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What Next for Sub-National Government?

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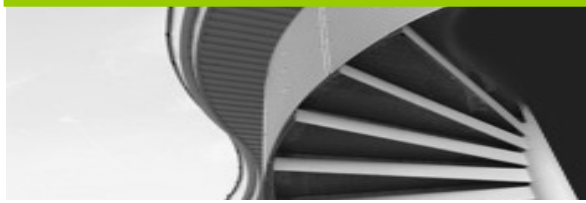

Local Governance Research Unit

Characteristics of English Local Government: 1

- Creature of statute
- No independent or constitutionally protected right to exist
- Boundaries, shape, size, structure, powers, roles, responsibilities and functions are set by central government
- *Ultra-vires*
- Funded locally and by central government
- Very big – the largest units of local government in Europe; size of English councils represents the victory of technocracy over democracy

Characteristics of English Local Government:2

- Council boundaries do not reflect natural (or any) communities of place; rather they are administratively convenient lines on a map

- Points of the compass councils:
  - East Staffordshire
  - North East Derbyshire
  - South Norfolk
  - East Hampshire
  - West Berkshire
  - West Lindsey
  - Mid Suffolk

Characteristics of English Local Government:3

- ‘AND’ councils
  - Redcar and Cleveland
  - Kings Lynn and West Norfolk
  - Basingstoke and Deane
  - Brighton and Hove
  - Bath and North East Somerset
  - Oadby and Wigston
  - Blackburn with Darwen

Characteristics of English Local Government:4

- And these places just don't exist
  - Three Rivers
  - Sandwell
  - Newham
  - Kirklees
  - Tendring

Characteristics of English Local Government:5

- Synonymous with service provision, rather than political representation and government
- Not seen as a competitor to central government, more an agent of central government
- Dominated by the three main parties
- Run on party lines

Three Scenarios for Local (sub-national) Government

- Doomsday Scenario
- The Sunlit Uplands
- Copus' 'Flight of Fantasy'

More of the Same?

- Reduction in the status and functions of local government
- Financial restraint and control
- Operating in a time of continual resource constraint
- Partnerships and ‘governance’ continues to replace government
- Job losses and consequent effects on services
  - (can we really do more with less?)

Sunlit Uplands

- General competence
- Localism and decentralisation
- Attracting roles and responsibilities from regional bodies and quangos
- Cross boarder co-operation to replace regions
  - Councils to decide partner councils and extent
- The power of influence (LEPs)
- Extension of economic development and trading powers
- Elected mayors and mayoral councils with more powers

Copus' 'Flight of Fantasy'

- Smaller councils
- Less party control (new voting system)
- Legislative / ordinance, powers (not mere by-laws)
- Constitutional protection
- Control over own boundaries
- A wider tax base and taxation powers
- Power to decide how and what to provide
- Underpinned by wide use of citizen called referendum

What Might a New Governing System Look Like?

- Small, autonomous (multi-tiered) councils
- English Parliament aprox 530 members
- House of Commons of 300 members from across the UK
- Senate of 100 members from across UK

  » **OR**

- A unicameral UK Parliament
- Finally, does England need regions ?...

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The Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms Of England