

Local Government Association (LGA) Constitutional Convention Bill House of Lords Friday 17 July 2015



Key messages

- The LGA is calling for a convention to debate and agree a constitutional settlement for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The convention's remit should include devolution of responsibility for public services and fiscal powers to local government. We do not believe this need delay progress of the legislation currently before Parliament.
- People in communities across the UK want more decisions that affect their lives to be taken closer to them. To achieve this we must transfer powers to the level of government closest to the people, secure and enhance the legal position of local government with a defined set of powers and responsibilities, and give greater responsibility for funding to councils.
- A wider convention on the constitutional settlement is needed to secure the position of local government across the United Kingdom. This will ensure communities have confidence that the power to make decisions that affect their lives rests with the people who live and work among them.

Background

Constitutional settlement

The LGA is calling for a convention to debate and agree a constitutional settlement for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The convention's remit should include devolution of responsibility for public services and fiscal powers to local government. We see no reason why this should delay the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, the Scotland Bill or the Wales Bill.

It is clear that people want the decisions that affect their lives to be made by people who live and work among them. 77 per cent of people trust their local council to make decisions about how services are provided in their area, compared with just 13 per cent for central government. For communities to have faith that the local representatives that they elect have real powers to enact their wishes, the legal position of local government needs to be enhanced and secured.

At the moment local government exists primarily through devolved authority from central bodies. Our communities want to be able to make local decisions for themselves. We need to consider a defined set of powers and responsibilities which sets out what local government can support at the local level so that we can design public services which are most appropriate to local need.

Too many decisions that affect local communities are centralised to national parliaments. The four local government associations of the United Kingdom – the LGA, COSLA, WLGA and NILGA – want to see devolution of powers beyond Westminster, Holyrood, Cardiff Bay and Stormont to local government and to local

Briefing

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Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution APPG

In March 2014 the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution in the UK published [*A Parliament for Reform 2015-2020*](#), setting out the constitutional issues that need to be resolved. It includes devolution to and within England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the role of local government, and wider electoral reform.

This report will form the basis for an inquiry on the future of devolution and wider constitutional change, to be chaired by Lord Kerslake. The inquiry will report in the spring.

The group is co-chaired by Lord Purvis of Tweed, Lord Foulkes of Cumnock, Andrew Rosindell MP and Catherine West MP. The LGA provides the secretariat for the group.