

11 City, town and village

Capital city



Commuter areas of the main towns in Britain

Below: Rush hour traffic in London. Road journeys can be very slow in London



Commuters catching the morning train to London



The people on the station platform in the photo above are waiting for the early morning train to take them to London. They travel to the city to work and they are called 'commuters'. Each working day London's railways carry about six million people from home to work and back again. If a line were drawn around all the towns and villages from where people travel to work in London we could see the 'commuter area' for the city. A rough idea of the area can be seen on the map.

London also has a 'catchment' area or a 'sphere of influence' for its shops and offices and for its goods and services. To obtain some sorts of goods, or to have treatment at a special hospital, or to see a leading solicitor or lawyer you will almost certainly have to go to a big city. Since London is by far the biggest city in Britain it is not surprising that its catchment area or sphere of influence for goods and services includes most of the country. Most people who work in London, though, will live within an hour or two of the city.

If you travel on a London commuter train or bus at the end of the day, you will see that many people will be reading a London evening paper. The London evening papers carry a lot of national and international news, but also a great deal that interests mainly those who live or work in the city or the towns within its sphere of influence. These people will also probably watch the independent TV programmes for the London area and listen to one of the local radio stations. Local newspapers, radio and television have spheres of influence for information, news and entertainment.

Central London: recent building development



London is not only the biggest city in the United Kingdom (that is, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), but also the capital of this country. The Houses of Parliament, where men and women elected to govern the country meet and work are in London. Here you will also find many of the main offices of the civil servants who help to carry out the laws passed in Parliament. In this sense the sphere of influence for political purposes is the whole country. This is what being a capital city really means.

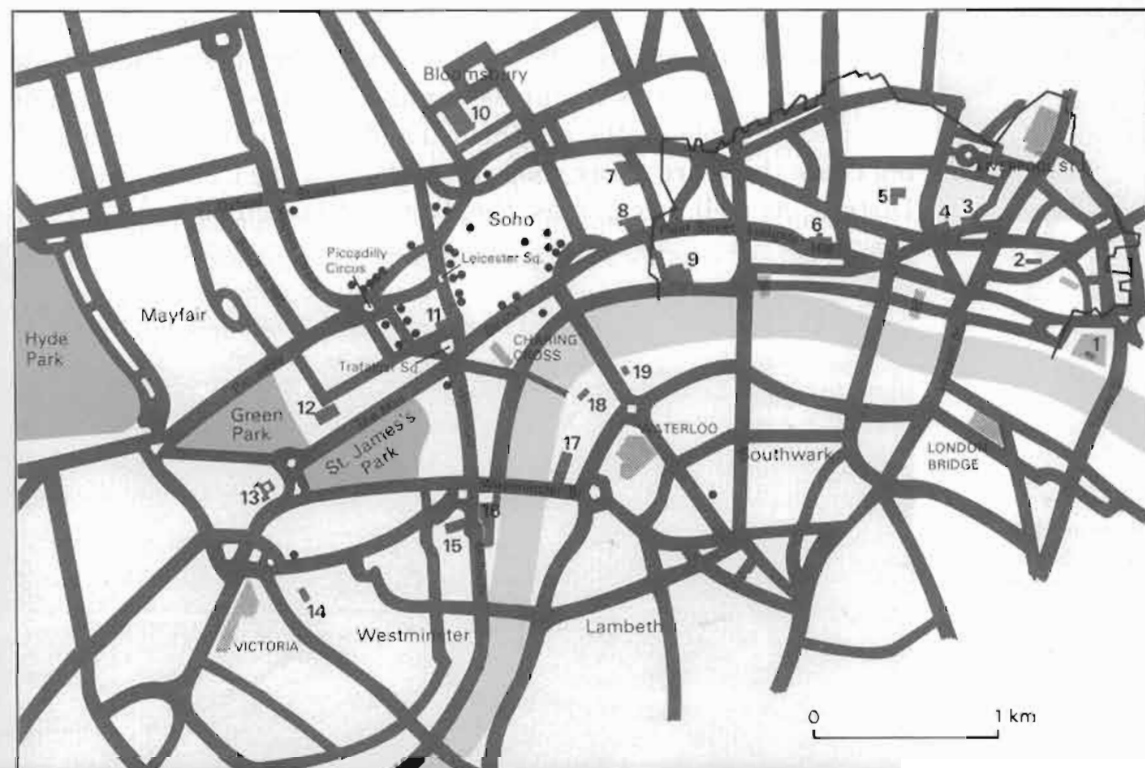
For some people in areas such as Wales, Scotland and the North of England, London is a far-away city that they rarely visit. They would rather have laws passed by local people from a city closer to them. Especially in Scotland and Wales, which in the past were both separate countries, many people feel that it would be a good thing to have more local power.

- 1 What is the furthest distance commuters travel into a city other than London? What determines how far people will commute? What is the furthest distance any member of your family travels to work each day?
- 2 Shrewsbury is a much smaller town than Liverpool, but the distance travelled by commuters is about the same. Try to explain this.
- 3 Which town or city sphere of influence are *you* under for a) grocery shopping, b) furniture shopping, c) going to a theatre, d) watching a First Division football game e) getting an evening newspaper?



Tourists looking across the Thames to the Houses of Parliament

London, capital of the United Kingdom



- Boundary of City of London
- Park
- Main-line railway station
- Main thoroughfare
- Theatre
- 1 Tower
- 2 Lloyds
- 3 Stock Exchange
- 4 Bank of England
- 5 Guildhall
- 6 St. Paul's Cathedral
- 7 Lincoln's Inn
- 8 Law Courts
- 9 Temple
- 10 British Museum
- 11 National Gallery
- 12 St. James's Palace
- 13 Buckingham Palace
- 14 Westminster Cathedral
- 15 Westminster Abbey
- 16 Houses of Parliament
- 17 County Hall
- 18 Festival Hall
- 19 National Theatre