

Conservative Press Release

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England wiped off the map by first Transnational Regional Assembly

Political equivalent of 'Frankenstein's monster' warn Conservatives

The alarm was sounded today at the creation of the first 'Transnational' Regional Assembly. Up to now, the unelected regional assemblies – created by John Prescott – only sub-divided England. Yet in a joint Government-Brussels project, a new 'Arc Manche Regional Assembly', which met this week, has been created to oversee the 'transnational region' of southern England, north France, and west Belgium.

- **Breaking up Britain:** In September, Conservatives exposed how the United Kingdom had been carved up into five new 'transnational' regions that crossed national boundaries (including the North Sea Region, the Atlantic Region, the Ireland-Wales Region and the North Periphery Region). It can now be revealed that the fifth region – the Arc Manche - has been given its own regional assembly. When founded last October, the programme was overseen by John Prescott's department. It is currently chaired by a French Socialist, Alain Le Vern, who is also President of Upper Normandy.
- **Secret transnational meetings – funded by the taxpayer:** Earlier this week, President Le Vern opened the Arc Manche Assembly in the landscaped and secluded settings of Fontwell Park in West Sussex. Bankrolled at taxpayers' expense, top European Commission bureaucrats discussed a 'strategic vision' for the new Arc Manche region.
- **New atlas wipes England off the map:** One of the key projects of the

Assembly is the creation of new geographic maps with no national markings – the ‘Atlas Transmanche’. The Atlas website proclaims a “joint history” for the region and boasts that “a thousand year period, beginning with the Norman invasion of England, now nears its end”. Further development of the Atlas pledges to promote “bilingual shared reflection”. This follows earlier warnings from Conservatives about the new EU ‘Inspire’ Directive that will allow the European Union to ‘harmonise’ and control maps.

- **EU backs transnational ‘territorial cohesion’:** German ministers have pledged to extend 'transnationality' when they take control of the European Union’s Presidency next May. Federal Minister, Wolfgang Tiefensee, and have called for 'trans-European territorial cohesion' to overcome ‘old borders’, to sidestep the setbacks with the European Constitution.

Eric Pickles MP, Shadow Minister for Local Government & Deputy Conservative Party Chairman, said:

“This is the political equivalent of Frankenstein’s monster, a hybrid creation of John Prescott and European Union bureaucrats. Taxpayers will be alarmed that their hard-earned cash is now being spent on literally wiping England off the map and handing power to foreign politicians who they never elected.

“This Labour-EU project needs to be stopped before these transnational regions grab real power and funding. I fear that John Prescott’s legacy of unelected and unaccountable regional assemblies in England will be the blueprint for a new masterplan - further undermining England’s cherished local and national identities, and creating a European super-state via the back door.”

Notes to editors

FIRST TRANSNATIONAL REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

The Arc Manche region (also referred to as the TransManche region) crosses south England, north France and west Belgium.

Map of the region:

<http://www.emdi.certic.unicaen.fr/en/partenaires.html> (JPEG)

http://www.emdi.certic.unicaen.fr/en/vision_strategique_carto/administrativeEN.pdf (PDF version)

The Arc Manche Assembly is part of the transnational 'Espace Manche Development Initiative' which is funded by taxpayers' money under the EU's sprawling Interreg IIIB programme.

The Arc Manche Regional Assembly was founded in October 2005. Their website describes how Alain Le Vern "was elected President". Monsieur Le Vern, a French Socialist, is also President of the French region of Upper Normandy.

http://www.arcmanche.com/pages_arc/rub_3_e.php3?Page=p_3_1_1.php3&commun=1&iActID=73

The Secretariat of the Arc Manche Assembly is based in France.

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REGIONAL ASSEMBLY MET THIS WEEK

The Regional Assembly met on 17 October 2006 at Fontwell Park in West Sussex.

<http://tinyurl.com/yddcg9>

Dating back to the 1920s, Fontwell House is described as 'a picturesque and secluded venue' with landscaped gardens.

<http://www.fontwellpark.co.uk/events/plans.asp>

I m a g e o f F o n t w e l l H o u s e :
http://www.fontwellpark.co.uk/gallery/fontwell_house3.jpg

The agenda for the Assembly meeting can be found at:

<http://tinyurl.com/yzyzk6>

"The aims of this conference are:- To present the Arc Manche Assembly and the strategic vision for the Channel area produced by the 'Espace Manche Development Initiative' project."

TRANSNATIONAL ATLAS – WIPING ENGLAND OFF THE MAP

On of the key projects of the Arc Manche Assembly is the creation of a new transnational 'Atlas' for the region.

The Transmanche Atlas website boasts:

"The Channel simultaneously divides and joins two parts of Western Europe, which for centuries have shared common events to create a joint History. A thousand year period, beginning with the Norman invasion of England, now nears its end... This work has been cofinanced by the European Union."

<http://atlas-transmanche.certic.unicaen.fr/>

The new geographic maps feature no national labels. The 3D maps can be viewed at:

<http://atlas-transmanche.certic.unicaen.fr/3d.html>

Technical note: the 3D maps are in 'VRML' format. A VRML reader for your internet browser can be downloaded from:

<http://www.parallelgraphics.com/products/cortona/>

Further work is planned on the Atlas as part of the Espace Manche Development Initiative:

“Developing a Regional Data Tool (RTD) for transnational co-operation. RDT objectives :

* Turning the electronic Atlas into a regional data tool adapted to the needs of transnational co-operation;

* Establishment of a bi-lingual forum for shared reflection and debate on the Transmanche zone;

* Consolidation of the knowledge base (statistics, mapping and analysis) for this sector of North West Europe.”

<http://www.emdi.certic.unicaen.fr/en/oit/outils.html>

JOHN PRESCOTT AND THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

New Parliamentary Questions expose how this transnational agenda is overseen by John Prescott's former department (the ODPM) – and since May 2006 run by Ruth Kelly.

“Michael Gove: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if she will make a statement on the (a) status, (b) role and (c) purpose of the EU Interreg III project.

Meg Munn: Interreg III is an EU community initiative, funded from the European regional development fund (ERDF) for the period 2000 to 2006, which has three programmes designed to promote territorial and social cohesion across the European Union. The three programmes are:

- Interreg IIIA, a programme to promote joint projects involving regions in neighbouring member states to promote regional economic development and regeneration.
- **Interreg IIIB, a transnational programme which aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion across large groupings of European regions through transnational co-operation.**
- Interreg IIIC an inter-regional programme intended to improve the effectiveness of policies and instruments for regional development co-operation across the whole of the European Union and neighbouring countries.”

Hansard, 9 October 2006, col. 370W.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/cm061009/text/61009w0074.htm#06101247002686>

Those attending the ArcManche Regional Assembly conference on Tuesday included the Head of Interreg Division of the European Commission, who delivered a speech on “Why a European Territorial Cooperation?”.

<http://tinyurl.com/yzyzk6>

GERMAN PLANS TO EXTEND ‘TRANSNATIONALITY’

Next May, under the German Presidency of the European Union, the EU is to adopt a new “territorial agenda framework”, to extend transnationality.

<http://www.bmvbs.de/en/Spatial-development-,1876.963636/Territorial-Agenda-of-the-EU.htm>

German Ministers explain that this is about working towards the goal of a European political union, despite the temporary failure of the European Constitution to be adopted. Wolfgang Tiefensee, German Federal Minister for Transport, Building & Urban Development, has explained,

“Even if scepticism about Europe is sometimes widespread and the work on a Constitution for Europe needs to regain momentum, there is the great hope underlying the goal of a United Europe that we can permanently overcome old borders” (*A Territorial Agenda for Europe: Looking ahead to the German Presidency*, June 2006, p.1).

http://www.bmvbs.de/Anlage/original_967320/A-Territorial-Agenda-For-Europe-Looking-ahead-to-the-German-Presidency.pdf

They argue that such transnationality should become part of the (stalled) EU Constitution:

“The inclusion of the Concept of Territorial Cohesion in the future Constitutional Treaty of the EU would create a formal shared competence of EU and EU Member States to strengthen territorial cohesion” (para 18).

They outline plans to “identity issues for trans-European co-operation” and “facilitate trans-European territorial integration” (EU Working Paper, *The Territorial State and Perspectives of the European Union Document*, September 2006, para 20).

http://www.bmvbs.de/Anlage/original_972721/The-Territorial-State-and-Perspectives-of-the-European-Union-Document.pdf

They advocate:

“Promoting trans-national competitive and innovative regional clusters: In order to create trans-European clusters of competitive and innovative activities, urban areas and **regions are encouraged to strengthen their international identity**” (para 14)

“A more strategic cooperation within the European macro-regions... is to be encouraged” (para 35)

“Territorial priorities and territorial cohesion aspects, being agreed upon at the EU level, are to be integrated in national sector policies” (para 37) (*Territorial Agenda of the EU 2007-2010*, 18 September 2006)

http://www.bmvbs.de/Anlage/original_972722/Territorial-Agenda-of-the-EU.pdf