23 Perfect storm

The pandemic, Brexit, and devolved government in the UK

Clive Grace

23.1 Introduction

The context for COVID-19 in the UK has been strongly shaped by the devolved structures of UK Government and the unusual character of intergovernmental relations to which it gives effect. But if we are looking for the echoes of genuinely federal systems, it is not ‘cooperative’ or ‘competitive’ federalist themes which stand out. The quality of relationships has instead been more about unilateral action by the center and frustration on the part of the devolved nations. However, like devolution itself, intergovernmental relationships during the pre-vaccine waves have been a ‘process rather than an event’ and a process of several interwoven threads. On the pandemic itself, the four UK governments began to work somewhat more cooperatively toward the end. But that became increasingly difficult to untangle from the consequences of delayed and last-minute Brexit negotiations with the EU, and with the underlying pressures for Scottish independence and Irish re-unification.

It might all have been quite different, and the UK’s devolved ‘federalized’ arrangements could have been mobilized effectively to tackle COVID-19. Collaboration and coordination could have been uppermost, with regular Heads of Government engagement and strong, positive, and open lines of communication. Information and early sharing of thinking and options, and views on what the ‘science’ had to say, could have been a significant feature. Marshaling of local government expertise, knowledge, and capacity could have been a natural part of the strategy.

What might have been the outcome of such an approach in governmental terms, notwithstanding the inevitable economic and health consequences of the pandemic, and even if the death rates were not very different from what actually transpired? A probable outcome would have been a strengthening of the centripetal influence of crises, making people across the UK feel that they were all ‘in it together’ and that they were stronger together than apart. Indeed, this effect was evident early on in support for the UK Government’s handling and through deployment of the power of collective institutions and common sentiments and symbols, such as when Her Majesty the Queen addressed the UK as a whole with a message of care, compassion and resolve.

In the event, the UK Government’s handling of COVID-19 and its approach to governing turned the crisis into a catastrophe. It was the centrifugal forces which were made ascendant. The UK had the worst performance of the G7 in both health and economic terms. A massive Conservative opinion poll lead and strong majority support for its approach have both been transformed into a neck and neck position with the Labour Opposition and widespread disapproval ratings. These ratings contrast

Table 23.1 Key Statistics on COVID-19 in the United Kingdom as of 10 January 2021

<i>Cumulative Cases</i>	<i>Cumulative Cases per 100,000 Population</i>	<i>Cumulative Deaths</i>	<i>Cumulative Deaths per 100,000 Population</i>	<i>Case-Fatality Percentage</i>
3,017,413	4,444.8	80,868	119.1	2.7

Source: *World Health Organization Weekly epidemiological update* – 12 January 2021. Geneva: WHO, 2021. Available from <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/weekly-epidemiological-update>

strongly with those of the leadership of the three devolved Nations despite relatively minor difference in death rates from those in England.

Initially, the devolved Governments in the UK had limited influence on the handling of the pandemic. Centripetal forces were strong, and crisis and economic measures were paramount. Despite their powers in key areas of domestic policy and service delivery, they followed the UK Government lead. But their influence grew into a significant factor in handling matters differentially and especially in when and how to ease lockdown restrictions. Collaboration between the UK Government and those in the devolved Nations and local government was very limited and mainly conducted on UK Government terms except when coordination was absolutely required, such as in relation to quarantine measures associated with international travel. Even that alignment subsequently broke down.

Paradoxically, the UK Government's handling of the pandemic looks likely to have a potentially profound effect on the future course of devolution and federalized arrangements in the UK. It has overlain and reinforced divisions created by Brexit, fueling support for Scottish independence and encouraging independence debate in Wales, whilst proposed Brexit arrangements nudge Northern Ireland toward reunification. Brexit itself threatens to weaken the current devolution settlement, but the combination of COVID-19 and Brexit may even drive the devolved parts of the UK further apart. This could lead either to separation or perhaps to greater devolution as a means to try and hold the Union together.

23.2 COVID-19 in the UK

The Management of COVID-19 in the UK has been a disaster. It would be wrong to temper that overall judgment with weasel words and the mitigation that these are 'unprecedented' times. The UK was judged by WHO as recently as 2019 as the second best prepared country in terms of ability to respond to a pandemic (the country judged as best prepared was the USA), and the UK had plenty of opportunity to learn from the early experiences of Italy, in particular (McCarthy 2019). But it failed to do so. Its vaunted preparations were overwhelmed by disastrous errors of policy and politics. After the first COVID-19 death at the end of January, the UK was slow into lockdown some six weeks later and so suffered huge health consequences. It was correspondingly slow out of lockdown and suffered enormously in economic terms also and then failed to thwart or manage well the emerging second wave.

As of the end of August 2020, the UK had experienced one of the very highest figures for deaths from COVID-19 per 1 m population (610), one of the highest absolute numbers of COVID-19 recorded deaths (over 41,000), and a level of excess deaths that was the highest in Europe (a 6.9 percent increase in the death rate for the period

from January to the end of May 2020). From the end of March 2020 until the middle of May, the UK recorded more than 2,500 new cases every day. From early April, death levels climbed rapidly to a peak of more than 1,000 a day, before dropping to an average of under 50 a day by early July and negligible numbers by the end of August. The number of new cases remained at what then seemed to be stubbornly high at 1,000+ a day – rather put into context by the 60,000+ cases a day which the UK experienced during the second wave.

The NHS was nearly, but not quite, overwhelmed, and it has been widely and deeply celebrated for the effort and the sacrifices which its staff made. New hospitals were created in record time, although for the most part, their capacity was only lightly used, principally because of a shortage of qualified staff. However, alongside the heroic efforts of the NHS, the key-associated components of a strategy to combat a pandemic were widely perceived as a shambles. They included a failure to ‘test and trace,’ a systematic and persistent absence of PPE, and a very poor response to the severity and consequences of the outbreak in care homes exacerbated by years of austerity-driven funding reductions.

There was also a widespread failure of trust in government and in governmental competence – on which the UK generally prides itself. This was partly due to the failures in health policy and approach outlined above and then magnified by the flagrant and highly publicized breach of the lockdown rules by the Prime Minister’s principal (and highly controversial) adviser, Dominic Cummings. It was then further amplified by a succession of policy U-turns culminating in the chaos of badly handled summer examination results. One could barely script what a mess it has been, and how it has damaged the UK’s reputation for good government and trust amongst its own population and overseas.

The economic costs to the UK have also been amongst the worst of anywhere in the world. The Q2 2020 GDP figure for the UK was 22 percent below the Q4 2019 figure, twice the fall in the US, far worse than Germany, and worst in the G7, ahead even of France. However, notwithstanding such huge economic consequences, the one area of government which has been seen as having a ‘good’ crisis has been the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Treasury and Bank of England. The measures introduced have not been especially innovative in international terms, but they were introduced quickly and boldly, notwithstanding that they represented a major departure from fiscal and economic orthodoxy as practiced by Conservative Governments for more than 40 years.

The Chancellor introduced tax and spending measures to support households and families including:

- Additional funding for the NHS, public services, and charities (£48.5 billion);
- Measures to support businesses (£29 billion), including property tax holidays, direct grants for firms and a ‘furlough’ scheme, and compensation for sick pay leave;
- Strengthening the social safety net to support vulnerable people (by £8 billion);
- Three separate loans schemes to facilitate business’ access to credit.

Key monetary measures included:

- Reducing the bank rate;
- A liquidity stimulus of £300 billion;

- Additional incentives for lending to the real economy and especially SMEs;
- A COVID-19 Corporate Financing Facility which makes £330 bn of loans and guarantees available to businesses (15 percent of GDP).

By mid-May, a roadmap to ease lockdown had been put in place to re-open the economy, with continued support via an extended furlough scheme and more targeted help for key sectors. The UK economy began to grow back but remained shrunk and severely weakened. The pandemic has exacerbated some underlying negative trends for UK retailing and High Streets as consumers switch to purchase online as well as disrupting supply chains. Unemployment is expected to be high, and to stay high for some considerable time. The UK economy had barely begun its recovery when the second wave, almost equally badly handled, dealt it a series of further hammer blows, intensified in some sectors by the economic consequences of Brexit.

23.3 COVID-19 and devolved government in the United Kingdom

The relationship between ‘federalism’ (devolved government) and COVID-19 in the UK, and the role of the three devolved Nations, has been heavily influenced by the underlying demographic and geographical structure of the UK, and the specific histories associated with devolution to all three.

23.3.1 *The topography of UK ‘federalism’*

The UK has a devolved and ‘federal-lite’ system of government which has been created top down (albeit largely in response to bottom-up pressure) and which could still, in theory, be reversed. The UK central government devolved powers to the three ‘Home Nations’ of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, each of which has a specific historical, political, and geographical relationship with the central government, and with England being ruled by the UK central government itself and having no specific devolved government. If it is federalism, it is not as we usually know it.

Whilst England has a population of 53 m, Scotland has 5.3 m, Wales 3.1 m, and Northern Ireland 1.8 m. The size differential is even greater in GDP terms, with London and the South East of England producing a disproportionate share of UK national wealth, and all three devolved Nations having a GDP shortfall as compared to their population ratios. Geographically, Scotland is part of mainland Britain but has a relatively impervious physical barrier to England. Wales has a long and very porous boundary with England, and many trade and transport routes run east–west between Wales and England rather than north–south within Wales itself. Northern Ireland, of course, is physically part of the island of Ireland and separated from Great Britain by the sea.

Scotland achieved devolution in 1998 following a referendum and built upon a network of distinctly ‘Scottish’ institutions and cultures, many of which traced roots back to when Scotland was still an independent country before 1707. Wales similarly achieved devolution in 1998, but had further to go in creating its own institutional infrastructure having been more strongly integrated into union with England, starting in the 13th century (although Welsh is the most widespread indigenous language of all three devolved nations). Northern Ireland was part of Ireland and in union with Great Britain, formally dating from 1801. It remained as part of the UK on the creation of an independent Irish

State in 1922. The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 triggered a modern, power sharing devolved government for Northern Ireland following the long period of the ‘troubles’ and inter-community conflict. In the Brexit referendum, a majority in Scotland and in Northern Ireland voted to remain and a majority in Wales to leave.

All three devolved nations have extensive powers in relation to domestic policy, but very constrained fiscal resources. They get a guaranteed share of national expenditure, but the aggregate total (and thus the size of the annual budgets of the devolved nations) is controlled by the UK government. In turn, the devolved national governments control local government spending closely. Healthcare and social care are devolved, along with many of the powers for managing emergencies, such that the devolved nations were able to diverge from the UK government’s approach in England. Initially, they did so hardly at all, but more significant differences emerged as lockdown restrictions began to be eased.

All three devolved Nations also have effectively just one other order of government at local level in the form of local authorities with broad powers and responsibilities including housing, transport, leisure and environmental matters, and with Scottish and Welsh local authorities also having extensive powers in the fields of social services and education especially. Compared to almost any other jurisdiction, UK local authorities are, on average, very large, have very wide powers, employ a lot of people, and spend a significant proportion of national public expenditure, notwithstanding the decade of austerity which hit their funding very hard.

Overall, devolution in the UK has been seen as a success (Paun and Mcrory 2019), albeit differentially. As Bronwen Maddox summarizes the position:

Devolution has had the most surefooted development in Scotland where, from the start, there was strong public support and the Scottish Parliament had extensive powers. In Wales, public support took time to build; so did the powers of the National Assembly. In Northern Ireland, the devolved government’s ability to function has been dogged by splits between rival parties which the devolution settlement itself was designed to try to heal.

(Cheung and Valsamidis 2019, p. 2)

And whereas Tony Blair initiated the referenda which led to Scottish and Welsh devolution in order to save the Union, when combined with COVID-19 and Brexit, the forces unleashed may yet have the power to destroy it.

23.3.2 *COVID-19 in the devolved nations*

The course and consequences of COVID-19 across the four Home Nations have often felt quite different, but, in reality, the similarities outweigh the differences in most major respects. When the UK government finally woke up to the need for lockdown, the character and scale of the crisis was so pronounced that the devolved nations followed suit almost to the letter, notwithstanding that the lockdown powers they relied on were substantially matters for self-regulation. The major fiscal and economic measures were in any event largely a matter for the UK government to determine and it did so in a relatively unilateral manner.

The key coordinating mechanism for emergencies which are UK wide or of broad significance is COBRA, the committee for dealing with crisis contingencies (Haddon

2020). The devolved Nations had access to COBRA, and it did play some part. For example, the Welsh Government declared that it was working in collaboration with the other governments in the UK to take an aligned approach where it was beneficial to do so, coordinated by the UK Government through meetings of COBRA. However, power to impose the lockdown in Wales rested with the Welsh Government, which decided how it should be implemented, along with responsibility for health and social care.

The relative lack of coordination has led to unnecessary differences and confusion for citizens. Commentators have called for greater collaboration not as a matter of principle and not in order to impose inappropriate uniformity but to optimize the collective effort. More extensive use of such collaborative intergovernmental machinery as the UK possesses has been strongly encouraged (Sargeant 2020).

The variations in handling between the UK's four 'Home Nations' showed some of the strengths of devolved government as well as its limitations in what remains a highly centralized country in fiscal terms. The devolved Nations increasingly deployed their powers to diverge from the UK Government's approach across the course of the pandemic and especially in relation to the 'when' and 'how' to ease lockdown. But, overall, the response to the pandemic reflected the fundamentally centralist character of UK Government associated with its political culture and history and the sheer weight and dominance of England.

This was reinforced and amplified by a centralizing political impulse of the new Conservative Government. By early July, the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales launched a coordinated attack on the UK Government for being 'shambolic' and failing to provide coherent information from UK Ministers on key issues of international travel and quarantine. They claimed that consultation with the devolved Governments was being treated as an afterthought, even though all three had clear legal duties to make sure that their decisions were lawful and proportionate. But whilst feeling like 'rubber stamps,' in practice, the devolved Nations initially accepted the UK government position on which countries should be exempt from travel restrictions – before then diverging both from the UK Government and from each other. Conversely, on some issues, the devolved Nations moved first, and the UK Government found itself under public pressure to follow suit.

Much of this criticism was reinforced and echoed by the Westminster Scottish Affairs Committee in its interim report on intergovernmental working during the pandemic. It spoke of a vacuum in ministerial-level communication between the UK and Scottish Governments and deterioration in collaboration as lockdown measures started to be eased. It saw the growing divergence of approach as creating public confusion and criticized the UK Government for not being clear when its messaging applied only to England.

The concerns of the devolved Nations about an over-centralized approach were exacerbated by what were seen as further centralizing moves arising from Brexit such as legislation to establish an internal 'single market' for the UK as a whole. *Inter alia*, this would potentially impose uniform regulatory standards on the devolved Nations, including on matters on which they currently have devolved powers. The UK Government's apparent unwillingness to engage with the devolved Governments unless it absolutely had to was also evident in the lack of consultation about post-Brexit trade agreements and migration policy.

Whereas 'strengthening the Union' was one of the Prime Minister Teresa May's five tests for a successful Brexit (Jack et al. 2018, p. 5), in fact, Brexit has imposed

severe strains on the Union. It has “highlighted the stark divide between how existing devolution arrangements are interpreted in Westminster and Whitehall, and how they are interpreted in Cardiff and Edinburgh. And it has divided the main parties in Northern Ireland” (Blair 2019). It seems less likely that Brexit will aid the Union than further weakening along the lines predicted by Tony Blair.

The devolved Governments felt shut out of the negotiations with the EU and other countries about future trade deals. They were keen to see key sectors of their economies taken account of and feared that the UK Government would not be sufficiently concerned about these. Scotland argued for a different approach to migration policy to avoid damaging rural communities which need in-migration to sustain birth rates and basic services. The same issue applies to Wales. So, an optimally effective UK-wide post-Brexit policy on migration would have needed more consultation and engagement with the devolved Nations than was the case.

The verdict as to whether devolution has helped or hindered the management of the pandemic in the UK is that it certainly has not been a hindrance, although the multiple messaging may have added somewhat to the sometimes confused communications of the UK Government. More positively, it has permitted the devolved Nations to tailor lockdown-easing plans more closely to their own concerns and judgments on what the ‘science’ was telling them. It also provided an element of competitive federalism as people were able to compare the various approaches being taken and thus supported greater accountability of all the governments. The more interesting question, however, is not so much what devolution did for the pandemic as to what the pandemic may well do to the future of devolution.

23.4 New directions in devolution: the impact of the pandemic

The pandemic has exacerbated intergovernmental tensions within the UK. It has not stimulated greater enduring collaboration but rather fuelled resentment and exasperation on the part of the devolved Nations. The policy divergences and the experience of the pandemic have been relatively minor, in fact, but have generated disproportionate confusion and irritation, notwithstanding that they were based in genuine differences of view and genuine differences in context between the four Nations.

Most strikingly, the pandemic made devolution visible in a much stronger and starker way. For many people, it brought devolution to life as they realized that things were being done differently in different parts of the UK, and that crossing from one jurisdiction to another meant that different rules and approaches applied.

The political impact of how the virus was handled has been profound. The UK Government is widely perceived as having handled it badly – its approval rating fell from 65+ percent in late March to 36 percent by July (see Savanta 2021). This has not been so in the devolved Nations. Broadly, they were slower than England to ease lockdown measures and have higher approval ratings for their handling of the pandemic. In part, they appear to have been more in tune with risk-averse public sentiment but perhaps did more harm to their economies. But, on many measures, all four Home Nations failed as badly as each other. So, the approval ratings in the devolved Nations seem to be as much about presentation and perception as more effective handling of the crisis as such.

The UK Government’s failure was amplified by a series of U-turns on both major and relatively minor matters of policy. These culminated in the fiasco over the

examination results of hundreds of thousands of 16- and 18-year-old pupils which created chaos in the higher education and vocational education sectors. The UK Government has lost a huge lead in opinion polls over the Labour Opposition and a huge positive approval rating for its handling in the early days of the crisis. The Prime Minister's personal approval rating plummeted. In contrast, the leaders in the devolved Nations have been continuously visible and have had continuously solid positive approval from their populations (see Davies-Lewis 2021; YouGov 2021). The policy divergence and the political tensions have been inevitable in the absence of any continuing positive and collaborative intergovernmental machinery. The limitations and lack of resilience of existing intergovernmental relations processes, such as they are, have been cruelly exposed. Collaboration between the UK Government and the devolved Nations, and between central/regional government and local authorities, should have been the hallmark of a nationwide response to the pandemic, but for the most part was missing or under-developed.

Interestingly, what might be thought of as being an 'obvious' place for international collaboration in the UK has been notably absent throughout. The 'Council of the Isles' (also known as the British-Irish Council) was created as part of the Good Friday Agreement and comprises high level and ongoing engagement between all four Home Nations and others on a broad range of matters of intergovernmental concern and with a permanent secretariat. A search of the official website found no results for 'coronavirus,' and 'pandemic' produced just one result – that a planned creative industries meeting had been cancelled because of the pandemic. The 34th summit (they average two a year) scheduled for June was also postponed. So, rather than building on and using existing collaborative machinery, it was actually put to one side.

The character and history of devolution in each of the devolved Nations, and their specific geographies, heavily influenced their relationships with the UK Government during the pandemic. Scotland, with its relatively impervious land border with England, was able to contemplate a 'COVID-19-free' policy approach. The Scottish First Minister even threatened to close the Scotland/England border to help give effect to this policy (but with the UK Prime Minister dismissing the very idea that such a border existed at all). Wales also made its 'border' with England part of its COVID-19 travel restrictions at one stage in a minor way, whilst knowing that its physical connectivity with major English conurbations along and across that border made major policy divergence difficult to justify and maintain.

The realities of the immediate consequences of the pandemic were not, in practice, so very different across the four Nations, although Northern Ireland's figures for deaths stand out as best, and on some other measures the devolved Nations did comparatively better than England. Care homes were a major problem almost everywhere, and especially in Scotland, partly from weak resources and capacity as a result of years of under-funding, and partly from policy errors. But the messaging and leadership was significantly different and perceived as such by the respective populations.

What may also be different in the longer term is that the pandemic has exposed and amplified the impacts of inequality on health and employment. The populations of the devolved nations are, on average, poorer, older, and sicker than the UK as a whole, and their economies are less resilient than England's. So, the ensuing increase in inequality will likely fall hardest on the devolved Nations. There will also be differences in post-pandemic recovery policy, with Wales, for example, already demonstrating difference by attaching high priority to tackling inequality, climate change and fair

work, and less emphasis on inward investment, innovation, and economic growth (see Russell 2020 and WCPP 2020). There will (or ought to) be a great deal of learning to harvest and share both about the course of the pandemic and its handling and the various post-pandemic paths that are and will be taken.

The wider consequences of the pandemic for devolved government and even the breakup of the Union will likely be potentially major. The Scottish National Party expects to win an overall majority in the Scottish national elections in 2021 on a platform of another independence referendum, which this time may well be won, if it is allowed to take place. The UK Government has already signaled that it will reject such a proposal, and their consent is required. But it will not be easy for Brexiteers, in particular, to argue that Scotland's people do not have the right to determine their own independence from the 'yoke' of Union within the UK.

The issues for Wales and for Northern Ireland are less stark and immediate, but the combination of the politics of the pandemic and the consequences of Brexit appear to be encouraging separatist sentiment. The push from within Wales for a more federalized UK is relatively longstanding in a devolved context (see Melding 2013) and that seam of opinion has grown through the pandemic (Jones 2021). The federalism/independence sentiment remains at a far lower level than in Scotland, but that example may have big ripple effects for Wales if Scotland does become independent and makes a success of it, or if Brexit departure arrangements impact on Northern Ireland as adversely as some fear. Positive sentiment toward re-unification has shifted visibly, albeit lacking a consistent majority (LucidTalk 2021).

However, the twists and turns of UK politics over the past five years have been so violent and remarkable, even without COVID-19's unique contribution, that such a linear prediction feels inherently unsafe. It may be that events take a more elliptical path. Stronger pressures for independence may lead to thwarted aspirations for immediate separation, but nonetheless trigger grants of greater devolved powers in an effort to assuage independence sentiment. That, in turn, could facilitate a longer-term independence path. Or it may even lead to a willingness to look more fundamentally at the structure of UK Government itself, perhaps even to contemplate a constitutional equivalence between the four Home Nations. We might yet see the eventual emergence of a system much more akin to a federalized government than could possibly have been imagined not so very long ago by anyone other than federalist dreamers.

Bibliography

- Blair, T., 2019. *Devolution, Brexit, and the Future of the Union*. London: Institute for Government.
- Cheung, A., and Valsamidis, L., 2019. *Devolution at 20*. London: Institute for Government.
- Cheung, A., 2021. *The Barnett Formula*. London: Institute for Government.
- Davies-Lewis, T., 2021. Wales' Vaccine Problems Mount for Mark Drakeford. *The Spectator*, 18 January. Available from: <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/wales-vaccine-woes-are-becoming-a-problem-for-mark-drakeford> [Accessed 31 January 2021].
- Haddon, C., 2020. COBRA, Institute for Government, London. Available from: <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/cobr-cobra> [Accessed 31 January 2021].
- Jack, M.T., Owen, J., Kellam, J., and Pash, Al., 2018. *Devolution after Brexit*, Institute for Government, London. Available from: <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/barnett-formula> [Accessed 31 January 2021].

- Jones, G.C., 2021. *A Sovereign Wales in an Isle-Wide Confederation*. Cardiff: Institute of Welsh Affairs.
- LucidTalk Polling, January 2021. *State of the Union Polling*. Available from: <https://www.lucidtalk.co.uk/single-post/lt-ni-sunday-times-january-2021-state-of-the-uk-union-poll> [Accessed 31 January 2021].
- McCarthy, N., 2019. The Countries Best Prepared to Deal with a Pandemic. *Statista* [online]. Available from: <https://www.statista.com/chart/19790/index-scores-by-level-of-preparation-to-respond-to-an-epidemic/> [Accessed 31 January 2021].
- Melding, D., 2013. *The Reformed Union: The UK as a Federation*. Cardiff: Institute of Welsh Affairs.
- Paun, A. and Mcrory, S., eds., 2019. *Has Devolution Worked?* London: Institute for Government.
- Russell MSP, M., 2020. *Scotland in a Post Brexit and Post Pandemic World* [online]. Available from: <https://policyscotland.gla.ac.uk/scotland-in-a-post-brexit-and-post-pandemic-world/> [Accessed 31 January 2021].
- Sargeant, J., 2020. *Co-ordination and Divergence: Devolution and Coronavirus*. London: Institute for Government.
- Savanta, 2021. *Coronavirus Data Tracker* [dataset]. Available from: <https://savanta.com/coronavirus-data-tracker/> [Accessed 31 January 2021].
- Scottish Affairs Committee, October 2020. *Coronavirus and Scotland, Second Report of Session 2019–21*. London: House of Commons.
- The National, October 2020. *Record Support for Scottish Independence* [online]. Available from: <https://www.thenational.scot/news/18793584.record-public-support-scottish-independence-new-poll-shows/> [Accessed 31 January 2021].
- Wales Centre for Public Policy, July 2020. *Planning for a Prosperous, Equal and Green Recovery from the Coronavirus Pandemic*. Cardiff: WCPP.
- YouGov, 2021. Nicola Sturgeon is the Most Popular other UK Public Figure and the Most Famous. *Politics & Current Affairs*. Available from: https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/explore/public_figure/Nicola_Sturgeon [Accessed 31 January 2021].