiscal autonomy.

Meaningful fiscal devolution must go alongside devolution of functions, whilst maintaining a single UK market. In practice, we view this as a development of the process to date: the adoption of a national fiscal framework, making clear through mutual agreement what financial levers remain at the centre. A principle of subsidiarity should therefore apply to all other functions, with devolved administrations free to pursue arrangements at a pace that suits them within this framework.

‘The most important issue that your group has to address is not about the constitution, it’s about funding. Devolution from the start gave wide legislative powers to Scotland and Northern Ireland, and Wales is catching up fast; but without corresponding fiscal power.’

Professor Robert Hazell

Specifically, VAT and National Insurance should remain centralised, with consideration given to how the latter could be made subject to adjustment at a devolved government level. Corporation Tax should be devolved to Northern Ireland on account of its international border and in alignment with the Stormont House Agreement. The panel also notes the case made by the Silk Report to give consideration to devolving Corporation Tax to Wales, and recommend that this is explored, including Scotland in the debate. Income Tax is already being assigned in Scotland and Wales and this journey should continue elsewhere in the Union if representative institutions request it. All other financial functions should be subject to the principle of subsidiarity.

‘The UK should remain a fully integrated single market with a single currency and common macroeconomic framework in which citizens are free to live, to work, to trade and to retire without legal impediment.’

Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law⁴

Barnett formula

Whilst the suitability of the Barnett formula was raised during the course of the inquiry, more evidence would be required to make an informed addition to the debate. The panel noted the current considerations being given to devolved financial arrangements through the Wales and Scotland Bills, as well as the commitment from pro-Union parties to maintain the formula at the time of the Scottish Referendum.

It is our view that as other powers and other fiscal levers are afforded to the devolved administrations, a re-evaluation of the Barnett formula may well be needed.

Lord Barnett himself made clear several years ago that the Barnett formula was only intended to be a temporary solution until a needs-based assessment could be introduced.

‘I thought it might last a year or two before a government would decide to change it. It never occurred to me for one moment that it would last this long.’⁵

Lord Barnett

Future exploration of a needs-based formula should therefore be welcomed, at a point when devolution arrangements have had the opportunity to manifest and mature.

⁴ http://www.biicl.org/documents/595_a_constitutional_crossroads.pdf

⁵ Select Committee on the Barnett Formula, 28 January 2009

Devolution beyond national institutions

Devolution should be accompanied by decentralisation as a basic tenet of subsidiarity. Our participants told us that devolution cannot come to rest in Cardiff Bay, Holyrood, Stormont or, in the case of England, remain in Westminster. Powers and finance should be carried past the devolved administrations down to local authorities if economic and social opportunity is to be realised by all. Furthermore, we are only likely to be successful in delivering better services if there is also increased devolution within other public sector bodies, such as the NHS.

‘In terms of the way we develop the devolved settlement, I think it’s inevitably the case that centralism has become a factor, and it’s the type of centralism, and how that plays out, I think, is the key issue. It is not necessarily about the loss of functions. It’s about micromanagement.’

Steven Thomas, Welsh Local Government Association

‘Across a wide range of issues, there is compelling evidence that taking decisions closer to the people they affected leads to better outcomes and saves the taxpayer money. Power should be transferred in such a way that decisions can be taken as a close to residents as possible.’⁶

Local Government Association

⁶ <http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6917361/L15-178+DevoNext+devolution+publication/7e036308-6ebc-4f20-8d26-d6e2cd7f6eb2>

Local government

‘The fundamental case for devolution is the stimulus it gives to local patriotism and pride in the development of services, a patriotism and pride which can well stimulate improvement in services.’

Professor Vernon Bogdanor

A focus on devolution to local government in England has been growing steadily in recent years. The introduction of the Localism Act 2011 afforded councils new freedoms and flexibilities, including the establishment of the General Power of Competence. The Act also brought about referendums on the adoption of an elected mayor in the largest cities outside London. The coalition government characterised mayors as able to provide ‘democratically accountable strong leadership which is able to instigate real change for the benefit of our largest cities’.⁷ However, all but Leicester, Liverpool and Bristol rejected the adoption of a mayor for their area.

A series of City and Growth Deals were also agreed over the course of the coalition. These sought to devolve packages of funding and flexibilities in relation to specific programmes and outcomes. The first wave were signed in July 2012 by the eight Core Cities - Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield - each having negotiated the devolution of certain powers. By July 2014, 20 further City Deals had been negotiated with a range of smaller cities and city-regions. Growth Deals were agreed with each of the 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

The current administration has set about building a ‘Northern Powerhouse’ through devolution. As part of the 2015 Spending Review, the Chancellor invited places wanting to agree a devolution deal to submit proposals to Government: 38 proposals were put forward from cities, towns and counties across the UK.⁸

The resulting deal-based approach has been characterised by local government embarking upon negotiations with Whitehall around these proposals, securing new powers and fiscal freedoms in exchange for the adoption of certain governance arrangements and the commitment to deliver certain outcomes.

⁷ http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5959/1896534.pdf

⁸ <http://www.gov.uk/government/news/landmark-devolution-bids-submitted-from-right-across-the-country>

To date, deals have been agreed with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Sheffield City Region, Liverpool City Region, Tees Valley Combined Authority, North East Combined Authority, West Midlands Combined Authority, Cornwall, and London.

‘We will hand power from the centre to cities to give you greater control over your local transport, housing, skills and healthcare. And we’ll give the levers you need to grow your local economy and make sure local people keep the rewards. But it’s right people have a single point of accountability: someone they elect, who takes the decisions and carries the can. So with these new powers for cities must come new city-wide elected mayors who work with local councils. I will not impose this model on anyone. But nor will I settle for less.’⁹

Rt Hon George Osborne MP

In giving evidence to this panel, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government outlined the current approach being taken to devolution. Namely, deal-based negotiations, accompanied by the local adoption of elected mayors and the full retention of business rates.

‘I don’t have a blueprint in mind that I’m seeking to get to by hook or by crook. I want to see the places across our country that have the appetite for greater self-determination, local leadership, to feel that they have the opportunity and the ability [to pursue devolution].’

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP

9 <http://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chancellor-on-building-a-northern-powerhouse>

The panel is keen to acknowledge and welcome the initial progress made through this approach, as well as the personal efforts of the Secretary of State. By bringing forward legislation in the early part of this Parliament, Government has signalled the priority given to this agenda.

‘I think we made good progress [during the coalition government], but I think that is going to increase and be maintained and indeed accelerate during this Parliament where we have 100 per cent retention of business rates by local government in prospect by 2020. We have, since the election, agreed a number of devolution deals with other places in the country. There will be mayoral elections in these places next year, in 2017, and there will be further devolution deals negotiated. So I think that we are in a very different world than we were five years ago.

I think party leaders in local government of all parties are enthusiastic about the opportunity to take on more powers and more responsibilities. Not just in the field of economic development which characterised the early deals, but also in areas of public services that a reasonable case can be made that they can work better if they are more joined up, such as health and social care, for example. So I think they will increasingly characterise the negotiations, and I hope agreements, during the rest of this Parliament.’

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP

‘[The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act] is a good first step on a journey which we hope will eventually lead to far higher levels of political, democratic and fiscal reform in English local government.’

New Local Government Network

In reviewing emerging arrangements for England, the panel were pleased to note comments from the Secretary of State concerning work to agree devolution deals for cities in the devolved nations. In light of this, the evidence heard on the devolution deals, whilst not immediately impacting on local government in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, does, we believe, offer lessons and principles that read across to these nations.

Devolution deals

Participants told to us that the deal-making approach is a pragmatic one, allowing for progress to be made in certain areas whilst simultaneously elevating levels of ambition and expectation for devolution across England. This is viewed as a good thing.

‘Whenever you’re trying to bring about fundamental change there are two ways to do it. You can either spend years drawing up the perfect plan, the perfect scheme that everybody buys into, it takes years and years and you may never get there, or you take a more pragmatic and opportunistic approach, seize the moment, and you start somewhere. I think this Government is starting somewhere. To that extent it’s to be welcomed. Whether it’s got longevity remains to be seen.’

Councillor Anne Western, Derbyshire County Council

However, it was made clear that this approach has not been without its challenges. It was put to us that despite the apparent open door attitude of the Government, in practice there has been greater engagement from some government departments than others; a notion of so-called 'no go' areas was raised. There was also consensus that far from bespoke negotiations, the deals done to date are somewhat templated arrangements with little room for variability, the overriding focus being on growth.

'I feel quite strongly that the Government has a job to make sure all government departments are signed up to this process. We had great success with DCLG. The Treasury were keen to do business with us. We've found other departments aren't as willing to get involved.'

Councillor John Pollard, Cornwall Council

'There's a bit of a danger that devolution is seen as something purely about business and economic functions, not something people have public buy-in to.'

Councillor Nick Forbes, Newcastle City Council

The panel have also noted that, with the exception of Cornwall, there has been a clear sequencing, or prioritising, of city regions as the initial recipients of devolution.

'If that emphasis on cities continues, and it's largely the big cities with devolution, you will get a two-tier situation.'

Councillor Nick Forbes, Newcastle City Council

‘While the initial rounds of devolution have focused on metro areas such as Greater Manchester, it is worth remembering that the majority of manufacturers are largely based in rural areas – as the County Councils Network notes, 53 per cent of all jobs in manufacturing are in county council areas. The potential benefits of devolution must be available to all parts of the country, ensuring no business gets left behind.’

Engineering Employers’ Federation (EEF)

The focus on city regions risks leaving behind not only non-metropolitan areas, but also the Key Cities group,¹⁰ which have significant economic potential. Some will fall naturally into wider city regions, but others are part of more complex geographies that may require a different model of devolution.

We acknowledge that devolution needs to start somewhere. Reviewing evidence presented, we believe that the commonalities across the existing deals are reflective of this, and to that extent provide a framework of functions and funds ripe for devolution. This should now be built upon and made available to all councils who wish to adopt them, without the need for repeated, protracted negotiations.

The Government must follow through on its commitments of bespoke, locally driven devolution, broadening out from the initial starting focus of cities and growth to meet aspirations across a variety of policy areas and geographies. Expectations have been raised across the country that need now to be followed through with pace.

¹⁰ The Key Cities Group includes: Bath and North East Somerset, Blackpool, Bournemouth, Brighton and Hove, Cambridge, Coventry, Derby, Doncaster, Hull, Kirklees, Milton Keynes, Newport, Norwich, Oxford, Peterborough, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Preston, Southampton, Southend-on-Sea, Stoke-on-Trent, Sunderland, Tees Valley, Wakefield, Wolverhampton, and York.

‘There is a real risk that what we will see is a patchwork of different arrangements in different parts of England. I support the experimentation which the Government is embarking upon, but I think there will come a point where some rationalisation will be required. Let’s have the experiments first.’

Professor Robert Hazell

The devolution agenda must be adopted across all government departments, without ‘no go’ areas of negotiation or policy. We recommend making clear the range of powers available to all local government across the devolved nations, to call down from to suit the particular requirements of the authority concerned.

A new London settlement

If we are to avoid a ‘one-size fits all’ scenario, devolution to local government must be viewed as a process, consisting of multiple deals and iterative arrangements for each area. London has made requests for increased autonomy in recent years that, to some extent, have been realised. Consideration must be given now to a further devolution deal for London. The report of the London Housing Commission, also chaired by Lord Kerslake, set out a radical set of proposals to tackle London’s current housing crisis.¹¹ Addressing this issue is essential if London is to remain competitive and the needs of ordinary Londoners are to be met.

‘It’s true that if you compare the powers that London has to other city regions in England, they’re considerable, but if you compare London to other international cities, it’s pretty risible.’

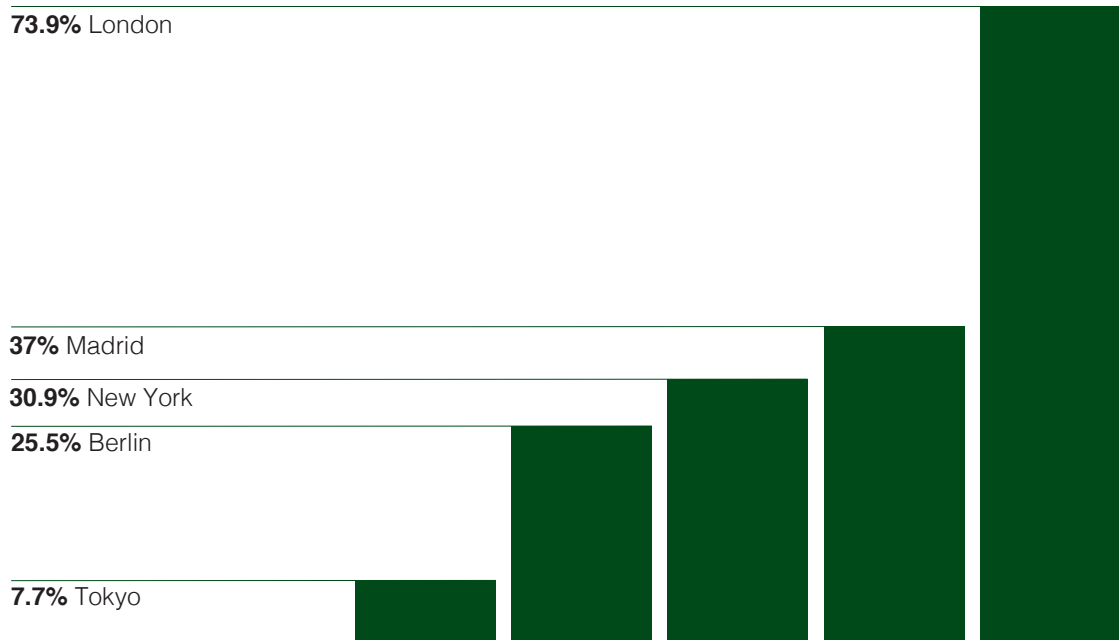
Ben Rogers, Centre for London

11 <http://ippr.org/read/building-a-new-deal-for-london-final-report-of-the-london-housing-commission#>

‘As a borough leader, I approach this very practically and I look at London as a city. I simply ask the question, ‘Do we have the tools that we can tackle the challenges of the city with, and, at the same time, capitalise on the opportunities on the city such that it can fulfil its potential?’ The answer to that question has to be, ‘At the current time we do not’. Therefore devolution isn’t something that’s simply a nice academic exercise. It’s something which is very real and lived.’

Councillor Claire Kober, Haringey Council

% of funding received from central state



Governance

‘The assumption is that a single source of high-profile, elected accountability will make devolved arrangements more democratic. This may be the case in many, or even most, areas. But without knowing the plans for devolution in every area, it is impossible to stipulate a one-size-fits-all governance solution. We think that local areas should be freer to pursue negotiations on governance in which the election of a mayor is one of a number of options.’

Centre for Public Scrutiny

Government has made clear that the adoption of a directly elected mayor is required if areas are to obtain the maximum level of powers and functions being made available to them. The Secretary of State gave evidence to this inquiry outlining reasoning on this: the Government is concerned with both international representation and a level of accountability that is reflective of the powers being devolved. This provides useful clarity to the sector on the Government’s position.

‘I think our great cities operate in a network of big cities around the world and I think to have the advantages of the clarity of the leadership is important for those big cities. The second thing I think is the level of ambition of the deal, in terms of the transfer of power from ministers.’

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP

The overwhelming consensus of the evidence presented to us is that a directly elected mayor is not the only model of effective accountability, and that it should be for local areas to decide appropriate governance arrangements. Alongside this bottom-up approach, the Government must also be clearer about what are the different levels of devolution available with and without a mayor.

Fiscal devolution and sustainable funding

‘One of my concerns is that we can’t think of devolution being done on a shoestring. There can’t just be transfers of power, it also has to be transfer of capacity and resources.’

Councillor Anne Western, Derbyshire County Council

The clear consensus put to this panel is that devolution must bring with it more fiscal autonomy if it is to be a successful, sustainable venture. A far greater proportion of public funds needs to be controlled locally and made subject to local democratic direction. Local government requires access to all possible financial tools if it is to build resilient and prosperous communities.

‘It feels like we’re in the grip of forces going in opposite directions. Devolution is moving ahead, it’s a big opportunity, but our budgets are being squeezed tightly to the point that some services are under real pressure, social care in particular. I’m not sure the Government understands those two things are linked. If you want a healthy, strong, vibrant economy, you have to tackle some of the social and inequality issues that prevent people developing their skills and getting good jobs and contributing to the economy.’

Councillor Anne Western, Derbyshire County Council

‘French local government raises three times more of its finance locally than English local government. If you go to places like Sweden, it’s 12 times more than we do. We’re in that ‘who pays the piper calls the tune’ space. For devolution to mean anything, it needs to be fiscal devolution as well.’

Lord Porter, Local Government Association

In addition to the Government’s deal-based approach, further, wide-spread fiscal reform is required. The recent move to devolve 100 per cent of business rate retention in England by 2020 marks the type of progress this panel deems necessary to effect change, but it must be seen as the first step of many. Over-reliance on business rate retention as the sole incentive for councils to take on greater levels of accountability is problematic, and will not provide enough of a foundation on which to base further devolution: there needs to be a more radical solution that challenges some of the current fiscal orthodoxy.

‘In terms of future funding, having business rates is a bit of a problem for us because we get more than we give. We receive more back from the Government than we pay in business rates. Clearly we don’t have a high tax base. We have a low wage economy with not many big businesses. There are problems there, and it was made clear to us in our devolution deal that we wouldn’t get fiscal powers at this stage.’

Councillor John Pollard, Cornwall Council

The panel recommends implementing the following fiscal reforms for local government in England, and assert that these principles may also be appropriate for consideration by the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- reform and control over council tax and business rates, including the ability to set charges locally
- exploring the devolution of other property taxes, for example the proposed retention of stamp duty as set out in the London Finance and London Housing Commission reports
- releasing local authorities from the current caps on borrowing for new housing investment
- freedom to introduce new fees and charges where there is local democratic consensus
- freedom to set locally charges that are currently set nationally, for example planning fees
- the devolution of those specific areas of funding that, through the deals, have been identified as 'devo-ready', for example skills and transport funding.

Equalisation

All participants were in agreement that financial autonomy comes alongside, not in replacement of, the continuation of equalisation. The establishment of an effective needs-based formula that facilitates the redistribution of baseline funding to local government is right and proper. The panel welcomes Government's commitment to retaining an equalisation approach. The mechanics of this, in light of the move to fully devolve business rate retention, must be designed with local government partners with the support of an independent advisory body.

‘If the alternative is between local government becoming more mature, working out a system that works for local government designed by local government, or the option we have now is somebody in London working out what’s best for local government, leaders around the country would knock the door down. The Leader of Westminster cannot keep all the business rates. She’ll know the price of devolution is that some of that goes down to Cornwall.’

Lord Porter, Local Government Association

Enshrining devolution

In order to build on the progress being made, participants argued that further enshrinement of devolution to local government is necessary. We concur with this; whilst we cannot bind any future parliament to devolving powers and functions, the compacted effect of decades of centralisation must be formally undone. The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 provides a positive starting point.

The European Charter on Local Self-Government,¹² to which the UK has committed, offers a foundation of principles on which to build. There needs to be a new legal basis for the independence of local government; a clearer constitutional footing made through primary legislation that, as much as possible, constitutes an enforceable legal embodiment of the principle of subsidiarity. The panel recommends transposing the European Charter on Local Self-Government into primary legislation.

¹² This has been adopted by the Congress of the Council of Europe, a body not to be confused with the Council of the European Union (the Council of Europe is separate from the European Union). The charter is a formal convention of the Council of Europe and commits the participating parties to applying basic rules guaranteeing the political, administrative and financial independence of local government: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/122>

In addition to this, we feel that a strong mechanism that safeguards against the revocation of devolved powers, both to local government and the national administrations, should be put in place. We have witnessed the ratcheting effect of increased centralisation over a considerable period of time. Current parliamentary debate, such as that concerning the Housing and Planning Bill, serves to highlight that despite the welcome progress made through the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act, moves toward further centralisation still continue. We recommend that Parliament enshrines its commitment to devolution by building in greater safeguards against centralism. For example, through the requirement of a 'super majority' if Parliament is to pass any bill that enacts significant recentralisation.

Next steps for local government

Devolution to councils in England is gaining momentum, but we are at the start of this journey, and there is an onus on local government to be bolder and more forthcoming in setting its own vision for devolution. The panel invites local government to be much clearer in its aspirations and set for itself the long-term vision for devolution.

Alongside this vision, councils must also enact a corresponding step-change in their way of working, rising to the greater levels of expectation placed upon them by both the Government and the electorate alike. A consequence of the current, over-centralised arrangements has been the emergence of a dependency culture, with local government rehearsed in looking to Westminster for permission. Authorities across the country now have the opportunity to step out of this dynamic and exhibit the necessary technical and political skill required for this new, more complex role.

Similarly, councils have long made the case that centralisation has brought with it a democratic disengagement, with Westminster far removed from the lives of those closer to the town hall. In taking on devolved powers, the responsibility to reverse this falls in much greater part to local government. New structures and governance models will not be enough on their own to build a new relationship with citizens. Local government must seek to devolve further, applying the principle of subsidiarity to its own workings as much as possible.

‘In a nation of some 48 million electors, only a quarter benefit from having a ‘hyper-local’ council to tackle local issues and take action on locally determined priorities. Devolution provides a golden opportunity to empower local democracy, through devolution deals and other means, and extend decision making and service delivery to the community level to achieve improved outcomes and better value for money.’

National Association of Local Councils

Central powers in the UK and intra-UK relations

The widespread aspirations for devolution across the country have been voiced through the course of this inquiry, with the number of deals achieved to date representing only a small proportion of this. In order to facilitate meaningful change across the widest geography, the Civil Service must show it is better able and prepared to progress devolution at a faster rate. It is our recommendation that the Government takes steps to ensure this is the case by the next General Election.

We heard that successful devolution cannot happen without appropriate reform across all of the UK Civil Service, as well local government. The necessary change was articulated on two levels. Firstly, in a change of relationship: central and local must move toward a dynamic of equal partners, delivering together through a collaborative approach. Secondly, in function: there will come a 'tipping' point for departments when the delivery of services sits predominantly in the regions, and Whitehall will be better enabled to play an agile, more strategic role.

'One of the best things that the Government can offer is the ability for people to work in local government on secondments, maybe a couple of years, to learn how life is like outside of the immediate civil service. I've got a few people in my authority who have previously worked in central government. That's been immensely valuable to us. Similar skills being shared with civil servants in local government would also be valuable.'

Councillor Anne Western, Derbyshire County Council

‘The people of the UK will not tolerate more onerous bureaucracy placed on them. As powers are devolved from Whitehall and Westminster this will need to be reflected in a shrinking of their role and influence. There should be no duplication but a new more transparent and open culture of sharing data and devolving power and responsibility to the local level. Whitehall must move from a controlling to an enabling model of working.’

New Local Government Network

These changes will occur incrementally, and progress should be monitored. The annual report to Parliament on devolution, brought about through the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act, already requires that Government report on progress to date. This report should also include a standing item on implications for Civil Service reform.

It also struck the panel that for devolution to be a success, public perceptions on the role of government ministers must shift accordingly. Responsibility will lie with politicians and public servants across all tiers of government to establish a new understanding of accountability, with citizens looking to local leadership first, and central government second.

‘It’s going to require the public more than anyone else to understand that when a service goes wrong in a particular area, it’s not the responsibility of a member of parliament or a secretary of state.’

Lord Porter, Local Government Association

Wider constitutional and democratic reform

‘Our constitutional problems must not be regarded as separate and discrete. They are in fact inter-connected.’

Professor Vernon Bogdanor

Over the course of this inquiry, the evidence presented has touched on a wide range of related constitutional issues, with participants making clear that the interconnected nature of these challenges provides a complex backdrop for the devolution debate. Some have gone so far as to characterise this as a time of ‘constitutional crisis.’¹³

We have heard how measures are being taken to examine some of these challenges. English Votes for English Laws, increased devolution to national administrations and the recent devolution deals in England do indeed prompt greater debate on the constitutional issues we face but, according to participants, these issues are ultimately being addressed ‘incrementally and bilaterally, with no sense of an overall strategy.’¹⁴

It is our view, that to go on tackling these fundamental matters of our constitution separately, or in a piecemeal fashion, is to curb the potential for successful devolution and undermines a strong and cohesive union. We recommend that the wider constitutional considerations linked to devolution are examined collectively, through an appropriate mechanism. This must include a review of the current complex constitutional situation before making recommendations for reform.

‘The lack of coherent common principles informing constitutional measures means that they could unwittingly destabilise our political system and create outcomes intended by no one. A national discussion of the constitutional principles and arrangements for the United Kingdom and our place in the world is therefore overdue.’

Democracy Matters

¹³ Professor Vernon Bogdanor

¹⁴ Professor Jim Gallagher

‘I can see real dangers in the piecemeal approach currently being taken by the UK Government that risks the Union’s stability and cohesion.’

Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM, First Minister of Wales

There was an alternative view presented. Some participants highlighted that the pragmatism and ‘getting on with it’ approach to devolution that has characterised the early part of this Parliament has yielded a pace of change and progress that would not have manifested if the debate had been led by an academic exercise in constitutional consideration. This position is acknowledged by the panel, and has credibility. However, we are clear in our view that these two approaches to devolution, both the practical, ongoing implementation of new models and the consideration of our interconnected constitutional challenges, can and indeed must now happen in tandem if momentum is to be maintained. The risk is that change made through one avenue and not the other may well suffer a lack of permanence or suitability, further exacerbating tensions in the Union, compromising our collective identity.

A nation-wide conversation

The panel engaged in much discussion as to what constitutes an appropriate mechanism for such an approach. Consideration was given to a Constitutional Convention, with both the Scottish Constitutional Convention and the Irish Convention presented to the panel as examples on how this type of model could work. Similarly, the recent Citizen Juries of both North Yorkshire and Hampshire and the Isle of Wight¹⁵ were highlighted as case studies on citizen involvement in the examination of democratic and constitutional issues.

There were differing views across the panel regarding these mechanisms. This was particularly the case in relation to a Constitutional Convention, with concerns being raised around the practicalities of such a method. Where consensus was found, was not only in the need to look at our constitutional considerations collectively, but also in the need to involve citizens in the debate.

The Scottish Referendum provided a powerful reminder as to the level of public participation and democratic engagement that can be leveraged when citizens are presented with matters of identity, representation and place.

15 Electoral Reform Society

It also serves to highlight the democratic deficit that characterises the wider conversation on devolution, and the challenge of legitimacy this poses. Whilst, ultimately, politicians are mandated to make decisions regarding these issues, an inclusive conversation, that invites people to participate and make clear their views on our constitutional identity should characterise the debate going forward. We recommend that the Government embarks upon a nation-wide, citizen-based conversation to include the electorate in matters relating to our constitutional identity.

‘Better devolution depends on citizens being able to take part in the decisions that govern their lives, as well as in the constitutional arrangements which make it easier for them to do so.’

Democracy Matters

We feel clear that this should be a modern, dynamic initiative. In the digital age, there is great potential to engage citizens of all ages and backgrounds on these pertinent issues. Far from a dry, academic affair, we propose this conversation be a fresh consideration of our national identity; an opportunity for individuals of all ages and backgrounds to give voice to our shared aspirations, articulate pride in our places and highlight the freedoms that make them successful.

‘The recent Irish Constitutional Convention, which ran from 2012 to 2014, provides a useful model. The convention included a two-thirds majority of ordinary citizens selected to be representative of the population as a whole, with the remainder made up from politicians nominated by their parties in proportion to their party’s representation in the legislature. The Irish convention was successful at fostering a deliberative environment to develop proposals for constitutional reform and achieving buy-in from political parties.’

Unlock Democracy

Further constitutional considerations

The panel revisited and debated the question of electoral reform, noting the evidence that current arrangements ‘exacerbates the West Lothian Question, divides England from Scotland, and increases the likelihood of separatism’.¹⁶

Percentage of seats in alternative parliaments¹⁷

Party	First past the post seats	List PR seats
Conservatives	331	242
Labour	232	208
Liberal Democrats	8	47
UKIP	1	80
Greens	1	20
SNP	56	30
Plaid Cymru	3	5

Please note the data does not include Northern Ireland

A significant number of the panel support proportional representation for central and local government, but there is not a unanimous view. Several different electoral systems are already used within the devolved nations.

	Local elections	Assembly / Parliament	General Election	European Election
England	First past the post	(London Mayor: supplementary vote system London Assembly: additional member system)	First past the post	Party list
Scotland	Single transferable vote	Additional member system	First past the post	Party list
Wales	First past the post	Additional member system	First past the post	Party list
Northern Ireland	Single transferable vote	Single transferable vote	First past the post	Party list

¹⁶ Professor Vernon Bogdanor

¹⁷ <http://electoral-reform.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/publication/2015%20General%20Election%20Report%20web.pdf>

The majority view is that there should be local choice for the local election system in England, with consideration given to appropriate safeguards around turnout should areas wish undertake a referendum to bring about local electoral reform. Proportional representation at a national level, as well as the question of whether to establish a new national voting age of 16, are both matters that the panel feel would be appropriate to reference in the nation-wide conversation.

Reform of the House of Lords was also considered in relation to better devolution. The key issue for the panel was to be clear on the purpose of the House of Lords from which the best organisational form should follow.

The panel noted with interest presentation of international examples where secondary chambers provide an integrating function for devolved administration. The role of the House of Lords, and in particular its potential to play an integrating function for the Union, is also a matter that the electorate may wish to engage in as part of a nation-wide conversation.

‘I can think of only one second chamber in the world that performs an effective integrating function, and that is in Germany. It is the state governments that are represented directly and, as you know, the functional model is that each government has so many seats. They aren’t given to specific individuals. For example, they would send their transport minister and officials to represent them in a transport debate, their education team for an education debate. It is really effective in integrating the state governments with the federal government.’

Professor Robert Hazell

Before looking to reform the House of Lords, it is necessary to decide what its purpose should be. In a number of other bicameral systems the second chamber plays a role representing the sub-national states, as well as providing scrutiny and oversight.

In Germany, the Bundesrat represents the 16 federal states at a national level, while the Bundestag is formed of directly elected representatives. The Bundesrat is subordinate to the Bundestag but must scrutinise and approve constitutional changes and all legislation that affects the states. Members of the Bundesrat are delegated by the state governments, rather than elected. A delegation from each state will consist of the minister-president or mayor and other cabinet ministers. Presidency of the Bundesrat rotates annually among the minister-presidents of the states. The political composition of the Bundesrat is determined by the ruling party or coalition of each state legislature.

Spain operates a highly devolved, asymmetric system in which sovereignty remains with the nation, but the autonomous communities exercise a constitutional right to self-government. Its second chamber, the Senado, has a de facto territorial role. Although the majority of its 266 members are directly elected on four-year terms, 58 are appointed by the legislative assembly of each of the autonomous communities. The number of senators is tied to the population size of the province. As well as its role in legislative scrutiny, the Senado holds some exclusive powers on local government and the appointment of constitutional judges.

Conclusion and recommendations

Now is the time for a higher ambition for devolution from all levels of government. We have made progress, but the United Kingdom must now push past piecemeal devolutionary arrangements and go further in its aspirations for reform. The devolution of powers and the broader governance considerations that sit across the United Kingdom should be examined and tackled together to bring about the necessary shift that leads to long term stability.

We make the following recommendations to bring about such reform:

Devolved nations

1. The respective size of the nations in the UK renders federalism, in its full or purest form, impracticable and unstable. An asymmetrical arrangement is the price we pay for a cohesive Union. The panel acknowledges that a more federal arrangement may emerge as devolution progresses.
2. The panel recommends establishing a set of principles that unite the citizens of the UK, on the basis of it being a voluntary union of nations.
3. Consensus should now be established as to what functions remain at a UK level through a reserved powers model. Individual nations should be free to pursue those functions agreed as available to them at a rate that is reflective of local will and circumstance.
4. Meaningful fiscal devolution to national administrations must go alongside devolution of functions, whilst maintaining a single UK market.

Local government

5. The devolution agenda must be adopted across all government departments, without 'no go' areas of negotiation or policy. We recommend making a range of powers available to all local authorities to call down from to suit the particular requirements of the authority concerned.
6. Consideration must now be given to further devolution to London.
7. Directly-elected mayors, whilst valid, are not the only model of accountability. Local areas should have greater freedom to determine appropriate governance arrangements for devolution.

8. Government should set clearer ground rules to guide devolution planning and proposals, without abandoning the 'locally-led' approach. For example, what levels of devolution can be obtained with and without a mayor.
9. Meaningful fiscal devolution to local government must be realised, alongside an independent and effective equalisation mechanism.
10. There needs to be a new legal basis for the independence of local government, made through primary legislation. Parliament should enshrine its commitment to devolution by building in greater safeguards against centralism.
11. The panel invites local authorities to be clear in their aspirations and set for themselves the long-term vision for devolution, enacting a 'step-change' in its way of working.

Central powers in the UK and intra-UK relations

12. The Civil Service should demonstrate that it is better able and prepared to progress devolution at a faster rate, in order to facilitate meaningful progress across the whole country by the next general election.
13. Better devolution cannot happen without appropriate reform across all of the UK Civil Service, as well as local government. The annual progress report to Parliament on devolution report should include a standing item on implications for Whitehall reform.

Wider constitutional and democratic reform

14. The wider constitutional considerations linked to devolution need to be examined collectively, through an appropriate mechanism. We recommend that the Government embarks upon a nationwide, citizen-based conversation to include the electorate in matters relating to our constitutional identity.
15. Local authorities should be permitted to undertake a referendum to determine the preferred voting method for their area.

Appendices

Panel members

Lord Kerslake
Crossbench (Chair)

Graham Allen MP
Labour

Dame Kate Barker

Lady Victoria Borwick MP
Conservative

Bishop of Derby

Baroness Janke
Liberal Democrat

Jason Kitcat
Green

Lord Maclennan
Liberal Democrat

Lord Norton
Conservative

Gavin Robinson MP
DUP

Lord Wigley
Plaid Cymru

APPG on Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution in the UK

The APPG on Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution in the UK was established in 2014 to provide cross-party parliamentary space for an open discussion on the need for a UK-wide settlement.

Its qualifying officers are Lord Foulkes of Cumnock, Lord Purvis of Tweed, Andrew Rosindell MP and Catherine West MP. The Local Government Association provides the secretariat.

In March 2015 the Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution APPG published 'A Parliament for Reform 2015-20', a legacy paper setting out the constitutional issues which need to be addressed in the new Parliament. This inquiry builds on the framework set out in the legacy paper.

Secretariat

The Local Government Association provided secretariat services to the inquiry. For more information please contact:
publicaffairs.team@local.gov.uk
or 020 7664 3060.

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence to the inquiry. Transcripts can be viewed on the inquiry's webpage: www.local.gov.uk/all-party-parliamentary-group

Tuesday 8 September 2015

Rt Hon Gordon Brown, former Prime Minister of the UK

Professor Jim Gallagher, Associate Member of Nuffield College, and **Professor Robert Hazell**, Professor of Government and Head of the Constitution Unit

Monday 30 November 2015

Lord Porter, LGA Chairman, **Cllr Nick Forbes**, Leader of Newcastle City Council, **Councillor John Pollard**, Leader of Cornwall Council, and **Councillor Anne Western**, Leader of Derbyshire County Council

Councillor Claire Kober, Leader of the London Borough of Haringey, **Sir Edward Lister**, Deputy Mayor of London and Chief of Staff to the Mayor of London, **Ben Rogers**, Director of the Centre for London, and Professor **Tony Travers**, LSE Department of Government and LSE London

Monday 7 December 2015

Caroline Abrahams, Director of Age UK, **Matthew Fell**, Chief of Staff at the CBI, **Lisa McElherron**, Head of Public Affairs at the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Organisations, and **Martin McTague**, National Policy Vice-Chairman at the Federation of Small Businesses

Professor Vernon Bogdanor, Research Professor at the Institute for Contemporary British History

Monday 18 January 2016

Jon Trickett MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Minister for the Constitutional Convention

Anil Gupta, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, **Derek McCallan**, Northern Ireland Local Government Association, **Steve Thomas** and **Chris Llewelyn**, Welsh Local Government Association

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Published written evidence

Written evidence was received from the following organisations and individuals. It can be viewed on the inquiry's webpage: www.local.gov.uk/all-party-parliamentary-group:

Age UK	Locality
Arts Council	Mile End Institute
Association of Town and City Management	National Association of Local Councils (NALC)
British Parking Association	National Housing Federation
British Retail Consortium (BRC)	New Local Government Network (NLGN)
Business Services Association	NHS Providers
Councillor Candy Atherton	Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)
Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM, First Minister of Wales	Oxfordshire County Council
Centre for Public Scrutiny	RAC
Citizens Advice	Robert Craig
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)	Professor Robert Hazell
County Councils Network (CCN)	Royal Town Planning Institute
Democracy Matters	Scope
EEF	Shanice Lewis-Spencer
Electoral Reform Society (ERS)	Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute (SPERI)
English Democrats	South East England Councils
Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)	UCL Constitution Unit
Institute for Government	Unlock Democracy
Professor Jim Gallagher, Nuffield College	Professor Vernon Bogdanor
Key Cities	Wakefield Council
Laura Darnley	Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)
Local Government Association	Westminster City Council.

All-Party Parliamentary Group on
Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution
in the United Kingdom

House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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