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ENGLAND

Problems of representation in a time of crisis



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Manuscript

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Editorial

The politics of Englishness: the stark relief of Brexit

England is the only nation in the British Isles without its own representative body. It is also a nation to whom its citizens must qualify their patriotism, where the patriotism of the other nations is celebrated and encouraged. "Englishness" has in many ways been branded somehow antithetical to progressive politics, and to be a patriotic Englishman is seen as an anachronism. These dimensions have added fuel to the fire for many parts of England both in the North and in the South, something which unites an otherwise often divided nation. In this respect Brexit infiltrated an edition of British Politics Review that was intended to be exclusively about England and Englishness – which shows how the issue of Brexit has come to redefine (eclipse?) contemporary British politics.

That being said in this month's edition of BPR the contributing authors assess a range of issues concerning England, and the politics of Englishness, with Brexit playing a central theme. What is clearly apparent is that the politics of England and Englishness is multifaceted and complex, and not the insular-closed-minded-nativism that it is often characterised as. Christopher Bryant posits that in fact there are significant cosmopolitan dimensions to Englishness and that there is a latent progressive Englishness, one that is open to the world and new ideas. These ideas are echoed by John Denham who suggests that the Labour party needs to engage with English patriotism in order to ensure that an English Labour movement remains relevant and representative, and able to bridge the gap between the older working class and the more socially liberal university graduates. He suggests the formation of an English Parliament in a federalised UK, which along with other aspects, should bring a divided nation together, and ensure the Union doesn't disintegrate. In Paul Stott's interview with UKIP councillor Kevin Sills there are aspects of the more patriotic and nationalist Englishness on show, and criticisms of mainstream political parties' representation of the English working class, particularly Labour. There are also agreements in that an English Parliament is essential to warding off further fissures in how united the United Kingdom really is. Again, there are visible divides in a complex politics of England, but there are avenues to overcome these challenges. Furthermore, Judith Blake's article details some of the ways in which English local authorities are putting forward practical plans to build infrastructure and actually materialise some of the wishes of the other authors. Andrew Mycock's article then brings many of these aspects together in accessing 'Englishness' as a unique political 'voice' that has both national and regional dimensions. He also suggests that the ad-hoc and piecemeal approach that has been taken to devolution is unsatisfactory in dealing with the challenges that both England and the Union face, but that regional and local politics will become more contested.

The articles in this edition of BPR take different perspectives on a prescient and, in fact, emerging debate about what a politics of England will look like in the shadow of the ground shaking events of the 23rd June 2016. What happens to England in terms of the formation of its own parliament and decentralisation of local government, and what happens to the Union with regards to federalism, the authors suggest have potential to heal some of the divisions that were acutely exposed after the referendum on EU membership. The extent to which this occurs, or works, only time will tell.

For this first edition of British Politics Review in 2017 – which is also the first edition to appear in a digital format only – we greet our readers with a fresh new design for our journal, courtesy of British Politics Society-member Henrik Stokken.

Henry Allen & Atle L. Wold (editors)

Cosmopolitan England before and after the Vote to Leave the European Union

by Christopher Bryant

Back in 2003 I published an outline of four constructions of England: Anglo-British England, Little England, English England and Cosmopolitan England. Each had its light and dark sides. Each also had considerable currency. Cosmopolitan England might be thought to constitute the future, I suggested, but the uneven cosmopolitisation of the regions would continue to complicate the collective representation of England. I enlarged on this in *The Nations of Britain* (Oxford UP, 2006). I still did not try to quantify the relative popular attachment to each of these four versions of England but I did argue that the direction of travel was towards a Cosmopolitan England. Such an England is, I said, 'outward-looking and contemporary in its orientation. It acknowledges not just the diversification of the people – particularly that legacy of the Empire, citizens (whose forebears are) of black or Asian origin – but also the enrichment of its economy and culture from sources abroad' including Europe, 'whether carried by immigrants or transmitted by trade or the media'. I also discussed some of the problems a cosmopolitan England faced and thought them surmountable whilst also acknowledging that the gap between booming London and the provinces could become too great. I further ventured that the future of a cosmopolitan Britain 'must lie within the European Union'. I did not anticipate the scale of Polish and other eastern European immigration to Britain after the 2004 enlargement of the European Union. In later writings I further considered a cosmopolitan England at ease with its diversity whilst accepting that an England ill at ease with it was also possible.

Many writers on cosmopolitanism in the last decade have additionally associated it with social liberalism. In May 2015, for example, a year before the referendum on membership of the European Union, Policy Network published *Britain's Cosmopolitan Future*. For its author, Jeremy Cliffe of *The Economist*, 'cosmopolitan' best sums up such major trends as a comfortable accommodation of ethnic diversity, the socially liberal live-and-let-live attitudes of young Britons, and the new swagger of not just global city London but northern cities too such as Manchester and Leeds. He also argued that the vast expansion of the university educated in the UK from about 5% of the population after World War II to more than 40% of young people now was associated with increasing adoption of internationalist, pro-EU, economically moderate, and pro-immigration values. And then in June 2016, just one year later, England voted to exit the European Union by 53.2% to 46.8%.

This will not have come as a surprise to Will Jennings and Gerry Stoker. Writing before the referendum, they used British Election Studies survey data on the 2015 general election campaign to announce 'The Bifurcation of Politics: Two Englands' (*Political Quarterly*, 2016). Data on fifty cosmopolitan constituencies of which Cambridge was their prime example suggested 'an Eng-

land that is global in outlook; relatively positive about the EU; pro-immigration; comfortable with more rights and respect for women, ethnic communities and gays and lesbians; and fundamentally future oriented.' By contrast, data on 'backwaters' constituencies of which Clacton, an east coast resort fallen on hard times, was their prime example, pointed to 'an England that is inward looking, relatively negative about the European Union and immigration, worried by the emergence of new rights for minorities and prone to embracing nostalgia'. Their methodology polarised by omitting the 433 English constituencies that were neither clearly cosmopolitan nor clearly backwater. Given that referendums polarise too, Jennings and Stoker's findings do throw light on the different profiles of remainers and leavers. On referendum day and the two days following, Lord Ashcroft Polls (June, 2016) surveyed 12,369 voters by telephone or online across the United Kingdom, 10,479 of them in England. For the context and summary findings see Michael Ashcroft and Kevin Culwick, *Well You Did Ask, Brightback*, 2016. I have sometimes used the full data set which is accessible online. The English electorate was 84% of that of the UK. Whenever possible I have used data on England only. When not possible I have always signalled it. High confidence in the Lord Ashcroft poll findings is justified because the sample was more than five times larger than that of most political opinion polls and its remain/leave percentages for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

were the same as those in the referendum itself.

Across the UK those aged 65+ voted 60% leave. With each ten-



The will of older citizens prevailed because they outnumbered younger citizens. Those aged 45+ cast 65% of all the votes.

year age cohort from 64 down the leave percentage declined and for those aged 18-24 it was just 27%. The cross-over was at 45-46. The leave vote for the 45-64 cohort was 56% compared with 46% for the 35-44 cohort. The will of older citizens prevailed because they outnumbered younger citizens. Those aged 45+ cast 65% of all the votes. (The voter registration and turnout rates of older citizens was also known to be higher.) 58% of Britons who voted Conservative in the 2015 General Election voted leave; 63% of those who voted Labour voted remain. In terms of issues those who were more concerned about economic matters voted remain; those whose prime concerns were immigration, border controls and sovereignty voted leave. Ashcroft and Culwick made much of their age-cohort findings and so has the press. This is not surprising because it suggests the old swung a vote whose consequences the young will have to live with for longer.

Similar UK stories can be told with respect to 'social grade' (sic) and education. 57% of professionals and managers voted remain. 51% of white-collar workers voted leave as did nearly 64% of blue-collar workers and those on state benefits. But professionals and managers are a minority. Similarly 64% of those with higher degrees and 57% of those with first degrees and further

education qualifications voted remain while 61% of those with no education beyond secondary school voted leave. But graduates are also a minority. Most workers are still earning less in real terms than before the banking crisis, while the incomes of top company bosses have soared. The new Conservative prime-minister, Teresa May, appears to acknowledge this in the concern she declares for those 'just about managing' (dubbed 'the jams' by the press). For them there has been no economic recovery and optimism is in short supply.

London was the only region to vote remain. According to the Greater London Authority its population exceeded 8.6 million in 2015. At the time of the 2011 census only 45% of the population was white British and there were over fifty non-indigenous communities with a population over 10,000. London has a claim to be the most ethnically diverse city in the world. It is also where a significant proportion of the students of England's highly-regarded provincial universities head on graduation. The perceived career prospects there are attractive enough to outweigh the huge lack of affordable housing.

The ethnic and social diversity adds to the perception that London is where things happen and where opportunities abound. It is cosmopolitan and confident. London's travel to work area is larger than Greater London and a number of constituencies around London also voted remain.

What other English cities offer a credible prospect of a vibrant future? The one suggested most often is Manchester. The city of Manchester has tightly drawn boundaries and is just one of the ten metropolitan boroughs of Greater Manchester. The latter is leading the way in assuming powers and budget responsibilities devolved from central government. It has the biggest concentration of banking, broadcasting, arts and higher education outside London. It will elect a mayor this year with many of the powers and responsibilities of the mayor of (Greater) London. The Labour controlled City of Manchester voted remain as did the Conservative Trafford to its west and Stockport with no party in overall control to its east. In ethnic and social terms Manchester is a cosmopolitan city-region mostly at ease with itself (the borough of Oldham with unusually high ethnic residential separation is the main exception). There is widespread optimism about its future and Greater Manchester's current population of 2.55 million is set to grow further according to the Office of National Statistics.

Lord Ashcroft Polls data points to the possible predominance of an English citizenry comfortable with a cosmopolitan England sometime in the future. Of course the data does not throw light on the 28% of the UK electorate who did not vote, citizens who were not registered to vote and residents who are not UK citizens but who nevertheless are part of the life of England and its localities. Even so it is food for thought. UK voters were asked whether they thought a number of things were a force for good, a mixed blessing, or a force for ill. 71% of remain voters and 47% of all voters thought multiculturalism a force for good. Similarly 68% of remain voters and 46% of all voters thought social liberalism a force for good, 60 of remain voters and 46% of all voters

thought the same about feminism, and 62% of remain voters and 57% of all voters said the same about the green movement. Most strikingly of all, 79% of remain voters and 36% of all voters thought immigration a force for good. Given that those aged 44 and younger voted remain more than leave, there is the possibility their views will come to predominate over time.

Those with higher and further education qualifications and those in professional and managerial occupation also voted remain more than leave. Even with no further expansion of post-secondary school education the proportion of the total population with higher and further education qualifications can only increase. The proportion of the population in professional and managerial occupation may also increase. None of this guarantees that a cosmopolitan

outlook will come to prevail across the whole population but it does suggest it is a real possibility. But were it to come to pass it does not necessarily mean that there would be a strong demand for a return to the European Union. Who knows what place in the world Britain, if the union survives, or England if it does not, will have secured in ten or twenty years' time? Who knows whether the European Union, if it survives, will have taken a form more attractive to the English than it has now?



About the author: Christopher G. A. Bryant is Emeritus Professor of Sociology in the University of Salford and a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences.

England: A crisis

England is a country divided, but it can be built as a nation of shared progressive values, led by an English Labour movement, writes John Denham

England was a fractured country well before the 24th June; the tensions that are now widely acknowledged had been developing for many years. A different result would have just left the other half of England feeling they had lost their country. The centre ground of politics is hollowing out – with the social conservative more resistant to change; the radical more open to radicalism; and still others more sceptical about any politicians. Our diverse society is much less genuinely integrated or at ease with itself than we have liked to pretend. New dynamics are at play that require a new politics and a new progressive movement.

The overriding need for social democracy is unchanged. Formed to challenge the unaccountable power of market capitalism, social democracy's historic mission has always been to hold capital to account and bend it to the common good. Unrestrained markets always lead to concentration of wealth, power and influence. While global capitalism is often dynamic and creative it is often also hugely destructive of security, income, communities and human relationships. With greater or lesser success, social democracy has always worked to create an elected majority capable of challenging the failures of markets and the abuse of their power.

Social democracy's base was the organised industrial working class, with its strong institutions and tough-minded collective values of solidarity, contribution and reciprocity. Here voting Labour was not so much a political choice of policy and ideology but a statement of identity. But as the economy has changed the old industrial working class has declined, triggering a crisis of social democracy across Europe. Millions today have never shared the experiences that generated identity with the Labour party. The modern economy creates hugely different lives, stratified by education, privilege, class, geography, ethnicity, faith, age and employment. Sometimes we barely understand our neighbours' lives, let alone sense what we share with those we don't know. And so our bewilderingly diverse society seems hard to unite. Yet, just as all seems lost, new opportunities are opening up.

In response to the insecurity and inequality of global capitalism people are creating new politics of identity; new ways of identifying common interest. The most dynamic political movements are those of nation, people and place. The most successful parties those that have established a relationship with voters on the basis of 'who we are' and 'who stands for me'. It's why the SNP have displaced Labour in Scotland (and why UKIP threatens Labour's base in England), and is one of the reasons for Welsh Labour's relative resilience.

Two generations ago, the Labour movement had little difficulty

with patriotism (though Orwell said that English intellectuals were the only ones ashamed of their own country). More recently and disastrously, the left has treated national identity politics with suspicion. In doing so, it has let the populist right set the agenda. There are dangers in right wing populism, but the turn towards nation, people and place is not created by the right. It is a spontaneous response to globalisation. It is also the left's best chance of creating a new, collectivist, popular base for social democracy. National identity reaches across social gulfs. We share deep attachment, across communities and class, to where we live. The left's politics need to be the politics of progressive patriotism, a politics that brings people together, not a bitter politics of division and fear.

The steady emergence of English identity is becoming politicised as voters distinguish English interests from those of the UK. The 2015 general election saw four different national elections take place, with different issues in play and different parties emerging successful. For the first time a distinct English issue – the so called SNP threat – became a talking point for millions of English voters and may have tipped the balance in key seats.

In the EU referendum, those feeling most intensely English were far more likely to have supported Leave.

These English interests won't go away

but will intensify as the diverging interests of different parts of the UK become more apparent over the coming months and years. Scotland wants to be in the EU and (possibly) out of the Union. England – whether we like it or not – wants to be out of the EU and (probably) in the Union. Scotland wants open borders, England clearly doesn't. In these circumstances, who speaks for England and who for the UK in the Brexit process?

The separateness of the Scottish and English (and Welsh and Northern Irish) political debates will rekindle resentment that English voters cannot elect representatives to determine domestic policy as other UK voters do. Pure electoral calculations – it is easier to win a Labour majority in England than in the UK, yet UKIP may steal our base – should focus Labour attention on England like never before.

England can be built as a nation of shared progressive values; with a powerful story of how we came to be here and what we are building together. At the heart of our national story would be the need to challenge capital to meet the common good. But to do so, we need to create the democratic institutions of England and create an English Labour movement that can live up to this moment of opportunity.

A distinct, progressive and patriotic Englishness cannot mature

A different result would have just left the other half of England feeling they had lost their country.

while there are no democratic forums or systems of democratic government to provide the focus and crucible of debate. An English parliament – whether directly elected, part of Westminster or some form of super EVEL – is now an essential Labour movement demand. English devolution is also critical to counteract London centric politics and should be established as a right, not a whim of Westminster government. While we need to devolve within the English nation, only a federal constitution holds any hope of holding the Union together.

An English Labour movement must lead the drive for constitutional change. But it must also be equipped to build a progressive, patriotic nation. English identity is on the rise, but its form is far from settled. It can sometimes be seen as ethnic and exclusive, sometimes civic and inclusive. It's often a 'conditional' civic identity – anyone can belong as long as you play by the rules. For most people it is and has always been one of several identities – regional, British, ethnic or faith.

National identities are created, not discovered, and the progressive patriotic Englishness we need is not yet fully formed. English Labour has to be a vehicle for nation-building; a place where the common ground can be found to define the sense of fairness that underpins society, share the need to hold the powerful to account, and work together to defend our ancient and recent rights.

Is there the sufficient common ground in our divided country? Yes, if we are prepared to look for it. We can find it in our tra-

ditions of freedom and our commitment to voluntary action; our instincts to support those most in need at the same time as we reward contribution; and our belief in strong communities with obligations to each other. We can find it in our belief that markets can be challenged to tackle inequalities of wealth and power. We can find support for diversity so long as we respect the limits of rapid change.

As we survey our divided nation, and our divided party, Labour needs a new vehicle for progressive patriotic politics. An English Labour movement could fill that gap.



About the author: John Denham is the director of the Centre for English Identity and Politics, and the Southern Policy Centre. He is a former Labour MP and cabinet minister.

Englishness and Brexit

“There is a forgotten, nay almost forbidden word, which means more to me than any other. That word is England.” - Winston Churchill

To what extent did Englishness, and English voters, determine the Brexit vote? Historically, England has lacked a distinct political expression. Irish republicanism, and both Scottish and Welsh nationalism have long political histories. Each possesses a distinct political strategy, with elected representatives who have gained office in devolved assemblies this century. In the case of Scotland, a potential culmination to campaigning exists via any second independence referendum. English nationalism has no such basis, despite occasional flurries of unease that England is the only constituent part of the United Kingdom without its own parliament. The one attempt at an ‘English’ political party, the English Democrats, is small and peripheral, currently without elected representatives. Despite this unfertile soil, the possibility English nationalism bore fruit on 23 June 2016 is contentious, but not ridiculous. Lord Ashcroft’s polling of referendum voters found those who considered themselves ‘more English than British’, were firmly for Brexit. Those ‘more British than English’ tended to vote Remain – indeed the spectre of a break-up of the UK was raised repeatedly by both the Prime Minister and Scottish nationalists, should Britain vote to leave. How influenced were Leave campaigners by such attitudes, and how important do activists consider England, as an entity, to be?

Interviewing Kevin Sills

Kevin Sills was prominent in the Leave campaign in the English midlands. He left the English Democrats in 2015 to join the UK Independence Party (UKIP).

Who are you and what current political positions do you hold?

I am a UKIP councillor in the town of Desborough, near Kettering in Northamptonshire.

And your political background has been?

I first got involved in the 1990s in the Referendum Party of James Goldsmith, after he sent an anti-EU video to millions of houses. That was hugely expensive, but it worked with me! In 1997 I stood for the National Democrats, a small party that attracted people who were anti-EU, and many who had left fascist parties. I later stood as an independent locally fighting the political establishment – the three main parties. I got 14% of the vote.

Why did you join the English Democrats?

I strongly believe in an English parliament, and after a break from politics could not believe there was finally a party arguing for that. I was pleasantly surprised, there was nice people, they were anti-fascist, the County Chairman was ex-Labour, and I found that refreshing. But eventually they had a vote on whether to campaign that England should be a wholly independent country. I want an English parliament, I don’t want independence, and was uncomfortable staying with the English Democrats. That’s now their staunch position, because the people like me who disagreed, have left. I joined UKIP.

Each part of the UK has some form of nationalist party – the SNP, Plaid Cymru, Sinn Fein, and all have been or are in office. The English Democrats has not reached that level. Why?

If you ask someone in the street what are they, they will probably say English, first. I think it is mainly the media, the political elite – Labour, Tory and the Liberal Democrats, they all seem to be the same to me. Anything mildly patriotic, you are branded a nutcase – people then won’t get involved. The SNP is pushed the other way by the media – it’s OK to be Scottish or Welsh, or Irish, but it’s not OK to be English.

What is Englishness?

We have all heard of mad dogs and Englishmen! We have a good sense of humour, a belief in fair play and a unique character – ingenuity, being brave, we are great explorers – there is a uniqueness which sets us apart from other nations.

At the 2015 general election one potential outcome, given the opinion polling, was a Labour/SNP coalition. How would people have felt about that?

At the time, there was a lot of talk about the SNP holding the balance of power. And they went on to a virtually landslide victory in Scotland. We could have had Scotland in charge of the UK, if they could side with one party or the other in a coalition to exercise the deciding vote – that would have been very dangerous from the UK’s point of view. They would be biased towards Scotland.

Was the question of England or Englishness an issue in the EU referendum? And why did we vote to Leave?

In England, the vote was higher than in the other three countries. There lies the conflict. But it’s about the people – the everyday person in the street. And a referendum is a simple yes or no

vote. People had had enough of the EU. Firstly, the cost of it, it's a very high membership fee. Then the rules and regulations, our laws are overridden by the EU's. And then immigration - freedom of movement. It just seems the working people finally got the chance to vote on something where they would be listened to.

The UKIP leader Paul Nuttall argued in the Stoke Central by-election (2017) that Labour has betrayed the English working class. What does he mean by that?

We can all see Labour is an internationalist party, it is part of the establishment. It is not for the ordinary chap who goes down the pub. If they were for the working man, the first thing they would do is limit immigration and put a points system in. This country over the last 25 years has been saturated with low income workers, so jobs have gone to the wall for English families. The factory and unskilled jobs are filled by Poles and east Europeans. England has taken the brunt of immigration – far more go to England than Northern Ireland or Scotland, vastly so.

What is more important? Having an English parliament, or Britain leaving the EU?

Britain must leave the EU, that's by far the biggest thing since WW2. I think an English parliament is quite important as well, as a Tory MP once said, England is the last country to gain independence from the British Empire. Big countries, small colonies – they all got their independence. Even Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have semi-autonomous parliaments, they can vote on their laws and local issues. England can't. We don't have equal rights. Per head, Scotland and Northern Ireland get more money spent on them, than the English. So, the English poor subsidise the Scots. England is the only part of the former British Empire which today does not have its own Parliament.

Kevin Sills articulates a frustration at the settlement Westminster has reached with the United Kingdom's constituent parts, or in the case of England, not reached. But the organisation most likely to raise these concerns – UKIP – is one with elected representatives in all four corners of the country. It even has an MEP in Scotland. It is not an 'English' party, indeed its name implies the opposite. Whilst Sills articulates English grievances about imbalances in public spending, populist critiques of establishment parties, the media, the EU and migration are part of a wider British (and perhaps international) discourse. This requires us to look again at just who voted for Brexit.

Who Voted to Leave?

Returning to Ashcroft's data, the older a voter was, the more likely they were to vote Leave. The incremental, gradualist nature of the European project did not impress those who voted in the 1975 UK referendum on EEC membership and could assess what they had voted on forty-one years later – the 55-64 and 65+ age groups had the largest majorities for leave. Their judgement of the EU is damning. It may also be that most British of concepts, class, played more of a role in the Brexit vote than realised. Ashcroft's polls suggest two thirds of council and housing association tenants voted to leave. Most significantly "The AB social group (broadly speaking, professionals and managers) were the only social group among whom a majority voted to remain (57%). C1s divided fairly evenly; nearly two thirds of C2DEs (64%) voted to leave the EU." The less you had, the less inclined you were to support the status quo and Remain.

Conclusion

Over time, perhaps more detailed polling data will allow us to determine the extent to which working class voters in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England differ and indeed agree on the referendum. But there is one over-riding piece of evidence which shatters any 'Brexit as English nationalism' thesis. Wales also voted to leave. And as anyone who has attended a Wales v England rugby match in Cardiff can tell you, whatever the Welsh have coursing through their veins, it is certainly not English nationalism.



About the author: Paul Stott teaches at SOAS, University of London and received his PhD from the University of East Anglia in 2015 for the thesis "British Jihadism: The Detail and the Denial." His research areas centre on terrorism, security, Islamism, the political fringe and conspiracy theory. His book on British Jihadism will be published by Routledge in 2018.

Devolution to England

Devolution is a concept primarily used to refer to the delegation of powers from the UK Parliament to the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff and the Northern Ireland Assembly in Belfast. As discussed extensively elsewhere on these pages, England remains the non-existent political entity amongst the constituent parts of the UK, as there is no parliament or regional assemblies serving England. However, the current debate on devolution is also taken all the way to new demands for and city governance within England. The article below, written by Councillor Judith Blake, the Leader of Leeds City Council, reflects precisely this concern.

Despite ongoing uncertainty around the commitment to this agenda within Theresa May's cabinet, calls for greater devolution continue to grow. Let's not forget that June's Brexit vote was in part a call for greater local self-determination. It was not a call for greater centralisation of power in Whitehall.

The devolution agenda must step up a gear in 2017 to answer that challenge. Now more than ever we need local economies to be firing on all cylinders so we can maximise the potential of the UK economy as a whole and enable more people to share in the benefits of growth.

The timing of decisions by Government is crucial. With national government preoccupied with the fallout from Brexit, it will be local government that drives innovation and economic growth in the coming years. It will be local government that brings divided communities together, and reduces inequality by providing much needed jobs and training opportunities. We need the tools to get on and deliver change.

This country remains one of the most centralised in the western world. In recent years more of our public spending has come from central government than any other OECD country except New Zealand. Local authorities still lack much needed control over the taxes that are generated in their area. On average, for every £1 generated locally in taxes, local authorities keep only 9p. The rest goes to the Exchequer.

The impact of that centralised approach on areas like Leeds City Region is profound. 90% of decisions affecting residents and businesses in our region are taken 200 miles away. Civil servants in Whitehall are making decisions on up to £30bn of spending in Leeds City Region every year. The result is significant regional imbalances embedded in the national economy. Transport investment is a prime example - Yorkshire and Humber will receive an average of £250 per person for infrastructure between 2016/17 and 2020/21. That compares to an investment of £1,900 per person during that period in London.

As Chair of the Core Cities Group I believe the importance of cities to the future of the UK has never been more acute. The ten Core Cities alone deliver 25% of the UK economy and are home to 19 million people. However, all our cities under-perform compared to their international rivals. Without giving cities more freedoms and powers that situation will continue.

Core Cities also want to be empowered to deliver more inclusive growth to tackle growing inequalities. That will require much closer integration of economic and social policy with solutions tailored to the particular needs of different communities. From

an economic perspective the RSA Inclusive Growth Commission has suggested that if we could address the inclusivity gap we could also increase GVA by £192bn a year.

I do not want to suggest that the current devolution deals are a silver bullet for our national economy. They are not. But they do represent movement in the right direction and they leave the door open for further devolution negotiations.

Leeds

Leeds is the economic centre of the Leeds City Region, the UK's largest city region economy after London and fastest growing in the North, with an economy worth £60 billion and a population of 3 million people. We know in Leeds City Region that devolution works. In 2012 we secured a wave 1 City Deal, which enabled us to set up the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

In 2014 we secured the largest Growth Deal in the country, which included a £600m gainshare deal. The funding provided via this deal for much needed transport improvements has only recently been matched by other city regions. Local people are beginning to see the benefits of this investment – whether it's new world-class college facilities, better road and rail links, or new affordable housing and development.

In December 2016 West Yorkshire Combined Authority approved a further £64m of local growth funding to deliver new infrastructure schemes across the Leeds City Region. That formed part of the largest package of Local Growth Deal investment anywhere in the country. A further first stage devolution deal was agreed in March 2015. We were disappointed by the scale of the deal - particularly with regard to the lack of housing investment powers. However, it did not diminish our ambition.

The deal was only one of three agreed nationwide at the time. It gave us greater influence over measures to boost growth and jobs in Leeds City Region. It gave us a greater say in strategic transport decisions and new responsibilities for skills. Crucially it left the door open for negotiations on further devolution of powers and funding. We are now actively pursuing further devolution with Government.

One of the strengths to Leeds' case for devolution is that we are already delivering better outcomes for local people than equivalent national schemes. I'd like to give you three examples of what that means in practice. Firstly, we are tackling unemployment. Our Devolved Youth Contract has seen 2,000 young people move into education or employment. In recent years we

have consistently delivered success for 7 out of 10 young people, as opposed to the Government Work Programme's 4 out of 10.

Secondly, we are supporting businesses to grow. Our Business Growth Programme has supported over 360 firms with over £23m funding. This has created over 3,000 jobs across the City Region, including 800 jobs in Leeds. For every £1 of public money spent, £8 of private sector investment has been levered in.

Thirdly, we have kickstarted development in our Enterprise Zone – we've funded a new Park and Ride site and provided grants to businesses in our Enterprise Zone. As a result we now have over 300,000 square feet of modern manufacturing space under development. Businesses from sectors such as printing and packaging, manufacturing, and distribution are creating new jobs.

We are currently in negotiations with Government about a further devolution deal. We hope to conclude these discussions positively. However, our efforts to reconcile an inflexible and often opaque Government process with our own regional geography have highlighted some of the flaws in the approach.

A disproportionate - and prescriptive - central focus on deal shape has created unnecessary complications and delay. Shape appears to have been prioritised rather than potential outcomes based on an economically coherent geography.

It has also re-emphasised that devolution in the UK is essentially a top-down process. It is central government – and usually the treasury - that ultimately determines what devolution looks like for localities.

The Future

I would urge the Government to commit fully to this agenda, to increase transparency in the process and to share with local government lessons learnt from the evolving rounds of deals. The experience of local government suggests on-going - and often significant - resistance amongst some Government departments to the principle of devolution. Too much emphasis is being put on joint working rather than true devolution.

Local authorities do not lack ambition. However, a number of regions are being held back by a disproportionate, and prescriptive, central focus on deal shape. A focus on the outcomes deliverable via varied local models, with locally determined governance, would provide something much closer to genuine decentralisation. We are a long way from embedding a "culture of devolution" in all Government departments. We are also a long way from engaging large sections of the public in the devolution debate. Devolution will only really take root if local people recognise clear lines of accountability via which they can scrutinise both the performance of deals and the huge amounts of public money spent through them. Imposing a 'one size fits all' mayoral approach, however, is not the answer. It merely creates another

layer of complexity.

The financial outlook for local government has been bleak in recent years. Core funding for Leeds has reduced by £214m (47%) since 2010. We will see a further £53m of reduction over the next 4 years. When combined funding reductions and soaring demand pressures in Leeds in 2017/18 amount to £75m.

In contrast, the opportunities presented by devolution are cause for optimism. Devolution offers the potential to deliver innovative solutions to the challenges facing our citizens, with the aim of genuinely improving lives. With the right tools we can reduce inequality, deliver economic stability and secure more sustainable public services for the future.



About the author: Cllr Judith Blake is the Leader of Leeds City Council, Executive Board Member for Economy and Culture and Ward Councillor for Middleton Park. She has been an elected member since 1996. Prior to being elected Leader of the Council in May 2015, she served as Deputy Leader of the Council for 5 years and also as a member of the Executive. In her time as a Councillor she has covered a wide range of portfolios including Children & Families, Planning, Education and Leisure.

Answering the English Question(s)

Recent reforms of the constitutional architecture of the UK state have been founded on and adhered to an established orthodoxy based on an enduring belief in the British Political Tradition. Devolution has thus proven largely unplanned, piecemeal, and pragmatic, taking the shape of an open-ended process, whilst lacking clarity in terms of its purpose, procedure, or extent. Successive Westminster governments have thus proven unable or unwilling to state whether the ultimate aim of devolution is to promote equality in terms of constitutional relations or to underline difference between the constituent nations and regions of the UK (Giovannini and Mycock, 2015). The UK is a multi-national state created by a series of unions. The resonance of nationhood and nationalism in defining constitutional relations has thus ensured that political debate has often been located at a national level. However, asymmetries in devolution across the nations and regions of the UK have created an explicitly quasi-federal state increasingly defined by constitutional instability that threatens its very existence. This sense that the end of the UK is nigh were heightened considerably by the Scottish independence referendum campaign and vote in 2014 and tensions emanating from the decision of leave the European Union. The main Westminster political parties have thus become increasingly reactive, defensive, and sporadic in the design of devolution policy in face of ever-more strident sub-state manifestations of secessionist nationalism outside of England.

The status of England has proven increasingly contentious and problematic in terms of the framing and layering democratic citizenship and political identity within a multi-national UK state. For many, England has been deliberately peripheralised or even overlooked by successive reforming governments in favour of the UK's other constituent nations. England has thus been framed as 'the hole in the middle' of the devolution process, the last 'colony' of a post-imperial UK state whose national aspirations have been cynically silenced and thwarted by anti-English liberal metropolitan elites.

Political and public interest in the so-called 'English Question' has intensified over the past two decades or so, thus entangling issues of constitutional reform in England with a growing recognition and resonance of English national identity and culture. The 'English Question' has however never been singular and in fact relates to the simultaneous and interconnected decentralisation of government to from Westminster to England at both a national and regional-local level (Mycock, 2016a). The 'English Question' thus pertains to a wider set of issues related to finding

an appropriate form of national democratic representation and governance for England which is balanced in the context of devolution both within the multi-national UK state and across the English regions and localities.

At a national level, the introduction of English Votes for English Laws (EVEL) has been strongly associated with the Conservative Party who, since the late 1990s, have promoted intra-Westminster reform as a means to address at least part of the so-called 'West Lothian Question'. The principle constitutional anomaly that EVEL seeks to address is whether MPs from outside of England, sitting in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom, should be able to vote on matters that affect only England, while MPs from England are unable to vote on matters that have been devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. The introduction of EVEL sought to provide MPs representing constituencies in England (or England and Wales) with the opportunity to veto certain legislative provisions that apply only in that part of the UK. EVEL was introduced by the Conservative government in October 2015 and used for the first time in the House of Commons in January 2016.

Answering the 'English Question' has also focused on the devolution of Westminster powers within England. Since the summer of 2014, two

interconnected and overlapping political projects - the so-called 'Northern Powerhouse' and regional-local devolution via a series of 'city-region deals' - have sought to redress regional economic imbalances, empower local authorities, and enhance political leadership via the introduction of 'metro-mayors'. While the Northern Powerhouse agenda has largely focused on developing transport and other infrastructure across the north of England to stimulate economic activity, Westminster has also sought to cajole local councils—most notably those in Greater Manchester - to form a patchwork of amalgamated combined authorities to collaborate in public service planning and delivery.

The following article assesses the impact of current attempts to answer the 'English Question(s)'. It will assess whether England constitutional reforms undertaken in Westminster, especially the introduction of English Votes for English Laws (EVEL) and regional-local devolution initiatives, have facilitated a distinctive national 'voice'.

Enhancing an English national 'voice'

The proposition that England has emerged as a nascent but identifiable 'political community' has gained considerable traction among a small but growing number of academics, politicians and media commentators. Advocates argue that English nation-



The following article assesses the impact of current attempts to answer the 'English Question(s)'.

nal identity has become more politically and publicly salient, this in part being reflective of a growing discontent with England's current constitutional position within the Union. Such claims have been founded on a growing body of research, particularly the Future of England (FoE) surveys, which indicate that English national identity is gradually superseding its British counterpart both in relative and absolute expressions of popular affiliation (see Wyn-Jones et al., 2012; Wyn-Jones et al., 2013; Jeffrey et al., 2014). Furthermore, it is argued that English national identity has become increasingly politicised in its form and expression in response to a range of grievances about inequalities associated with devolution within the UK, European Union (EU) membership, and the scale and impact of immigration. These shifts in public attitudes have encouraged mainstream Union-wide political parties to engage rhetorically with England as a distinct national political entity and design policies that appeal predominantly or exclusively to the English electorate (Kenny, 2014; Mycock and Hayton, 2014).

However, the reported intensification of English national identity – and the correlative necessity to reform Westminster to provide national political expression for England – may well be overstated. Indeed, FoE surveys indicate that popular attachment with discrete forms of Englishness has fluctuated over the past decade or so and even declined. Furthermore, longitudinal studies undertaken as part of the British Social Attitudes survey, utilising different methodologies to the FoE studies, indicate a broad stability and balance in public affiliation with English and British identities since 1999 (see Curtice, 2013). Critically, such studies have not sought to test the absolute or relative strength of regional identities in England when compared to English and British identities or to acknowledge complexity and diversity in how the public understands and frames sub-national local and regional affiliations (see Giovannini, 2016).

The introduction of EVEL has – as yet – failed to significantly clarify or increase the resonance of English national policy-making since its implementation (see Gover and Kenny, 2016). This is in part due to its infrequent operationalisation in the House of Commons in the first year after its introduction, being certified to be applied to parliamentary bills on only nine occasions. The introduction of EVEL has however exacerbated calls to reify England as a distinct national political community – either by encouraging further Anglicisation of the parliament and civil service of the UK state, or through the creation of a discrete English parliament (see, for example, Denham, 2016; Gover and Kenny, 2016).

Such calls reflect a widely-held view that EVEL has been primarily implemented to address a constitutional anomaly related to a perceived imbalance in the representation of England's national 'voice' within the UK parliament. However, demands for a more explicit English national political resonance within West-

minster should be treated with caution. There is scant evidence that shifts in attitudinal surveys on national identity in England directly correlate into political or popular support for the reform of the UK's constitutional architecture to further strengthen a discrete, unified and monochrome English national 'voice'. Moreover, calls for the increased territorialisation of politics in the UK are not confined to the nations of the UK, and are starting to gain relevance also across the regions and localities of England (Giovannini, 2016).

This, in turn, prompts reflection on what is meant by 'English national voice' and whether England does really have a singular national 'voice'. Debates about the politicisation of English nationhood often overlook regional and local dimensions of English identity which indicate that 'the voice of England' is layered and plural. Moreover, the implementation of EVEL has rarely been viewed within a more expansive lens that recognises the duality of the 'English Question' in terms of issues of national and regional-local governance in England. Survey evidence identifies high levels of support for variants of EVEL when compared to the maintenance of the status quo, an English parliament, or regional assemblies. Such research suggests that a majority of English citizens see themselves as Anglo-British in identity terms and are thus happy to support reforms that reflect the hybridity of Westminster both as a UK and – to a lesser extent – an English parliament. There lacks however any substantial evidence that English citizens seek a discrete national parliament or that they wish to further extensively reform Westminster to alter its principal function as the UK parliament.

An evidence gap also exists in terms of assessing the attitudes of English citizens on matters of constitutional reform in terms of plural and multi-layered forms of governance in England. Existing research has typically forced respondents to choose one from a range of options (usually the status quo, intra-Westminster reform, an English parliament, and some form of regional assembly). Evidence from these studies indicates that most respondents support reform of Westminster as per EVEL, with few supporters for any regional options offered. This approach reflects the current view of the UK government with regards to the governance of England by segregating national and regional reforms rather than acknowledging their concurrent and overlapping implementation. Put simply, reform of national and regional-local governance in England is not an 'either/or' choice. The extent of support for regional-local may well have been under-estimated though. For example, a survey undertaken in 2014 indicated that 28% of respondents supported the proposition that local or regional institutions should have more influence over governance in England, compared with 30% supporting an English Parliament or a reformed Westminster (Cox and Jeffrey, 2014). Regional variations also exist regarding preferences on how England should be governed, with stronger support for local and regional devolution in the North of England where

strong sub-national identities exist (Jeffrey et al., 2014; Eichhorn et al., 2015).

The demand for the political recognition of English regional-local voices has though proven more difficult to realise in terms of governmental structures than those which reside at a national level. This has been reflected in the current 'devolution deals' agenda which has stimulated instability, competition and conflict between the regions and localities of England. Such tensions have often proved to centre on growing political and public concerns about the lack of correlation between existing regional-local cultural and political institutions and identities and emergent Westminster-ordained combined authority regional polities. Moreover, asymmetric approaches to English regional-local devolution in terms of powers devolved have encouraged the reproduction of anomalies associated with the 'West Lothian Question' within England - the so-called 'Manchester Withington Question' (Giovannini and Mycock, 2015).

The concurrent introduction of EVEL and regional-local devolution has not provided a suitable solution to the much-needed reorganisation of the governance of England and its place within the Union. Indeed the bespoke and uncoordinated approach to constitutional reform in England has fuelled rather than quelled instability and uncertainty about the future cohesion and longevity of the UK state. This, in part, has proven a product of politicians and policy-makers inability or unwillingness to provide a clear and coherent vision of the form, purpose, and extent of devolution across the nations of the UK and within England.

The introduction of EVEL appears to seek to reify England as a monochrome and homogeneous national territorial, political and social entity while also intensifying the gradual 'Anglicisation' of the House of Commons. This approach appears to overlook the need to be sensitive to and representative of the territorial (UK state-wide and English national, regional and local) nuances, vies and needs associated with English nationhood. There is an urgent need to grasp the challenges of synchronising reforms within Westminster to enhance England's national 'voice' with the fundamental changes to regional-local political representation and policy-making within England. Policy-makers in Westminster urgently need to adopt approaches to constitutional reform that are sensitive to demands for recognition of English local and regional 'voices' as well as a national 'voice'. Crucially, this requires a consideration of how and in what ways EVEL develops in conjunction with devolution of power within England (and in the other national constituencies of the UK) to find sustainable answers to the 'English Questions'.

Concluding Thoughts: Answering the English Question(s)

Recent constitutional reforms have further entrenched nationality in shaping policy both at UK state and sub-state levels. England is thus increasingly framed and understood in national terms as a homogeneous, political and territorial unit. However,

the nationalisation of English politics and policy-making, exemplified via the introduction of EVEL, has so far failed to explicitly take account of or connect with reform of governmental arrangements within England. Moreover, proponents of the nationalisation of English politics have often failed to acknowledge the importance and potential political capital of existing and emergent local and regional territorial polities shaped and underpinned by distinctive cultural, historical, and economic identities. However, a durable constitutional settlement for England and the rest of the UK requires policy-makers to move beyond narrow nationally-framed approaches between the four nations of the UK and 'think territorially'.

EVEL is likely to bring some much-needed clarity to English national policy-making while also refining further the party political vernacular of England. In its current form, EVEL is however unlikely to fundamentally nationalise electoral politics in England or reorientate significantly the civic relationship between English citizens and the House of Commons. In particular, the contested and porous nature of what might be deemed 'England-only' legislation and the emergence of new polities within England will likely make it difficult for political parties to frame manifesto pledges and policies in discretely English national terms. Indeed, EVEL may well intensify challenges to the political authority and identity of the main Westminster-based Unionist parties as it becomes more established, particularly in the context of English identity politics.

Current approaches to 'answering the English Question(s)' highlight a continued faith in piecemeal but disconnected devolution to and within England which will further undermine the stability of the UK by creating new constitutional anomalies. It is likely that the elections for the inaugural 'metro-mayors' in May 2017 will coalesce and politicise local and regional disparities and resentments within England on issues of funding and resources, policy design and delivery, and the coherence and uniformity of welfare and other public services. This could encourage greater and more divisive competition amongst English MPs which might affect how EVEL operates. Moreover, MPs will be increasingly placed in a position where they must compete for authority and influence with emergent local-regional elites, thus potentially encouraging new arenas of contestation both within and between political parties driven by the politics of territorialism and identity.

See next page for references.



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Scotland after Brexit



SUCCESSFUL BPS SEMINAR WITH SCOTLAND'S MINISTER FOR EUROPE

What future awaits Scotland in Europe, as Britain prepares to leave the EU? This was the chief question on the agenda, as the British Politics Society on 16 February invited its members and friends to a timely seminar with Scotland's Minister for Europe, Dr Alasdair Allan. Dr Allan has been an MSP for the Scottish National Party since 2007, representing the constituency of the Western Isles.

The event was held against the backdrop of the British government's newly published White Paper, which presents the UK's overall strategy for its exit from and future partnership with the EU. In his talk, Dr Allan reflected on Scotland's relationship with Norway and the EU historically as well as Scottish responses to the referendum result last year. He also outlined possible scenarios for Scotland's future relationship with the EU, highlighting proposals in the Scottish Government's 'Scotland's Place in Europe' paper.

Much to the audience's delight, Dr Allan delivered the opening part of his speech in fluent Norwegian.

The seminar took place at the Social Science faculty (Eilert Sundt's hus) at the University of Oslo, Blindern. It was opened by BPS board member Øivind Bratberg. Board member Kristin Haugevik led the subsequent Q & A session.

Dr Allan and BPS member John Todd were also guests in NRK Urix the same evening.

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Forthcoming edition of British Politics Review

How do the British commemorate the past? In the spring edition of British Politics Review, we raise this question under the heading of "Heritage Britain", taking the anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele during World War 1 as our rather sombre point of departure. What characterises commemorations of past events in Britain – such as the many battles fought by British soldiers during the Great War – and to what extent is the past used (or abused) for political purposes now? Moreover, what is the status for the so-called "heritage industry" in Britain per 2017?

The spring edition of British Politics Review is due to arrive in May 2017.