

Speaking for England

Some of you have noticed I have dropped the Speaking for England phrase from this website. I did so after careful consideration. When I thought through and set out my promises to electors for the late 2019 General Election I decided that the forthcoming Parliament had enough to do to see Brexit through, develop the wins from Brexit, and drive through a levelling up economic agenda. I doubted the Prime Minister's interest in constitutional reform for England, so thought it better not to arouse expectations. I did in the past promise a referendum on EU membership before it was party policy, and helped bring that about, and promised to speak for England and helped bring about English votes for English issues before that was party policy.

I was torn over the speaking for England issue, as it is clearly unfinished work. When I helped persuade David Cameron to take the issue of the unfair devolution settlement seriously I both argued for an English veto on laws affecting England and a right to initiate England only laws for English MPs. We secured the new procedure that any law affecting just England requires a majority of English MPs voting to vote for it. I did not secure the other half, the right of a majority of England's MPs to initiate and pass a law for England which MPs from other parts of the UK do not approve. William Hague led a successful attempt to block us. England therefore remains way behind Scotland in our devolved powers, as the Scottish Parliament can initiate and veto legislation for Scotland over a wide range of devolved matters.

Some of you argue England needs its own Parliament, like Scotland, away from Westminster. I disagree. I do not want to spend more taxpayer money on more politicians and another layer of government. I do want England to have a better voice in government, and control over its own laws. This can be done by having a Cabinet member leading for England and representing England, working closely with the Secretaries of State for Local Government, Transport, Health and Education who are mainly England only Ministers. It can be done by an English Grand Committee of all UK MPs elected for English constituencies forming the English legislature at Westminster. If I were an English nationalist then of course I would argue for a separate Parliament with as much power as possible. I would prefer the UK to survive as my country, but do want a fairer deal and a better say for England within our devolution settlement.