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## Scottish independence and the North East

On Wednesday 26 March, Professor Jonathan Blackie will deliver a lecture that asks the question, *'Can the North East benefit from greater Scottish autonomy?'*

Scotland's referendum on independence will be held on September 18th and the outcome could have a significant impact on those parts of England that lie closest to the Scottish border.

Focussing on the relationship between the North East of England and Scotland, from Berwick to Teesside, Professor Blackie will draw upon his experience as the senior civil servant in the North East, which included the

referendum in 2004 which considered the creation of an Elected Regional Assembly for the region.

Professor Blackie, a Visiting Professor at Northumbria, is also Culture Partnership Manager for the Association of North East Councils and Chair of the Alnwick Garden trustees, New Writing North and the Governing Body of St Chads College, University of Durham.

He was Regional Director for the Government Office North East for almost a decade, and formerly served as Director of Strategy for One NorthEast, North East Director of English Partnerships and Director of Newcastle City Challenge.

He said: “As Scotland’s closest neighbour, the North East has an opportunity to find new ways of working, across the Border, between the cities, and in areas where there is a mutual interest to connect.

“Whatever the outcome of the referendum on independence, it is likely that Scotland will continue down the road of devolution, providing a strong voice, considerable autonomy over the management of Scottish affairs, and significant flexibility over the use of the various resources at the disposal of the Scottish Government.”

Last year Professor Blackie and fellow Northumbria colleagues worked with the University of Durham and IPPR to publish a report, *‘Borderlands: Can the North East and Cumbria Benefit from Greater Scottish Autonomy?’*, on the issues surrounding the referendum for the local authorities in the North of England.

The publication of the report in July was closely followed by an announcement by the Scottish Government to hold a ‘Borders Summit’.

*‘Can the North East benefit from greater Scottish autonomy’* takes place at 6.30pm in Northumbria University’s City Campus East on Wednesday 26 March. A pre-lecture drinks reception will begin at 6pm.

If you would like to attend, send an email to [nu.events@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:nu.events@northumbria.ac.uk)

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