



HOUSE OF LORDS

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Witnesses: Lord Salisbury, Lord Hain and Daniel Greenberg

Paul Nowak and Tony Armstrong

Professor Matthew Flinders and Katie Ghose

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Members present

Lord Cullen of Whitekirk (Chairman)
 Baroness Dean of Thornton-le-Fylde
 Lord Hunt of Wirral
 Lord Judge
 Lord Lester of Herne Hill
 Lord MacGregor of Pulham Market
 Lord MacLennan of Rogart
 Lord Morgan
 Lord Norton of Louth
 Baroness Taylor of Bolton

Examination of Witnesses

Lord Salisbury, Lord Hain and Daniel Greenberg, Constitution Reform Group

Q202 The Chairman: Can I welcome the representatives of the Constitution Reform Group, Lord Salisbury, the chairman, and the other members of the steering group, Lord Hain and Daniel Greenberg? Can I just begin by expressing our appreciation for the work you have already done leading to the discussion paper that you produced in September of last year? If I may begin the questioning, could I ask you what progress has been made since the launching of that paper in September of last year and, in particular, for example, the progress that has been made in drafting the proposed new Act of Union?

Lord Salisbury: Thank you, Lord Cullen. We hugely appreciate your asking us here, and we have read with very considerable interest the evidence, both oral and written, that has been submitted to this Committee, and as part of my answer I wonder whether it would be helpful if I set in context where we are coming from, which would take me, I hope, a very short time. Certainly, glancing through your evidence so far, I think all of us in the CRG have been very struck by the near-unanimity of your extremely distinguished contributors, in one respect at least: a feeling that the proposed legislation may not deliver a long-term, stable constitutional framework for the United Kingdom, and that there is a horrible probability that this will not be the end of the matter. I think two of your witnesses said separatists can always ask for more. We certainly agree with that view, and those who do want to keep Scotland in the kingdom need, we think, to wrest back the initiative, which has been lost, from the separatists. We think a sensible way of doing this would be to propose a new Act of Union, which would start from the other end, if you like. By that I mean that, instead of arguing what should be devolved, the four nations should agree between them what the centre should do. This, in our

view, would make us all think about what we could all do better together—to coin a phrase—and in those things we would be weaker apart. It would obviously be matters like security, both economic and military, basic levels of health and social security, human rights, support from the rich south-east of England, for instance, to the rest of the country. Those are, perhaps, just obvious examples.

We think that an Act of Parliament would be the neatest way of achieving this objective of wresting the initiative back from the separatists. Indeed, I think the Bingham Centre envisages a similar approach. We think the procedure of an Act of Parliament is clearly well-understood country-wide, and that it can be preceded by any amount of consultation and pre-legislative scrutiny. It can be brought into force only after a post-legislative referendum, which we think would obviously have to be approved in its provisions by all four parts of the kingdom. It has the advantage of being able to be encapsulated in relatively straightforward terms, because we feel it is very important for the nation or the electorate as a whole to rescue constitutional matters, at least in their essential principles, from being the province of—however admirable—masters of constitutional arcana. An Act of Parliament could select what needed to be changed, and only change what needed to be changed.

We think it is a good time to introduce this idea, and that such a Bill would provide a way of injecting the idea into the political bloodstream, as we face the run-up to the three elections in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales on 9 May. We therefore have tried to match our timetable—and I finally come to trying to answer your question, Lord Chairman, and I am sorry that it has taken so long, but it might be helpful to set it in context—in that we have made very considerable progress in our first attempt at a draft Bill, which we hope to have at least three-quarters cooked within the next relatively few days. We will, of course, be very happy to provide this Committee with a copy, and any comments, as always, would be extremely welcome.

We hope we will be able to circulate this draft to our very large number of what we call our correspondents—many of whom have already given evidence to this Committee—for further comment and discussion. We are going to initiate next week a series of opinion polls and focus groups—particularly in Scotland, where this initiative started, with a group of Scots people with whom we are beginning to collaborate, to provide them with technical support, both drafting and financial—to see whether the public as a whole have any interest in such an idea, and, if they do, whether they approve of it. We would want to play the results of those efforts into the political debate in the run-up to the campaign.

We hope that this draft will be generally available, that everybody will feel able to comment on it, and that over the coming couple of months what we have now will be greatly improved in its content and presentation. I hope that gives you some idea of the background of how we approached this, and the progress that we have made since we published the consultation paper you so kindly referred to.

The Chairman: Arising out of that, in the course of your discussion paper you mentioned choices as to whether one goes for alternative A or alternative B. Will your draft come down, as it were, in favour of a particular one?

Lord Salisbury: No. We are giving two basic alternatives—one rather radical one, which I know would involve some very major changes and which a number of us in the group regard as not wholly practical. Others are more ambitious and more radical, and it is in that light that there will be two basic approaches in the Bill. It will not be a definitive answer, but it will provide two options.

The Chairman: One other question: when would the group regard its work as finished?

Lord Salisbury: That is a very interesting question, which we have not yet resolved. My personal view is that, if the group is proved right in its predictions that the Government's present policy will prove not to be the beginnings of a final settlement and that further work will need to be done, we hope that a general realisation allied to increasing public approval, as a result of our activities for the idea of a new Act of Union, would generate enough momentum over the next two or three years to induce the Government to take over the idea of a new Act, in the light of public support. If we manage that—which is quite a big ambition, I grant you—we would think that our primary work was done, although obviously all of us would continue to take an interest.

The Chairman: Lord Hain, is there anything you wish to add?

Lord Hain: Only, briefly, that we were very grateful to receive funding from the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, which together with other funding has enabled us to have in mind and begin to put in place a detailed series of focus group activity and polling, in order to maximise public consultation without being over-ambitious as to what might be achievable. We are not planning meetings in every town hall in every town and city across the UK, but we are seeking to get a representative response to what we are proposing.

Perhaps I could just briefly add another point that I think is relevant. You might have been surprised to see Robert Salisbury and myself as a united front on this.

Lord Salisbury: Not as surprised as we were.

Lord Hain: Not as surprised as we were, yes. But for me, the interest in my own involvement, and I think this goes for others in this room, is that whereas in the past a series of very important, worthy and admirable initiatives have been launched from, as it were, the other side of the political spectrum—the Liberal Democrats, some Labour and then the considerable group of expert constitutional reformers that there are, some of whom have given evidence to your Committee—this initiative came from Robert and other senior Conservatives, and that seemed to me to put it in a different place, with a different possibility and a much greater opportunity for change of the kind that can bring and maintain the UK. That is its significance and what attracted me to work enthusiastically as part of this group.

Q203 Lord Judge: The Act of Union would, presumably, be legislated through the House of Commons and then this House in the usual way. How are we going to engage with the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly and the Northern Ireland Assembly about this very crucial question from their individual points of view?

Daniel Greenberg: In one of a number of possible ways.

Lord Judge: Give us your best three.

Daniel Greenberg: It is a question of three different kinds of approach. One is getting them to produce almost their own wish lists and their own key foundation provisions, and making sure that we incorporate them in our drafting. You could have a bigger Sewel convention vote. You could have something that formally engaged them in the process at that point. The other end of the spectrum would be something less formal but purely about engagement behind the scenes. I would preliminarily favour something in the middle that does not involve creating a new kind of constitutional beast, because that has its own obvious problems, but nevertheless allows the peoples of each nation to see that their Parliament or their Assembly has been formally involved in the process.

Lord Judge: Is what you are envisaging involvement in the process prior to the enactment of the Act of Union, or approval afterwards?

Daniel Greenberg: Both.

Lord Judge: All right. Let us assume that beforehand all is fine and good, but then the Act of Union appears and one or other of the Assemblies or the Scottish Parliament does not like it. What then?

Daniel Greenberg: In formal terms, “What then?” is nothing, because as you say in formal terms this is an Act of Parliament. In practice, as Lord Salisbury mentioned, this will only come into force with a referendum, and we are making it very clear that a commencement referendum would have to have a majority not just UK-wide but within each of the constituent

nations. I would take an eventuality such as you describe as an indication that we were not going to get that overall majority.

In a way, it does not matter formally why it has fallen apart, but to us it would be very important to come up with something that is accepted by the people informally and by each of the Parliaments formally, whatever mechanism we decide to use. If we do not get buy-in from the people informally and from the Parliaments formally, we have lost.

Lord Judge: Do I also understand from what you have said that, if either the Assemblies or the Scottish Parliament in their own right, or a referendum in Northern Ireland, Wales or Scotland said, “No, we are not having this”, the whole thing falls to the ground? One or other of the constituent parts has, in effect, a veto.

Daniel Greenberg: Certainly, yes, as to the second. If the referendum fails in any part, we have failed. As for the first, I would not want to say now unequivocally yes, because for example if there was a specific issue, we might want to go back and amend to meet that issue. That needs to be worked through.

Lord Salisbury: If I may, Lord Chairman, I would like to emphasise that first bit, because for the Bill to become law in what used to be called the Imperial Parliament and have any chance of being credible, it has to have the support of the four constituent parts of the kingdom. Therefore, without both the formal approval of the constituent parts of the kingdom—that is, their own Assemblies and Parliaments—and in so far as we can tell the pull of public opinion, I would be surprised if the House of Commons and your Lordships would feel inclined to pass such a Bill. Once it has been passed it would clearly imply that there is general support for such a thing, and after that general support had been given and the Bill passed there would be a further check put on it, in the form of a referendum with approval from all four parts of the kingdom.

Q204 Lord Lester of Herne Hill: To avoid wasteful duplication, will you be combining forces with the Bingham Centre so that we have a single constitutional document, or will we have to have two?

Lord Salisbury: Lord Chairman, I could not agree with what Lord Lester says more. One of the dangers of groupuscules, it seems to me, in almost any political activity is they hate each other more than they do the enemy. Our basic principle is to be wholly open about this, to give maximum circulation. We sent, for instance, the Bingham people copies of the consultation document. We certainly will send them drafts of our Bill, and we hope that, so long as we are not too precious about wanting to take credit for it, we can build a consensus

behind this, and whoever wants to take credit for it can do so. As we know, success has many fathers.

Daniel Greenberg: Can I just add to that, very briefly, Lord Chairman? Just to assure Lord Lester, at what you might call an official level we are in close, practical co-operation with them.

Lord Lester of Herne Hill: I hope you are not drafting both.

Q205 Baroness Taylor of Bolton: I have a very brief and simple question. You are talking with a degree of confidence that there will be buy-in from each of the different parts of the United Kingdom. Given that we have a Scottish Executive who have no interest in remaining part of the United Kingdom, how do you think you are going to get buy-in from them?

Lord Salisbury: There are two ways. The first thing is that we do not, and there is clearly a risk, as with any activity, and the risk is a high one for the reason that Baroness Taylor gives. However, we would be very interested to see what the results of our polling and our focus groups are in Scotland, which are going to be fairly intensive over the next couple of months, to see whether there is interest and approval among the 50% plus who still want to remain part of the kingdom. That, in the end, if we or our Scottish friends can generate some momentum behind this idea, is bound to have some influence.

Secondly, I do not know what you think, Lady Taylor, but I am interested that the Scottish National Party, whose *raison d'être* is Scottish independence, still do not scorn engaging on constitutional reform matters so long as they remain part of the kingdom. They have not said, "We will not talk about constitutional reform". After all, the Scotland Bill and all of the rest of it is something they have a vital interest in. If there is going to be further constitutional arrangements while they remain part of the United Kingdom, they have not shown that they are wholly averse to taking part in those conversations.

Baroness Taylor of Bolton: Maybe they see what has happened with the Scotland Bill as part of the path to independence.

Lord Salisbury: That is our fear. I agree with that.

Q206 Lord Morgan: Will your draft proposals—when they appear; shortly, I gather—about the procedures of how a referendum would be organised, and in what circumstances, take account of the fact that it is probable that it would take place after the referendum on membership of the European Union? I mention that because that is likely to be a very destabilising factor, with opinions in different parts of the United Kingdom very much at odds with each other.

Lord Salisbury: Of course, there are two huge questions that have to be settled over the coming years. One is whether we remain members of the European Union, and I would submit the other is whether it is possible to arrive at a stable constitutional framework for the future of the United Kingdom itself. I would think it wholly impractical, in view of the Prime Minister's hints that we are facing an EU referendum earlier rather than later, for this proposal to have any force or chance of being brought forward before the European referendum, and anyway it would be undesirable or impractical for us to suggest that should happen, even if the referendum on Europe were delayed until 2017. This is going to take a good deal longer than that.

The Chairman: Let us move on to another subject.

Q207 Lord Hunt of Wirral: You are proposing a new system, which should have as much flexibility as possible, for instance allowing each constituent part to draw down from a set of available powers, whilst having a clear and understood list of functions for central performance. By what process would those powers be devolved, and should there be some sort of mechanism by which the public are explicitly involved?

Lord Salisbury: The short answer is yes, but may I turn to Daniel?

Daniel Greenberg: Probably, although this is, like everything else in the Bill, something that we want to hear people's views on. But probably you would start off with a core that is made central, that functions by the Bill itself. That is achieved by the Bill. Then there is a mechanism by which—to pick up the language that Lord Salisbury was using earlier—each nation and its Parliament or Assembly can choose whether a particular function is to be dealt with for them by Westminster or by themselves. I do not want to go further into the mechanism than you want me to guess, as it were, but I would say, similarly to the question before, that you need to have the mechanism in both places. The initiative has to come from the nation that wishes to exercise its choice, but there has to be within Westminster a balancing effect of the approval of that choice.

Lord Salisbury: A number of people who have given evidence to this Committee hitherto have suggested the idea of what I think they called a drop-down menu, which might get around the question of inflexible uniformity for each part of the kingdom. That sort of device we would find quite attractive.

Lord Hain: Devolution up until now has been a top-down process: the centre deciding to devolve powers to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and more recently in parts of England. The model we are proposing is a bottom-up process. It is turning it on its head. That is to say that the nations, and I hope also in England's case the regions and maybe city

regions, will then federate upwards to the UK and decide what is done at the centre and what is done at a national level, for the purpose of the nations. That is what would make the UK a lot stronger and a lot more appealing to Scots and Welsh in particular—particularly Scots at the moment. They are deciding what is done at the centre, rather than the centre deciding what is allowed to be done by, say, Scotland. That is what makes a new Act of Union on this particular model attractive.

Q208 Lord MacGregor of Pulham Market: The sharing of risks and resources between richer and poorer areas of the United Kingdom is stressed in your discussion paper. How will you ensure that this sharing continues as, crucially, greater powers over taxation and spending are devolved to Wales and Scotland? We are beginning to see a problem here already. Can I be quite specific on it? You say in your paper, as the two legislatures take on more of their revenue-raising and rely less on the block grant from the UK consolidated fund, it may be useful to discuss how that affects the redistribution of funds from richer to poorer areas. I would have thought that it is not just useful but crucial. What is your answer to that?

Lord Hain: I completely agree with you, Lord MacGregor. This, for me, is one of the absolutely critical parts of this whole debate and what might follow from it on constitutional change. I speak as an enthusiastic devolutionist when I was Secretary of State before and subsequently, for Wales and Northern Ireland, but I am concerned that, if the devolution particularly of income tax and other taxes goes too far, it will exclude the possibility and the mechanism for redistributing resources, not just from the south-east and London, which constitute together 40% of UK GDP, and not just to parts of Scotland and the poorer parts of Wales but also to deprived parts of England, which often get excluded from this debate, whether it is Cornwall or the north-east of England. This Act of Union has to address that very seriously and have a taxation mechanism in which there is considerable room still to redistribute. Getting that right is not easy, but it has to be part of the settlement that we are seeking to achieve.

Lord MacGregor of Pulham Market: Are you thinking of looking further at this, developing your views further on this point, so that you can come up with at least one solution to it?

Lord Hain: We have set ourselves a pretty stiff and tight timetable, and are not going to be able to answer all of the questions before the May elections, but we start to address them in the draft Act we are going to produce, and the beginning of addressing that is recognising that a rather ad hoc system is evolving, which is going to leave us all in a mess as far as redistribution of resource is concerned. For me, the union that stands for fairness and equal

rights, and an opportunity for the poorer parts to be assisted by the richer parts of the UK, is one of the attractive things for the citizens of the UK—whether they are Scots, Welsh, Northern Irish or English—to feel part of this union. That is a key attraction, and we have to make it work and not lose that through this ad hoc, incremental devolution of taxation.

Lord Salisbury: I think, like everybody else, Lord Chairman, we feel that we need to do a lot more work on this, for exactly the reasons that Lord MacGregor gives. As always, trouble is going to come over money. That is going to be extremely difficult. Historically, if you look at other countries which give support from the centre, it is very difficult for a union to keep together unless there is a way of making sure that the centre can support the individual parts of the polity and, if there is no way, there is a good reason for the individual parts of the polity to break away.

Lord MacGregor of Pulham Market: We have done it so far, to a large extent, through the block grant, have we not? That will disappear as a mechanism, because of the ability of the other devolved administrations to set their own levels of social security, university fees or whatever. I am glad to hear you are going to give further thought to it.

Lord Salisbury: I have not heard anybody else being able to give a glib reply to your absolutely-on-the-button question. I include myself in that.

The Chairman: We have some time to turn to England.

Q209 Lord Norton of Louth: The Future of England Survey 2014 found very substantial support for retaining England as a political unit, yet many of the proposals for devolution, of course, are to go at the sub-national level. Is it possible to create a devolution settlement that achieves both of those, and resolves that tension between focusing on England and at the same time pushing power further down within England?

Lord Salisbury: The short answer to that one must be, “Yes, there is”, but beyond that there is endless scope for argument. I am quite sceptical about whether the deals between the Chancellor and Manchester, for instance, are anything more than a happy convenience for both parties. I hope that is not too rude. However admirable that may be, I do not see that as a sustainable basis for devolved power. First of all, our first focus in our working paper has been on the four constituent parts of the kingdom. You all, as usual, have put your finger on the button when you see we have not fully addressed the English part of this, but it does seem to us that if you can find a way of settling the constitutional relationship between the four parts of the kingdom, then what England does should be very much a matter for England. Obviously, it is hugely important in any long-term settlement, with 85% of the population and the vast majority of the GDP of the polity itself, but equally there is huge geographical

difficulty in splitting up England into regions. The most convenient one, Lord Prescott thought, was the north-east, and that did not get him anywhere. When you begin to draw divisions between southern, south-eastern and the Midlands of England, you just have to ask yourself the question, “Does it work?”

From our point of view, we have deliberately eschewed going into detail on England, because we think that the first important thing is to settle the four nations themselves. However, we recognise that part of that settlement, if England’s increasing unhappiness is to be addressed, must be for England itself to determine what it wants to do. It may be a form of regionalisation in parts of it, or it may be some expansion of Lord Heseltine’s idea of greater unitary authorities with elected mayors, and then the question is whether they would have any local tax-raising powers of their own and, if so, under what circumstances, and the consequences for being given borrowing powers and so on.

Lord Norton of Louth: You are saying that it would be the unit itself, England, that would determine the distribution of powers.

Lord Salisbury: That is our feeling, but we recognise that if England is unhappy, the union as a whole will be unhappy. The two are intimately connected.

Lord Hain: As an enthusiast for devolution within England outside London, because of course London has substantial devolution, I do not take the rejection of that option in 2004 by the north-east as being a significant obstacle. I was in the Cabinet at the time, as maybe Baroness Taylor was. It was offered a very watered-down version. When you look at the English regions, most if not all of them are bigger than Northern Ireland. Most of them are bigger than Wales. Some of them are bigger than Scotland, in size. You could envisage a UK constituted with substantial English devolution, whether to Cornwall or the north-east or whichever unit wanted, and develop it incrementally. That would be possible.

Lord Norton of Louth: You would be creating the framework within which that could take place, rather than stipulating what form it would take.

Lord Hain: Absolutely.

Lord Salisbury: Yes.

Lord Hain: An enabling framework, rather than a prescriptive one.

The Chairman: Lord Lester, perhaps one short question?

Q210 Lord Lester of Herne Hill: It is probably my fault, but I am a bit confused. Surely Whitehall and Westminster have to decide whether to use administrative or legislative measures to create units within England. That is not something that England can decide; it must be decided by the Government and Parliament. Do you think that, in the framework that

you desire, we shall go on devolving purely administratively, as we have at the moment in England, or do you think that we would need to have legislation to devolve to units of one kind or another within England, as we do, of course, with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

Daniel Greenberg: We feel that, in order to achieve it in a satisfactory way, you do need legislation; you do need a legislative option that is available to regions and cities. I do not think that means we necessarily rule out administrative action on top of that and around the edges of that. That has to be possible, but we agree there has to be clarity, and that requires legislation.

Lord Lester of Herne Hill: It would mean the power to create assemblies in English regions or city regions, if that power was to be used.

Daniel Greenberg: That would obviously have to be legislative, yes.

The Chairman: We have, by now, overrun the allotted time for this session, but that is perhaps an indication of how important your evidence has been, and how useful it has been to us. We thank you very much, indeed. We appreciate that there are a number of questions towards the end of the list concerning England that we have not got around to. If any of you would like to submit something in writing, please do so. That would be most helpful.

Lord Salisbury: Thank you, Lord Chairman. We would be very happy to do that, and we greatly appreciate being asked.

The Chairman: Thank you very much for your attentions.

Examination of Witnesses

Paul Nowak, Assistant General Secretary, Trades Union Congress, and **Tony Armstrong**, Chief Executive, Locality

Q211 The Chairman: Can I welcome Paul Nowak, the assistant general secretary of the TUC, and Tony Armstrong, the chief executive of Locality? In the case of Mr Armstrong, thank you very much for providing copies of the recently published paper by Locality, on *Devolution for People and Communities*. We would be very interested to hear what you, from your individual perspectives, have to say about the subject of our own inquiry. Perhaps I could begin by asking you about the sharing of risks and benefits, which is often referred to in terms of being a social union, or creating social solidarity. It has been described as binding the union together by redistributing revenue and pooling and sharing risk, through welfare benefits and through the pensions system. That is the context I am talking about. How important do you think this is, and to what extent is it put under pressure by devolution or the extent of devolution?

Paul Nowak: Lord Cullen, first of all thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to the Committee. The TUC represents just short of 6 million working people, right across all the regions and nations of the UK, and that description of the union in terms of pooling the benefits and risks is one that we would recognise. It is fair to say—our members see this very much, and our unions see this—that there are huge variations between the regions and nations of the UK, not just in terms of economic variations and differences in GDP but also measured by some of the key socio-economic indicators, whether that be health or whatever. Therefore, there is a value in thinking about how you pool risks and benefits.

Politicians across the political spectrum have recognised that. People are talking about the need to rebalance our economy, not just in terms of the balance between services and manufacturing but between the regions and nations of the UK. We think it is vital that the benefits of the union are expressed and maintained.

Tony Armstrong: From Locality's perspective, we cover England. We are an England-only organisation, but we have sister organisations in each of the three other parts of the UK. Certainly talking to our sister organisations regularly, as we do, the thing that springs to mind when thinking about this question is that sharing of information and resources is something that is incredibly valuable. As the devolution settlement has unfolded over the past couple of decades, we have found that sharing of information and solidarity across borders is more important—to learn from each other and to share. Things like welfare are where it is

particularly important, because they are mostly reserved matters, so it is something on which we work together, as four organisations across the UK.

The other thing about risk that is very important to our members is that they own assets, buildings and land. If you think about the whole context of the rise of social investment, particularly over recent years, and financial instruments and models, risk becomes a very important thing that is shared across borders. When you think about communities taking on quite difficult and challenging assets or liabilities, or perhaps they are liabilities that they want to turn into assets, risk becomes very important. Some of that work is done on a scale that is appropriate at the UK level, rather than at the level of each nation.

Q212 Lord Morgan: The social union and the idea of the social solidarity of the different parts of the United Kingdom is something that has been widely stressed. Different views are taken of it, of course, are they not? Between Scotland and Wales, for example, in terms of the way policy is currently going, there might be a feeling that social provision would be different and less robust in some parts of the country. The Scotland Bill appears to provide for additional assistance from the Scottish Government, through fiscal autonomy, compared with what might be received in other parts of the country—in Wales or, indeed, the poorer areas of England. Do you feel this kind of consideration is a risk for the idea of a social union?

Tony Armstrong: We do not take a particular view on the advantage or disadvantage or whether or not it is desirable to have further devolution or separation. The principle that really guides us is that decisions should be taken at the closest possible level—the subsidiarity principle. We know that currently at a UK level, or indeed any of the other levels of governance, decisions are taken at a level that is inappropriately distant from local communities. It is certainly something that we have been concerned about with the moves for English devolution: the danger is that, in using the rhetoric of pushing powers down closer to local people and communities, we will end up centralising some powers at a sub-regional level. For us it is not so much about the governance at the UK level and between the individual nations and regions; it is between local neighbourhoods and local community decision-making, and then the various decision-making powers above that.

Paul Nowak: The comment that I would make, Lord Morgan, is that we are very acutely aware, representing people across all of the regions and nations, that there is no value in having regions and nations pitted against each other and in some sort of competitive situation. There are very clear risks, just as there are clear benefits, to the whole devolution agenda. Just to share a couple of thoughts on those, in our contact with the Smith commission, for example, we were very clear that we did not feel that there was a case for devolution of issues

like the national minimum wage or employment and trade union law. We think it is important that, wherever you live in Great Britain, you are subject to the same provisions in terms of employment law and you have the same rights at work, whether you work in Glasgow or Guildford. Likewise, on the national minimum wage, we were very concerned that could have been the precursor for the regionalisation of the national minimum wage more broadly. At a time when the economy is still fragile, that means regions having the potential to set lower minimum wages, competing against each other on the basis of who has the lowest minimum wage. We do not think that sort of race to the bottom does anybody any favours at all.

Likewise, we have real concerns about issues around regional pay, and maybe we will get into this during the course of the discussion, but just as people are worried about a postcode approach to the provision of services, so we would be concerned about a postcode approach to pay terms and conditions. One of the things that we have argued consistently over the last few years—at the same time as supporting devolution and the developments in Scotland and Wales, and devolution in the English regions—is that we do not want to see that at the detriment of public sector pay terms and conditions. It is interesting, for example, that many of our largest successful private sector organisations maintain national pay frameworks, because they are coherent, they make sense and they address issues around equality, and we would not want to see the move towards devolution, either in the nations or regions, leading to any negative impact on pay terms and conditions.

Lord Morgan: I am very sympathetic to that, but you rightly say, Mr Nowak, that you do not want to pit one region, or indeed nation, against another, which is entirely right, but is that not in danger of happening? The Scotland Bill, as I say, does appear to allow for the possibilities of social security payments being distinctly stronger and better in Scotland than in other parts of the UK.

Paul Nowak: Some of those concerns are part of the reasoning underpinning the move in the English regions to greater devolution, and we are seeing developments in not just Greater Manchester but in the north-east and Birmingham as well. From the TUC's perspective, we are very clear there needs to be a common set of standards around things like welfare, employment law and rights at work. That is to the benefit of workers in Scotland, in Wales and across England as well.

Lord Morgan: Thank you.

Q213 Lord MacGregor of Pulham Market: It seems to me you are in an almost impossible situation. The whole principle of devolution, and we are going to see it in a whole set of areas, is for local parts of the UK to decide. We are already seeing it in Scotland on tuition fees, and

other things. Is it not inevitable that, if you give greater powers to the devolved assemblies, they will use those powers and it will lead to differences in the very things you do not want to see differences in?

Paul Nowak: To be clear, there have been very clear differences emerging over the last few years in areas like education and health. Some of those I would characterise as positive differences. If you take the approach to education, for example, in both Scotland and Wales, successive Scottish and Welsh Governments have decided not to go down the route of academies, free schools and the fragmentation of education, and the teaching unions and teachers that we represent would see that as a positive step forward. It is important that we do have a devolution settlement such that those national Governments can take responsibility for those areas. From my point of view, I would not want to see as a consequence of that teachers working in Cardiff being employed on poorer terms and conditions than those employed in Colchester, by dint of the nation in which they work.

There will be differences, and again there will be positive differences. If you think about public service reform and the pressures on public finances, we know whether you are in Scotland, Wales or England—across the regions—public finances are under pressure. If you look at Wales, one of its characteristics—and it is not perfect, by any stretch of the imagination—is that over the last few years they have tried to embed a partnership approach to those very difficult issues around public service reform. Local government, employers, the Welsh Government, trade unions and the voluntary sector sit down in a workforce partnership council to try to mitigate the worst impacts of those pressures on public spending and to navigate the way through public service reform. There are always, clearly, going to be risks but, as I say, there are also positive experiences to draw on from the devolved Administrations. Maybe one of the bits of learning is how we better share some of the best practice between Scotland, Wales and increasingly the English regions, as we move forward.

Q214 Baroness Taylor of Bolton: You are talking about positive differences, in terms of top-ups. Do you think there is a definitive list of those areas of public policy that must be determined from the centre, or at least where there must be a floor from the centre, and if so what does it include? Healthcare? Welfare? Where would you see the situation developing in the future, for example with the steel redundancies that we have had? If we had the same steel company in the north of England and in Scotland, with different top-ups, would you see that as positive or would you see that as undermining the principle of equalisation of conditions?

Paul Nowak: Steel is a good example of the need for action at a regional/national level, but also at a UK-wide level. While there may be additional support that, for example, the Scottish

Government might provide for particular companies, some of the big issues facing our steel industry, whether subsidies to mitigate the impact of carbon taxes or the issue of China's market economy status, can only be dealt with by the UK Government. I would be very wary, Baroness Taylor, of saying there is a definitive list of areas that should or should not be devolved. We are moving towards the situation we have in Wales, where it is incumbent on the Westminster Government to identify areas. Going back to Tony's point on subsidiarity, why could you not devolve an issue?

There are some things, such as defence, where I do not think there would be any appetite, but with macroeconomic policy there is a recognition that you have to have a view across the whole of the UK. Clearly, though, there is education and health, and there are colleagues in Wales pressing for, for example, thinking about policing in Wales and the scope for extending powers in that regard. I would be wary of a list, and I suppose that the point I would stress is the interaction between what happens at a national/regional level and what happens on a UK-wide level, as well, and steel is a good example of where you need action by Government right across the piece.

Sorry, Lord Cullen, for a very long-winded answer, but there was some really positive work done in Wales, for example, in the aftermath of the crash in 2008. They set up ReAct and ProAct, which were schemes to mitigate the impact of or avoid redundancies. That was a piece of learning that could have been applied in other parts of the UK as well. Jobs were saved in key sectors like automotive, because the Welsh Government took positive, proactive action.

The Chairman: Mr Armstrong, do you have anything to add?

Tony Armstrong: We do not take a particular view on the UK settlement, being an England-only organisation. I suppose, as a fairly neutral observation, what has been quite interesting is the impact on the charitable sector as devolution has unfolded, because more UK-focused organisations have found it now impossible to act on a UK basis, and so have federated or become separate organisations. In our own case, we are now four separate organisations with our own independent boards and independently constituted organisations, when a few years ago we used to operate much more as one single set of organisations. Although we have always had strong individual focus in each of the four nations, we have become wholly separate now. It is more about a partnership of equals, because the political, policy and regulatory environment is now so different in each of the four areas. Again, it is about learning. We all look longingly at various aspects of the policy environment in each of the four, depending on the combinations, but it is quite an interesting development. It has made

the job of the charities sector slightly more difficult, in managing that transition, but it is quite interesting now that we have more equal relationships.

Q215 Lord Norton of Louth: I have similar questions, I suppose, but within the context of England and the devolution taking place, because it is not uniform. We are seeing asymmetrical decentralisation, and the evidence we have had on it so far is varied. Adam Tomkins saw it as a virtue; Professor Robert Hazell said he thought it was probably not sustainable. How do you see the benefits and disbenefits of asymmetrical decentralisation from your perspective? Is there the danger that some are going to be left behind as a result of the process that we are presently seeing?

Tony Armstrong: For us there is a very parochial difficulty. It becomes even harder to keep in touch with, lobby, support and feed into the differences, because you have wholly different structures springing up in different places. For the voluntary and community sector in general, it becomes more difficult to keep track of that. One of the things that we have highlighted as a particular difficulty is that, with the move to create self-sufficient local authority funding streams, you end up potentially mainstreaming deprivation into funding settlements, because you have a lower tax base for people to use, and if you are relying on generating your own income, obviously you have different possibilities depending on where you are and who lives in the area.

We have not yet seen an answer to that problem, and I know that there is a Government consultation on transferring some resources, but it is a really big problem for us. That is our major concern, and a lot of our members are operating in some of the most challenged neighbourhoods, and they have often had minimal public sector investment, lots of social problems, which are increasing, and it is going to be difficult to sustain funding using locally generated income from that neighbourhood.

In parallel we have also seen the withdrawal of lots of services from some of those more deprived neighbourhoods and challenged areas. In some cases, local council offices have now been centralised, perhaps to the town hall, so on an estate or in a particular neighbourhood you do not have those strategy services operating. There is now a weird transfer of wealth going from the neighbourhood in terms of council rents and things that people are paying for locally, and they are not getting back the services locally in that neighbourhood. It is a double whammy: you are withdrawing those services as well as seeing that reduction in overall income for the area.

Paul Nowak: I will just pick up one thing, Lord Norton, from Tony's contribution, and then maybe talk a little about asymmetry more broadly. All of this is happening in the context of

very difficult pressures on public sector spending—a 37% cut in local government funding from central government over the last five years—and that puts real pressures on our core cities and regions right across the UK. I would say that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with having an asymmetrical approach. I do not think there is a blueprint for devolution. By necessity, devolution is going to look slightly different in the north-east than it will do in the Midlands. There are some very real concerns out there that are fed back to me from regional TUCs about whether this rush towards devolution works in some parts of the country. Yes, we can see how it works in Manchester and potentially in Liverpool and in Birmingham; we are struggling to see how it works in the south-west, where you have a much more disparate region and you do not have the same sort of core cities across the region. There are concerns very much there.

Rather than having a blueprint, there are some fundamentals that you need to see in all of the devolution settlements. From the TUC perspective, that would be things like positively engaging the workforce. We have done work in Greater Manchester as part of the Devo-Manc deal. We have just agreed a protocol on handling workforce issues, which brings together the different unions representing people across the different parts of public services in Manchester, in health, in higher and further education and in local government. How are we going to work together with the new devolved machinery in Manchester? We would extend that and say there is a need to engage not just the workforce but the local citizens and civic society organisations as well, and there is probably learning that can be taken from the best of the old regional assemblies in that regard: how you empower voluntary and community sector organisations, trade unions, local businesses and others to engage in these new structures. That is important.

The one thing that is missing from our perspective is, if we agree that there is no blueprint for what devolution looks like, do we have a shared vision of what we want devolution to deliver? It is clear, because of those funding pressures, lots of local authorities are reaching out for these deals, quite rightly, because I understand in this context that, if you are a local authority leader, anything that improves your financial position is something you are going to look at positively. However, they are reaching out without clearly thinking through what they want devolution to deliver. For me, it is not devolution for devolution's sake. It is thinking: is there a shared vision within the region or locality? Can we use this not just to boost the regional economy but to make this a better, fairer place to live? Can we improve the quality of employment? Can we use the procurement opportunities that we have, the economies of scale, to drive improvements in the procurement process and the supply chain? It is the vision bit

that is missing, and partly because there has been a rush, the money has been dangled; I understand absolutely why people say, “It is important that we make these deals, because we need that cash, and we need it now, as well as the additional responsibilities that the deals bring”.

Lord Norton of Louth: I suppose that the question is then, how would you get people to agree the vision? There has to be agreement.

Paul Nowak: There has to be a vision that goes beyond the leaders of the particular local authorities within a locality. We held an event just before Christmas in York, which brought together union representatives from across the country, local authority leaders, including Simon Henig, from the combined authorities in the north-east, and community and voluntary organisations; Tony Lloyd was there from Manchester. One of the criticisms that came across very loud at that event was that people felt these were deals done behind closed doors. If you are serious about reinvigorating local democracy, how do you engage local people right from the outset rather than presenting them with a *fait accompli*? Now, again, I would not take anything away from local authority leaders across the political spectrum. We know the pressures they are under. In many ways the timing of this is being taken out of their hands, but it is important to find ways right at the outset of engaging the broader spread of civic society, rather than this being seen as a deal done behind closed doors by local authority leaders.

Tony Armstrong: We would definitely agree with that. The development of some of the deals and geographical combinations of authorities is quite interesting. We have been doing a lot of work in Yorkshire, and there have been various negotiations going on about who is in and who is out of various deals, which is done entirely without any public accountability or scrutiny. Some of the councillors that we have been talking about in local authorities have also been completely in the dark about some of the negotiations being carried out.

There is a necessity, I guess, to restrict negotiations to a small group of people to make it workable, but where is that debate about what kind of area you want to have? One of the things we have been saying in the paper that was mentioned earlier is whether there can be some kind of mini constitutional convention—that type of approach—where you bring in civil society and people from outside the public sector to talk about what kind of city, city region or county we want to have. The deals have been made because there has been a particular process that has been introduced, and that has been externally imposed, but let us use this now as a starting point to say, “Actually, okay, we have established the geographical boundaries. We have swallowed an elected mayor for the region. What do we want to see in terms of the

onward devolution opportunities down to communities, and can we create that positive vision?”

Q216 Lord Norton of Louth: I am from Hull and on the commission that is trying to do this at the moment, and we are about to report. I suppose the question is, from what you have said, what if agreement is not reached? If there is no shared vision—if you cannot bring people together, whereas other parts are reaching agreement—does that not create the position that Robert Hazell was saying may be unsustainable?

Tony Armstrong: We have said this is a process, not an end result. We are at the stage where we are imposed largely by central government’s timing on it. I suspect it is going to take quite a lot of time to build up trust and any sense of interest in a lot of these areas. We have been talking to some of our members and they are some of the most established—they have the most capacity within the community and voluntary sector to engage—and very small numbers of them are knowledgeable about what is happening in their local area or have the capacity or inclination to feed into things. That is one of the reasons why we have been interested at a national level in saying, “You really must be interested in this, because decisions are going to be taken that will directly impact on your work”, such as where commissioning sits in these new structures.

I suspect it will be bumpy and it will be a long-term process, but unless you build up that conversation across civil society, we are definitely guaranteed to have alienation from the process and poor access to decision-making processes. In some areas, let us not forget, people have voted against having mayors and now have elected mayors. I know they are not the same geographical coverage, but that is quite a tricky thing to explain to local people, along with why things are happening. It is imperative that you have that ongoing process of consultation and involvement of people, or else you are just going to have, at best, complete ignorance and a lack of engagement with the new structures.

Paul Nowak: I would just reinforce the point. It is incumbent on national government not to set artificial deadlines or in some way to guillotine the opportunity. From the TUC’s perspective, it is better that these deals are worked out and done well than necessarily done quickly. Obviously, you are always going to struggle to get absolute consensus, but I genuinely think local politicians working with local businesses, local community sector organisations and organisations like trade unions—we had experience through the regional assemblies and regional development agencies—can build, if not consensus, a shared vision.

The only other point I would add, Lord Norton, is about capacity. It is important to provide the space for community and voluntary sector organisations and, from my point of view, trade

unions to engage in these new structures, but you have to help build the capacity for people to engage in those structures as well. We have about 160,000 workplace representatives; we train 65,000 workplace representatives each year. Am I confident that in all of these new devolved arrangements we would have fully skilled, fully trained, confident union reps who could go in and articulate the concerns and issues of working people? We would struggle right at the outset, and so thinking again about how local government can facilitate capacity-building is important. I used to be the TUC's regional secretary up in the north-east during the days of One North East, the regional development agency, and the regional assembly. We did a lot of work to try to build a capacity of not just unions but community and voluntary sector organisations to engage in the new structures, because just giving people a seat at the table is no good if they are not properly supported to be able to take full advantage of that opportunity.

Q217 Lord MacLennan of Rogart: What I would really like to hear is how you would structure public engagement so that you and your organisations can get the message across or derive the message from the public. You mentioned a convention and you talked about taking time, but it does seem to me that the issues of decentralisation are with us and, if we delay too much, we could face the break-up of Britain. How would you like to see this structured?

Tony Armstrong: For us, it is about building on existing networks and on what is already there. Often, when particularly local authority consultation is done poorly, it is because it is done in a rush and as an exercise because you had to tick a box, rather than going to where people are engaged in conversations about what is needed locally. A very good recent example is Leeds City Council, where we were talking to the Chief Executive about the deal in West Yorkshire. They had got all of their cabinet out and gone to community organisations, held their cabinet meeting there and talked to people who were in and out of the centre, rather than asking, in a fairly dry exercise, what people think about the future. There are lots of organisations, infrastructure organisations, community anchor organisations, that we represent and other voluntary bodies out there that have direct access to client groups or service users—people who are experiencing some of the services that are on offer or some of the things that are at stake. Going to those groups and talking to those people directly is something that is really useful, rather than overlaying a rather bureaucratic process on top of that.

Lord MacLennan of Rogart: Who should be doing that?

Tony Armstrong: It should be certainly local councils and other public sector bodies as well, like the NHS. The NHS is sometimes poor at engaging with the public. It tends to be focused

on patients rather than thinking about the public in general. We have seen that increasingly as prevention types of funding and prevention services have declined.

If you are having a conversation in the context of devolution deals, when you are setting up the new structures—and usually that will be led by local authority officers and councillors—decision-making routes need to be built into the process, and consultation and engagement routes into those. Although it is not a long-term gap before things happen—I am not suggesting that people sit around for three years discussing what area they want to look at—it is more of an iterative process. By all means implement the deals, get on with the elected mayors, because that is happening, and think about where budgets are going to be delegated, but alongside that also have an ongoing conversation about how decisions can be devolved further to local neighbourhoods and communities.

One of the ideas that we have suggested that deserves discussion is whether, rather than shifting responsibilities around various bits of the public sector, you could shift responsibility out to civil society, to existing community and voluntary organisations, many of which are already delivering public services on a contractual basis. You could take a step further and think about setting them up as partners to statutory bodies, who could then ask for a review of particular statutory services and then take on more responsibility, with appropriate oversight and accountability, which obviously needs to be built in. Rather than just thinking of it as the public sector deciding which bits they will let go of and which bits they will retain and how to rearrange them, other people can play a bigger role, which is the big society concept. I think that was the original intention of it: that community organisations can play a more active role in delivering and designing services at a more locally appropriate level.

Paul Nowak: To reiterate what I said before, Lord MacLennan, we would support the idea of civil society forums that underpin these new devolved arrangements in the English regions, but I would make a particular pitch for the need to engage the workforce. When I talk about the workforce, I do not just mean the directly employed public sector workforce—those people delivering health services or local authority services in a particular area. If you are serious about economic regeneration and about a shared effort to improve economic performance, think about how you engage workers across the private sector as well. One of the critiques I would have of existing pieces of architecture, things like the local enterprise partnerships, is that they are very narrowly defined; it is local authorities and local businesses. We do not think about how the public service can support economic development; we do not think about how you engage the workforce in that process. These are not new ideas: going back to the old days of the training and enterprise councils, there used to be union

representatives sitting on those; union and employee representatives sat on the regional development agencies. You need to think about ways of reaching out beyond local politicians. It is important to make the point that it is not as if the situation on the ground is perfect now. People quite often feel disconnected from local government. They certainly do not have any sense that they have any say in how local health budgets are allocated or those priorities are identified. We saw with the turnout for the police and crime commissioners that people do not seem to be demonstrating the sense that they really own these new posts. This could be an opportunity to reinvigorate local democracy and should be seen as an opportunity to do so. For me, that means more than just asking people to put a tick in a box once a year at their local council elections. It is giving them other types of opportunities to get engaged.

Lord MacLennan of Rogart: Who should take the initiative to stimulate what you are describing?

Paul Nowak: Ultimately, the responsibility in each of the devolved arrangements will lie with local authorities, but I would like to see clear guidance coming from central government saying, “We are not going to set out the blueprint for devolution, but there are some fundamentals that we think should be part of every devolution deal”. That would involve setting out how you are going to actively engage local civic society, setting out how you are going to engage the workforce, and setting out how you are going to use this as an opportunity to boost local democracy rather than to circumvent local democracy. Central government could insist on that as part of their process of agreeing these new devolved arrangements and set some of those basic benchmarks.

Q218 Lord Lester of Herne Hill: Do you think that devolution in general and decentralisation in England in particular risk making lines of accountability for public policy less clear?

Tony Armstrong: Inevitably, that is happening right now in terms of who is accountable for who is in and who is out of various geographical combinations and what kind of powers. As I said, many councillors are completely absent from those conversations, so in terms of the process currently that is a huge risk about being unaccountable. I think, though, we probably have to look at how to treat accountability slightly differently in devolution. One thing we have been saying to our members is it is going to be more annoying for all of us to engage with, because there is not going to be a neat pattern of structures that is consistent across the country. There are going to be different things that happen in different areas, and so everybody needs to respond to those in a different way.

There are some more interesting things we can think about in terms of accountability. Some of what I was just saying around devolving powers potentially to non-public-sector bodies or community organisations would be a prime candidate for that, to deliver aspects of services or to fulfil parts of what are currently local authority responsibilities. There has to be accountability around that, but it does not necessarily need to be all routed through a local authority/councillor state.

Echoing what Paul was saying, the current situation is already quite fraught with unaccountability in the system. If we think about the commissioning framework, at the moment commissioning is a problem with local authorities. We are seeing an increase in the scale of contracts, which means that lots of local providers are effectively blocked out of even competing for some of those contracts. If you are letting a big contract because you need to save money and you have put lots of services in one pot and then put it out to the market at £20 million, you are not going to get many local providers who are able to deliver that. We have seen outsourcing companies and large national charities being the only people who can bid for things, undermining current contract delivery from small businesses and small community organisations. The relationship between the democratic accountability of how they manage those contracts and the delivery is already very opaque in terms of who is really accountable for delivering some of those things, and we have seen some contracts being handed back to the state unfinished, leaving a huge problem.

I would argue it is not particularly accountable at the moment, so are there ways that you can break down some of that? For us, it is about the principle of keeping it local, making sure that local providers are able to bid for things. Although it may seem that it is not a cost saving for a council to have relationships with many providers locally, there is a myth that people are saving money by that scale and standardisation happening at the moment.

If you have closer relationships on an ongoing basis with smaller organisations, we think there is more knowledge that is happening between local council officers and councillors and local organisations. There is more direct accountability from the delivery agencies because they are from the local area and, therefore, have a stake in the success and economic growth of the local area. Very importantly, they are retaining wealth and employment locally, so not just having money going out to a head office but staying in the area. If you look at that in terms of the accountability to the local area, retaining economic growth and the proceeds of growth in an area, you start to have a different conversation about how to imagine services being disbursed and how contracts are let.

Paul Nowak: Going back to your question as to whether lines of accountability are in danger of being blurred, I think they could be. One of the concerns that we have is that you have devolution of responsibilities without devolution of adequate resources to accompany those responsibilities. If you think about the most advanced devolution arrangements in the English regions, in Manchester, Greater Manchester councils have lost £1.5 billion worth of central government funding since 2010. The independent King's Fund says that it faces a health-funding deficit over the next five years of £2 billion. You can achieve a lot of efficiencies and savings by combining and integrating health and social care in Greater Manchester over the next five years; you are going to be pushing it to find efficiencies that will deliver £2 billion worth of savings. There is a danger that the responsibility is devolved and pinned on local politicians and it allows national government to say, "That is your responsibility. We gave you those powers. You are responsible for running health and social care in Greater Manchester".

There does need to be a serious and grown-up discussion about funding for our public services. If this was happening at a time of growing public spending, more investment in local government, more investment in health, it would be a very different picture from the one now, where people are having to make very difficult decisions on funding and on local authority employment in particular. From speaking to local politicians, I know that they want to step up and take responsibility on behalf of their local communities, but they are worried about what the reaction of the voters is going to be in a few years' time when national government turns around and says, "This is all down to you. You have had the tools". There is a danger that lines of accountability do get blurred if resources are not put in place to support these new arrangements.

Lord Lester of Herne Hill: As I understand your evidence, you are not advocating some form of legally enforceable set of standards as, for example, you have for equal pay for women where, because of EU legislation in particular, devolution does not allow unequal pay for women to prevail. However, you are not advocating, are you, some legally enforceable set of standards that would protect what you regard as the national interest?

Tony Armstrong: No.

Paul Nowak: No. If you take health as a very real example, we have long been supporters and proponents of integrated health and social care. One of the interesting things about the developments in Manchester is that is a fundamental part of the new arrangements—a drive to integrate health and social care across Greater Manchester. That is a good thing, but we want that within the context of a national health service. How do you maintain national standards?

How do you ensure that people in Greater Manchester still get the quality healthcare that you get in other parts of the country? I do not think that is by setting legally mandated targets, but it does pose a question about, rather than imposing targets or standards from the top, what the process is for devolved authorities, national government and national government departments to agree the standards they will apply, so it does not matter if you live in Greater Manchester or in Guilford: you can still expect to be seen by a doctor within a certain time. I do not think that is a set of legal standards. It is about local government and Westminster working together to set mutually agreed standards. The National Health Service should remain a national health service, albeit it is responsive to the needs of local communities.

The Chairman: We have to stop there. Thank you very much indeed for your evidence on the basis of your experience and the perspective of the organisations that you represent. Thank you indeed.

Examination of Witnesses

Professor Matthew Flinders, Sheffield University, and **Katie Ghose**, Chief Executive, Electoral Reform Society

Q219 The Chairman: Can I welcome Professor Matthew Flinders and Katie Ghose, Chief Executive of the Electoral Reform Society? I know that each of you has been taking a leading role in setting up the pilots for citizens' assemblies. What do you see as the product of these pilots? What do they demonstrate or what do they show can be done?

Professor Flinders: For me, what is probably the best or the suggested main output of the assemblies relates to the fact that we live in a time dominated by a lot of cynicism about politics and about the public's interest in politics. As a political scientist, for me what has been most amazing about these pilot assemblies—Assembly North in Sheffield and Assembly South in Southampton—is the huge public appetite to learn about what is going on and to get engaged and give up their time to learn, to deliberate and to come to a view on things in a way that really goes against a lot of the academic literature. However, the public want to have informed debate. They do not want to feel that they are involved in tokenistic window dressing. They want to feel that there is a link between what they are contributing to and the policy-making world. Give them that link and there is a desire for fresh ways of doing politics.

Katie Ghose: I will build on that a little. I would absolutely echo the real ability and willingness we saw among citizens, many of whom are not in the usual business of being engaged with formal political debate, to grapple with quite complex issues of governance. That was very encouraging. There was an incredibly high retention rate between the two weekends. The people who came along absolutely got hold of the issues and said things like, "This has really blown me away and I want more knowledge and learning". The other important thing we did and I took away from it was the difference in doing a deliberative exercise, if you like, that is spread out into phases. There is a learning phase, where people get up to speed on the status quo and how local or national government works, then there is a consultation phase where they can take on views of the wider public, and then there is a deliberation phase where they challenge each other's views and so on. Those phases worked, and we were doing this in miniature, if you like, but the lesson I took away is a lot of what we did could be scaled up and done on a UK-wide basis in a constitutional convention.

The Chairman: I want to ask you about that, because obviously the pilots were of comparatively small groups and they were, perhaps, quite strongly stage-managed, handled

and so on in order to get the best out of the members of the groups. You think this can be replicated over a larger scale.

Katie Ghose: Yes, very much so. A lot of the lessons we learned were about how to get a reasonably representative sample of the population, the importance of having quite a focused agenda and a topic that can be dealt with in the time available, but also having a little open space for people to discuss or deliberate other topics as well. There are definitely some lessons there that could be scaled up.

The Chairman: I notice that with the pilots, for example, the members of the groups were handpicked, if that is the right word, and a lot of care was taken to make sure that the personal experience was tailored to the occasion, as it were. They were not put under too much pressure and were given some time to think and so on. Is that possible? Can one do that on a larger scale?

Professor Flinders: The participants in the assemblies were not handpicked. We commissioned YouGov to approach and recruit members for the assemblies. We had a fairly good cross-representation of society. In fact, one of the interesting things about the pilots was that they uncovered areas such as, if you were to scale up, how you might have to have random sampling that you then came back to with more targeted recruitment to make up for specific areas of society that had not come through the random sampling. There was certainly no handpicking, and lots of people who were involved had not had any involvement with politics ever before.

The issue with stage management and support is absolutely key, and there is no doubt it would be possible to organise a citizens' assembly and to the assembly schedule, the selection of invited speakers, the influence of the facilitators etc. in order to manipulate the process and increase the chances of obtaining a certain outcome or recommendation. We had an advisory board of directors of large national and regional citizens' assemblies from all over the world who advised on how to avoid these risks. One of the things we spent a lot of time on was, at the beginning of the assembly, allowing the members to decide the principles and values, the rules of the game for their own assembly and what they wanted to look at. One of the challenges, as an investigator, was that we had to be responsive by the hour to what the assembly said they wanted us to deliver for them and change and be very flexible around them. It was a very interesting and positive experiment.

Q220 Baroness Taylor of Bolton: I would like to follow up in terms of the selection. You have mentioned that to a certain extent, but by definition people who come to an event like that have either a confidence or an ability or an interest, which you are reinforcing or tapping

into. Could you remind us of the numbers and the timescale of what you were doing and how much involvement there was? Also, did you do anything to find out whether, having brought people into the citizens' assembly, they then became interested in more mainstream politics or went as visitors to council meetings or got involved in any other way and sustained that interest?

Professor Flinders: That is a fantastic question. One of the challenges of the organisers was that the assemblies lasted over an eight-week process with two residential weekends within those eight weeks. The members of the assemblies tended to work together, as a community, online between the weekends, and a huge number started going off and meeting their MPs and councillors, and organising community events on their own. There was a real dynamism that took off.

On the initial recruitment of members, we worked with YouGov. They had a large sample database in our two regions of the country of several thousand people. A random process was used to invite cross-sections to express an interest. You are absolutely right about the self-selection issue. These were people who had already, in effect, joined the YouGov panels, and that is a key issue. There is no hiding that at all, but then we went through and made sure that we spoke on the phone to all the people, from a range of different backgrounds, who had expressed an interest. We explained exactly what was needed. The support for members of the assemblies is absolutely critical, because we had lots of people turning up from all over South Yorkshire who knew nothing about politics, and they were really scared. They were very nervous about what they were doing, so we had more facilitators and staff than we did actual public members at each assembly in order to ensure a supportive environment, using brilliant volunteer students who had their own specialist training. That support for people to allow them to be confident and speak openly throughout the process was key—so a lot of personal care. Having a citizens' assembly is a resource-intensive process, but not necessarily in terms of money. We have a specific short note from YouGov on some of the challenges of recruiting a large cross-section of society, which I am happy to send to the Committee after today's meeting.

More broadly, in politics there is a rising level of democratic inequality, particularly among the economically disadvantaged and the young. What became clear—and this is the great reason for having a pilot—was that if you were to do an assembly on a national basis, you would have to be far more proactive than maybe the polling companies would be on their own, but that has happened in other countries. That is not a challenge that would undermine the whole system, but you would have to be far more proactive in making sure that the final

number of 100 people or 150 people really was representative as a whole. Once you brought the people together, it was critical to make sure they had the support, in all sorts of different ways—even the tiny things—that allowed them to forget everything outside and just commit to the process. What was fantastic was our retention rate: 100% of the people who turned up for assembly 1 came back for assembly 2. At the end of assembly 2, we asked the members, “How many of you would be willing to stay involved with the process and appear in Parliament or appear at public events to talk about your experience?” It was 100%.

Baroness Taylor of Bolton: How many people did you have?

Professor Flinders: The initial plan was to have 45 members of the public on each of the assemblies, one in the south and one in the north. We ended up with around 35 people on each assembly, because we had no-shows from those who were not coming. The difference between the two assemblies was that the northern assembly was a pure assembly, just made up of members of the public; Assembly South was a hybrid assembly of two-thirds public, one-third politicians. One of the challenges there was that politicians are busy people. Getting politicians to attend and commit to two full weekends proved to be a big ask, but again that is part of the learning process.

The Chairman: The process of recruitment would, presumably, be intended to exclude people who had, let us say, extreme views, is that right?

Katie Ghose: No, not necessarily.

The Chairman: Well, an agenda.

Katie Ghose: One of the values of doing a deliberative exercise where you do a random representative sample, if you like, is that it challenges people to come along and have their views challenged, and this was something that we saw in real time, if you like. Some people came along and they had a party affiliation but many people did not; some people were involved in politics but many people were not. Over the course of the two weekends, with the three weeks in between of the online deliberations, quite a lot of people did have their preconceptions or prior views challenged and they changed their minds over time. Therefore, what you are trying to do is get a reasonably representative sample of the population, and that must include people who have all kinds of views within it.

The Chairman: Let me put this to you: our attention was drawn to a blog by Dr Alan Renwick of his experience, in which he said, “The alternative of allowing anyone to participate who wants to inevitably attracts an unrepresentative proportion of political junkies, many of them with particular axes to grind”.

Katie Ghose: Yes, exactly. If you do not do it in a thoughtful way and it is up to the usual suspects to trot along to something, that is one way of doing it. We were designing it and doing it in a real attempt to reach out and get a reasonably representative sample of the population. The difference between that and the idea of a constitutional convention writ large, if you like, is that you really do your best. It is important to say it is not just about the formal assembly members who were there. A good design of a constitutional convention has lots of public meetings going along on the side, with lots of opportunities to feed in. The interest groups, if you like, and the politicians are vital, as are the technical experts to come along and give evidence to the assembly members. It is important to look at that broader picture of how to get as many views in as possible.

Professor Flinders: I did a piece for the *Yorkshire Post* about the assemblies a week or so before they were due to start and I made the mistake of putting my email on the end of the article. I was inundated with hundreds and hundreds of people who had very strong views and wanted to be on the assembly, asking how they could get on it. Of course, we did not want to fill the assembly just with those who were already politically active and interested. We wanted some of those, but we wanted a broader cross-section. What was fascinating, for me, when we started off the assembly was that it was clear there were some very extreme views and some strong characters. However, as the assembly process went on, a lot of those characters became far more quiet, calm and thoughtful, and lots of the people who had not had an interest in politics became more confident and started getting involved.

Q221 Lord MacGregor of Pulham Market: How could a constitutional convention best be used to address questions around devolution and the territorial constitution? Could a single convention deal with the issue or should the regions and nations of the UK each be asked to contribute?

Katie Ghose: The design should probably combine or be conceived of as a single project that stretches across the UK but that can have some conversations among citizens of each nation and then some opportunity for cross-border conversations as well.

Lord MacGregor of Pulham Market: What is the ultimate objective?

Katie Ghose: Of a constitutional convention?

Lord MacGregor of Pulham Market: Yes. I am trying to align this to the answers to the previous question about the citizens' assemblies. What is the long-term objective?

Katie Ghose: We have some good learnings now from the assemblies. We were really careful to have a question that could feasibly be addressed in the time. The question for these local pilots was, essentially, "Where do you want power to lie in your local area?" For reasons of

time and resource, that was quite a limited question, if you like. We did not particularly stray into the whole issue of where power should lie between and among the nations of the UK. That was sensible for the pilots. The design and the ambition or objective for a constitutional convention should very much look at the territorial issues and the power and the identity issues of how the nations of the UK are going to relate to each other as well as devolution within the nations. I am not an advocate of the kitchen sink, as it were, where you organise a convention and you throw in every single constitution and political reform issue. It should be the objective of that convention to really unearth the territorial and identity issues in a sensible fashion.

Professor Flinders: For me, the one thing to be clear on is that a constitutional convention is not going to be a panacea for the problems of the constitution that we face. There are complex challenges and there are no simple solutions. The great benefit of a constitutional convention in the current context is that there is a gap—and a very real gap—between formal politics and politicians and then the broader public and, particularly, sections of the public. Also, the model of English devolution that is currently being proposed is very different from the models of devolution that have come forward in Scotland and Wales. There is a need to avoid the view that this is just another top-down process. There is a need for fresh ways to re-engage with the public and give them an opportunity to feed in, in a meaningful way. In a sense, you might say that there is a symbolic as well as a practical, empirical reason for having this citizens' assembly. That symbolic view that the political world is listening, that it can do things differently, is itself very important.

The \$100 million question, though, to think about is the reconnection point or the nexus. You have a big constitutional convention, it is very successful, it gets a lot of public and media attention, it creates a groundswell of democratic energy, but then what? In some countries, politicians have been brave and have said, "Whatever the citizens' assembly comes up with, its recommendations will be put directly to the public". In other countries, the recommendations have been purely advisory and have been left on the shelf. There is a great danger around constitutional innovation in that there is nothing worse than raising the public's expectations and then dashing them, because you make things seem worse than they were already. There is a real need to think about where, if there was a constitutional convention, the final report and recommendations would go in terms of feeding it back into the formal democratic process.

Lord MacGregor of Pulham Market: I am struggling still to work out exactly what this constitutional convention does. Who would be the people attending it, for example?

Katie Ghose: Building on the citizens' assembly pilots, you would be getting a representative sample of the population in the different areas. There is quite a strong case—and this is what we tried to do with the pilots—for giving English citizens a say, given that Scottish citizens have had a lot of say over the future of their democracy. English citizens have not had that opportunity. If you were to do a series, for example, of regional conventions to get the constitutional conversation going, you would be drawing a reasonably representative random sample of citizens from among those regions. I would strongly advocate for it to be two-thirds citizens and one-third politicians. They could be a mixture of local and national elected politicians, because there is real value in people and politicians coming together to resolve some of these issues. That would be my direct answer to who the people would be. Other people it would be vital to involve would be experts and advocates, who would come along and have a role as evidence-givers and witnesses to the meetings.

Lord MacGregor of Pulham Market: I was a Member of Parliament for quite a long time and spent, as others here, a great deal of time not only in my own constituency and all the organisations you deal with having these sort of discussions but also more broadly and more widely. I am struggling to see how this approach and the people you are involving in very complex issues could contribute to the general thinking once you get into issues of different levels of assemblies and so on and different regions, and the extremely difficult questions of finance and how you allocate and all that—all of those very complex questions that many of us struggle with for a very long time very intensively.

Katie Ghose: Even in this mini-pilot, where people had two intensive weekends and three weeks between, I think you would have been really struck, as Matthew and I were, by their sheer ability to grapple with those complexities. Once people are given that opportunity to have knowledge shared with them and to develop their own knowledge—and Alan Renwick and others have examined this when they looked at similar exercises in other countries—there is absolutely an ability to deal with complexity in the citizenry. It is a question of giving them the tools, resources and the time to do it.

Q222 Baroness Taylor of Bolton: I will be restrained. How does this fit in to the whole principle of representative democracy?

Professor Flinders: Good question. I think it fits in. I hate to say such a phrase among such esteemed company, but there is a massive debate about what has been termed 'post-democracy' and what is happening in most people's lives and politics. The public are involved in politics; they might not admit it or understand it, but their everyday politics is a million miles away from the formal political processes or the institutions that we are in today.

This is an adjunct. It is an evolution of democracy. It is a new way for responding to the public's need to play a greater role in deciding how they live their lives and where power lies. That is the great challenge. In a way, with the rise of new parties you have bubbles of democratic energy and large sections of the community who are extremely critical. They are not anti-political, but they are pro a different form of politics. The big question for representative politics is whether it has the nimbleness and the agility to respond to broader social demands in a way that can tap into—it is almost like a pressure pot—and channel those democratic energies that are out there and exploding at the moment. A constitutional convention would provide one of a number of different ways that you could respond to some of that public angst and frustration that nobody listens to them and nobody is interested in them.

One of the issues around the current debate on devolution and decentralisation in England is that there seems to be view among sections of the public that this really is a very paternalistic, top-down view and that politicians and an elite at the local and central level know what is in the best interests of the public. The problem is that if the public were asked directly, they would probably reject what was on offer. That is the issue. It is about blending and evolving representative democracy with new opportunities for engagement.

Katie Ghose: A lot of MPs are already experimenting with different ways of doing politics.

Baroness Taylor of Bolton: As John was saying, we always did.

Katie Ghose: Yes, and they are bringing citizens in to the difficult trade-offs that elected representatives have to make. One of the values of this kind of process is that it forces citizens to confront directly the very difficult decisions and trade-offs that elected representatives are trying to make. In that sense, deliberative or participative means are a good complement and a possible strengthening of the representative democracy that we have.

Lord Lester of Herne Hill: I can understand the case. I even agree with the case for a constitutional convention when it is considering concrete, focused proposals—for example, with a Scottish convention before the Scotland Act, or the Northern Irish constitutional convention presided over by the then Lord Chief Justice. That I can understand, but it seems to me that you are in danger of putting the cart before the horse if you have a constitutional convention without any clearly defined options and without some kind of body to help to steer the conversation. Otherwise you finish up with a kind of constitutional babel, it seems to me. I am sorry to mix my metaphors.

Katie Ghose: I agree with you, which is why one thing that we tested out in the assembly pilots was something very concrete in each area, which was a proposed devolution deal that

had been set out in specific terms by local authorities in the area. Quite a lot of the discussion was saying to the citizens, “What is it that you think about this? Do you have other ideas about it?”, so I would absolutely endorse that approach. It has to be a mixture of getting some agenda-setting and a bit of freedom with a number of options that would be put before the body with good expertise, so I would probably agree with you on those important issues around design, agenda and focus.

Q223 Lord Hunt of Wirral: Were the assemblies run before or after the general election?

Katie Ghose: After.

Lord Hunt of Wirral: I see. What was wrong with the general election in producing a deliberative and participatory democracy?

Katie Ghose: The electoral system, I would argue, gave us an electoral map that did not fully reflect the views and votes that were expressed across the nations. When you look at Scotland, which is probably a very stark example, you have Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives with barely 5% of the seats on nearly half of the votes, whereas you have the SNP with 56 seats out of the 59 on 50% of the votes. If you are looking at the future of the union and future relations between the nations of the UK, you have to have a look at how the electoral system is, in a multi-party era, no longer able to fully reflect the true diversity of views out there and gives you an electoral map that exaggerates political divides among the nations.

Lord Hunt of Wirral: I am asking also about this policy of decentralisation to cities and regions. We are told that it has been lacking in public engagement. Do you agree and, if so, what are the problems with this and how should it be rectified?

Professor Flinders: The current process with the devo deals and the metro mayors has been lacking in public engagement. That is not just a criticism that we would make; it has come out of a number of different committees and organisations. Looking forward, what was very interesting about the pilots was that both assemblies were generally in favour of the Government’s plans for devolution within England. However, they were not in favour of the specific model that was currently on offer and were in favour of a slightly different change. The value of the assemblies is related very much to the knowledge that local communities can bring to specific areas but, in the current plans, the demands on local authorities in the areas that have put in for devo deals are very weak in terms of the commitment for any form of public engagement. The risk is that we go forward to 2017, when we have the first elections of the mayors, and the democratic turnout is so low that it brings into question the authority of mayors. That is where, in a sense, the risk with the current model is: unless it is embedded and

socially discussed and supported, it will just seem like another top-down initiative and the public will not understand why it matters to them in their lives.

Q224 Lord Judge: I am not and never was a politician. I have great confidence in the jury system and that is 12 citizens assembled together to make some very difficult decisions examining sometimes very complex evidence, so I am not surprised that a group of citizens sitting together, who have taken sufficient interest to come along to what you describe as a national assembly, were intelligent, thoughtful, committed and so on. There is nothing surprising about that. What I want to know is, if you introduce such a system, (a) who is going to choose them, (b) to whom are they responsible and (c) are they not going to be yet another body telling all the other citizens what they should and should not be doing?

Katie Ghose: I am not advocating at the moment, although it is an exciting idea, a kind of standing system of constitutional conventions. I am advocating, for now, a one-off that could really grapple with the very pressing issues.

Lord Judge: The questions are still the same, though: who selects them and so on?

Katie Ghose: Absolutely. One of the issues is whether this is a government-instituted process, ideally with cross-party support, or whether it is not a government-instituted process. We were doing something that was off our own bat, if you like, with a broad network, and that was an important lesson, because although it was not a government project and we could not promise the citizens that note would be taken of it, none the less they came along and showed appetite and willingness to engage. That is one important point. In direct answer to your question about who chooses the citizens, it is going to depend on who the instigators of the project are. We would love to see a government-instituted constitutional convention. If that does not happen, there are some good lessons from other conventions that have happened in the past, and I have found it invaluable to be bringing together academics, campaigners and others so that you have a good group of people to come up with a sensible and neutral design.

Professor Flinders: I would imagine that whether it was a government-commissioned or parliamentary-commissioned inquiry, a chair would be selected of high public standing and then an initially random selection process would be used to recruit members (with the potential to ‘top up’ with individuals from under-represented groups once the initial recruitment phase has been completed). In a sense, many public citizens’ juries have been used extensively in recent years as part of the move towards deeper forms of democracy, particularly at the local level. You might have 100 or 150 members of the public, a cross-section drawn from different regions of the UK, with very specific criteria. I would imagine it is more than likely that their recommendations would be advisory. This would not

mark a new start in terms of all issues going towards a constitutional convention, nor should it be a standing convention, but we are at a particular point in terms of the constitution. There are so many untidy ‘loose ends’—there is such a debate about the direction of travel and where we are going and why—that now is a good time to have a constitutional convention, which would be different from some of the more traditional ways that these issues might be looked at, in order to provide a fresh way of thinking about politics. Interestingly, it is often not only the people on the assembly who learn a lot but also the politicians who are engaging with the assembly too.

The Chairman: Can I just ask you about the lessons from the pilots, not in terms of the process but whether they yield any conclusions about what powers citizens want to see devolved or decentralised to their cities, regions or communities, or is it, at this stage, too early to say?

Professor Flinders: The detailed data analysis is going on, but the headline findings of the assemblies, particularly the assembly in the north, was that the public were in favour of regional devolution within England. They preferred an assembly model rather than a mayoral model, but they wanted the assembly itself to have more powers than had been previously offered in other similar cases, particularly Lord Prescott’s reforms a few years ago. It was pro-regional government, but a more powerful model, not a large city mayor model.

Q225 Lord Norton of Louth: On decentralisation that is taking place now within England, what is happening seems to align with much of our evidence that it is asymmetrical and there seems to be support for that, so it is trying to meet local needs, moving as quickly as some areas can sustain change, and others cannot. What is your view on that? There is some conflicting evidence about whether that is sustainable or not, because the danger is that certain areas may be left behind. Is it sustainable and what do you see as the merits and demerits of what is happening should we maintain this asymmetrical decentralisation?

Professor Flinders: I do not think there is any problem with asymmetrical devolution in principle. The concern at the moment is around the speed of the process and the underpinning values and principles that are guiding that process. It is all very well to say, “Let a thousand flowers bloom”. However, there is an issue about the obvious fragmentation that is likely to occur if that goes forward too quickly. One of the issues around a constitutional convention is that it often allows for some space for thinking and talking and, in fact, for listening, which can be incredibly healthy.

I also think one of the issues at the moment with the asymmetry is not just about geography but the balance of the focus of the policy. The policy at the moment is about driving the

economy and economic growth. That is important and incredibly valuable, but it has to be offset with a focus on the social aspects of people's lives, and that is where there is a slight imbalance currently. I have absolutely no problem with asymmetrical devolution, but where is the blueprint? Where is the glue that holds the system together? That is the big question for me.

The great thing about a constitutional convention is that it can really help to allow and support the public to think through those issues. At the moment we have a whole range of centrifugal forces pulling the UK in different directions and, again, that is not itself a problem, but where is the glue that is holding us together as a union? Where are the pragmatic international best practices for stopping and letting us think about the nature of the democracy we want? That is what we do not have: the reflective space, as it were, at the moment.

Katie Ghose: I agree with what Professor Flinders has said. We have asymmetry of powers, which is not necessarily a problem, asymmetry of population, which is a fact to be grappled with, but the real problem with the local picture and the march of devolution at the moment is the asymmetry of public voice. It is completely arbitrary as to whether any local resident of any corner of the country is going to have any say over the flavour and settlement of devolution in their area. This is where we can relate the local to the national very clearly. If we do not start with the values and the principles and the criteria that should underpin the political structures, we are left flailing around. That is what we are seeing at the national and at the local level, and then you have real problems in terms of a lack of public support, legitimacy, sustainability and stability.

Lord Norton of Louth: Do you not have a problem that, even if you create the framework where there can be greater discourse and people can discuss, you might not still reach agreement and there is still a problem? You might find there is commonality of view in one area but next door there is a different view and, therefore, you might have to go your separate ways or not have any agreement at all about what should be decentralised, so you are then falling behind relative to those areas where you have reached agreement.

Katie Ghose: The problem at the moment is that there are multiple speeds and, as a consequence, in some areas people will not feel they have had a chance to think about where they want power to lie in their area.

Professor Flinders: There is a very strong "me too" dynamic going on: "If these councils are getting in on the action, we must do so really quickly too". Whilst I can understand the logic and the real challenges that local authorities are facing, which are incredibly tough, it is very interesting. Michael Heseltine gave a speech in which he said that the English devolution deal

should not be spoken about in terms of devolution or decentralisation; it was the Westminster model. It was just a new partnership where the central state would tell local authorities what to do with even more direction, and the trade-off was slightly more flexibility in delivering those goals.

The big risk for local authorities is that they will become the public face of austerity, and local authorities are well aware of these challenges, but we have to retain a sense of optimism and positivity that, as a collection of people, a community nationally, locally and regionally, we can address these challenges. Maybe I should not have said it in front of the assembly, but I said that I had been a professor of politics for 20 years and I had learned more about politics by running the assemblies than I had from reading thousands of books about real politics and how it affects people's lives. I just think that is an important reflection in terms of where we go from here, given the challenges that face us economically and democratically and this issue about 'what binds us?'. That really is the central issue. Where is the centripetal force that can allow for flexibility or difference? We have new academic centres for super-diversity. What still gives us a commonality and goals that allows us to live together? That is where a constitutional convention, properly resourced, over time, done transparently, will not deliver all the answers—not everybody will agree on all the recommendations—but will help to put down certain markers so that the politicians, who have, quite rightly, been elected to make decisions, will have a better basis on which to make those decisions.

The Chairman: We have come to the end of the allotted time. Thank you both very much indeed for the insights you have given us from your own experience and knowledge of the working of these assemblies. Thank you very much.