

From:
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What should the future size of the Northern Ireland Assembly be?

As is pointed out in the consultation paper, the current Assembly comprises 108 members (18 constituencies electing six members by STV) and there are proposals to reduce the number of constituencies to 16 (which would make an Assembly of 96 members). However, as the paper also points out, this would lead to a disparity of size. Scotland elects 129 MSP's for a population of 5.2 million (40,310 per MSP), Wales elects 60 AM's for a population of 3 million (50,000 per AM), London elects 25 AM's for a population of 8.1 million (324,000 per AM) and Northern Ireland elects 108 MLA's for a population of 1.8 million (16,667 per MLA). The average of these four Assemblies / Parliaments is 56,211 per elected member. This would suggest therefore that the Northern Ireland Assembly should only have 32 members. However, as Northern Ireland is a rural area (with an area of 13,480 square kilometres giving a population density of 133 people per square kilometre), I believe that this figure should be doubled to 64 (meaning that four members from each of the proposed sixteen constituencies is elected). However, this would prevent smaller parties being elected, therefore I formally propose that each of the sixteen proposed constituencies elect three members with the extra 16 members being made up of a regional list (similar to that used in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) but only open to those parties who poll more than 5% of the regional list vote and have not had at least one directly elected member. Members would be elected using the d'Hondt PR method of election.