KING ETHELRED'S
COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Established in 978 (ish)

DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL, SIEGE
AND UNNECESSARILY ROBUST ENGINEERING

DEMOLITION SEQUENCING FOR A KINGDOM: A STRUCTURAL SURVEY OF THE UNION

Being a survey of the United Kingdom considered as a building, with a method statement for taking it apart without dropping the roof, prepared by an institution that was standing before the foundations were laid



A departmental survey prepared under the College Fellowship Ordinance
(Walls, Props and the Removal Thereof) 1707

HERMIONE T. STRACHAN-PRYCE

M.Eng. (Hons.), Ph.D. (King Ethelred's)
Research Fellow in Structural Assessment, Controlled Demolition & the Trebuchet Research Group

Fortitudine.
Ingenio.
Tea and biscuits.

UPPER PIDDLINGTON - SEPTEMBER 2026

ABSTRACT

Reports published on 13 September 2026 describe a planned Cardiff Bay meeting of the First Ministers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, with a declaration on self-determination.[1] This survey takes that reported occasion as its prompt, not as evidence that any constitutional outcome has been agreed. The College has received no instruction to commence demolition. It has, however, been asked whether a declaration is a method statement. It is not; the stationery is similar, which may explain the confusion.

The College declines to hold a view on whether the Union should continue. It was founded in 978 (ish), which is to say before the crowns were joined, before the Parliaments were joined, and before one of them left, and it has never once been asked its opinion on any of it. It has, however, been asked many times to take a load-bearing wall out of an old building without dropping the roof, and it recognises the problem. This paper therefore treats the Union as a structure: it surveys what was built and when, identifies the load paths, examines the precedents for taking similar structures down, and produces a method statement.

The survey finds different legal routes, negotiable financial settlements and a substantial basing problem at Faslane. Its programme is an illustrative scenario, not a forecast: legal separation and completion of relocation need not share a date. A temporary tenancy could change the sequence without moving a single submarine. The paper draws no conclusion about whether the work should be done. It observes that the 1707 Act's 'for ever after' is a specification rather than a warranty, and that the College expects to remain available for snagging.

Research status. The College and its staff are fictional. Historical figures and proposals are dated; calculations are labelled as examples. Contemporary reporting is attributed, not treated as a transcript. The programme is conditional on negotiated arrangements. The College takes no position on independence or Irish unity. It would prefer a measured drawing before anyone orders a skip.

Keywords: Union; devolution; Scotland; Wales; Northern Ireland; referendum; Section 30; border poll; Faslane; currency union; Velvet Divorce; structural survey; method statement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author thanks Professor Wilfrid A. Loxley-Ogden, Head of Civil, Siege and Unnecessarily Robust Engineering, for supervising the survey and for the observation, made on the first day and repeated on every subsequent one, that the College has watched three unions of these islands assembled and one dismantled, and has never been consulted, and does not expect to be, and has kept notes anyway.

The Department of Strategic Geography, International Law, Crown Works and Applied Common Sense supplied the legal drawings in Chapter 4 and confirmed that the answer to 'what is the rest called afterwards' is in a cupboard. The Department of Defensive Engineering supplied the Faslane material and the Major, who read Chapter 5 and said that in his day the deterrent would have been moved by a sergeant with a lorry. It is four submarines. He has conceded the lorry.

The Department of Applied Geopolitics reviewed Chapter 10 and reports that the dominoes are still leaning, that a fourth has been added, and that it would prefer nobody touched the table. The Bursar asked one question, which was which government the College should invoice after the work, and has been given Appendix B.

The Trebuchet Research Group offered its assistance with the demolition. The offer was declined, minuted, and declined again.

Mrs Enid Partridge of the Senior Common Room, asked whether the Union would survive, said that it had survived her mother and would probably survive her, and that the biscuits were the more pressing concern. The Department records this as the most rigorous forecast it received.

Gerald was asked to find the Department's copy of the Acts of Union 1707. He has found a copy of the Treaty of Union 1706, which is the same thing and different, and the Department has decided not to explain why.

Statement on impartiality. The College has Fellows from all four nations and one from the Isle of Man who insists it is not in any of them. None was permitted to write a paragraph about their own. The humour in this paper is directed at structures, statutes, precedents and politicians of every party, in that order.

CONTENTS

Abstract i
Acknowledgements ii
Nomenclature iv

1 Introduction 1
1.1 The summit 1
1.2 The College's standing 1
1.3 Scope 1
1.4 Method 1

2 The structure as built 2
2.1 Construction history 2
2.2 The load paths 3

3 Precedents 3
3.1 How long unions last 3
3.2 How they ended 3

4 The doors 4
4.1 Scotland 4
4.2 Northern Ireland 4
4.3 Wales 4
4.4 Westminster 5

5 The load-bearing wall 6
5.1 Faslane 6
5.2 Propping 6

6 The pipework 7
6.1 The currency 7
6.2 The debt 7
6.3 The debt, as tweeted 7

7 The fittings: who pays, and who guards the door 9
7.1 Who pays today 9
7.2 Who guards the door 10
7.3 The Irish model 10

8 Method statement 11
8.1 The sequence 11
8.2 Cutting in the wrong order 12
8.3 Making good 12

9 What stays up 12

10 The summit, surveyed 13

11 Conclusions 13

References 15

Appendix A - Sample calculations 17

Appendix B - The Bursar's card 18

Appendix C - Future work 19

Appendix D - Departmental note 20

NOMENCLATURE

Symbol	Meaning
the Union	the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as a structure; see Chapter 2 for the as-built drawings
Section 30	an Order in Council changing devolved competence; one route used to authorise the 2014 Scottish independence referendum
border poll	a referendum on Irish unity under section 1 and Schedule 1 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998
the 40% rule	the 1979 requirement that 40 per cent of the whole electorate, not of those voting, approve a Scottish Assembly; it did not
Barnett	the formula used for changes to devolved block grants following changes in comparable UK departmental spending
Faslane	HM Naval Base Clyde, home of the Vanguard-class submarines and the deterrent; with Coulport, the load-bearing wall
Acrow prop	an adjustable steel post used to hold up a structure while a wall is removed; see Chapter 5
Velvet Divorce	the separation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia on 1 January 1993; assets two to one, currency union 38 days
method statement	the document in which a contractor says how a job will be done, in what order, and what will be held up meanwhile
make good	what is done after the wall is out: plastering, painting, and explaining the draught
the summit	the meeting of the three First Ministers at Cardiff Bay on 14 September 2026, as reported
for ever after	Article I of the Acts of Union 1707; a specification, not a warranty
the remainder	whatever is left standing after the work; name to be confirmed by Strategic Geography

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The summit

According to reporting of 13 September 2026, the First Ministers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are to meet in Cardiff Bay on 14 September, with Sinn Féin's president, to discuss self-determination.[1] The meeting is the prompt for this survey. A shared declaration would not make their constitutional routes identical: Scottish or Welsh independence and Irish unification are different works packages. The Department has asked that they not be put in the same envelope merely because all three require a stamp.

Political exchanges about a referendum or a Prime Minister's tenure are not a programme for delivering either.[2] Nor does a foreign President's enthusiasm supply domestic legal authority.[3] Those exchanges are not treated here as authenticated transcripts. This survey's question is narrower: what arrangements would be needed if a lawful democratic decision to change the Union were made? The College has found that politicians of every persuasion are more willing to announce a completion date than to sign the schedule of works. The Bursar regards this as a procurement risk.

1.2 The College's standing

The College was founded in 978 (ish). It is therefore older than the Kingdom of Great Britain by 729 years, older than the union of the crowns by 625, older than the annexation of Wales by 558, and older than the Norman Conquest by 88, which it regards as the last change of management it was not warned about. It watched the Union with Ireland assembled in 1801 and most of it removed in 1922. At no point in this history has anyone asked the College what it thought, and it has not offered. It has, however, been asked on many occasions to take a wall out of a building that people were still living in, and it recognises the shape of the problem when it sees it in the newspapers.

1.3 Scope

This paper does not ask whether the Union should continue. That is a question for the people of four nations and the College has no vote in any of them, being fictional. It asks a narrower and, the Department maintains, prior question: if the work were to be done, what is bolted to what, in what order would the bolts have to come out, and what would be held up meanwhile. A structural survey precedes a demolition. The Department has noticed that the public argument has so far proceeded without one.

1.4 Method

Survey the structure as built. Identify the load paths. Find the precedents. Prop before cutting. Cut in order. Mind the neighbours. Make good. Put the kettle on, in whichever jurisdiction it ends up.

> **College hypothesis.** Every union in these islands has been assembled by statute and could be taken apart by statute. Statutes are quick. Submarines, currencies and borders are not, and it is the slow things that decide the programme.

2 THE STRUCTURE AS BUILT

2.1 Construction history

The Union was not designed. It was extended, in the manner of a farmhouse, by successive owners with different ideas. England's kingdom emerged in the tenth century; Wales was incorporated under the Tudor Laws in Wales Acts of 1535/36 and 1542. The crowns were shared from 1603 and Great Britain's Parliament from 1707; union with Ireland followed in 1801, and partition and the Free State in 1921-22.[4] Devolution added new rooms in 1999. The 2016 referendum authorised work on the European wall; the UK left the EU on 31 January 2020. Estates notes that approval and completion are not synonyms.

Element	Built	By	Structural note
Kingdom of England	927	Æthelstan	An early part of the structure; not its sole support
Wales attached	1536 and 1542	Laws in Wales Acts	No door of its own; see Chapter 4
Union of the Crowns	1603	James VI and I	One roof, two houses
Great Britain	1707	Acts of Union	'for ever after'; a specification, not a warranty
United Kingdom	1801	Acts of Union with Ireland	Extension; partly demolished 1922
Parliament's style	1927	Royal and Parliamentary Titles Act	Nameplate adjusted after partition
Devolution	1998 to 1999	Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland Acts	Three extensions with their own front doors
Leaving the EU	2016 to 2020	Referendum and Withdrawal Act	External wall removed; draughts reported in two extensions

Table 2.1 - The as-built drawings. The Department notes that nothing was ever designed to be taken out again, which is normal for a farmhouse and unusual for a state.



Figure 2.1 - The Union as an old stone farmhouse with three later extensions, an external wall recently removed, and a row of Acrow props under a main beam chalked FASLANE. A surveyor with a clipboard looks doubtful.

2.2 The load paths

A survey asks what carries what. Here the principal connections are Parliament, the Treasury, shared institutions and the arrangements at the borders. The Crown is a separate constitutional question: the Scottish Government's 2023 proposal retained the monarch, but that is not a common position binding every independence or unity movement.[20] The Barnett formula carries changes in funding; Faslane carries a substantial basing problem. None is a law of masonry. Chapters 4 to 8 examine the connections before the Department permits anyone near them with a hammer.

3 PRECEDENTS

3.1 How long unions last

Figure 3.1 compares selected constitutional arrangements by their calendar spans, not by a common measure of stability. Czechoslovakia's 1918-92 span includes the interruption of 1939-45; Great Britain's and England-and-Wales's bars overlap and are not independent observations. The chart is a filing aid, not a survival model. The Department has omitted an average life expectancy for a union, having failed to obtain one from the insurers.

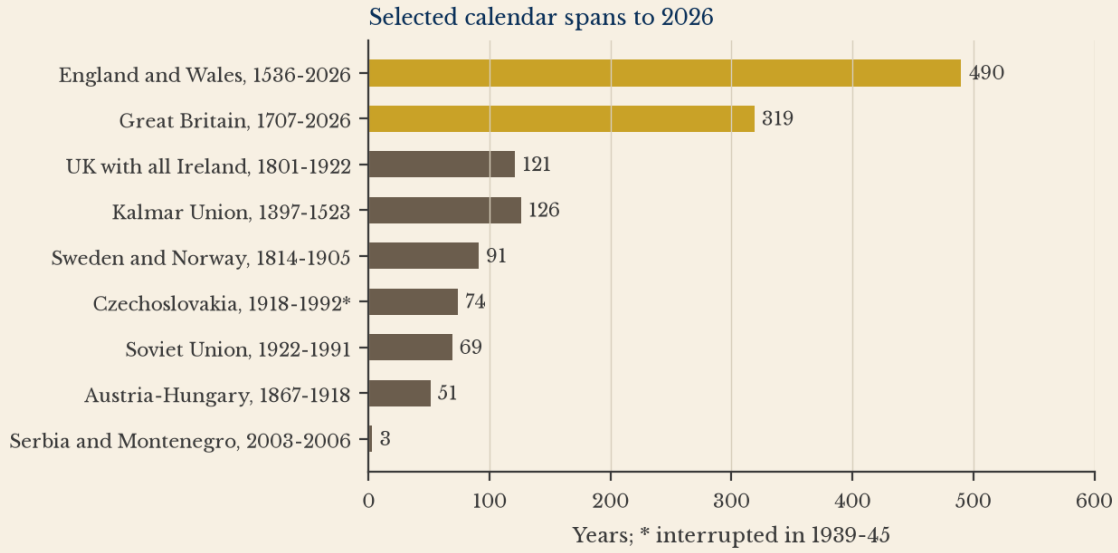


Figure 3.1 - Selected calendar spans, not uninterrupted lifetimes or a forecast. Gold marks arrangements still standing in 2026. Czechoslovakia was interrupted in 1939-45; overlapping bars must not be added.

3.2 How they ended

Three endings are instructive. Norway's 1905 dissolution referendum produced 368,208 votes for and 184 against, about 99.95 per cent.[5] Sweden subsequently accepted separation after negotiation. The Irish Free State left the United Kingdom in 1922 after conflict and a treaty; sterling use continued and the Irish currency introduced in 1928 remained at parity until 1979. Czechoslovakia divided on 1 January 1993 by political and legislative agreement, without a separation referendum; its common currency lasted another thirty-eight days.[6] These are precedents, not items from a catalogue with guaranteed delivery.

Departmental observation. Unions end by war, by treaty, by referendum or by an act of the legislature, and the shortest and cleanest of the four was the one where nobody was asked. The Department does not recommend it. It notes that Czechoslovakia's two halves have both since prospered, and that the currency union did not.

4 THE DOORS

4.1 Scotland

Scotland's door is controlled by the devolution settlement. In 2022 the Supreme Court held that the proposed independence referendum concerned reserved matters and was outside Holyrood's competence without a change to that settlement.[7] A section 30 Order in Council supplied the route for 2014; Westminster legislation could provide another. A political refusal is not a new constitutional statute. The Department therefore distinguishes the lock, the person currently holding the key, and the possibility of Parliament employing a locksmith.

4.2 Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has a statutory route. Under Schedule 1 of the 1998 Act the Secretary of State may direct a poll and must do so if it appears likely that a majority would vote to leave the United Kingdom and form part of a united Ireland.[8] A further poll cannot be held within seven years. The mandatory threshold is not the whole of the discretionary power. Unity also requires the relevant consent and agreed implementation on both sides of the border. The Department records the distinction because 'may' and 'must' are different fittings, however similar they look in a television interview.

4.3 Wales

Wales has no standing independence-poll mechanism comparable to Northern Ireland's. A lawful route would need to be established; Westminster could legislate. The Senedd's existing powers do not themselves provide a ready-made exit procedure.[4] Figure 4.1 records different questions asked at different times, not a current measure of independence support. The Department has asked that a vote about an extension not be entered in the demolition column.

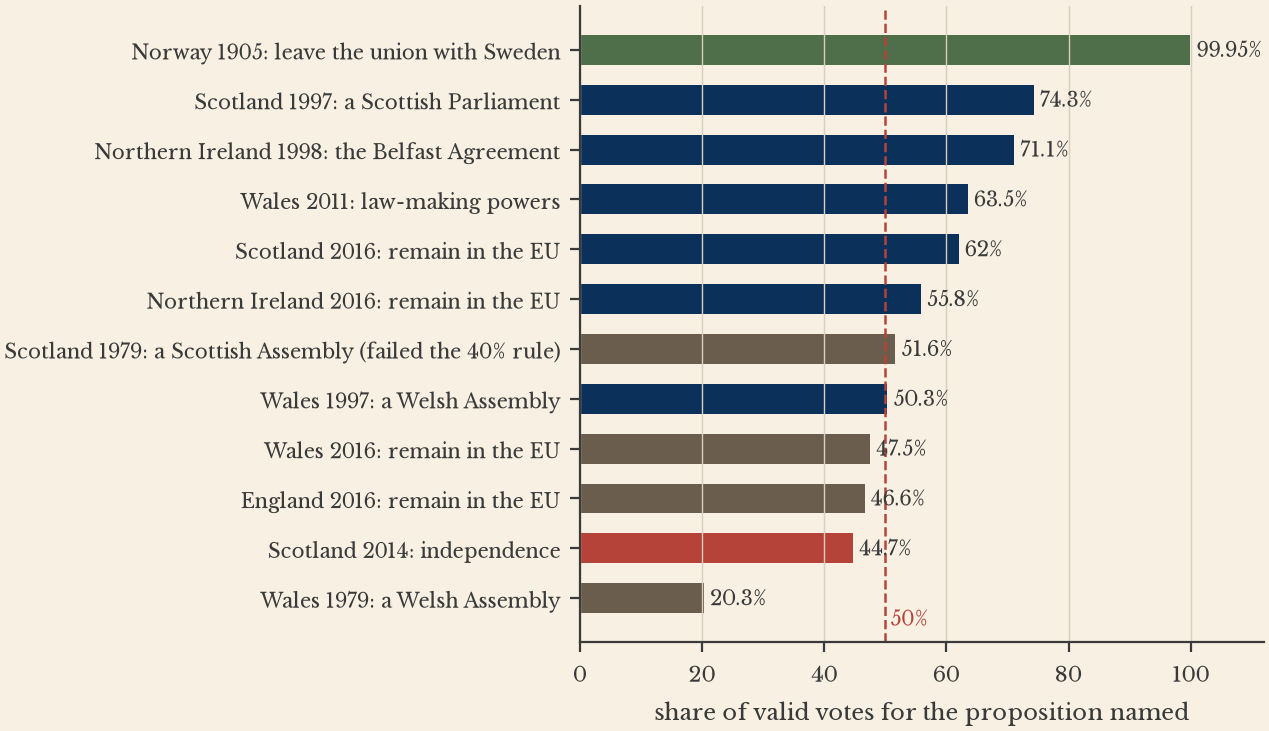


Figure 4.1 - What the constituent nations have said when asked, with Norway in 1905 for scale. Scotland in 1979 cleared 50 per cent and failed the 40 per cent rule, which the Department regards as the only time a door was fitted and then bricked up in the same afternoon.

Nation	The door	Who holds the key	Condition
Scotland	Section 30 or other UK legislation	Westminster	Requires an authorised legal route
Northern Ireland	A border poll under the 1998 Act	The Secretary of State	Discretion to call; duty if a pro-unity majority appears likely
Wales	None in statute	Westminster, if asked	Would have to be built first
England	No separate exit mechanism	Not applicable	Depends on the settlement

Table 4.1 - The doors. Three nations, three different doors, one of them not yet fitted. The Department has never surveyed a building like it.

4.4 Westminster

Westminster can legislate to change the constitutional settlement, but parliamentary power is not a substitute for the consent requirements, negotiations and international obligations involved.[4,8] The Department accordingly separates what Parliament could enact from what the governments could sensibly implement. The fact that a wall can be struck with a hammer has never obliged the surveyor to recommend it.

5 THE LOAD-BEARING WALL

5.1 Faslane

The heaviest thing in the building is the deterrent. The four Vanguard-class submarines, one of which is always at sea, are based at Faslane on the Gareloch, with their warheads at Coulport eight miles away; the Dreadnought class is being built to replace them there. The Scottish National Party's settled policy is that an independent Scotland would require the deterrent's removal, and its 2013 prospectus proposed doing so within the first Parliament.[9] The Department has no view on the policy. It has a view on the timescale.

5.2 Propping

RUSI's 2014 study examined relocation of Faslane and Coulport functions. Its gross infrastructure estimate was £3-4 billion at 2012/13 prices, excluding land purchase and clearance; it was not a current quotation.[10] Relocation presents substantial practical and political difficulties. RUSI also considered continued basing in Scotland after independence. This survey therefore treats interim basing, relocation and the legal date as separate decisions. The illustrative programme in Chapter 8 allows a tenancy during the works. A lease would move the legal date; it would not move the submarine.

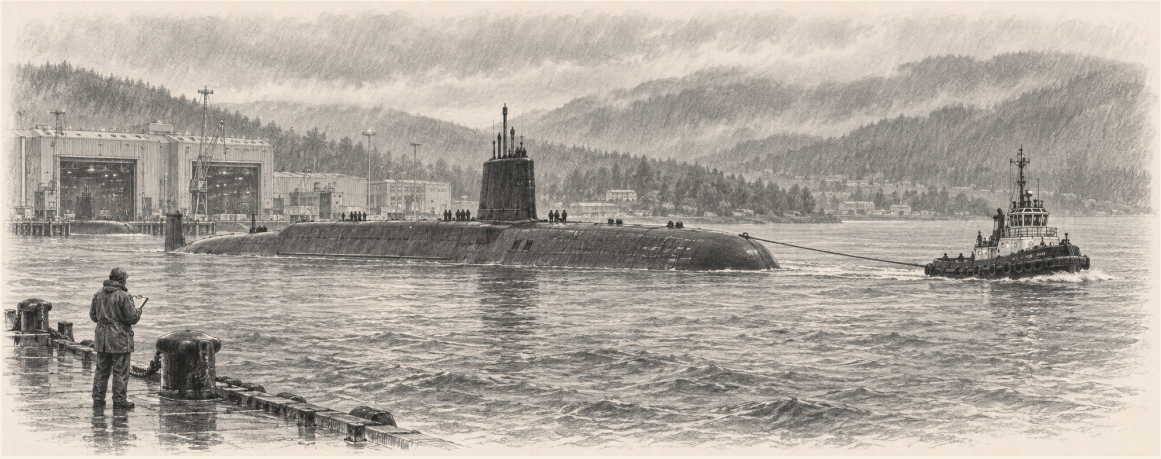


Figure 5.1 - A Vanguard-class submarine leaving the Gareloch under tow, the Faslane sheds behind, a small figure on the jetty with a clipboard, and the weather as usual.

Departmental finding. A basing agreement and a completed replacement base are different things. Either route needs consent and a credible plan. The Department will not accept 'the submarine will sort itself out' as a method statement.

6 THE PIPEWORK

Beneath the structure runs the pipework: matters to disconnect, cap or reroute. The monetary precedents are in Table 6.1, the debt example in Table 6.2 and the wider schedule in Table 6.3. None is an invoice.

6.1 The currency

In 2014 the Scottish Government proposed a formal sterling union; the UK Government rejected it before the vote. That refusal was a policy decision, not a measured duration. In 1993 the Czech-Slovak currency union lasted thirty-eight days. Ireland offers a different example: continued sterling use after 1922, followed by an Irish currency from 1928 whose sterling parity ended in 1979.[6] A currency union, using a neighbour's currency and maintaining an exchange-rate peg are not the same pipe. The Department has labelled them before someone orders the wrong connector.

Arrangement	Period	What the duration means
Czech-Slovak common currency	1 Jan-8 Feb 1993	38 days after state separation
Sterling use in the Free State	From 1922	Continued use; not a bilateral union
Irish currency at sterling parity	1928-1979	About 51 years of a fixed link
Scottish formal-union proposal	Rejected in 2014	Not implemented; no observed lifetime

Table 6.1 - Different monetary arrangements, with dates and duration stated separately. A refused proposal has no observed lifetime. The Department has retired the logarithmic zero.

6.2 The debt

In January 2014 the Treasury said the continuing UK would honour existing UK debt, while an independent Scotland would owe a negotiated share under a separate agreement.[11] That was an assurance to creditors and a framework for negotiation, not an automatic formula for every possible dissolution. Debts, assets, guarantees and the identity of the continuing state would need to be settled together. The Department expects a larger schedule than the one supplied on social media, chiefly because it would have to include the terms.

6.3 The debt, as tweeted

The phrase 'bankrupt on day one' is a conclusion, not a calculation. Table 6.2 tests a hypothetical £3 trillion debt split using round population shares and explicitly illustrative GDP assumptions.[13] It shows how the arithmetic works, not what a treaty would allocate or lenders would charge. A high debt ratio alone proves neither immediate default nor effortless solvency. The Department has declined to issue either certificate on the strength of a division sum.

Country / case	Assumed share	Debt (£bn)	Illustrative GDP (£bn)	Ratio
England	84%	2,520	2,300	109.6%
Scotland	8%	240	210	114.3%
Wales	5%	150	95	157.9%
Northern Ireland	3%	90	58	155.2%
Total example	100%	3,000	2,663	112.7%

Table 6.2 - A reproducible worked example, not an opening balance sheet. Round shares and GDP denominators are assumptions; ratios use the displayed figures. No international debt series is mixed into the calculation.[13]

On these assumptions, the debt ratios are about 110 per cent for England, 114 for Scotland, 158 for Wales and 155 for Northern Ireland. They are not measured opening balance sheets. Different debt allocations, GDP estimates, interest rates and currencies would change the result. Sovereign debt is not assessed by ratio alone: the ability and willingness to service it matter. Individual gilts mature and are repaid, often through refinancing; the national debt is not an immortal invoice. International comparisons require matching statistical plumbing; a borrowed percentage is not an inspection certificate.

The Irish precedent is a reminder that allocations are negotiated. Article 5 of the 1921 Treaty provided for a Free State share of public debt and war pensions; the agreement of 3 December 1925 released it from that liability.[14] That does not make all subsequent payments or obligations disappear, nor does it forecast another settlement. It shows why an opening demand is not a closing account. The Department would prefer to see both before announcing that the sum has been settled.

Departmental observation. A population share is an assumption. A treaty allocation is an agreement. A borrowing rate is a price. The Department has supplied three separate boxes in the hope that somebody will stop putting them in one.

Run	What it carries	Precedent	Departmental note
Currency	The pound	Czech union: 38 days; Irish peg: 1928-79	Capped by the Treasury in 2014 before the vote
Debt	About £3 trillion, shared	Czechoslovakia: two to one; Ireland: waived in 1925	2014 Scottish case; share negotiable
Barnett formula	The devolved budgets	Temporary since 1978	Would simply stop; something else would start
Pensions and benefits	Entitlements earned across the border	Ireland 1922; EU 2020	Entitlements and liabilities need agreement
The border	A line on the A1, and one on an island	Ireland 1998 to date	The Irish one is already a treaty; the Scottish one is a field
The Crown	The head of state	Different constitutional models	No common commitment to retain it
The Crown Dependencies	Man, Jersey, Guernsey	See the College briefing on the British Isles	Separate Crown relationships; review terms
Rockall	A rock, Scottish by the Act of 1972	None	Scottish administration; wider claims disputed

Table 6.3 - The pipework. Assets, rights and liabilities need agreed treatment. Rockall remains in the schedule because the Department enjoys it, not because a rock settles a maritime dispute.

7 THE FITTINGS: WHO PAYS, AND WHO GUARDS THE DOOR

A survey of a shared building must record who pays the bills and who locks up at night, because both change the moment the tenants separate. The Department has been asked, at High Table and in the post, whether the smaller nations are carried by the larger, and whether they would have to raise armies. The answers are in the accounts and in the statute book, and the Department gives them without adjectives.

7.1 Who pays today

The UK pools revenues and spending, with different regional balances. Identifiable public expenditure per person is not distributed evenly; needs, geography, devolved decisions and funding arrangements all matter.[15] Nor does revenue per head follow a permanent national ranking: offshore revenues and the accounting basis affect it. A country's balance cannot be inferred from its position on the map. London is not a water tank and Scotland is not a tap, however convenient either would be for a diagram.

For a dated baseline, the corrected 2024-25 GERS tables show Scotland's net fiscal deficit at £26.188 billion: 11.6 per cent of GDP including a geographical North Sea share, or 14.3 per cent excluding it, against 5.1 per cent for the UK.[16] These are the corrected August 2025 publication figures, not a claim to the latest vintage. They describe public finances for Scotland under existing arrangements, not merely the Scottish Government's budget. They are not an independence forecast. Future balances would depend on policy, economic performance and the settlement. The Department has retained the accounts and withdrawn the crystal ball.

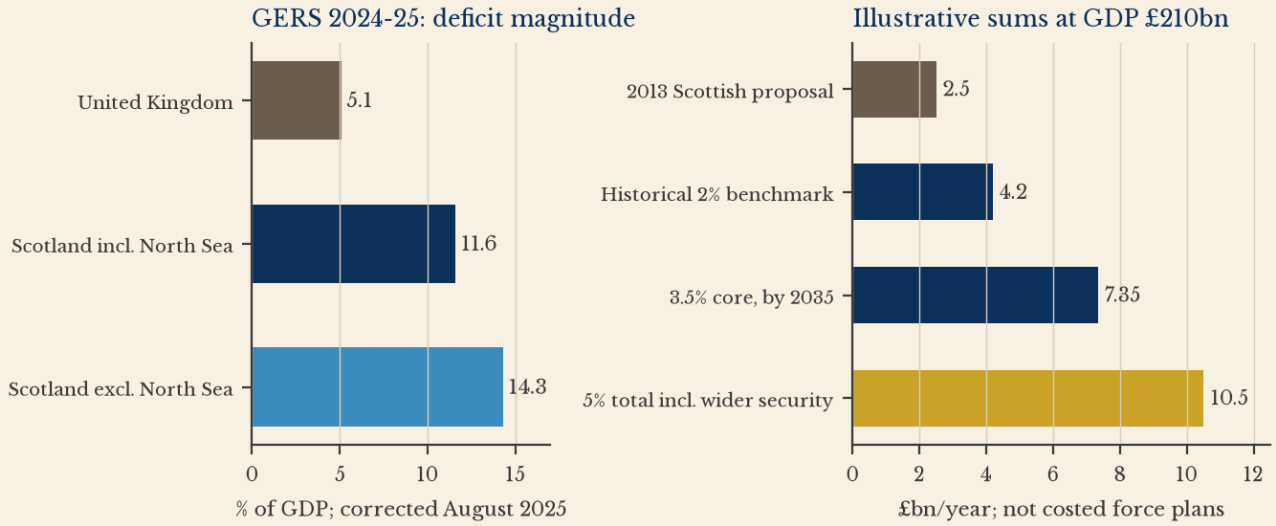


Figure 7.1 - Left: corrected 2024-25 GERS baseline, not an independence forecast. Right: illustrative annual sums at a £210 billion GDP assumption; dated proposals and NATO categories are not interchangeable.

7.2 Who guards the door

The UK's defence and intelligence arrangements are shared institutions, with important sites across the country. A settlement would need to address personnel, equipment, bases, contracts and information-sharing, not merely draw a line through a departmental telephone directory.[17] Independence would not require each new state to reproduce every UK capability. National provision, cooperation and agreed support are different options, with different costs and dependencies. The Department has asked for those dependencies to be priced before the word 'free' appears in the prospectus.

The Scottish Government's 2013 proposal envisaged a £2.5 billion annual defence budget; it is a historical proposal, not a current costed force plan.[18] NATO's 2025 Hague commitment is 5 per cent of GDP by 2035: at least 3.5 per cent for core defence and up to 1.5 per cent for wider defence and security-related spending.[21] Figure 7.1 shows the arithmetic at a fixed illustrative GDP. It does not turn every category into a military budget or every target into a quoted price. Irish unification would require a separate analysis within Ireland's institutions.

7.3 The Irish model

Ireland illustrates that a state need not duplicate the UK's defence model. Its military policy, capabilities and international cooperation reflect different choices and constraints. Reported arrangements for UK air support should not be described as a complete, free substitute for national defence; their scope matters.[19] Nor would Irish unification create a new Northern Irish state starting an army from nothing. The Department recommends reading the insurance schedule before admiring the premium, and checking which neighbour has actually agreed to answer the telephone.

Item	Where it is now	Who pays now	After separation
Deterrent: Vanguard and Dreadnought boats, warheads	Faslane and Coulport, Scotland	The common pot	Relocation or agreed interim basing; Chapter 5
Northern air defence and maritime patrol	RAF Lossiemouth, Scotland	The common pot	Assets, access and cooperation negotiated
Fast-jet training	RAF Valley, Anglesey	The common pot	Future use and training access negotiated
Intelligence: GCHQ, MI5, MI6	Cheltenham and London	The common pot	Continuity, new institutions and sharing agreements
NATO membership	The United Kingdom's	The common pot	New applicant needs consensus; unity differs
Health, policing, pensions, schools	Devolved or shared	Pooled and devolved funding	Existing services; future funding and settlement

Table 7.1 - The fittings. Possible consequences depend on the settlement. A base, a capability and a right of access are three different items, even when filed under Defence.

Departmental observation. Separation changes who owns, funds and operates things. The answers may differ for each thing. The Department has opened a spreadsheet; several ministers have asked whether a declaration would do instead.

8 METHOD STATEMENT

8.1 The sequence

Figure 8.1 is a worked scenario, not a forecast. It assumes decisions and consents by year 3, agreements by year 7.5, and a relocation project starting at year 3 with a 10-15-year modelled duration. Completion is therefore year 13-18. If an interim basing agreement permits it, legal separation could occur before relocation is complete. If it does not, the legal date may move. The Department has supplied both possibilities, having been advised that reality sometimes declines the preferred programme.

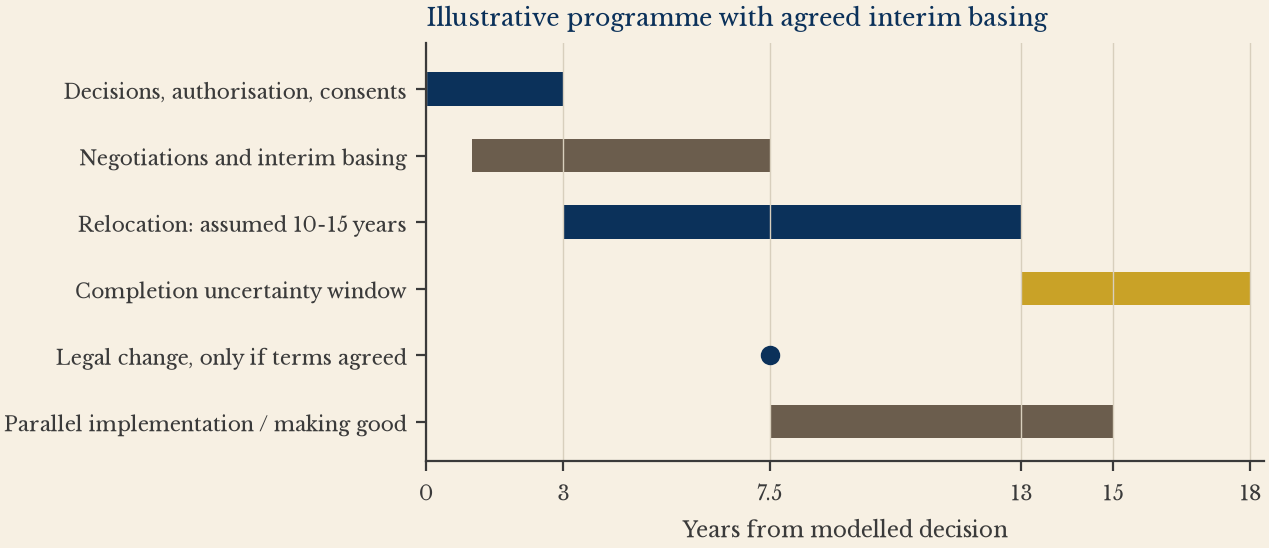


Figure 8.1 - Illustrative scenario: interim basing allows a modelled legal date at year 7.5; relocation completes in year 13-18. Without agreed interim basing, that legal date is not assumed.

8.2 Cutting in the wrong order

The UK's 2016 referendum and its formal EU withdrawal in January 2020 were different events; the transition ended in December 2020. Likewise, a Scottish legal date before relocation would require an agreed tenancy, not a vanishing submarine. Irish unity requires the applicable consent and implementation arrangements. Wales would need an authorised route. The order follows law and negotiated choices as well as practical constraints. Not every choice is a beam.

8.3 Making good

Pensions, borders, institutions and access arrangements must be addressed before and after legal change, not postponed wholesale until the paint arrives. The model allows work in parallel to year 15; relocation may finish later. It is a schedule of assumptions. Estates has underlined the last word.

9 WHAT STAYS UP

England contains most of the UK's population, but the identity and name of a continuing state would be matters for constitutional and international arrangements, not an automatic deduction from headcount. A Scottish departure, Welsh departure and Irish unification have different implications; none is captured by ordering a smaller nameplate. The Department has referred the naming question to Strategic Geography, which has answered it before and placed the answer in the Map Cupboard. Any claim about the 'final Prime Minister' is political rhetoric, not an output of this programme. The Bursar has asked which legal person will sign the purchase order.

> **Departmental observation.** A politician's tenure and an infrastructure programme use different clocks. Neither predicts the other. The Bursar has survived eleven Prime Ministers and declines to offer that as a scheduling method.

10 THE SUMMIT, SURVEYED

The Department will attend the reported summit only in the sense that it has read about it.[1] A declaration on self-determination is a statement of intent; it is not an authorised referendum, a border poll, a debt agreement or a basing lease. The legal routes differ, and the Northern Irish office operates within a power-sharing Executive. The College has drawn surveyors rather than politicians because their instructions require them to measure the opening before declaring that everyone has the same door.



Figure 10.1 - Three surveyors with clipboards and hard hats on the steps of a grand hotel on Cardiff Bay, one measuring the doorframe, one looking at the sky, one reading a letter.

The Department does not reproduce the disputed political exchanges as authenticated quotations. Its narrower conclusion survives without them: a manifesto is not a structural calculation, and opposition to a manifesto is not one either. The building does not read the headlines. It needs agreed arrangements for the loads, and the people occupying it are entitled to decide what those arrangements should be. The Department would be glad if anyone at the hotel requested the drawings.

Statement of neutrality. The College takes no position on whether Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland should leave the Union, or whether Ireland should unite. It has watched every previous arrangement of these islands assembled and dismantled without being consulted and expects the same courtesy this time. Its interest is in the order of the bolts.

11 CONCLUSIONS

- The Union developed through successive constitutional changes. The 2016 referendum and formal EU withdrawal in 2020 must not be entered as the same event.
- The legal routes differ: Scotland needs an authorised change to the settlement; Northern Ireland has statutory powers and duties; Wales has no equivalent standing poll mechanism.
- Faslane is a substantial practical issue, not proof that independence must wait for a completed replacement base. Interim basing would require agreement.
- Monetary precedents differ: a currency union is not sterling use or a peg. The Czech-Slovak union lasted thirty-eight days; that is not a forecast for anyone else.
- The £3 trillion split is a worked example. Debt service, assets, currency and negotiated terms matter; the arithmetic alone certifies neither bankruptcy nor solvency.

- Corrected 2024-25 GERS figures describe existing arrangements. Future fiscal balances cannot be read straight from them as an independence forecast.
- Defence choices and institutions would need agreement. NATO's 2035 commitment separates core defence from wider security spending; Irish unity is a different institutional case.
- The model permits legal change at year 7.5 only with interim basing; relocation finishes in year 13-18. These are illustrative assumptions, not promised dates.
- A declaration is a statement of intent. The Department welcomes it to the file and still requires the method statement.

Principal finding. The Union can be changed through lawful decisions and negotiated arrangements. The difficult questions concern consent, liabilities, services and practical continuity. This survey offers a conditional model, not a single compulsory sequence. The College has no view on the desired result; it would simply prefer the paperwork to describe the work.

Secondary finding. 'For ever after' remains an impressive specification. The Porters' Lodge roof carried a similar assurance. The Department recommends checking both the wording and the maintenance record before relying on either.

REFERENCES

[1] The Guardian, 'First ministers to affirm right to seek independence from the UK', 13 September 2026. Contemporary reporting of the planned Cardiff meeting, not a record of an enacted settlement. *theguardian.com*

[2] Source limitation: the parliamentary and letter exchanges are not authenticated here against original transcripts and documents. Their precise wording is not relied upon. The argument concerns the difference between political statements and legal authority.

[3] Reuters, 'UK PM's office says position on Irish unity unchanged after Trump comments', 12 September 2026. Attributed contemporary reporting; no foreign statement supplies UK constitutional authority. *reuters.com*

[4] Statutory framework: Laws in Wales Acts 1535/36 and 1542; Union with Scotland Act 1706 and Union with England Act 1707; Union with Ireland Act 1800; Royal and Parliamentary Titles Act 1927; Scotland Act 1998; Government of Wales Act 2006. Distinguish Parliament's style from automatic state succession. *legislation.gov.uk*

[5] Norwegian referendum, 13 August 1905: 368,208 for dissolution and 184 against. Approximately 99.95 per cent. Used as a historical comparison, not a forecast or an asserted world record.

[6] Czech National Bank, '100 years of the koruna', on the 1993 monetary separation. Irish monetary chronology distinguishes sterling use after 1922 from the Irish currency's 1928-79 parity link; these are not one continuous bilateral currency union. *cnb.cz*

[7] UK Supreme Court, [2022] UKSC 31, 23 November 2022, press summary, pp. 1-3. The proposed referendum concerned reserved matters; competence could be modified by Order in Council or otherwise. *supremecourt.uk*

[8] Northern Ireland Act 1998, section 1 and Schedule 1, paragraphs 1-3: discretionary power to direct a poll; mandatory duty when a pro-unity majority appears likely; seven-year minimum between polls. Read with the Belfast Agreement and Irish constitutional consent requirements. *legislation.gov.uk*

[9] Scottish Government, Scotland's Future (2013), the dated proposal for removal of Trident and an independent Scotland's institutions. A historical proposal is not a current construction tender. *gov.scot*

[10] Hugh Chalmers and Malcolm Chalmers, RUSI, Relocation, Relocation, Relocation (August 2014), executive summary. Gross infrastructure estimate £3-4bn at 2012/13 prices, excluding land purchase/clearance; continued Scottish basing is also considered. *rusi.org*

[11] HM Treasury, UK debt and the Scotland independence referendum, 13 January 2014. Continuing-UK obligations to creditors and a separate negotiated Scottish obligation are distinct. *gov.uk*

REFERENCES (CONTINUED)

[12] King Ethelred's College, The British Isles, Explained Slowly (2026). Fictional companion work; not independent authority for constitutional or maritime claims.

[13] Departmental calculation note. Table 6.2 assumes debt £3,000bn, shares 84/8/5/3 per cent, and illustrative GDP £2,300/210/95/58bn. These are round scenario inputs, not a harmonised official dataset or forecast. No attributed social-media quotation is required for this example.

[14] Agreement of 3 December 1925 between the British Government, Irish Free State and Northern Ireland, releasing the Free State from Article 5 debt and war-pension liability. The December agreement, not an earlier parliamentary discussion, is the relevant instrument.

[15] HM Treasury, Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2024, country and regional analysis. Identifiable expenditure is a particular accounting measure, not a complete forecast for successor states. *gov.uk*

[16] Scottish Government, Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland 2024-25, Summary, Table S.1; publication corrected 14 August 2025. Net balance: Scotland -£26,188m, -11.6% of GDP; excluding North Sea -14.3%; UK -5.1%. This edition deliberately retains that dated baseline. *gov.scot*

[17] UK Government, Scotland analysis: Defence (October 2013). Historical analysis of shared institutions and assets; future basing, personnel, ownership and access would require an agreed settlement. *gov.uk*

[18] Scottish Government, Scotland's Future (2013), defence proposals. The £2.5bn annual proposal is dated and is not inflation-adjusted or represented here as a current costed capability plan. *gov.scot*

[19] Source limitation: reported Irish-UK air-support arrangements are not treated as a complete or free defence guarantee. Their precise scope and current cost require the underlying official documentation; no numerical cost claim is relied upon here.

[20] Scottish Government, Building a New Scotland: Creating a modern constitution for an independent Scotland (19 June 2023), head-of-state proposal. It cannot be attributed to every nationalist or republican party. *gov.scot*

[21] NATO, The Hague Summit Declaration, 25 June 2025, paragraphs 2-3. By 2035: at least 3.5% of GDP for core defence, with up to 1.5% for wider defence/security-related spending, within the 5% commitment. *nato.int*

Sources and limits are stated above. The College is fictional; the arithmetic is not permitted the same exemption. Contemporary reporting remains attributed and the programme remains illustrative.

APPENDIX A - SAMPLE CALCULATIONS

A.1 The age of the College against the age of the Union

The College: 2026 minus 978 (ish) gives 1,048 years (ish). Great Britain: 2026 minus 1707 gives 319. The College has therefore been standing for 3.3 Unions, and has been asked about none of them.

A.2 The conditional programme

Decision at year 0; consents by year 3; agreements by year 7.5. Relocation starts at year 3 and takes an assumed 10-15 years, so it finishes in year 13-18. With interim basing, legal change is modelled at year 7.5. Without it, that date is not assumed. Making good runs to year 15; total completion is therefore the later of year 15 and relocation: year 15-18. This is the College's example, not RUSI's forecast. The Bursar has initialled the assumptions and declined to guarantee the Prime Minister.

A.3 The currency

The interval from 1 January to 8 February 1993 is thirty-eight days. The Irish currency's sterling link ran from 1928 to 1979, about fifty-one years. Continued sterling use from 1922 is a different arrangement. A rejected Scottish proposal has no observed duration. The Department has stopped asking zero to stand on a logarithmic axis.

A.4 The debt calculation

For each row: allocated debt = £3,000 billion multiplied by the assumed population share; ratio = allocated debt divided by the illustrative GDP, multiplied by 100. The four allocations sum to £3,000 billion and the denominators to £2,663 billion. Thus the aggregate ratio is 112.7 per cent. The assumptions are deliberately round; the addition is not permitted the same discretion.

APPENDIX B - THE BURSAR'S CARD

If asked	Answer
Will the Union break up?	The College has no vote and no view. It has a survey.
Can Scotland just hold a referendum?	Not under the competence considered in 2022. An authorised legal route is needed.
Can Northern Ireland?	The Secretary of State may call a poll and must if a pro-unity majority appears likely.
Can Wales?	No equivalent standing mechanism. The lawful route would need to be established.
What about Trident?	Relocation and interim basing are different options. Neither is arranged by announcing it.
And the pound?	Currency union, currency use and a peg are different fittings. Specify which.
Bankrupt on day one?	A debt ratio alone cannot tell you. Ask about terms, currency, revenue and debt service.
Who pays for services?	Existing pooled and devolved arrangements; future policy and the settlement matter.
Would they need an army?	Capabilities and cooperation must be chosen and funded. Irish unity is a different case.
Which government do we invoice?	Whichever one signs the order. Estates must still establish where the College is standing.
Is the Union for ever?	The Act says 'for ever after'. So did the specification for the Porters' Lodge roof.

Table B.1 - Answers approved for High Table. The Bursar has asked that the tenth be read first.

APPENDIX C - FUTURE WORK

The Department will revise the method statement when the reported summit produces a text, and again if an authorised referendum, border poll, settlement proposal or basing agreement changes the assumptions. It will also accept corrections accompanied by sources. The Trebuchet Research Group has asked whether enthusiasm counts as a source. It does not.

A companion survey of the name over the door, should the door change, is in preparation with Strategic Geography, which has already answered the question once and would like it noted that it was not thanked.

The Trebuchet Research Group's offer stands. So does the Department's answer.

APPENDIX D - DEPARTMENTAL NOTE

The Department of Civil, Siege and Unnecessarily Robust Engineering was founded in 1187, when the College was already two centuries old and the walls it was asked about were mostly being attacked rather than surveyed. It has since built bridges, held up roofs, taken out walls, and advised on the removal of one tower which, it maintains, was going to fall anyway. It regards the present paper as consistent with that record: a survey, honestly done, of a structure it did not design and will not be asked to alter.

The Department records that this paper was prompted by a weekend's reporting about the Union's future. It has checked the fittings, separated evidence from assumptions, and left political preferences to the occupants. It has chalked the remaining questions and put the kettle on. Neither activity should be mistaken for a forecast.

Persevera Etelred