



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

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Update paper on size of the Assembly

- 1 The size of the Assembly and number of government departments (Efficiency Review Panel)

The Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011

The Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 reduced the number of Parliamentary constituencies from 650 to 600. As a result, the number of Parliamentary constituencies in Northern Ireland will be reduced from 18 to 16 for the purposes of the next UK Parliamentary election.

The Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland is currently engaged in the sixth review of Westminster Parliamentary constituency boundaries and the review has to be completed before 1st October 2013.

In September the Boundary Commission published its *Provisional Proposals Report*.¹ Contained in this report are the proposals for the removal of two of Northern Ireland's constituencies. Five new constituencies have been proposed from boundary

¹ Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland, *Provisional Proposals Report: Sixth periodical Review of Parliamentary Constituencies*, September 2011. Available at: <http://www.boundarycommission.org.uk/Homepage/bcni-ppr1.pdf>
Accessed: 17/10/2011

readjustments. These are Glenshane (largely East Londonderry/Mid Ulster); Mid-Tyrone (West Tyrone/Mid-Ulster); Mid-Antrim (North/East Antrim); Belfast South East and Belfast South West.

The boundary changes will reduce the number of MLAs from 108 to 96 and currently the boundary commission is holding open meetings to hear the views of the public on the proposed changes.

In terms of developments that have occurred in the past year surrounding the size of the Assembly, the following motion was tabled by the Leader of the Ulster Unionist Party on the 6th June 2011:

That this Assembly recognises the need to reform its structures, including having a requirement for an official opposition to be in place by 2015 to create greater delivery, flexibility and scrutiny; and supports a review of the number of Departments and MLAs, and a restructuring of arm's-length bodies.”²

The motion passed without a ministerial response.

Furthermore, an Assembly question was tabled by David McNarry to OFMDFM on 10th March 2011:

To ask the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Efficiency Review Panel, the establishment of which was announced on 9 April 2009.³

OFMDFM responded:

The Panel has not yet been appointed but is among the matters to be covered by the draft report which is being prepared for consideration and agreement of the St Andrews Agreement Working Group established under the Hillsborough Castle Agreement.⁴

² Assembly Motion, tabled 06/06/2011. Available at: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/record/reports2011/110606.htm#f>
Accessed: 18/10/2011

³ Assembly Question AQO 1317/11. Tabled 10/03/2011.

⁴ As above.