

**Activity**

- 1 Look back to the section on how England was governed in 1445 in the previous chapter. Can you think what the fifth article referred to in Source M might be?
- 2 Use your knowledge of Margaret of Anjou to assess how useful Source M is as evidence of her influence on government. AS

**Source M** A description of the Queen's growing involvement in government  
 .....  
 ... the queen has made a bill of five articles ... the first is that she desire to have the whole rule of this land; the second is that she may make the chancellor, the treasurer, the [keeper of the] privy seal, and all other offices of this land, with sheriffs and all other offices that the king should make the third is that she may give all the bishoprics of this land, and all other benefices belonging to the king's gift; the fourth is that she may have sufficient livelihood assigned to her for the king and the prince and herself. But as for the fifth article, I cannot yet find out what it is.

John Stodeley, agent of the duke of Norfolk, to his master, 19 January 1454, from Paston Letters

**The significance of Margaret's bid to become regent**

Queens of England in medieval times did not have any direct involvement in the governance of the country. They did, however, often take on an intermediary role, mediating on behalf of others in their dealings with the king. An example of Margaret taking on this role can be seen after York's attempted coup at Dartford when the Duchess of York corresponded with the Queen asking her to mediate on her husband's behalf, York having been ostracised from court. In putting herself forward as a candidate for the regency, Margaret was stepping beyond the bounds of the traditional role of queen. However, a Queen of England had been a regent before. In 1253, Queen Eleanor had been named regent by her husband, Henry III, while he went abroad for ten months. In that time Eleanor ruled assisted by a council chosen by her husband. There was, however, little backing for Margaret among the nobility with only Viscount Beaumont coming out in her support. In addition to this, given the problems between the nobles at that time, the chances of them all being able to pull together to provide Margaret with the necessary support in a council was unlikely.

The Duke of York was appointed Protector and Defender of the Realm in March 1454. On the surface it seemed as if Margaret had accepted the decision as there is little evidence of any political activity on her part for the next two and a half years. Putting herself forward as a possible regent was, however, significant as it marked the first sign of Margaret's interest in political matters that went beyond the usual role of that of a queen.

It has been suggested that Margaret began to reassert herself once Henry VI had recovered his senses. It was probably she, along with Somerset, who encouraged Henry to call a great council at Leicester having convinced him that York and the Nevilles were plotting treason. It was after all Margaret who held the castle and town of Leicester.

**Source N** The Duke of Orleans, a Frenchman, gives his views about the situation in England in 1453 in a poem.  
 .....

Haven't the English often betrayed their kings?

Yes, certainly, everyone has knowledge of it.

And again the king of their country

Is now in a doubtful balance.

Each Englishman puts himself forward by speaking ill of him;