Revised transcript of evidence taken before
The Select Committee on the Constitution

Inquiry on

THE UNION AND DEVOLUTION

Evidence Session No. 7    Heard in Public    Questions 105 - 122

WEDNESDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2015

10.35 am

Witnesses: Ed Cox

Scilla Cullen and Julian German
Q105 **The Chairman**: Good morning, Mr Cox. I have already explained to you that you have a solo session with us today. Unfortunately Professor Harding has been prevented from getting here, for personal reasons. However, as leader of the IPPR for the north of England and with your experience in local government information units and so on, you may well have perspectives that the Committee has not yet been able to gather in this broad-ranging inquiry. If I may, we will just fire off into the questions. We asked earlier witnesses what they think is the core of the value of the union—its purpose, its nature and how it works. We have had very brief but pertinent answers, such as security and trade and a reference to the sharing of risks and resources. There is another side to it, of course, apart from the mechanical side. There is the cultural and hereditary side—the heritage and so on—and the philosophical approach, but answer this as you think fit. What does England gain from its union with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

**Ed Cox**: It is a huge question to start off with.

**The Chairman**: Yes, it is.

**Ed Cox**: I can offer a partial answer. I offer my answer along the lines that you have already suggested. There are huge economic benefits by way of trade and co-operation between the different nations and, indeed, from having a shared currency. At the time of the Scottish devolution debate, many of those facts and figures were traded, so to speak. Broadly speaking, there was a sense that the economic integrity of the union was very important. Secondly, from a fiscal point of view, there are clearly big advantages to raising and spending tax revenues over a very wide population—the wider, the better, in many respects—because that allows for sharing of risk across different areas. Having said that, many people within
England feel that they get rather a bad deal out of the way in which that fiscal redistribution currently operates. Given my role as director of IPPR North, I would make a particular case that people outside London, within England, feel that very often they get the worst deal around the whole fiscal redistributive set-up that we have at the moment.

The third area, which you touched on in your question, is the cultural dimension. Clearly there are strong emotional ties to the union, as we saw in the debates 15 months or so ago. Those date back over many centuries. To that extent, there is a very interesting relationship to be explored between English identity and British identity. I would throw into the mix local identity as well. IPPR has written about those different issues.

On each of these things—economically, fiscally and culturally—there are arguments both for and against what England gets out of current arrangements. What is particularly interesting in this regard is that while in the devolved nations—in Scotland, in particular—there has been a very lively debate about these issues, we do not seem to have had quite the same debate in England. That is to our detriment. We have not thrashed out from an English perspective—as English people, so to speak—precisely what the benefits are in this regard. We have normally done it in reflecting on the benefits to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Chairman: Yes. We hear in the north of England a feeling of slight resentment that Scotland seems to get more financial help, more economic assistance and so on. Does that work against the broad national comity and the feeling of a shared United Kingdom, or does the latter overturn the economic grumbles?

Ed Cox: It is a matter of personal opinion, in most cases. As a think tank, we try to establish the evidence and do the research properly to understand how people feel. I would suggest two things; it is very difficult to tease them out. The case for economic union is largely made—that is one fact that can be established—as is the case for fiscal union, to a large degree, although we can explore that in more depth. As regards the cultural argument, the problem with research that is done around this is that we are unsophisticated in the kinds of questions that we ask. People are quite comfortable with what I would call nested identities and that they are—in my case—Mancunian and English and British. I can sit fairly lightly with those three identities. The problem is that when we do polling, surveys and so on, we force people to make a choice about those things. That leads to a relatively arbitrary sense of what is most important to people, when actually they are quite comfortable holding multiple identities.

Lord Maclennan of Rogart: Can you say what you think about foreign policy and defence? The recent defence paper, which appeared on Monday, revealed that there will be considerable investment in Scotland, in manufacturing of vessels and the location of defence
centres. There is also the question of influence in Europe from the fact that we are four nations. There are some threats of separation in Spain, Belgium and so forth. How do you think this plays in England? Not only that, how does it impact upon foreign countries?

*Ed Cox*: The first thing to say is that I do not consider myself an expert in matters of defence and some of the topics you have raised. IPPR North has written particularly about the devolution issues, the constitutional issues and the cultural identity issues. To offer a partial answer to your question, as regards where the economic activity associated with defence takes place, it plays very much to the argument I made that it is better that we draw on all the economic opportunities in the whole United Kingdom as we decide how we want to grow the national economy. The economic arguments for having particular industries in particular places are significant in that regard.

As regards our influence in Europe, you can play the argument both ways. Having four nations, with all that that carries with it, is clearly a matter of significance in relation to our European partners by way of not just size but reputation and so on. At the same time, there are countries with much smaller population sizes that have significant influence and weight. We need to be cognisant of that fact. Simply having greater size and scale is not necessarily the only way in which we can have an influence in Europe.

*Q106 Baroness Dean of Thornton-le-Fylde*: Good morning, Mr Cox. Looking at the asymmetrical impact of devolution, we know that in the devolved nations it is there. We have heard people say to us as a Committee, “It is a great virtue. You cannot really have one without the other”, but others say that it impacts on the stability of the UK as a nation. I would like you to comment both on that and on a second part, particularly as you come from the north-west. How do you think the government policy of devolving powers or decentralising—whichever word you want to use—to the northern powerhouse or other areas will impact, at least on that asymmetry within England? Will that then be changed? In your view, is that a good thing or a bad thing?

*Ed Cox*: Let me address the asymmetry across the United Kingdom to start with. Again, there are different ways into answering that question. In economic terms, it has been very interesting that research done by Professor Michael Parkinson at the University of Liverpool has shown that the cities of Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Belfast have all fared very well since devolution. He contrasted that with English cities and the fact that, to some extent, they have been held back by the lack of economic development powers that they have held. We carried out our own research, looking at inward investment in England and Scotland. Clearly, what the Scottish Government have done by way of inward investment powers has been very
effective in attracting investment to Scotland. In economic terms, the asymmetry has allowed Scotland to push ahead, whereas English cities have not been able to do so in the same ways. As regards public services, which are another key dimension of the asymmetrical debate, as we are aware, there is a rather more mixed picture. In particular, people have noted challenges regarding health and education in the devolved nations. Personally, I think that there needs to be more substantial debate about that. It is not simply a case of saying that they have done badly in health and education and therefore devolution was wrong. It is much more sophisticated than that. There are historical issues. There are big questions as to how far it is down to the particular policies of Scottish and Welsh Governments, the funding mechanisms and so on. We need to explore that in more detail if we are to understand fully whether it is asymmetrical devolution that has led to a perception of poor public services in Scotland and Wales.

There is a democratic issue, too, which is probably at the heart of what we are concerned about here. Asymmetrical devolution has really enlivened democratic debate across the country. We have seen that particularly energised in the Scottish situation. In turn, that has raised big issues about devolution in England as well. My sense is that many people, certainly in this place, will feel that it has stirred up a hornet’s nest. It may not necessarily be something that many people here wanted, but I believe that it has been an excellent thing for our democracy, to enable a much richer debate about the nature of British democracy, which—in my personal opinion—has become much too centralised and disconnected from many people’s lives. To that extent, it has been positive.

As regards asymmetry and what is happening in England at the moment, with the devolution deals process that is currently taking place, we are seeing a fragmentation, but that is nothing particularly new. I would want to make the point that London is already very asymmetrically governed compared with the rest of England, in that it has a mayor and a GLA. I would add that it is the home of central government and the majority of central government institutions. For the rest of the country, it seems highly asymmetrical within England. The other aspect of asymmetry that we have long established in our system is the messiness of local government. I do not think that we are unfamiliar with asymmetry within England.

Whether that is a problem depends on two issues. The first is the extent to which that asymmetry within England is perceived to be unfair. Speaking as somebody from the north of England, representing an organisation that does a lot of work in this field, I think that there is definitely a sense of unfairness in relation to London and the rest. We have demonstrated statistics to show that our planned expenditure on transport infrastructure, for example, is
running at around £2,600 per head in London compared with £400 per head in the north of England. People perceive that asymmetry as incredibly unfair. You could look at similar stats around the amount that we spend on education per household, which is £600 more in London than in the rest. We recently demonstrated that at the ages of four and five, when children enter school, children in London are already 12 percentage points further ahead of children in the rest of the country. In so far as London’s asymmetrical governance gives it those advantages, that sense of unfairness is key.

We have just spent six months researching the devolution deals process that counties, as opposed to cities and metropolitan areas, have been following. There is a real sense of unfairness among counties that cities are being privileged, both in the process by which their devolution deals are being negotiated and in the deals themselves, which are considered more substantive than the deals that are being brokered with counties. In perceptions of fairness, there are problems with a very asymmetrical approach.

The Government are right to say—we have argued this ourselves—that devolution deals need to be different and bespoke to different places. A degree of asymmetry is absolutely right, particularly in the short term, as the Government take a case-by-case approach to devolution. Although that asymmetrical approach is absolutely right, ultimately it will have its limits. For example, the city deals that have been announced and struck already are very similar to one another. There are differences, and those differences are important, but the kinds of things that are being negotiated are increasingly similar. Central government has a big capacity problem with trying to negotiate 38 all at the same time. To that extent, having a degree of symmetry and some core packages that could be negotiated between areas may help the process and reduce the pressures on central government in doing the negotiation.

The last point that I would make is around sharing good practice. There is a huge amount to be said for the devolution deal-making process being more open, so that areas can look at the different deals that are being done and share with one another the good practice that they are developing. Asymmetry is a good thing within England, but we have to address some of the problems of capacity and fairness.

**The Chairman**: Can I bring in Lord Hunt, please?

**Q107 Lord Hunt of Wirral**: Where does that leave us now? Thank you for your essay, but it was really an outline of all the problems. We are looking for solutions. It may well be that by demonstrating what a hornet’s nest we have, you are advocating the decentralisation decade—

**Ed Cox**: Yes, we are.
Lord Hunt of Wirral: You think it will take a coherent programme over 10 years, with a clear timetable. A slightly briefer exposition of your decentralisation decade would be very useful.

Ed Cox: We have argued that, if we are to get to a position on decentralisation that is coherent and credible, we need a 10-year process, based on some clear principles. Those clear principles need to include understanding the purpose of our devolution in the first place. We need a clear and co-ordinated approach over 10 years that allows for asymmetry but has some clear outcomes at the end of it, be those economic, or on public services or democratic devolution. I can dig into each of those, if you want me to; I am conscious that you wanted a clear and concise answer. I am saying that the process we have at the moment is piecemeal and partial, which is leading to an even greater sense of messiness around the country. However, if we were to set out on a very clear and purposeful 10-year programme, as we have argued and set out in some detail in our report, we might move to a situation where, yes, we end up with asymmetry—different places having different powers and responsibilities—but in a far more coherent fashion than we have at the moment.

Lord Lester of Herne Hill: I understand that you are describing the system in positive terms, but what are the limits on decentralisation to protect the basic rights of the citizen, irrespective of which part of the union they happen to be in, to ensure that decentralisation does not lead to local tyrannies of local majorities, for example?

Ed Cox: Professor Tony Travers has described the situation at present, which is that we could not be more centralised in this country if we tried to be. To that extent, we have a long way to go before we reach any particular limits, but allow me to suggest a couple of things. First, what we are doing at the moment is largely administrative devolution. We are only just beginning to address the kinds of decentralisation that we see in most developed, modern, democratic nations. I refer particularly to fiscal devolution, and to a greater sense of political devolution as well.

On fiscal devolution, clearly the Chancellor has begun a conversation about that process by saying that he wants to devolve business rates in their entirety to local government. We do not think that can be done without opening the wider Pandora’s box of fiscal devolution more generally. To contrast, Germany and Sweden raise and spend between 50% and 60% of their tax revenues at that local level. We currently raise and spend about 5%, if you take a very generous view of council tax. As far as limits are concerned, we are a long way fiscally from what we can do.
On political devolution, we have started a conversation, with the formation of combined authorities and, indeed, the introduction of directly elected mayors for certain city regions, but a lot more conversation needs to be had about how we revive local democracy—in particular, devolving powers around, for example, proportional representation, votes at 16 and second chambers. Some of those ideas have been used in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to some extent, but we are yet to have that conversation within local government in England. That addresses your concern around what you described as local tyrannies. My sense is that the only way to have a more vibrant local democracy and to put trust and faith in local councillors, combined authorities and directly elected mayors is to give them powers that allow the general public to take them seriously and to want to get involved in the local democratic process. The problem we have had is that by constantly limiting the powers and stripping the funds of local government we have, essentially, denuded it of any credibility. We end up with a poverty of local government, and then people do not see the value of getting involved with it and challenging it.

Lord MacGregor of Pulham Market: Can I ask you one question, before I come to the question that I was going to ask? You described the differences between the different regions and the unfairness of it all. Is there no impact from the regional MPs, who are presumably raising the case all the time—I recall doing it myself for East Anglia—for the issues that concern them, including some of the ones that you described as being very different from those in London?

Ed Cox: Yes. It is fair to say that many Members of Parliament are very vocal about their local areas and secure the kind of decisions that will be beneficial to their areas. The problem with that system is that it militates against the proper and necessary devolution of power and has historically drawn powers to the centre. The game then, of course, is to be elected as a Member of Parliament and to come and do the bidding of your constituency in Parliament, rather than to do what most modern democratic nations have done, which is to recognise the proper principles of subsidiarity, pass down the relevant powers to the relevant institutions at that subnational level and, effectively, allow politics and politicians to get on with their business at the most appropriate level. Instead, we have sucked powers to the centre and then made Members of Parliament king in negotiating those. A far healthier democracy is one that shares power vertically. There are necessary decisions that need to be taken at national level and Members of Parliament can do that, but, equally, we need politicians working at other tiers of government in order to make the appropriate decisions there, too.

The Chairman: Lord Morgan, do you want to come in?
**Lord Morgan:** I was going to track back a little, but it relates to what has been asked. I should apologise very much for being late. I was a victim, I suppose, of administrative devolution—namely, what has happened to London’s traffic, which meant that a journey of two miles took me 50 minutes. I am sorry about that.

England has a very considerable boundary with Wales and a considerable boundary with Scotland. If there is considerable variation within the various local authorities in England in what they do, how would that relate to links with Wales and, no doubt, with Scotland, too, in connection with transport services, collaboration in hospital and health services and things of that kind? Might that be a limitation on the extent of decentralisation that we should have?

**Ed Cox:** I am sure that it is a limitation on the extent of decentralisation, but it should not be an insurmountable hurdle. If we look at the way in which other nation states such as Germany operate, the different Länder all have significant boundaries with one another. Tax is something that is often raised in this regard, but there are processes at the national level to enable a degree of harmonisation between them. We have published research looking particularly at issues of public service variation between the Länder in Germany. What we have demonstrated over a number of different public services is that, through Germany’s decentralisation process, it has caused a race to the top, rather than a race to the bottom, between the different federal states of Germany in the way it provides public services. Yes, there are issues. Yes, there are matters that need to be addressed and understood, but there are very good ways, whether on tax or on public services, to harmonise and to enable those borders to operate effectively.

**Lord MacGregor of Pulham Market:** Shall I come back in now?

**The Chairman:** I am sorry, Lord MacGregor; I had not realised you wish to ask a further question.

**Q108 Lord MacGregor of Pulham Market:** I would like to probe a bit further on the question of asymmetry. Does the Government’s policy of decentralisation risk a fragmentation of power and governance across England? Do you think that represents a problem?

**Ed Cox:** I have addressed many of those questions before, so I will not rehearse them all. Yes, it leads to fragmentation. The question then is, should there be a limit to it, and is it a problem? In the short term, it is not a problem. We need devolution and decentralisation to enable the economy to flourish, for public services to improve and to engender a much greater democratic debate in our nation. To that extent, the fact that the current process is leading to fragmentation is not problematic, but, as I suggested before, in the longer term we will
naturally see a greater level of symmetry than the current Government perhaps expect, in that ultimately different cities will want very similar packages of powers. That will cause a greater degree of symmetry than might currently appear. Similarly, counties will ask for similar powers. I feel that over a period of time—it will take a little while, perhaps 10 years, for it properly to mature—we will end up in a new settlement, which will be more symmetrical than it feels it is becoming at the moment.

The Chairman: Professor Robert Hazell told us that “the risk of continuing with devolution on demand is that we may end up, in England, with a very fragmented and patchwork set of powers and responsibilities in different parts of England. I do not myself think that that, in the longer term, is sustainable”. You are saying that you think that in the longer term we will not be at that position.

Ed Cox: Yes. It feels like that at the moment. We have only six or seven deals currently struck. Those deals are being presented to us as all very different from one another, because that is exactly what the Government and the cities want us to think—that they are all very different and bespoke to their area. In the course of time, when the other 38 deals are struck, we will be able to see quite clearly patterns emerging as to the nature of some of those deals. Then we will feel more comfortable that it is not as asymmetrical as we thought. I really do not want to lose the important point that the Government are right to make—that in the current process it is absolutely right that each area should negotiate its own bespoke deal. That is very important, given the terms of the devolution conversations that are going on right now. I would prefer to see a 10-year process, with much more coherence, but it is clear that the only way to drag certain powers out of certain departments is to take the approach that the Government are currently taking.

The Chairman: Three of my colleagues want to follow this up, Mr Cox, so I will ask for short questions and fairly short answers.

Ed Cox: I will do my best to be quick.

Baroness Dean of Thornton-le-Fylde: Mr Cox, I have two quick points. When talking about asymmetry and devolution, quite a number of witnesses sitting where you are quote London. It could be argued that London is the worst case, not the best case, to quote, because often the rest of the country is not in such a good economic position. The effect of the recession on other areas, as opposed to London, was much more severe. You talk about the upside all the time, but are you building in any unintended consequences? In 10 years’ time, will we, in fact, have pockets of England—that is what we are talking about at the moment—in a worse economic position than they are now, simply because of devolution asymmetry and because
they do not have the economic wherewithal to pump-prime the growth in their economy that they need? There is loss of population in Liverpool, for instance, and other areas.

*Ed Cox:* What we have demonstrated since the 1930s is that regional policy dictated by central government has not been particularly effective. There are limits to what we tried to do before. Effectively, what we have done—certainly since the 1970s—is to centralise more and more economic development powers. It is right now to look at what has happened in other mature democracies where they have far healthier, more balanced economies and to say, “Actually, they are doing something there that we have failed to do in this country”, which is to decentralise economic development powers. As I said, interestingly, since devolution to Scotland and Wales, we have seen the cities there, in particular, flourish to a greater degree. We are beginning to see the cities in the north of England flourish as well, thanks to the devolution to those cities that is starting to take place. Yes, there is a risk, even in the long term, because London is so dominant in the national economy, and to a large degree that benefits places outside London, through redistributive grants, benefits and so on. In the long term, however, I think northern cities would rather stand on their own two feet and drive their own economies, even if that means that in the short term they are poorer for doing so.

*Q109 Lord Lester of Herne Hill:* You referred us to Germany as another mature democracy. Germany has a written constitution, a Bill of Rights and a system that allocates powers between the Länder and the central government. How is that relevant to us when we have none of those characteristics?

*Ed Cox:* I would simply argue that those are the kinds of characteristics that we need to develop in this country.

*Lord Brennan:* Mr Cox, I have some difficulty grasping the concept of asymmetrical democracy, which seems to flow from the cities paper. I will not challenge you on the principle of decentralisation, but rather on the method. The first paper, 2014, refers to cities and the second to counties. England is a territory with about 50 million people in it. I can understand wanting to expand and fortify successful cities and counties. I do not see how at the moment this programme helps the lesser places that there are bound to be, with a population of such size, as to powers and as to finance. I am concerned that asymmetry could become a synonym for inequality.

*Ed Cox:* I very much share your concerns. That is why we have argued for a more coherent and co-ordinated approach than we are currently seeing. At the moment, we have local enterprise partnership areas across England that broadly cover the whole geography of England—38 of them. My sense is that they cover what you have described as the lesser
places—the smaller places—as well. If we were to have a systematic approach to devolving powers to each of those, we would be in a situation where those lesser places were covered by devolution powers as well. However, I agree that with the deals that are currently being struck some places are being left out.

There is a deeper problem about the narrative that we currently have around city growth, which, in my view, excludes too many areas. There is a problem with this. Forgive me, as I am sure that you do not want me to go into the detailed economics of it, but we presume too much of our city growth policy on US and east Asian models of city growth, rather than on European models of what I would call metro regions, where cities and smaller towns and places all grow together. The dominant narrative around city growth is important, and we have to take it seriously, but there is also a narrative from the European situation that shows that, for example, the relationship of places such as Preston, Burnley and Blackburn to Manchester, which are currently outside that combined authority, is very important, not just for those places but for Manchester itself. We need to be a bit more sophisticated in our economic understanding of the way city growth operates.

**The Chairman:** We have one or two substantial points that we still want to address. Lord Maclennan, would you like to squeeze in your question before we do that?

**Lord Maclennan of Rogart:** A lot of it has been answered already.

**The Chairman:** That is rather what I felt. Are you content?

**Q110 Lord Maclennan of Rogart:** I was wondering whether you had evidence from the public about how to deal with the problem of inequality, and whether or not you think that the public would be overwhelmingly concerned if there were considerable imbalances in the resources being ploughed into different parts of the country.

**Ed Cox:** There are three quick dimensions in responding to that. First, if you are talking about income inequality, I am not persuaded that any of the conversations that we are having around devolution in England will address that fundamental problem that we have with our economy. It has much more to do with the structure of the national economy, the role that particular sectors play and how that works.

If you are talking about public services and inequality of public service provision, I would simply make the case that those who say that devolution leads to postcode lotteries should look at the situation we have right now. There is growing evidence to show that the centralisation of our public services is the primary cause of inequality, because of the constraints on public service providers. The way we deliver public services at the moment, through central contracting processes, is the fundamental problem and why we see
inequalities at the moment. If we devolve greater power, it is more likely that we will see much more adaptable public services, much better attuned to local populations, and perceived inequality will reduce.

If you are talking about fiscal issues, we currently have a system that I believe is asymmetrical and skewed as regards the amount of public resource that we put into places such as London and Scotland, compared with the rest of the country. I would argue for an opening up of the whole fiscal box and the way in which we redistribute tax revenues across the country, and that we consider different ways of administering our tax system to address that problem.

Lord Maclennan of Rogart: Do you think that there is any way in which we can stimulate the public to comment on these issues?

Ed Cox: When the public are provided with information and decision-making processes, as has recently taken place with the Sheffield citizens’ panels that they have been running over the last few months, people are very animated and have very strong views about devolution—just as we saw in Scotland. The problem is that there is cynicism on the part of both central government and local authority leaders in the present situation to strike relatively secretive deals in order to transact power from one to the other. They believe that it is better to do it that way than to involve the general public in these things. That situation needs to be opened up over the next few years.

Q111 Lord Norton of Louth: Coming on to a somewhat different topic, we have had different evidence on English votes for English laws. I know that in the past IPPR research has tapped a certain degree of resentment in England over the West Lothian question. Do you see English votes for English laws as an answer to the English question?

Ed Cox: English votes for English laws is an immediately attractive proposition to try to address a particular problem around voting in Parliament. It is also a very useful device for causing political mischief, I would argue, which may or may not have unintended consequences; I just flag that, too. Its particular salience in the current debate betrays poverty of thinking about wider democratic issues in this country, for two reasons.

First, for the English question to be subsumed into a procedural issue in Westminster demonstrates just how disconnected this place is from wider democratic concerns among the general public at large. As events in Scotland have shown us, our democratic deficit cannot be dealt with simply by tinkering with arrangements here. I appreciate that people in this place do not perceive English votes for English laws as simple tinkering, but, frankly, many people
in the country do. People want to see powers being exercised much closer to them. To that
extent, it is only a partial answer.

The second problem is that English votes for English laws denies a fundamental proposition
or principle of modern democracy—in particular, of our union—which is that at some level
there needs to be an element of solidarity and shared decision-making. To that extent, we have
to trust one another, at some level or other, to take decisions on behalf of one another. I am
worried that simply as a knee-jerk reaction to a grievance about the way the Scottish
devolution debate has played out, and, indeed, to cause political mischief, this is really a
lowest common denominator approach to the problem.

Lord Norton of Louth: Can you do anything else in the short term to address the concerns
that people have? As I said, the IPPR research reflected attitudes and tapped problems in
England. To what extent can we deal with those in the short term? Essentially, you are
indicating that your solution is a longer-term one. Should we simply be working towards that,
or is there something else that we should be doing?

Ed Cox: I am not arguing that devolution is a long-term answer; I am arguing that devolution
is a long-term process. The steps that we are taking already on devolution are short-term
steps, but they are in the right direction. We can all take a view. Immediately after the
Scottish referendum, discussions about English votes for English laws were very high on the
agenda. I perceive that they have dissipated to quite a large degree. I would make the case that
that might be because, in a rather sophisticated and mature way, the Chancellor, in particular,
has recognised the fact that devolution may be a better solution to this question than English
votes for English laws. Short-term steps that the Chancellor has taken are perhaps dissipating
some of that debate.

Lord Norton of Louth: Given that, do you think that English votes for English laws has any
wider consequence for the union, or do you think it will diminish as steps are taken in the
direction that you favour?

Ed Cox: No. I think that it has very profound implications for the union, which is why there
needs to be a very significant debate about it. If you are asking how we answer the English
question, I think we need a range of debates and discussions as to how that plays out.

Lord Norton of Louth: That would be the debate you referred to.

Ed Cox: Yes.

Q112 Lord Lester of Herne Hill: You said in answer to one of my questions that you like
the German constitutional model and you think it is relevant to us. Is there, in fact, a viable
federal model for the UK?
**Ed Cox:** Let me be clear about my comments on Germany. My response to you was that we need to work towards a written constitution and a more federal model in the UK, not that we should adopt the German model. Please be clear about that. Is there a viable federal model in the UK? In principle, yes, in so far as most other modern democracies of the UK’s size have a more sophisticated what I would call multi-tiered governance structure than we have. Yes, there could and should be a more viable federal model. A lot of the international evidence suggests that to divide nations into states of about 6 million to 8 million people is a pretty good principle that seems to work quite effectively, but there are myriad examples of how federal states might work. In principle, the answer is yes.

In practice, we still have a long way to go in understanding the form that we would like a federal state to take. Forgive me for articulating the problem; I will come to a solution. To a degree, we already have a federal state, in that we have the devolved nations, but England is far too big and too dominant. The issue is, how far can we subdivide England, and should we subdivide England? To go from national to local authorities, I would argue that local authorities are definitely much too small. We now have local enterprise partnership areas, which are essentially around functional economic areas. There are 38 or 39 of those. My argument would be that even that is probably too small. We therefore need some kind of mezzanine regional tier. That is where the creative thinking needs to come. We know from recent history that administrative regions were not perceived as fit for purpose. Nine regions of England did not seem to work very well both in the public imagination and in some regions, effectively, economically on the ground. That leaves a big question as to what the regional tier should look like. This is a piece of work that IPPR would like to explore more in the near future.

**Lord Lester of Herne Hill:** One needs people’s consent if you are changing the system. One of the suggestions has been a kind of Spanish model of opting in. You could have a framework, which would allow coherence, but only with the consent of the regions. That is the Spanish solution. Is that the sort of thing you have in mind, or do you not have any particular recommendations for us?

**Ed Cox:** It would be fair to say that I do not have any particular recommendations. Certainly the opting-in model that you described is something that could be explored. Where there is some real energy around this issue at the moment, it relates to the north of England—in particular, the formation of the Transport for the North body, which, as many will know, is now to be given statutory powers. It seems to me—again, this refers to my principle of subsidiarity, of which we need to be very mindful—that there are a number of powers that are
best held at that mezzanine level. Transport, inward investment and innovation are three, but you could look at others as well. The salience of the Transport for the North body, now with statutory powers—let us be clear: it will have a certain amount of governance around it, too—shows that there is some appetite and some geography that you could develop for England at that mezzanine level. I think that we will see Transport for the North extend its remit. It already has. It started with rail and has now moved to transport generally. I think that it will quickly move to infrastructure. It is already carrying out a big economic review, which will take it into areas of wider economic development. For me, that is only a few short steps away from being something akin to the kind of governance that we see at the mezzanine level in other countries. What does that mean for the rest of England? They need to get their skates on.

**Q113 Lord Brennan:** Is the idea of English regional assemblies dead—politically, first of all, among the parties at Westminster—or is it alive, perhaps in a state of cryogenic freezing in the community, waiting for the Government to respond?

**Ed Cox:** As my previous answer indicated, the idea of regional assemblies in the form in which they were developing—let us put it that way—under the new Labour Administration in the early part of this century is probably dead. I do not think that there is any appetite for bringing back nine regional assemblies of that nature. However, as I suggested, some mezzanine tier of governance in England, between the functional economic areas and central government, is absolutely necessary. It is only a matter of time before we evolve structures at that level, no doubt in our typically British and organic way. I point to Greater London as another structure at that mezzanine tier.

**Lord Brennan:** What is the evidence that the people of the country want that solution?

**Ed Cox:** It has been borne out by a number of surveys. The most recent was a BBC survey last week, which said that 82% of the population believe that the balance of power between central and local government is wrong and that we need devolution. The problem is that if you then ask the general population, “Do you want mayors?”, they say that they do not know. They do not say that they do not want them; they say that they do not know whether they like them or not. It is very mixed. If you say, “Do you want regional assemblies?”, they say, “We are very mixed in terms of what we want and what we don’t”. It is the form that people are less clear about, not the fact that they want more devolution.

**Q114 The Chairman:** Your answer leads into our next set of witnesses, who are already here. We are almost out of time. There is just time for me to ask you one question, for a one-sentence answer. Has the decentralisation of the BBC to the Greater Manchester area had a beneficial spin-off that is in any way measurable?
Ed Cox: Yes. It has had great economic benefit to Greater Manchester.
The Chairman: What it spends itself in the area, yes.
Ed Cox: What it spends itself, but there is also the movement of population to Manchester and the wider spin-off industries that have come out of MediaCityUK. Indeed, looking at my own neck of the woods, in south Manchester, house prices have gone up because of demand. Those wider economic effects have had benefits as well. Culturally, too, it makes a big difference. To get up in the morning and hear presenters talking about the weather in Salford or in Manchester, rather than assuming that whatever the weather is like outside the window in London is the way we should all perceive the world, makes quite a significant difference to people.
The Chairman: As a Scot, I can identify with that, Mr Cox. It has been a fascinating session. You have been extremely helpful and very informative. Thank you very much.
Ed Cox: Thank you very much.

Examination of Witnesses
Scilla Cullen, Campaign for an English Parliament, and Julian German, Campaign for a Cornish Assembly

Q115 The Chairman: Can I welcome both of you? I am glad that you were able to hear the tail-end of Mr Cox’s evidence. He represented the IPPR in the north of England and had some very interesting insights. We are glad to be able to talk to you, Ms Cullen, as the chair of the Campaign for an English Parliament, and to you, Mr German, as the chair of the Campaign for a Cornish Assembly. I would like to dive straight into the first question. Ms Cullen, what powers do you envisage for the new parliament that you contemplate?
Scilla Cullen: The CEP policy has always been that the powers of an English parliament should be the same as those of Scotland—no more and no less. That is quite a simple concept. That would be over domestic matters that are now devolved to Scotland, domestic matters alone: the matters—health, education and other things—that are most important to the individual member of the public.
The Chairman: Nevertheless, you say in your evidence that devolving powers of taxation, which is about to happen in a very large-scale way in Scotland, “would ensure that poorer parts of the UK would become even poorer and the richer, richer”. Is that a problem?
Scilla Cullen: I saw that in relation to the current Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, because that is where taxation is devolved to large cities. We have just heard that that
sucks people in from rural areas, which tend to be poor. An English parliament would be able to lobby for appropriate funding from the British Government. It cannot do that now, because there is nobody to speak for England. As we all know, the Barnett formula ensures that every person in England is underfunded in those very important domestic matters. I do not really wish to speak on the devolution of taxation powers as such, although it appears that that is in train to Scotland. That brings rather worrying consequences about how major responsibilities of the UK Government would be funded, but that is something for them to decide.

The Chairman: Before I move to Mr German on the same question, what is the rationale for the powers that you envisage? Why do you think that England needs identical powers to Scotland?

Scilla Cullen: There are a number of reasons, which I brought forward in my submission: equality of franchise—we do not have an equal franchise; and equality of representation, both internally, within the UK Government, and externally, in the European Union. Scotland and Wales have offices in Europe and sit on various committees. They also sit on the British-Irish Council, where England has no representation. I will qualify that. Some years ago, I inquired how England was represented on the council. I was informed that we were represented by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg. The idea that the needs and requirements of England would be at the top of their minds takes a leap of the imagination. It is all those kinds of things, particularly lobbying for appropriate funding. There are anomalies in legislation, which I have brought forward in my submission, particularly in the borders areas, near the Tweed and so on. At the moment, we simply do not have representation. We have no voice. It is instructive to look at the Encyclopaedia Britannica definition of England, which states merely that it is a geographical area. That is not what I feel.

The Chairman: We will be able to develop aspects of that as the questioning proceeds. Mr German, what powers do you envisage for your Cornish assembly? Again, what is the rationale for that?

Julian German: Thank you. Please excuse me if I make any faux pas. I am not used to this forum, so I am not aware of all the protocols.

The Chairman: You may relax. We are broadcasting, but please relax.

Julian German: I will start by saying that we perceive Cornwall as a distinctive region. We are happy for England to decide what it wants to do, but we see Cornwall as a discrete territory. We are very keen to see a direct relationship with the UK Government and not to introduce another tier of governance into that equation.
As regards the powers we have looked at, the Cornish Constitutional Convention was formed in 2000. We were responding to the then Government’s view of regions. As regards our positioning, we co-commissioned with the South-West Constitutional Convention a piece of work to look at the relationship between those two bodies—whether the south-west region made sense or whether Cornwall made sense as a region. That was undertaken for us by UCL and was co-commissioned. Its findings were that Cornwall made sense as a regional entity. At that point, we were looking at the powers put forward by the Government. As pragmatic as the British constitution is, we have seen the development of devolution powers in the devolved bodies, so our thinking has evolved with that. For example, we have seen Wales request further powers that make good economic and political sense. We have followed that trajectory in our thinking.

**The Chairman:** Thank you very much. Let us open up these subjects.

**Q116 Lord Maclennan of Rogart:** Mr German, how would you see the distribution of powers between a Cornish regional assembly and an English parliament? Do you support the concept of an English parliament?

**Julian German:** I support what the people of England want. Speaking for Cornwall, we would like our own regional assembly, with a direct relationship with the UK Government. If England has regional assemblies, city deals or an English parliament, we see that as a matter for England. Cornwall and the people of Cornwall have had significant input into this. During the campaign around the Labour Government proposals in 2001, we collected over 10% of the electorate’s signatures in support of a Cornish assembly, because that is what we were told would trigger a referendum. We have had MORI polling and Beaufort polling showing significant support for a Cornish assembly.

**Lord Maclennan of Rogart:** Do you see where the fiscal powers would lie? Would they lie with the English parliament or with the Cornish assembly?

**Julian German:** I am afraid that I do not accept the premise, so we will not get very far with the English parliament concept in terms of the relationship between Cornwall and the UK Government. I do not think that any political party is interested in another tier of governance. We very much see this as a direct relationship, as Wales has with the UK Government.

We are very interested in fiscal devolution. We have some devolution, through the Cornwall deal. We proposed more devolution than we received, through the Case for Cornwall. There were certainly fiscal elements to that. We are one of the poor regions we were talking about in the last session. We believe that the evidence shows that fiscal devolution really helps to drive the economy. For the electorate—the residents of an area—to buy into this, there needs to be
an understanding that there is real decision-making at that level, rather than delivery of government projects.

**Lord Maclennan of Rogart:** Ms Cullen, do you see the English parliament as a step towards further decentralisation?

**Scilla Cullen:** We have always said that we are not against decentralisation as a concept, but it needs to be cohesive and there needs to be a collective voice for England. What we see at the moment is something that is totally incoherent. It is a political muddle. It is bespoke. There is no overall infrastructure for England. With regard to how decentralisation might work, we have always regarded the ancient English counties and shires as the natural seats of decentralised government.

**Q117 Lord Morgan:** It is very interesting to see these rather different kinds of proposal. A famous colleague of mine in Wales, Gwyn A Williams, whom Lord Hunt will recall, wrote a famous book called *What is Wales?*, with the subsequent inquiry, *When was Wales?*. Could I ask: what is Cornwall? You compare it in various places with Wales. To me, Wales is a nation with a strong historical identity and its own culture. I am not at all aware of that kind of historic feeling in Cornwall. As a Welsh-speaking Welshman, I can read Hen Gernyweg—Old Cornish. I wonder how many people in Cornwall could so do. What is the nature of the impetus and the demand?

**Julian German:** My a wor kewsel Kernewek, but I do not think that language is the sole identifier of a nation. For example, if we look at Gaelic in Scotland, do we say that Scotland is not a nation because the majority of Scots do not speak Scottish? There is a strong identity. I have moved from saying that we have a national identity and talked about a strong regional identity, although some years ago I had the pleasure of doing my dissertation in Lord Norton’s department on the claim to Cornish nationhood. We have a distinct border. The Government have recognised our language. We have been recognised as a national minority by the Government, through the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. It is true to say that there is a strong identity to the place. Our regional relationships—for example, with Brittany, Cantabria and the family of Gorsedd—show that we are recognised by others as having a strong regional identity.

**Lord Morgan:** When did the last person speak Cornish, I wonder? Has anyone spoken it in the last 150 years?

**Julian German:** The Government kindly fund the Cornish language, because of their commitments under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The language is very much alive. Please have a look on the internet or come to Cornwall. Even the London
Cornish class is a good place to hear Cornish being spoken. I am going off the topic now, I am afraid.

**Lord Morgan**: I was wondering whether the west of England would not make a more plausible region.

**Julian German**: Exactly. These are questions we have been very interested in. I referred to the report by University College London’s constitution unit about the south-west region. Our fundamental economic differences from the rest of the south-west make a strong case for a separate regional construct. We are recognised as a NUTS 2 region. We have a much higher level of European funding, as a less developed region, which shows that we are an economic area distinct from the wider south-west. Our local enterprise partnership is well regarded as successful. We have a functional economic area. I would see us, and the constitutional convention would see Cornwall, as distinct from the south-west.

**Q118 Lord Lester of Herne Hill**: Many years ago, Lord Hailsham of St Marylebone described our system at Westminster as an “elective dictatorship”. In your schemes of things, what would you put in place to safeguard the rights of the individual and minorities against an English parliament or a Cornish assembly becoming an elective dictatorship that discriminated against minorities or was otherwise a tyranny by a majority?

**Scilla Cullen**: There is no reason to suppose that an English parliament would discriminate against minorities any more than one supposed that a Scottish Parliament would do so. Clearly, things like human rights would be for the UK Parliament, which underwrites the EU Convention on Human Rights, so that is not a question that I think should be feared. I cannot think of any reason why an English parliament should discriminate. That has floored me a bit.

**Julian German**: I agree. I do not see why a regional or an English parliament would be different from the UK. To ensure equality throughout the UK, it is important that we draw some baselines—for example, on healthcare—so that there is a base of service delivery to all the residents of the UK. Some regions may decide to go over and above that. That is their local democratic decision, but to ensure equality—importantly, equality before the law—there should be baselines for any regional or national devolution within the UK.

**Scilla Cullen**: Of course, many of us in England think that we are already discriminated against by the UK Government, because we do not have an equal franchise and we do not have equal representation. An English parliament would be very conscious of issues of discrimination.

**The Chairman**: Thank you. We will bring in Lord Norton to follow that up.
Q119 Lord Norton of Louth: I move on to the proposal for English votes for English laws, to see what your reaction is to that. I know that back in 2007 the Campaign for an English Parliament published a pamphlet called *Devolution for England*, which, it is fair to say, took a very dim view of English votes for English laws, to put it mildly. How do you respond to evidence that we have received? We have had conflicting evidence on the merits, but when it comes to popular support it seems to be the most supported option.

**Scilla Cullen:** If I can summarise, the reasons that we do not support it are as follows. It is an administrative procedure that can be reversed; it does not have the force of law. It does not give England representation, either internally or externally. It politicises the Speaker. It does not cover the issue of Ministers—heads of departments of state—being appointed from other parts of the UK. The policies for England will always be policies of the UK Government. Why do people think that it is popular? I think that it is popular because it is the only answer on offer. The man on the Clapham omnibus feels that at least this is something for England. I think it will turn out to be pretty chaotic. I was looking at how the procedure was supposed to work; the *BBC* gave quite a good illustration. Of course, we now know that, despite their principled stand in the past that they would not vote on English matters, as far as the SNP are concerned, all English matters have a Barnett consequential—apart perhaps from sweeping the leaves in Hyde Park, as I heard from somebody. In that particular chart, it looks as though, where there are contentious issues, the whole thing could ricochet from the Committees to the other place and back to the Committees. It would just gum up the work of Parliament.

Lord Norton of Louth: Is there not the argument that, as things stand, not much legislation will fall within it? The argument, I suppose, would be that creating an English parliament is a rather substantial edifice that is quite expensive, to cope with something that could be coped with in existing procedures.

**Scilla Cullen:** If we are talking about the domestic matters that are devolved for Scotland, that is an argument that might have prevented devolution, but it did not. Of course, domestic matters are very important to the man in the street. That is really all they think about. They will get the international policy in the newspapers. When we are talking about hearth and home, it is about how their children will be educated, what their National Health Service is like when they need it, and those kinds of things. Have I answered your question?

Lord Norton of Louth: Yes. Mr German, do you have any views on this?

**Julian German:** I will limit my answer, because predominantly it is an English question. My understanding is that, generally, there is a knock-on of resources available. That is the issue for the other devolved Administrations. You touched on the fact that there is a lack of
England-only legislation. The number four was referred to in relation to parliamentary time last year for Bills that referred to England only, so is putting these constructs together a worthwhile political accommodation to make?

**Scilla Cullen:** May I add something? The other thing we are concerned about is secondary legislation, because that can affect England only. We know about the workplace parking regulations and things like bin charges, which affect only England. This is another area that affects England more than you might consider primary legislation affects us.

**Q120 Baroness Dean of Thornton-le-Fylde:** Good morning. Part of my question has already been answered. If you look at the claim for an English parliament and, indeed, a Cornish assembly, could it be argued that the Government shot your fox, in the sense that we now have the northern powerhouse and devolution to various areas and cities? Is that not what people really want, rather than to replace one national parliament with another national parliament? The English parliament would cover 85% of the population of the UK. How do you react to that? Do you feel that the debate has moved on and that the solution has moved on, as regards an English parliament?

**Scilla Cullen:** We have talked about the man in the street. I do not think that the man in the street sees devolution to cities and myriad other types of local authority as anything to do with a national parliament; when I say “national”, I mean England. There have been referenda. Earlier we mentioned the north-east region, where the proposal was resoundingly defeated, by 78%. Ten out of 12 proposals for city mayors were turned down by the population. I find it very hard to believe that people are in favour of all this, except for those with selective and sectional interests—in town halls. In fact, one of your earlier witnesses said, talking particularly about Manchester, that it tends to have a centralising power because of all the local authorities that are now being unified. I come from north Hertfordshire. I am concerned about rural communities in England, which will find that all the power, the funds, the money and the wealth have been sucked up from them.

**Baroness Dean of Thornton-le-Fylde:** Thank you. Mr German, my question is about the deal that was done with the Government in July. I live in Cornwall—

**Julian German:** I am aware of that.

**Baroness Dean of Thornton-le-Fylde:** Okay. I cannot quite grasp this. You are saying that Cornwall is discrete, that it is separate and does not want to be part of the English parliament. If you are saying that, are you actually advocating independence? Yes or no?

**Julian German:** No. It is not a word that has crossed my lips.
Baroness Dean of Thornton-le-Fylde: If you are looking at fiscal authority, which you mentioned earlier, to what extent do you want that to go? How do you see the Scilly Isles, which have the option under the deal to opt in to themes? They are not fully in it at the moment.

Julian German: That is right. There are a couple of interesting points to address. The Government are moving this agenda forward. The start of the question was about whether the Government have stymied our ambitions. No. We see the UK constitution as pragmatic and devolution as a journey. We had Scott Mann MP at our AGM last weekend. He was talking about the fact that we did not get planning powers as part of the deal for Cornwall but that we needed them if we were going to be able successfully to address our economic and housing issues. We are aware that these arguments will be ongoing. Lord Lang, earlier you asked about the secrecy of the deals. In Cornwall, Cornwall Council put forward the Case for Cornwall to the general public, and outlined the parameters. While Cornwall did not get what it had put forward in the Case for Cornwall, at least the public were engaged as to the broad areas where we are looking for devolution.

The OECD and many studies show the need for regions to have some level of fiscal control if they are to be able to make locally accountable decisions that make real differences to their community and grow their local economies. If we are to be successful, fiscal devolution will come. It was certainly part of the Case for Cornwall, although it was not given in the deal for Cornwall.

Baroness Dean of Thornton-le-Fylde: Does that include tax-raising powers?

Julian German: Tax-varying. I know that the proper word is raising, but for the general public perception, we should make sure that it is tax-varying. On business rates—perhaps we will hear more detail on them today—we would welcome the opportunity to lower business rates, as well as, potentially, to raise them. There are many different ways to drive your economy and attract business. Increasing the tax take is not necessarily the best way of bringing more money into local services.

Baroness Dean of Thornton-le-Fylde: And the Scilly Isles?

Julian German: The case of the Scilly Isles is interesting, is it not? On the English votes for English laws question, my understanding is that the Isles of Scilly have to be specifically included in primary legislation, otherwise they are excluded. Does that mean that the MP for the Isles of Scilly is the sole arbiter of legislation on the islands? The convention sees it as up to the people of the Isles of Scilly to decide what they would like to do. The Cornwall deal is
open for them to join, but it needs to be their democratic decision. They are a distinct unitary authority, so they need to use their democratic will to decide what they want to do.

**Q121 Lord Brennan:** The English parliament point is very important in terms of the division of power between an English parliament and the UK Parliament, let alone the other devolved legislatures. Some people are concerned that creating an English parliament would endanger the strength of the union—potentially, its future—because of competition between the English parliament and the UK Parliament. How would you answer that?

**Scilla Cullen:** We have always considered that, in fact, not having an English parliament will destroy the union. If the people of England cannot buy into the UK state as it is at the moment, clearly there will be no cohesion. Of course, the English parliament will have only the powers of the Scottish Parliament and will not rival the UK Government, certainly in the reserved powers we spoke of before. As far as we are concerned, it would not be over-powerful. It would be no more powerful than the Scottish Parliament.

**Lord Brennan:** As a matter of interest, Ms Cullen, could you tell us from what place the campaign proposes an English parliament and its government offices will operate? Secondly, have you costed it?

**Scilla Cullen:** Strangely, I remember that question from the last time we gave evidence to this Committee. We have never been stressed by where an English parliament would sit. We consider that it is a red herring. We are interested in the principle of the equality of nations within the UK, between each other and with central government. Those who support an English parliament—of note, Lord Salisbury, Lord Lexden and Frank Field—always considered that it would be in the current Houses of Parliament, with the English parliament in the other place and the House of Lords forming the senate. We would not disagree with that. John Redwood has talked about a peripatetic parliament, which we think would not really work. The truth of the matter is that wherever you put the parliament—wherever it is—it will have the same MPs, debating the same issues. I think that does not really matter.

As for costing, if it were situated in this place—the Palace of Westminster—the cost would be very little. In fact, you could argue that it would be much less costly to have a small senate than currently.

**Lord Brennan:** What evidence do you have about public opinion on the suggestion of an English parliament?

**Scilla Cullen:** All the polls that we have seen that have talked about devolution for England have always supported devolution for England as a whole. Where the possibility of an English parliament was put forward in recent polls, it received a majority. In very early polls, people
had not really thought about it. One of your earlier witnesses referred to the fact that, when asked whether England, Scotland and Wales should be on an equal basis, 60% of people in the whole of the UK say, “Yes, they should”.

**Lord Morgan**: I have just one question. There has been much debate, particularly right now, about reserved powers being allocated to the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. Should an English parliament have reserved powers? If so, would it really make any sense, as regards preserving the union?

**Scilla Cullen**: The diminishing of reserved powers to the UK Parliament has considerable dangers. I am thinking about defence, in particular, which is extremely costly. We have never advocated changing the reserved powers, but clearly changes are taking place. I agree with where I think you are coming from; there should be very strong reserved powers for the UK as a whole.

**The Chairman**: We now move on to devolution to Cornwall. Lord Hunt, you had a couple of questions.

**Q122 Lord Hunt of Wirral**: Yes. My interest in this subject started with a big debate that I attended in Cornwall in 1968, since when I have been watching the situation reasonably carefully. Of course, the proposal that came from the Cornish Constitutional Convention in 2002 came at a time when arrangements for devolution in Wales and Scotland were at a different stage. How have the proposals for the Cornish assembly changed as the arrangements for devolution in Wales and Scotland have developed?

**Julian German**: Certainly they have strengthened. We have seen the Welsh Assembly accrue further powers because of the deemed necessity to be able to govern well, moving some powers from the UK remit to the Welsh. We have followed that trajectory. In saying that, I am not trying to draw a comparison and to say that Cornwall is the same as Wales; I am trying to expand on the relative powers that are required to have a successfully devolved area. Those powers have strengthened, in respect of what we see as required to be successful in taking forward a revitalised area that contributes more than it currently takes from the UK state.

**Lord Hunt of Wirral**: Should there be a symmetrical structure, where all counties or regions of England have devolved institutions like those you propose for Cornwall?

**Julian German**: I reflect my earlier answer. It is up to the people to decide. I have forgotten the name of the gentleman from the IPPR—

**Lord Hunt of Wirral**: Mr Cox.

**Julian German**: Thank you. I was interested in his evidence. He said that in the Devolution Deals there is a lot of symmetry. In the Government’s agenda around health and social care
integration and the core elements that are coming through in deals, that is no doubt the case. Equally, we are seeing some very different things come through in deals as well. For example, in Cornwall there is the creation of a low-carbon zone and the facilitation of deep geothermal renewable energy. Cheshire is the only area in the UK that has geological similarity. While there will be similarities and it is important that we draw baselines to make sure that UK residents have equal treatment in fundamental areas, there will be quite distinct asks as well, because of the culture, the geography and, in the case of deep geothermal, the geology of the place. We should not be afraid of regions wanting to utilise the resources they have that other regions do not.

**The Chairman:** Let me follow that up with one final question for you, Mr German. I used to represent a constituency called Dumfries and Galloway. It embraced three rather disparate counties. Its landmass was broadly comparable with Devon and Cornwall. We hear about Devon and Cornwall regularly on the weather forecast and in other contexts. Why not a Devon and Cornwall assembly?

**Julian German:** I am happy to share detail, if that would be useful for the Committee. We have done a lot of work on this. There have been strong proposals about a Devon and Cornwall region in the past. We saw the paucity of intervention with Objective 5(b) European funding, but when Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly were granted NUTS 2 status, being seen as distinct economic areas for the purposes of European funding, they performed much better with that funding. The economies are very different. Even in the east of Devon, you can see a London effect. I travelled up to Exeter this morning. You see people on the train coming to London from east Devon nearly in commuting fashion. You certainly do not see that from Cornwall. The economies and, indeed, the traditions are different; for example, the religious and political tradition of nonconformism in Cornwall is very different from the political and religious tradition in Devon. We are, of course, western democrats. I do not want to overplay these differences—

**The Chairman:** You have made the point.

**Julian German:** Cornwall is comparable to 40% of the rural area of the UK. The people of Cornwall have shown the desire for a regional assembly. We would be very happy to pilot that for the UK. We can then see how it works and take forward other options within the country, based on the evidence we provide.

**The Chairman:** Thank you. That was an extremely interesting answer. You and Ms Cullen have been very informative and helpful to us. You have given us lots to think about. Thank you very much for coming.