

Summary Analysis of Written Submissions to AERC Review

| <p>Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper</p> | <p>(1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies...</p> | <p>(2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011...</p> | <p>(3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly...</p> | <p>(4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly...</p> | <p>(5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions....</p> | <p>Additional information</p> |
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| <p>Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper (in full)</p> | <p>(1) Whether the statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies should be removed and the implications of removing or retaining this link (advantages and disadvantages of 'decoupling'; supporting evidence for view; and if the link with Westminster constituencies should be retained/removed, etc.)</p> | <p>(2) The implications of the forthcoming reduction via the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011, and any further reduction in the number of MLAs (implications of the reduced number of MLAs; and further reduction in number of MLAs per constituency, etc.)</p> | <p>(3) The reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly in delivering its key functions is maintained, consistent with the safeguards on inclusivity (appropriate size of Assembly; comparable arrangements elsewhere; and factors to take into consideration when deciding the size, etc.)</p> | <p>(4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly in delivering its key functions, including proposals to ensure a robust and effective committee system (mitigating the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly; and ensuring a robust and effective committee system, etc.)</p> | <p>(5) The reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions which will ensure the effectiveness of the Executive functions is maintained (how many departments are required to effectively discharge the current range of devolved functions; and what functions should be grouped together, etc.)</p> | <p>Additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.</p> |

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| Parties of the Northern Ireland Assembly | | | | | | |
| Alliance Party | <p>'The Alliance Party are aware of the arguments for both decoupling and continuing with the existing statutory link. Given the debate around this issue we feel it would be best dealt with at the leaders meeting.'</p> <p>'Irrespective of whichever decision is taken on the statutory link it is essential that the need for simplicity and consistency for the electorate is kept as the main concern.'</p> | <p>'The Alliance Party is supportive of a reduction in the number of MLAs. The reduction in the number of constituencies represents a good opportunity to do this. On the basis of a move from 18 to 16 constituencies the Assembly would be reduced in size from 108 to 96 MLAs. We would be supportive of a further decrease by reducing the number of MLAs per constituency from 6 to 5; providing an Assembly with 80 Members.'</p> | <p>'There is no evidence to suggest than 80 would be insufficient to ensure the effectiveness of the Assembly particularly if a streamlining of the Executive happened concurrently.'</p> <p>'With a reduction in the number of MLA there should be no discernible drop in the level of governance. An example of this is Scotland, where the Parliament has similar powers to the NI Assembly and fewer MSPs per head of the population.'</p> | <p>'In order to ensure a reduction in MLAs does not adversely impact on the ability of Committees to carry out a robust scrutiny role a rationalisation of the number of Government Departments from twelve to eight should be undertaken, this will decrease the number of Committees, as per our previous answer.'</p> <p>'The Alliance Party would restructure Committees in line with a rationalisation of the number of Departments, our suggestions for reducing the number of Departments are outlined in the answer to Question 5.'</p> | <p>'Alliance argues that eight Departments, and therefore Committees could be established as follows: OFMDFM; Economy; Finance and Personnel; Justice; Health and Social Services; Education; Environment and Rural Development and Urban and Social Development.</p> <p>Proposals for structure of Departments are set out in full submission.</p> | <p>'At this point we would like to note our disappointment that the AERC Committee, as part of this review, are not considering other reforms to the structures, such as the removal of Assembly Designations, in time for the forthcoming Northern Ireland legislation.'</p> |

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| Alliance Party (continued) | | <p>'Alliance would caution against going below five members per constituency. At below five, proportionality begins to be lost. This is seen in elections to the Dail, which can be on the basis of 3, 4 and 5-seat constituencies. Proportionality is particularly critical in a deeply divided society such as ours.'</p> <p>'Five MLAs per constituency may also be more reasonable from a cost perspective.'</p> | <p>'A streamlining of the Executive and the resulting reduction in Government Departments would lead to a reduction in the number of Statutory Committees within Stormont and therefore less MLA's would be needed to cover the number of Committee places available.'</p> | | | |

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| Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) | Submission does not cover this area. | Submission does not cover this area. | 'We propose that the number of MLAs should be reduced to 4 or 5 per constituency and a maximum of 80 from the 2015 Assembly election.' | 'One of the flaws of the present system of government is the lack of a formal Opposition. This is primarily because any Party with over 10 MLAs is likely to be entitled automatically to a seat in the Executive. There is however no obligation on a Party to take up its place in the Executive – any party is entitled to forgo this and form an Opposition.' | 'We propose that the number of Departments should be reduced to 6-8...' 'OFMdFM would be reconstituted as the Executive Office with its concentration on dealing with Executive business and including responsibility for many of the central or cross- Governmental functions.' | 'We believe that in the long-term, the best means of governing Northern Ireland would involve a voluntary coalition Executive and weighted majority voting of around 65% in the Assembly, resulting in an end to Community Designation. This system could provide for both an Executive and an official Opposition which would be consistent with normal democratic institutions while accepting the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland.' |

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| Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) (continued) | | | | 'However, pending changes to the present configuration, the Departmental Committees have an important role to play in holding Ministers and Departments to account.' | In addition there would be seven ordinary Departments: Department of the Economy and Business; Department for Education; Department of Health and Social Services; Department for Regional Development; Department of Justice; Department of Communities and Social Welfare and a Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Development. Full proposals for structure of Departments are set out in full submission. | 'This should be the long-term goal of all of the Parties in Northern Ireland. However, we must be realistic about the ability to achieve it in the short-term. While voluntary coalition would undoubtedly improve the performance of devolution in Northern Ireland, it would be a mistake to assume it is a panacea to all of the problems that we face.' |

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| Green Party (GPNI) | <p>'GPNI is committed to a smaller Northern Ireland Assembly elected either by (1) a form of multi-member constituency PR-STV with a "top-up" regional list or (2) an Alternative Member System with single member constituencies and a single Northern Ireland Regional Constituency.'</p> <p>'Not only would we welcome a decoupling of Assembly boundaries from Westminster boundaries but, clearly, we believe there should be a complete redesign of how the Assembly is elected. New constituencies should be built in a "bottom up" fashion from new Local Government electoral wards and council boundaries.'</p> | <p>'...we believe the reduction to 96 members will not have an adverse impact on the operation of the assembly.'</p> <p>'Reducing the Assembly below 96, under the current electoral system, severely limits the key representative function of MLAs and should not be countenanced whatever the minimal cost savings that might result. A reduction below this number, 6 per constituency, should only be undertaken in parallel with a decision on more representative electoral systems.'</p> | <p>'The representative function of the Assembly is critically linked to the method of election of its Members'.</p> <p>'We believe a representative Assembly of 80 members, elected under a new electoral system, would be adequate to perform the legislative and scrutiny functions required of it.'</p> <p>'Considering the numbers of MLAs who are also elected councillors, and indeed MPs, it could be argued that that the Assembly is already operating at below 108 member effective capacity.'</p> | <p>'GPNI believes that there should be a fundamental review of the Assembly committee system in the context of a reduced number of Government departments.'</p> <p>'With regard to the effective running of committees, specific proposals that we support include: (1) A reduction in the number of members per statutory committee to 9; (2) A prohibition on committee Chairs from holding any other committee position (as well, of course, as seats on local councils or at Westminster); (3) Strong consideration to be given to a standing order provision that</p> | <p>'GPNI provides two models of Government departments/ministers addressing two different scenarios.'</p> <p>'The first scenario is an incremental approach, assuming the constraint of mandatory coalition enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement. This scenario proposes 10 government departments'.</p> <p>'The second scenario is our view of the thematic portfolios that should be allocated within the context of an Executive formed as an 'agreed' collation. This scenario would have 7 government ministers in addition to a First Minister acting as head of government.'</p> | No comments. |

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| Green Party (GPNI) (continued) | | | 'The (AERC) Committee should consider adopting a position of strict opposition to multiple electoral mandates being held by Assembly members.' | a committee vacancy must be allocated to an MLA without any committee responsibility in preference to an MLA with an existing committee responsibility; (4) Scheduling of both standing and statutory committee business so that it does not clash with Assembly plenary business and;(5) The merging of the Audit and Public Accounts standing committees.' 'In the scenario of a 96 member Assembly with 10 statutory committees; we expect there will be absolutely no impact on the effectiveness of Assembly committee operation.' 'Focus on an overarching planned legislative programme...' | 'We emphasise that it is our position that the move towards an "agreed Executive" with a formal opposition would be a substantive change to the Good Friday Agreement and must be endorsed by the people through a referendum.' Full submission details the suggested structure of government and departments. | |

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| <p>Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP)</p> <p>*all views are from verbal presentation at Committee meeting</p> | <p>'We believe that very serious consideration should be given to whether the statutory link between Westminster and Assembly constituencies is in the best interests of our region. We have raised previously the fact that there is nothing to say that, in future, the number of Westminster constituencies could not go back up again. Therefore, you would have a situation where the Assembly numbers could be forced down and forced up and then forced down and up again on a four- or five-year cycle to follow the vagaries of population spreads across the UK as a whole. That certainly</p> | <p>'There will be an automatic reduction of the Assembly from 108 to 96 Members should the Act become law. The further implication is that it leaves the question about the size of the Assembly only partially in the hands of this Assembly, because another part of the decision-making framework will remain, unless we take a decision to decouple, outside of our hands — something that we do not believe is necessarily in the best interests of this region.'</p> <p>'We believe that any future negotiations about the size of the Assembly should take place in the context of the Assembly reflecting on the best interests of this region.'</p> | <p>'The best advice suggests that anything below 96 would make it very difficult for MLAs to continue to properly scrutinise the current architecture of government, which raises the question around the number of Departments. We have long argued that it should not be a numerical debate, but one around need.</p> | <p>Did not cover this area.</p> | <p>'We have recommended significant reform in the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), the creation of a single economy Department, a new Department for energy and sustainability, a new Department for learning and a community housing and local government Department.'</p> | <p>'We have long believed that a review such as this should deal with the issue of nomenclature in the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. We believe that this is an opportunity to agree to call that office what it is, which is the office of the joint First Ministers.'</p> |

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| <p>Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) (continued)</p> <p>*all views are from verbal presentation at Committee meeting</p> | <p>would not be in the interests of this region and would not be conducive to political stability or to a good relationship between constituents and their public representatives at Assembly level.'</p> <p>'So, we would be very keen for this body, the Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC), to reflect on that and to speak with some authority on the matter in the report.'</p> | | | | | |
| <p>Sinn Féin (SF)</p> | <p>'Sinn Féin would consider options to decouple Westminster constituencies to replicate RPA as part of any overall review.'</p> | <p>'Reductions in representation could potentially marginalise smaller parties and independents.'</p> <p>'Sinn Féin want an inclusive Assembly as possible - We will consider all options that reflect the inclusiveness and equality envisaged by the GFA.'</p> | <p>'Sinn Féin is committed to adequate representation for all groups and communities within our society. The current political institutions and arrangements, as established under the GFA are unique to our society which is in a post-conflict stage.'</p> | <p>'There is no evidence that a reduction in MLAs would impact on the effectiveness of the Assembly, however it would likely have an impact on smaller parties and marginalised groups within our society.'</p> | <p>'We are not opposed to a reduction in the number of departments.'</p> | <p>No comments.</p> |

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| Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV) | <p>'There is no compelling reason to keep the present link between the Westminster and Northern Ireland Assembly constituencies.'</p> <p>'12 constituencies, each returning 6 members, would give an appropriately sized Assembly.'</p> | <p>'There can be no justification for 108 MLAs, and while 96 is better it is still too many for this small region.'</p> <p>'72 would be an appropriate number produced by 6 MLAs from each of 12 Northern Ireland constituencies.'</p> | <p>'The correlation between reducing the number of MLAs and the number of departments is obvious. If the departments were reduced to 6, 72 MLAs would be more than adequate.'</p> | <p>'The key mitigating factor in regard to reducing the number of MLAs is a corresponding reduction in the number of departments. With 6 departments scrutiny committees of 10/11 members each is possible.'</p> <p>'The statutory basis of the scrutiny committees needs to be changed from their functions being to "advise and assist" ministers and departments to "scrutinise and hold to account" ministers and departments.'</p> | <p>'Six, plus First Minister's Office'</p> <p>Full submission includes suggestions for the structure of departments.</p> | <p>'Basic changes to the structures of government are required to enhance democracy'</p> <p>'The fundamentals of the electorate being able to change its government and have an Opposition in the Assembly are imperatives. Thus mandatory coalition must go with, after each election, those who can agree a PFG and command the requisite majority forming the government, and those who can't - whoever they might be - forming the Opposition.'</p> <p>'The dysfunctional office of the OFMDFM should be abolished with the single position of the First Minister filled as part of the negotiations leading to the formation of government.'</p> |

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| Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) | <p>'The Ulster Unionist Party is not in favour of decoupling from the Westminster constituency model for Assembly elections.'</p> <p>'Firstly, it has the potential to create unnecessary confusion as the public would be faced with three differing boundary sets given the new 11 council model, the Westminster Constituencies and decoupled Assembly constituencies.'</p> <p>'Secondly, this would mean that the existing discrepancies with the variation of representation of the current constituencies would continue despite population changes.'</p> <p>'Thirdly, the link with Westminster constituencies is an</p> | <p>'The Ulster Unionist Party is mindful of the fact that under the Parliamentary Voting Systems and Constituencies Act 2011, Northern Ireland's representation at Westminster is to be reduced from 18 to 16, and that each constituency should have an average number of electors of 76,641'.</p> <p>'This reduction in Westminster constituencies will result in a decrease of 12 MLA's under the current legislation. It is also expected that there will be a considerable reduction in local councillors with the proposed new local government model. We view this review as another step on the journey, not</p> | <p>'The effective scrutiny of Ministers and their Departments needs sufficient members for the corresponding Statutory Committees. In addition, an adequate number of members need to be available for Standing Committees.'</p> <p>'The actual number of members required to operate the Committees will be dependent on the number of Departments and numbers on Committees.'</p> | <p>'The Ulster Unionist Party supports the reduction to 96 MLA's. With a reduction in Departments, as contained within the Programme for Government, there will also be a need for fewer statutory Committees. We believe this could be achieved with minimal disruption to the current Committee structure.'</p> <p>'In order to ensure that Committees remain effective with fewer MLA's we believe it is important to maintain a sufficient level of research and support services.'</p> <p>'The Ulster Unionist Party are content with the current membership number of 11 within each committee, however,</p> | <p>'The Ulster Unionist Party has called for a review of government Departments for some considerable time and we would like to see a reduction to a maximum of 8 (plus OFMdFM).'</p> <p>'The Independent Review of Economic Policy (IREP) proposed the creation of a single Department of the Economy to spearhead Northern Ireland's economic recovery. Given that the economy is the number one priority of the Executive, we have called for this to happen immediately and before the review of strand one institutions.'</p> | <p>'It must be noted that any changes to government structures should be looked at in a holistic manner. Any reductions in the number of MLA's and Departments or changes to the Committee system or constituency makeup are linked and must be considered concurrently.'</p> <p>'The Ulster Unionist Party therefore reserves the right to make decisions based on the specific circumstances of the particular time.'</p> |

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| Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) (continued) | important one which the Ulster Unionist Party would be reticent to break given Northern Ireland's integral place within the Union.' | the destination. The Belfast Agreement in 1998 was about inclusive government and the reduction by 12 MLAs will make for more effective government. It is important to embed this change before taking the next step.' | | we recognise that this would be likely to alter given the reduction of MLAs and if there are further reductions in the number of departments.' 'We would argue that more accountable government should be created which, whilst continuing to require cross community support, could allow the electorate to determine those who would be in government and those who would not. We believe that evolution to more normal democratic structures and accountability should also be considered by the AERC Committee under the current review.' | 'Further to that we are committed to engaging in the debate over the number of government Departments which would bring about the most effective governance of Northern Ireland.' | |

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| McNarry, David MLA (Independent) | <p>'The Northern Ireland Assembly is a devolved institution deriving its power from the Westminster Parliament which is sovereign. Due to this, I believe it would be inappropriate to decouple the Assembly seats from Westminster Parliamentary constituencies.'</p> <p>'With 16 Westminster seats this indicates either 5 or 6 seats per constituency.'</p> <p>'as the number of departments is being reduced from 12 to 8, a reduction of a third. A similar reduction in the number of MLAs would indicate 72 MLAs.'</p> | <p>'There are two problems which arise from a reduction in the total numbers of MLAs. One is the need to have sufficient MLAs to service the Assembly committees. With the reduction in the number of departments, this problem is eased. The other is the difficulty which arises when minority communities – unionists west of the Bann and nationalists east of the Bann – do not have any representation in the Assembly. These factors have to be balanced since minority representation is a key part of inclusiveness.'</p> | <p>'The effectiveness of the Assembly is more related to the work that it does than to the number of committees, though this latter is important. There needs to be an optimum number decided on for the committees which reflects the workload and the need to maintain political balance.'</p> <p>'Committees should, in my view, be engaged on a major programme of legislative revision. I believe this would have the effect of making the Assembly more of a working body and less of a debating chamber. I believe the public would approve of this and it would increase respect for the Assembly.'</p> | <p>'Committees should, in my view, be engaged on a major programme of legislative revision. I believe this would have the effect of making the Assembly more of a working body and less of a debating chamber. I believe the public would approve of this and it would increase respect for the Assembly.'</p> | <p>'There should in my view be seven or eight departments – a department of the economy, a department of finance, a department of education and skills, a department of agriculture, a department of tourism and culture, a transport ministry and a housing ministry. The First Minister's department could be combined with the department of finance, which would reflect where the power lies in government.'</p> | No comments |

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| McNarry, David MLA (continued) | 'By keeping a link to the 16 Westminster constituencies this indicates a total of 80 MLAs with 5 members in each.' | 'I believe there would be considerable public opposition to retaining the existing 6 member constituencies. There is a perception that the province is over-governed and over-regulated.' | | | | |
| Key Stakeholders – Clerks of relevant parliaments | | | | | | |
| Clerk/Director General of Northern Ireland Assembly | 'This is not a matter which would seem to fall within my area of expertise or responsibility and I do not therefore propose to comment.' | 'In parliamentary terms the key implication of the Act and any further reduction in the number of MLAs will be a reduction in the Member time available to undertake parliamentary functions.' | 'The Committee will therefore wish to consider the implications of the reduced number of MLAs in terms of the capacity of the Assembly and its members to deliver the full range of functions of the Assembly and whether in reducing the number of MLAs or the number of MLAs per constituency it will have implications for specific functions.' | Highlights a piece of work that a project team completed in 2010 regarding the activity and outputs of committees, in consultation with Members and their staff. Submission also details the work that is ongoing to improve performance in the Assembly. | 'This is not a matter which would seem to fall within my area of expertise or responsibility. The only comment that I would make is that a reduction in the number of departments will impact on statutory committees, though as indicated previously, the legislative and policy output for consideration by the Assembly is unlikely to be affected.' | 'When it comes to implementation of any recommendations on institutional reform careful consideration will need to be given to the organisational and financial implications for the Assembly Commission of proposed changes.' |

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| Clerk/Director General of Northern Ireland Assembly (continued) | | <p>Main/core functions of a legislature listed in full submission.</p> <p>'If the number of MLAs reduce, in order to sustain effectiveness it will be necessary to identify new approaches which maximise the contribution of Members to key parliamentary roles and enable Members' time to be utilised to greatest effect. This is likely to require significant reform to current arrangements and careful consideration by Members in relation to balancing their various roles and prioritising the work that they undertake.'</p> | <p>'The size of the Assembly is only one, though an important one, of many institutional factors in determining whether the roles and functions of the Assembly as described in section 2 can be delivered effectively. Other such factors include the powers of the Assembly and its committees, representativeness of the committee system, parliamentary procedures, the resources available to the legislature, relationship between the parliament and the Executive, etc.'</p> | <p>Makes the suggestion that, 'investing in the continuing professional development of Members, and indeed staff, has the potential to make a significant contribution to effectiveness.'</p> <p>Also suggested that 'a reduction in the numbers of Members should result in a detailed review of the Committee system.'</p> <p>Full submission lists key issues to consider in relation to Committee effectiveness.</p> <p>'I would strongly encourage an early start being made on a review of the committee system'</p> | | <p>'A reduction in the number of MLAs is likely to result in some direct financial savings. However, there is likely also to be a need for investment in new initiatives to ensure that in reforming the institution's effectiveness is sustained and where practical enhanced.</p> <p>This will be challenging in the context of a budget which is reducing in cash terms by 8.9% by 2014/2015 and a staffing complement which is reducing to 375 by 2014/2015. Further consideration of staff and financial resources to support reform objectives and to sustain performance of the Assembly will be required.'</p> |

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| Clerk/Director General of Northern Ireland Assembly (continued) | | | <p>'A particular issue for consideration, which the Committee has rightly identified is the importance of an effective committee system in unicameral parliamentary systems. This is dealt with in more detail under Section 4, but maximising the contribution made by Members to scrutiny, policy and legislative development through the committee system is likely to be of the utmost importance in sustaining Assembly performance.'</p> <p>Submission also details 'Reform elsewhere' in terms of the House of Commons Reform Committee report of 2009.</p> | <p>'If statutory committees are covering a wider range of functions, perhaps with less Members, it may be necessary to consider new innovations within the committee system to enable the public to put the issues of importance to them on the Assembly's agenda.'</p> <p>'If a review of the committee system is to be undertaken, it may also be timely for the Assembly to consider whether it would wish to enable committees of the Assembly, in line with other devolved legislatures, to have the power to make amendments directly during a committee stage.'</p> | | |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Chief Executive/Clerk to the Welsh Assembly | <p>Submission provides a factual account of the electoral system and decoupled position in Wales.</p> <p>'The Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 de-coupled National Assembly for Wales constituencies from Parliamentary constituencies. The latter will be reduced to around 30 in Wales.'</p> <p>'...the Boundary Commission won't be reporting on the new constituencies until October 2013...' From then on there will be two different sets of constituency - Parliamentary ones and Assembly ones. There are currently no plans, or mechanisms, to revise the boundaries of Assembly constituencies.'</p> | No comment. | <p>Submission provides a factual account of the number of Members in Wales.</p> <p>'The National Assembly for Wales is made up of 60 elected Assembly Members. 40 are chosen to represent individual constituencies, and 20 are chosen to represent the five regions of Wales.'</p> <p>'Assembly Members represent their area as a member of a political party or as an independent.'</p> <p>'Effective scrutiny of a government's work is at the heart of any democratic process, and this work is undertaken by the National Assembly for Wales through a number of Committees made up of Assembly Members from all political parties.'</p> | <p>Submission provides a factual account of Wales' committee system. Provides the details of the previous committees in Wales, the current system, the remits of the current committees, powers, etc.</p> <p>'In 2011, the Assembly decided on a committee structure which gives committees the power to both scrutinise the government and associated public bodies and to scrutinise legislation, within a subject remit. In June 2011, the National Assembly for Wales established five (subject) committees to carry out these functions (listed in full submission)...</p> | No comment. | No additional comment. |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Chief Executive/ Clerk to the Welsh Assembly (continued) | | | | <p>'Five additional committees have been established to undertake other functions specified in Standing Orders:' (again, listed in full submission).</p> <p>A further committee, the Business Committee is responsible for the organisation of Assembly.'</p> <p>'The five subject-based committees have been established with sufficiently large memberships (10) to enable them to undertake multiple streams of work in formal sub-committees and informal or rapporteur groups as well as continued operation in full committee. This allows policy and legislative work to take place simultaneously.'</p> | | |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Secretary General and Clerk of the Dáil | Submission does not cover this area | Submission does not cover this area | <p>Submission provides a factual account of the changes to the Houses of the Oireachtas.</p> <p>'A Constituency Commission will now recommend Dáil constituencies based on a reduced number of TDs between a minimum of 153 and a maximum of 160. Previously, the range was 164 to 169.'</p> <p>'The programme for Government contains a proposal that a Referendum be held to abolish the second House of the Oireachtas (Seanad Éireann) and the referendum is likely to be held next year.'</p> | <p>Factual account of downsizing the number of Committees in 31st Dáil and effects.</p> <p>'In the 30th Dáil there were 23 Committees.' This was reduced to 14 Committees in the 31st Dáil.</p> <p>'To achieve this reduction the functions of Committees were merged. Six of the seven sectoral Committees are covering the work of more than one Department. Three of these Committees are shadowing the work of three Departments and three are shadowing the work of two Departments respectively.'</p> | Submission does not cover this area | Full submission provides comprehensive tables on Committee structures and costs. |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Secretary General and Clerk of the Dáil (continued) | | | | <p>'The Committee covering three Departments have 27 Members each, whereas the sectoral Committee covering one Department has 15 Members.'</p> <p>'Some of the consequences of the new structure for Committees are as follows: Greater number of meetings; longer meetings; low participation rates; uneven focus of the work; administration issues.'</p> <p>Full submission states there are weaknesses in the new structure for Committees.</p> | | |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Secretary General and Clerk of the Dáil (continued) | | | | <p>'It is proposed to restructure a number of the larger Committees. The proposal is to increase the number of sectoral Committees from 7 to 9. With one exception it is proposed that each Committee will track no more than 2 Departments and that membership of a Committee will be restricted to a maximum of 21 Members.'</p> <p>Full submission includes an appendix with tables regarding Committee configurations, Committee meetings, salaries, costs etc.</p> | | |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| The Clerk of the States of Jersey | 'I do not believe it would be appropriate for me to comment on this question.' | 'I do not believe it would be appropriate for me to comment on this question.' | Gives a summary of the changes to the States' government system with the establishment of Ministers and Assistant Ministers and parallel parliamentary scrutiny committees. The parliamentary scrutiny committees and a PAC are always required to have a larger number of non-executive members which have the task of holding Ministers and Assistant Ministers to account. Jersey has no tradition of political parties and all members serve as independents. | 'Take care to ensure that there are sufficient members available to serve on committees so that the committee system remains robust and effective.' | 'I do not think I can usefully comment on this matter.' | No comments |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Key Stakeholders – Academics | | | | | | |
| Galligan, Yvonne (Doctor) – Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics, Queen's University Belfast | <p>'The matter of decoupling does not raise particular difficulties from the point of view of ensuring gender equity in political representation.'</p> <p>'Perhaps the key issue to consider here is whether future revisions to either the Assembly size or constituency size will be determined by further boundary adjustments or increases/reductions in constituency seats while keeping constituency boundaries intact'.</p> | <p>'Reducing the number of MLAs....raises quite a number of concerns from a gender equity perspective. There is the strong possibility of women's representation being reduced with the reduction in MLA seats. Countering this potentially delegitimizing outcome as a result of seat-reduction is a matter for the political parties'</p> <p>'...in 2011, female representation in the Scottish Parliament was 35%, and in the Welsh Assembly stood at 41%. It is clear that these elected bodies are more reflective of the composition of the</p> | <p>'There is a need to balance a numerical reduction with more efficient use of legislative time and process. In addition, the inclusivity requirement is also a gender-related one, especially in terms of the nature of the issues on the Assembly's agenda and the range of perspectives brought to bear on any one issue.'</p> | <p>'No specific proposals beyond encouraging consideration of a rationalisation of committees, scheduling and tasks'.</p> | <p>'As with the number of MLAs, the decision on how many Departments is enough to conduct Executive business is more of an art than a science. However, Departments should take the gender perspective on the policies under their aegis into account as an integral function of their work.'</p> <p>'OFMDFM have an important co-ordinating role to play, and awareness-raising of making policy relevant to male and female interests.'</p> | <p>'The gendered nature of politics and parliaments is a subject of extensive study, and I can provide a range of sources if this is required. As a starting point, the IPU study on gender-sensitive parliaments is a useful resource.'</p> |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Galligan, Yvonne (Doctor) – Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics, Queen's University Belfast (continued) | | <p>general population than is the NI Assembly, and one could argue, more legitimate in its decision-making as a result.</p> <p>'I would advocate the retention of 6 seat constituencies, or a variation between 5-7 seat constituencies, but not lower than 5-seat (because it seems women's chances of being elected are improved in larger-seat constituencies than in small-seat ones).</p> | | | | |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| McKenna, Conan (Doctor) | Only made comments on issues relating to Committees and effectiveness – based on doctoral research concerning effectiveness of parliamentary committees and focusing on the issue of the relationship between the number of committee places and number of members available to serve on them. | Only made comments on issues relating to Committees and effectiveness. | ‘Among the 5 parliaments/ assemblies looked at (Houses of the Oireachtas, House of Commons, New Zealand, Scotland and NI Assembly), NIA had the highest number of committee memberships as a proportion of House members.’ My research also showed that NIA committee attendance levels (for the sample of committees) were just below 76% with the average at 78%. This would suggest that, while members are spread thinly across committees, they nonetheless have good attendance rates against the average. | Only made comments on issues relating to Committees and effectiveness. | Only made comments on issues relating to Committees and effectiveness. | Only made comments on issues relating to Committees and effectiveness. |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| McKenna, Conan (Doctor) (continued) | | | <p>The NIA committee system showed the highest number of total sitting hours...'</p> <p>'These statistics might suggest that there is an issue already with the burden of coverage by members in NIA of work of committees and that any reduction in the number of members in the House, without very significant accompanying reductions in the sizes of committees or the number of committees, would result in the Assembly committee system becoming less effective.'</p> | | | |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| <p>Wilford, Rick (Professor) – Queen's University Belfast</p> | <p>A number of advantages and disadvantages of decoupling given in the full response.</p> <p>'Somewhat conflicted by the issue: retaining the status quo may seem to be the simplest position to adopt. It would tie the NIA into a known, though by no means uncontroversial process. However, the prospect of further changes in Westminster boundaries... may well give pause for thought. If there were to be further changes in NI (i.e. a reduction in the number of MPs/constituencies) the issue would recur. For that reason, politicians</p> | <p>'There are two inter-related issues here: the number of constituencies and the corresponding total number of MLAs.'</p> <p>'Assuming that decoupling does occur, the parties can plan on the basis of a settled number of 16 constituencies for the foreseeable future. The issue then is, how many MLAs per constituency. There is no "magic number."</p> <p>'Any reduction in the total number of MLAs will....place increased strain on committee effectiveness (and efficiency), all other things being equal.'</p> <p>'The precise number of statutory committees is contingent on the agreed number of</p> | <p>'The issues here follow closely on those in the preceding section. As noted, an Assembly of 80 MLAs, given a reduction in the number of Departments to eight and of statutory committee size to nine, would enable all MLAs (excepting the Speaker etc) to be offered a committee place.'</p> <p>'An 80-member Assembly is perfectly capable of discharging both plenary and committee business provided the business timetable is crafted so that plenary sessions do not impact on committee sessions.'</p> <p>'Perhaps the most obvious direct comparator legislature is the Scottish Parliament.'</p> | <p>'A more carefully planned and timed legislative programme would enable Committees to undertake a greater volume of draft legislative scrutiny.'</p> <p>'With potentially fewer committees, the case for a more routinized use of sub-committees is enhanced as is the use of the rapporteur device, e.g. for scoping planned inquiries.'</p> <p>'Avoid, if at all possible, turnover in the membership of statutory committees so that they build a stable core of experience, knowledge and expertise over a mandate.'</p> | <p>'There is again no "magic number" that can be conjured-up out of the ether, though it is noticeable that 'eight' seems to be the number of Depts favoured by some parties.'</p> <p>'Identifying the reasons for Executive reform/reconfiguration can be encapsulated under three broad headings: economy and efficiency; policy effectiveness; and political advantage.'</p> <p>'Very broadly speaking there are then two ways of approaching the task of Executive re-design. The incremental, which in large measure would be governed by an initial agreement on the number of Depts</p> | <p>'There is a significant academic literature on both executive and legislative design. Given the short notice, I have not provided it here but could supply something akin to a "reading list" if required.'</p> |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Wilford, Rick (Professor) – Queen's University Belfast (continued) | may be attracted by the demise of co-terminosity between Westminster and the NIA: it would, all other things being equal, lead to enhanced constituency stability. On balance, I'm generally disposed to de-coupling.' | <p>devolved Departments: and any agreed reconfiguration of the Executive has to be mindful of the shallower pool of MLAs that would be available to discharge committee business.'</p> <p>'In NI, reducing the norm (of number of committees) to nine (from 11) would allow the total number of MLAs to fall to 80 (five per constituency) provided there was a reduction in the number of Departments to eight, given that the 'usual suspects' would be precluded from committee membership. Inter alia, this would alleviate the significant problem</p> | <p>In Scotland, smaller committees (average size is eight MSPs) discharge their roles without hampering the conduct of parliamentary business. However, there is no stipulation that all MSPs be offered a committee place so that there is more capacity available to deal with other matters while some MSPs are engaged in committee work.'</p> <p>'There is no evidence to suggest that those MSPs who are not involved in committees consider themselves to be lesser parliamentarians as a result. That potential issue is, though, averted with an 80</p> | <p>Normally, Statutory Committee chairs should not be nominated to serve as members of other Statutory Committees.'</p> <p>'Place the (Chairpersons) Liaison Group on a statutory footing – the model of the Scottish Convenors Group (or the HoC Liaison Committee) serves as an example.'</p> <p>'Shorter, focused inquiries carry the potential to exert a more immediate impact. 'There may be a case for merging some (standing committees), e.g. Audit & PAC. There may also be a case for subsuming any prospective future A&ERC-like brief</p> | <p>and then shuffling functions around in a way that seeks to secure a 'better fit' than currently exists. An alternative approach would require a more root-and-branch exercise. This would entail thinking about Departmental design in perhaps more thematic terms, as in both Wales and Scotland where design/re-design has been more considered. The key here, to my mind, is to start at 'the top' i.e. OFMDFM and revisit its raison d'être: what is it actually for?'</p> <p>'Key is how overlapping briefs are managed and by whom – OFMDFM, in my view. It should steer rather than row boats: it means stripping out a number of functions.'</p> | |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Wilford, Rick (Professor) – Queen's University Belfast (continued) | | of multiple committee memberships that currently obtains and which does hamper committee/member effectiveness.' | member Assembly, an Executive comprising eight Depts (with a total of nine Ministers and two junior Ministers) and a maximum of nine members per statutory committee.' | into the work of the Procedures Committee, which perhaps could also undertake the work of the Standards & Privileges Committee.' '...set aside committee days for Plenary sessions?' | | |
| Key Stakeholders – Political parties registered in Northern Ireland | | | | | | |
| Conservative and Unionist Party NI | 'Given the transparent advantages of coterminosity (listed in full submission), the limited impact of the 2011 Act on constituency numbers (albeit not on constituency boundaries) and the ability of the STV system in any case to offset changes in the | 'We favour moving toward a four-member per constituency model, which, if there were 16 parliamentary constituencies, would mean an assembly of 64 MLAs.' 'Our suggestion is that the Assembly moves towards a 64 seat model over 3 elections, in order to enable | Full submission gives several examples from other countries with devolved legislatures and population sizes similar to Northern Ireland. 'From all of the above relevant analogues, it appears that the minimum efficient Assembly size is in the region of 55-60 | '...a 64-member Northern Ireland Assembly should be able to accommodate 16 committees. When our recommendations on the number of departments are incorporated here, two committees will cease to exist by default. In addition, there are opportunities | Full submission goes into substantial detail regarding the party's views on a new structure of government departments and reshuffling of responsibilities. Also makes comparisons with Scotland, Wales and Westminster. | Full submission reiterates and summarises the main recommendations from the Party's perspective. |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Conservative and Unionist Party NI (continued) | number of Westminster constituencies through changes in the number of MLAs, we conclude the coterminosity should be maintained.' | MLAs to grow accustomed to the arrangement and to test the effects of a smaller number of representatives i.e. 2015 96 MLAs. 2019 80 MLAs. 2023 64 MLAs.' | members, with an absolute range of 57-80 members.' Suggests two options: A 4 member per constituency with 16 constituencies = 64 or A 5 member per constituency with 16 constituencies = 80. | for committee rationalisation. For example, a separate committee is not necessarily needed for each minister or government department – there is an 'Education and Culture Committee' in the Scottish Parliament. Consequently, we see no major difficulties in adapting the committee system to the smaller assembly.' | 'We therefore recommend a 9 department model (10 with OFMDFM), rather than 11 (12 with OFMDFM) as at the present time. This model is entirely consistent with those UK Government departments which are, to at least some degree, devolved.' 'In terms of total number of ministers, NI would have 11 ministers plus two junior ministers...' | |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Procapitalism | Advantages of decoupling: The Assembly would have autonomy over the choice of the number of constituencies. Disadvantages of decoupling: The Assembly would be inclined to propogate for a maximum number of constituencies. 'Locally accountable democracy is still a novelty for Northern Ireland.' | 'The Assembly would be sufficiently representative and functional, with no more than 60 MLAs, thus 15 constituencies with 4 representatives.' 'the implications would be that the Assembly would cost less and intellectual resources, so badly needed in the private sector, would not be misallocated to the Assembly.' | 'With the trend internationally towards ever bigger government, it is not possible to offer any example that would act as a useful paradigm.' | Implies that the committee system as a whole is inherently flawed. | 'Departments should not exceed the number already in play. Some could be easily enough eliminated, and others integrated.' | 'The priority of the Assembly must be to create an environment with a minimum of populist regulation...' |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Key Stakeholders – Others | | | | | | |
| NILGA | <p>'NILGA is of the view that, whatever the final decision, it must be easily understood by, and well communicated to, the public.'</p> <p>'The current co-terminosity with Westminster boundaries is clear and easy to understand. An additional system of boundaries specific to the Assembly would add a layer of complexity to existing arrangements.'</p> <p>'A potential alternative solution would be to align with the post-reform council boundaries, and allocate an appropriate number of MLAs in</p> | <p>'If the forthcoming reduction from 108 to 96, and the further reduction being considered were to take place, participation issues may arise if the current Department and Assembly Committee arrangement is to be maintained and some streamlining of processes may be required.'</p> <p>'If confidence is to be maintained in the Assembly's scrutiny role, and in the participation of elected members on committees, thought should be given to a rationalisation of both the committee</p> | <p>'The final numerical assessment must permit effective operation of the Assembly as a legislative and scrutiny body, and ensure that inclusivity is safeguarded.'</p> | <p>'NILGA asserts that in order to rationally look at the size of the Assembly, there needs to be a full and thorough analysis of the existing and proposed suite of functions to be determined: by the Departments; by the Councils; by the private sector and the social economy.'</p> | <p>'It is recommended that a set of principles (or similar) be used to inform a departmental and Assembly assessment – the principles are listed in the detailed response, Section 4, question 5.'</p> <p>'If the focus of the Assembly is to ensure the departments are delivering the Programme for Government, then one option would be for our departments to be designed around that Programme.'</p> <p>'Another option is to look at "families of services", and to explore whether the families of services that are grouped</p> | <p>NILGA made both an interim response and a final full response following consideration and approval by NILGA's Executive and full members.</p> |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| NILGA (continued) | each of the 11 new areas. This would also enable a dynamic relationship between the two tiers of elected members.' | structures and departments, and therefore a significant reduction in their back office demands and functions.' | | | together currently in our departments are a suitable grouping for effective working. An additional issue to consider is the potential to make more use of the 'junior minister' system as evidenced in Scotland.' | |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Platform for Change | <p>'Platform for Change sees no need for a coupling between the boundaries of the assembly and Westminster constituencies. As in Scotland and Wales, the distinct functions of the devolved parliament/assembly and Westminster mean there is no logical need for co-terminosity.'</p> <p>'Platform for Change would be perfectly happy with an assembly reduced in size to 80 members, which would be the outcome of a reduction by two in the number of Westminster constituencies on which the assembly is currently based,</p> | <p>'A reduced number of MLAs would have implications, if introduced in isolation, for the effective functioning of the committee system. It should logically be connected to a reduction in the number of departments and so statutory committees, so that the adequacy of scrutiny by the latter is not diminished.'</p> <p>'We have indicated above that we do not believe the number of assembly members and constituencies can be rationally discussed in abstraction from the method of election.'</p> | <p>'We have indicated above that we would view an assembly of 80 members (or thereabouts) as reasonable.</p> <p>This would still be disproportionately large, compared with the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh National Assembly. It would however be closer to the size (78 members) of the assembly elected in 1973, associated with the power-sharing executive of 1974.'</p> | <p>'The number of committees should be reduced pari passu with the number of departments (see next answer) to ensure individual members are not required to attend more committees and/or committee membership is reduced.'</p> <p>'Removal of the dual (and in some cases even triple) mandates of many members is essential to ensure committee work is taken seriously, rather than the assembly being perceived as just another place to make speeches and lobby.'</p> | <p>'Platform for Change believes that seven departments would be a reasonable number but the structure should be aligned with overarching policy goals as in Scotland, rather than simply being conceived as silos for particular public services, like schools, police or hospitals.'</p> <p>'It is critical that the executive operates, like its predecessor in 1974, on the basis of collective responsibility, so that joined-up government can be made a reality.'</p> | <p>'A piecemeal response focusing narrowly on the number of MLAs and departments will not address this profound challenge (of change to governance arrangements). An holistic approach is needed, as we have set out, which meets it coherently and comprehensively.'</p> |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Platform for Change (continued) | allied to a reduction by one in the number of members per constituency. But this is not the way to do it.' 'What is required is an impartial review under an independent commission to consider the electoral system to the Northern Ireland Assembly, with the corollaries of the number of constituencies and, depending on the system advocated, the number of Assembly members.' | | | | | |

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| Other Stakeholders | | | | | | |
| Edgar, James Mr | <p>The main advantage (of decoupling) would be that if the Westminster parliament should in the future decide to change the number of constituencies in Northern Ireland, then this would impact directly on representation in the Assembly. This would mean that the number of M.L.A.'s would be changed.</p> <p>“Decoupling” would allow the Assembly to be control of its own requirements and allow for greater stability on this issue. The Assembly would not have to be concerned about any further boundary redistribution after the next General</p> | <p>‘The author welcomes proposed reduction of twelve members to the Assembly (from 108 to 96).’</p> <p>‘The author would support the use of the proposed sixteen Westminster constituency model as the basis for future elections to the Assembly.’</p> <p>‘The author recommends that with a sixteen Westminster constituency model the number of M.L.A.'s per constituency should decrease to 5. This would allow for the return of an 80 member Assembly, which the author recommends as the optimal level of elected representation for</p> | <p>‘An 80 member Assembly is the minimum level required to ensure effective regional government for a population of 1.7 million citizens.’</p> <p>‘Comparable regional representative institutions in Scotland and Wales would indicate that Northern Ireland should have a reduced number of elected representatives. Also, compared to Dáil Éireann the Northern Ireland Assembly has a higher number of elected representatives per head of the population.’</p> <p>‘An 80 member Assembly provides an optimal level that</p> | <p>‘The author is of the view that any review of membership of the Northern Ireland Assembly must be considered with a review of the number of Government Departments.’</p> <p>‘The author would recommend that the Assembly should review the basis of its Committee system for the next Assembly. There are two Committee models that may be considered:</p> <p>The first model would be a continuation of the existing system of Statutory Committees linked to the number of Government Departments.’</p> | <p>‘The author recommends that the next Northern Ireland Executive could be based on nine Government Departments, inclusive of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.’</p> <p>‘The author would recommend that Government Departments be constructed on a thematic basis.’</p> <p>Full submission includes suggestions for the reshuffling of the current themes under NI government departments.</p> | <p>‘There is a public expectation that the Northern Ireland Assembly should lead by example, and operate in a ‘leaner’ format. However, this should not be at the expense to the effectiveness of the workings of the Assembly Committee system, and the running of Government Departments.’</p> |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Edgar, James Mr (continued) | Election in 2015. It would also bring the Northern Ireland Assembly into line with both the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales. 'The author would recommend that the next Assembly election should use the new Westminster parliamentary constituencies (assuming there will be sixteen).' | regional government in Northern Ireland. The author recommends a decrease of 1 M.L.A. per constituency to ensure an overall 80 member Assembly.' 'The author is of the view that 5 elected M.L.A.'s per constituency is sufficient to allow for effective representation on behalf of constituents. If 1 M.P. can represent the same constituency at Westminster, then 5 is more than sufficient for a regional Assembly.' | would still ensure effective governance. It would also allow all eligible M.L.A.'s to be a member of a Statutory Committee within the Assembly.' Full submission includes a list of issues when deciding on the size of a future Assembly. | 'The second model would be the use of a "thematic/subject" Committee system.' 'The author would recommend that for Statutory Committees membership should be a maximum of nine M.L.A.'s, with a quorum of four required to formally convene. Standing Orders of the Assembly should be amended accordingly.' | | |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Independent Financial Review Panel (IFRP) | Submission does not cover this area. | The IFRP recently published a report on Assembly Members' salaries, allowances, expenses and pensions. As part of this report, it carried out a series of exercises, including a public consultation. In relation to the number of MLAs: 'Although the number of responses to the consultation process was limited, much of the criticism expressed was not related to the salaries of individual MLAs but rather the overall cost of the Assembly. A frequently expressed view was that there were too many Assembly members.' | 'In the benchmarking exercises which the Panel carried out, the main factor that became evident was the relatively low span of MLAs' responsibilities due primarily to the number of MLAs per constituency. MLAs represent on average considerably fewer voters than their counterparts in other devolved legislatures and the House of Commons and therefore cost proportionately more. 'The nature of the political arrangements in the Assembly is such that there is a substantial amount of duplication in the responsibilities of MLAs within constituencies.' | 'The current political structures mean that duplication and competition are unavoidable' 'The Panel believes that having too many representatives in one small political space has a negative effect on both of the factors.' (That is effectiveness and cost of local politics) | Submission does not cover this area. | 'The Panel has stated that for its next Determination, it will address any different levels of ministerial posts based on size, type, accountability and complexity. In doing so it will be guided by any changes agreed by the Executive in relation to Ministerial responsibilities. |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Institute of Directors Northern Ireland (IoD) and NI Independent Retail Traders Association (NIIRTA) | 'We wish to restrict our comments to the section on the number of government Departments.' | | 'While the focus of this response is the number of NI Departments, the IoD suggests that, with the proposals to realign Westminster constituencies and reduce the number to 16, each Westminster constituency should return just 4 Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly thus creating an Assembly of 64 rather than the current 108.' | | 'As a business organisation representing and lobbying on behalf of our members, we believe that the current system needs a radical overhaul and that Northern Ireland requires no more than seven government departments.' 'For a region our size, seven departments are sufficient to provide effective streamlined government with clear strategic objectives.' Full submission includes suggestions for a new structure of NI departments. Suggests that many services currently delivered by the | |

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| Institute of Directors Northern Ireland (IoD) and NI Independent Retail Traders Association (NIIRTA) (continued) | | | | | public sector could be delivered in partnership with private sector. Gives a suggestion for a change in the Ministerial portfolio – would advocate Junior Ministerial roles to departments where the workload might be too heavy a single Minister. | |
| Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) | 'NIPSA response to Northern Ireland delinking from Westminster constituency model would be consistent with our aims in that whatever model our political representative favour NIPSA would continue to ensure working conditions for our members are not diluted in pursuit of efficiency savings.' | 'The reduction in MLA's from 108 to 96 or 80 in NIPSA's view would not constitute a reduction in the workload of MLA or Secretariat staff services.' 'Proposed reduction of MLA's in NIPSA view will not reduce current workloads; in fact if there are less MLA's representing a constituency, the MLA workload will increase as they will have a greater number | Submission does directly not cover this area; but the response to Issue 2 is also relevant here. | 'NIPSA would see this as an opportunity to review Committee structures, scrutiny roles within the Assembly. If departments are reduced, amalgamated or new departments are created these departments should be mirrored through the establishment of a relevant statutory committee. | 'NIPSA would welcome the fact that if the current departments are reduced a sensible approach is taking in creating new departments, for example in the case of DEL, NIPSA supports the case that DEL should be amalgamated with ETI yet consideration of splitting DEL between two departments is not a value for money option. | 'Overall whilst not within the remit of the A+ER committee it would be encouraging for the committee to recommend gender proofing of new MLA's and follow this on through to Committees. Comparators with other legislatures may be considered although NIPSA would see this as an opportunity for A+ER to review |

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| Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) (continued) | <p>NIPSA's main aims are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secure jobs for its members within Northern Ireland 2. Protect Terms & conditions for members 3. Provide a value for money public service | <p>of constituents to service. The proposed reduction of MLA's will also mean a reduced number of party staff support and therefore it will be essential that there is a sufficient non-political impartial secretariat to service the additional needs of our politicians. Also if the proposed RPA changes are recommended then this will reduce the number of councils/ councillors and could envisage further increases on MLA workloads.'</p> | | <p>NIPSA would also encourage that committee numbers would not include individual MLA's sitting on several committees simultaneously. NIPSA would note that an increased scrutiny and analytical role of new committee structure would have an increased workload. NIPSA would also see a review of standing committees to meet the required needs of a new Assembly structure.'</p> | <p>It is an ideal opportunity to realign old departments and also remove a number of ad hoc areas such as Economic Policy and Regeneration into an Economy Department.</p> | <p>and modernise the working operations of the Assembly, such as roles of the Committees, Plenary timings and debates.'</p> |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP) | Submission does not cover this area. | Submission does not cover this area. | Submission does not cover this area. | Submission does not cover this area. | Submission does not cover this area. | <p>Full submission gives background of the organisation and cites several documents (including the Belfast Agreement) that reference the need for gender equality. Full submission makes several recommendations to promote gender equality.</p> <p>Directly in reference to the Review, recommends that the Committee 'ensure throughout the review of the operation of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Executive that gender equality is one of the main priorities considered at every step throughout the process.'</p> |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Royal Town Planning Institute Northern Ireland (RTPI) | 'RTPI NI members have expressed the view that a link between Westminster and Northern Ireland constituencies should be retained. It was felt that the link would allow for a more user friendly option that offers ease of use and administration advantages.' | No comment. | 'In relation to the number of MLAs it was the view of members that this should be reduced to a maximum of 5 per constituency and that the current number is excessive and not sustainable.' | 'The National Assembly for Wales, with a total of only 60 Assembly Members runs an active Committee structure, providing scrutiny and undertaking a range of Inquiries. The Scottish Parliament also offers a good example of committee structures.' | '(RTPI) Members would welcome the reduction in the number of government departments.' Full submission states that the area of planning is a major concern and gives suggestions for improvement. 'It is vital to the delivery of a fit for purpose planning system that these functions are not split in order to ensure a smooth and joined up approach that will avoid unnecessary delays and enhance accountability.' | 'The Institute feels that the review paper provides the opportunity to make preparations for the Review of Public Administration and would urge the Executive not to miss this opportunity.' |

| Issues as set out in the 'Call for Evidence' paper | (1) The statutory link between Westminster and NI constituencies... | (2) Implications of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011... | (3) Reduced number of MLAs required to ensure that the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (4) Proposals to mitigate the impact of reducing the number of MLAs on the effectiveness of the Assembly... | (5) Reduction in the number of NI Government departments and associated re-allocation of functions.... | Additional information |
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| Women's Tec | <p>'Northern Ireland constituencies should be decoupled from Westminster constituencies, as they are in Scotland and Wales.</p> <p>The current situation is that there will be an automatic reduction in the number of MLAs based on UK-wide adjustments, rather than careful consideration of the needs of Northern Ireland as a region in the transition from conflict.</p> | <p>'A reduction in the number of MLAs would be opposed...'</p> <p>Full submission gives reasons why the organisation believes that the number of MLAs should not be reduced, as this would result in fewer opportunities for women to be elected, for women's issues to be heard, etc.</p> | <p>'The number of MLAs should not be reduced.'</p> <p>'Human rights and equality are key aspects of the Belfast Agreement, which should be mainstreamed through all government decisions. Consideration should be given for committees for equality and human rights (or a combined equality and human rights committee) with a remit for cross-departmental oversight on these matters.'</p> | <p>'See responses at (2) and (3). Any reduction in the number of MLAs would be opposed.'</p> | <p>'Women's Tec does not have a view on how many departments there should be or how they are organised. However, it should be clear from the outset where specific functions lie and their administration simplified for easier decision-making, for example, regarding social development and vocational training support.'</p> | <p>'The opportunity should be taken to legislate for changes in electoral law to increase the representation of women.'</p> <p>'While there are many methods that can be used to promote more women in politics... the most effective mechanism for ensuring increased representation is statutory quotas.'</p> |