

## **Briefing for Interview with Professor Cole and Dr Stafford, Cardiff University**

### Meeting Information

Professor Alistair Cole (Principal Investigator and co-chair of the Wales Governance Centre) and Dr Ian Stafford (co-Investigator) of Cardiff University have asked to interview you as part of their three year project on 'Territorial Governance in Western Europe: between Convergence and Capacity'.

The Meeting will take place at **10:30 on Thursday, 21 March** in the Commission offices in Caspian Point. Dr Stafford has indicated that the interview is likely to last between 30 minutes and one hour.

The interview will be centred on the following core questions that the project is investigating:

- whether the economic crisis has undermined, or reversed the seemingly relentless trend towards decentralisation across Europe from the 1980s to circa 2010;
- Or, on the other hand, are the processes of devolution and decentralisation sheltered from the direct effects of these global and European pressures?

### Suggested lines to take

- our first report took full account of the international evidence.
- we found that Wales was unique in not having tax and borrowing powers.
- but on the other hand there are limits on what can be devolved eg mobile tax bases.
- and don't want to put at risk fiscal transfers.
- international evidence also relevant to part II.
- there are pressures towards both decentralisation and centralisation in the EU. Question of striking the right balance in line with subsidiarity principle.
- There was some concern expressed in our evidence that the economic situation should be prioritised over constitutional change.
- We argued strongly that greater financial accountability would incentive economic growth – in our case, by making part of the devolved budget dependent on Welsh income tax receipts.
- This has been broadly accepted – with many surprised that Welsh employment has been stronger than overall economic performance (people had thought Wales was too poor to self-finance).
- However, our report clearly acknowledged that the UK's economic union required a common regime in relation to a number of taxes – including excise duties and VAT (and also Corporation tax, in our view).

### Background

The 'Territorial Governance in Western Europe: between Convergence and Capacity' is a new three-year International Network funded by the Leverhulme Trust.

It is based on a partnership between Cardiff University (the lead network partner), the Institute of Political Studies, Rennes (France), the Universidad Pablo Olivade (Seville, Spain), Darmstadt Technical University (Germany) and the Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium).

The network is trying to capture the processes of policy convergence and divergence by comparing territorial dynamics in public finance, education and intergovernmental relations in five European states: Belgium, France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom.

It has identified five regions – Wallonia, Andalucia, Wales, Brittany and Saxony– within the five states that combine a distinctive and developed territorial capacity with fiscal deficits and/or dependent relations with central States. These states cover the range of logical possibilities for comparison: two federal states (Belgium and Germany), a federation in all but name (Spain), a predominantly unitary state modified by forms of asymmetrical devolution (United Kingdom) and a decentralised but still unitary state (France).

In Wales, the network has identified a panel of 32 people it would like to interview with similar interviews being conducted in Belgium, France, Germany, and Spain.

It will also be hosting a number of events across the five states including an initial conference on Europeanising Devolution which will be held in the Pierhead Building, Cardiff Bay in May 2013.

### Biographies

#### **Professor Alistair Cole**



Professor Alistair Cole is the Director of Research (Politics) at the Cardiff School of European Languages, Translation and Politics, Cardiff University. His research interests lay in contemporary and comparative European politics and policy, in particular, the related themes of governance and capacity building. He has conducted a number of funded research projects on territorial and multi-level governance (especially comparative devolution), public administration and the State, public policy (education, training, research, the knowledge economy), Europeanisation and European Integration.

Professor Cole is a founder member of the European Governance, Identity and Public Policy research unit and co-chair of the Wales Governance Centre.

## Dr Ian Stafford



Dr Ian Stafford has been a researcher at the Wales Institute for Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD) at Cardiff University since 2009. Prior to joining WISERD, he worked for two years at the University of Bristol as a Research Associate and on the University of Wales Board of Celtic Studies funded research project '*Public Policy and Wales-only Legislation: A Study of Transport Policy*' at Swansea University, where he also completed his doctoral thesis on the impact of devolution on the policy making process and policy outputs in Scotland and Wales.

He has a number of research interests including Public policy analysis, theories of policy-making process, policy networks, policy learning, governance, multi-level governance, UK Politics, territorial politics, intergovernmental relations, devolution, transport policy.