



Japan Local Government Centre, London

Monthly Report for May 2011 – Devolved national capitals

Belfast

Belfast is the capital of and the largest city in Northern Ireland. It received its city status from Queen Victoria in 1888, to reflect its status as Ireland's largest settlement following rapid expansion of its linen industry (the so-called 'Linenopolis') as a result of the restrictions on the American cotton industry during the 1860s US Civil War (the linen trade having been established by French Protestant Huguenots fleeing religious persecution). Its industrial prominence and wealth led to it and six of the nine counties of Ulster being partitioned from the south of Ireland during the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921), with a Protestant-dominated devolved administration for Northern Ireland established at Stormont Castle in the city under the 1920 Government of Ireland Act. The devolved administration sat until 1972, when direct rule from London was introduced as a result of the pro-Catholic civil rights struggle in the city which led to widespread rioting in 1969 and terrorist activity for much of the 1970s and 1980s. In 1999, cross-community devolved government was introduced under the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (approved by referendum in 1998), again at Stormont Castle.

The population of the City of Belfast is 267,500 (contrasted to 1,685,000 for Northern Ireland as a whole), with 483,418 people living in the wider urban area.

The City of Belfast is one of 26 district councils in Northern Ireland. The local government system of Northern Ireland was introduced in 1973 with the new districts (elected to four year terms by the Single Transferable Vote, unlike England and Wales) responsible only for environmental and leisure services, with five education and library boards and four health and social services boards (appointed centrally) handling education and social services. Unlike mainland Britain, local government in Northern Ireland is conducted by the committee system. Belfast City Council has six committees (roughly corresponding to the council's service departments) – development (includes regeneration, tourism and economic development), health and environmental services, licensing, parks and leisure, strategic policy and resources and town planning. There is no council leader (unlike elsewhere in the UK), with the role performed jointly by the chairman of strategic policy and resources committee and the Lord Mayor. In 1997, the Unionists lost control of the city council, which is now split between them and Nationalists, with the cross-community Alliance Party holding the balance of power. The council also elects one of its number to the post of High Sheriff, a role undertaken by royal appointment elsewhere in the UK.

The city council meets in the domed Belfast City Hall in Donegall Square, which was designed in the Edwardian Baroque style and completed in 1906.

Belfast has sister city partnerships with Nashville (US), Bonn (Germany), Hefei (China), Wonju (South Korea) and is a member of Eurocities.

In 2008 the city council launched its new visual brand identity for the city based around a heart-shaped B logo (to signify 'be welcome' and Belfast's name), as well as promoting its association with the Titanic (built in the city) through new tailored quarter. Belfast is marketed internationally by Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau.

Cardiff

Cardiff is the capital of and largest city in Wales. It received its city status in 1905 and became Welsh capital by default in 1955 following a decision by the Home Secretary to clarify its status (the royal seat of Caernarvon had contested this). However, official recognition of capital functions only occurred with the establishment of the Welsh Office and its headquarters in the city in 1965. Prior to 1905, Cardiff had only been the county town of Glamorganshire (since the Act of Union between Wales and England in 1536) and in the 1801 census was found to be the 25th largest town in Wales, with rapid expansion taking place in the 1830s following the construction of the Taff Vale Railway to carry coal from the mines of South Wales to the newly founded docks in the city. In 1996 the city became a unitary authority as the City and County of Cardiff and in 1999 it became the seat of the new devolved National Assembly for Wales.

The population of Cardiff is 336,200, with 1.4m residing in the wider metropolitan area (almost half of the population of Wales). There is however sub regional structure for this metropolitan area.

The City and County of Cardiff is governed by Cardiff Council, which consists of 75 councillors elected to four year terms. The Leader of the Council is the Liberal Democrat Rodney Berman, who leads a Liberal Democrat-Plaid Cymru coalition administration as no one party has a majority since Labour lost control of the council in 2004.

The city council meets in the domed Cardiff City Hall in Cathays Park, which was designed in the Edwardian Baroque style and completed in 1906. The former County Hall in Cardiff Bay also serves as municipal headquarters.

Cardiff has sister city partnerships with Luhansk (Ukraine), Hordaland county (Norway), Nantes (France), Stuttgart (Germany), Xiamen (China) and is a member of Eurocities.

In 2008 the city council launched its new visual brand identity for the city based around a circle-patterned 'C' (to move on from stereotypes of dragons and daffodils of the past), as well as promoting its association with the new Welsh Assembly in the on-going Cardiff Bay development. Cardiff is marketed internationally by Cardiff & Co.

Edinburgh

Edinburgh is the capital of and second largest city in Scotland. Until the Act of Union with England and Wales in 1707, Edinburgh served as a Royal Burgh of the Scottish Crown (since 1130) and became capital of the independent Scotland in 1437. Under the 1707 Acts of Union London became the *de facto* British capital as seat of government, with the Scots Parliament abolished. Under the Scottish local government reorganisation of 1975, Edinburgh lost its royal burgh status and was governed by the City of Edinburgh District Council as a district council of the Lothian regional area. Since 1667, convenors of the council have been known as Lord Provost (Provost 1376-1667), the post being broadly comparable to Lord Mayor elsewhere in the United Kingdom, although unlike Lord Mayors the Lord Provost also serves as ex-officio Lord Lieutenant of the City of Edinburgh (since 1997). The term provost is derived from the French *prévôt* of the *ancien régime* and is used to denote mayors elsewhere in Scotland (the three other cities of Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow also have Lord Provosts). In 1999 the devolved Scottish Parliament was established in the city, reaffirming its capital status.

The population of Edinburgh is 477,660, with a population of around 778,000 in the wider urban area of the former Lothian Region.

Edinburgh City Council is one of the 32 unitary local government areas of Scotland, following the local government reorganisation from districts and regions (since 1975) in 1996. Edinburgh City Council is governed by the committee system common in Scottish local government (unlike England and Wales), with six executive committees (consisting of 13-17 councillors each) supervising the work of and setting policy for the council's service departments. The six committees are culture and leisure, economic development, education, children and families, finance and resources, health, social care and housing, transport, infrastructure and environment, with additional quasi-judicial committees supervising planning and licensing. Previously the council operated (until 2007) under the cabinet and scrutiny system found in England and Wales. The council's 58 members have since the 2007 local elections been elected under the Single Transferable Vote system (like in Northern Ireland). The council is led by a Liberal Democrat/Scottish Nationalist Party coalition, with Liberal Democrat Cllr Jenny Dawe serving as council leader.

The city council meets in Edinburgh City Chambers on the Royal Mile, which was originally completed in 1761 as a merchants' exchange and taken into council ownership in 1811.

Edinburgh has sister city partnerships with Munich (Germany), Nice (France), Florence (Italy), Dunedin (New Zealand), Vancouver (Canada), San Diego (US), Segovia (Spain), Xi'an (China), Kiev (Ukraine), Aalborg (Denmark), Kyoto Prefecture (Japan), Krakow (Poland) and is a member of Eurocities.

In 2005 the Edinburgh Inspiring Capital brand was launched, taken over by the city council in 2008. The purpose of the new brand for the city was to ensure it was cohesive across all sectors and that external promotion was handled in a more joined-up way between them. Edinburgh is marketed internationally by Marketing

Edinburgh, following the recent merger of a number of promotion bodies and bureaux.

Cities of the Isles

The Cities of the Isles (COTI) network is a partnership of six UK and Irish City Councils: Belfast; Cardiff; Dublin; Edinburgh; Glasgow; and Liverpool. The network was created in 2000 to share urban regeneration experiences and explore and develop a coordinated approach to issues of strategic importance. It followed the creation of the Council of the Isles (British-Irish Council) under the Good Friday Agreement.

All six cities face similar regeneration challenges and the network exists to facilitate the exchange of information and experience on mutual issues, policies, programmes and legislation. It also exists to support and present the city perspective to the Council of the Isles.

Any opinions expressed in this report are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of JLGC or CLAIR.