

IN CONFIDENCE

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THE OPERATION OF THE ADDITIONAL MEMBER SYSTEM OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION IN ELECTIONS TO THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT AND WELSH ASSEMBLY

It is proposed that the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly be elected by the additional member system of proportional representation. Under this system, each elector is entitled to cast two votes: one for a constituency member, and one for the party of his or her choice. Votes for constituency members are counted on the 'first past the post' basis in the same way as elections to the UK Parliament, using the same constituencies as are used for elections to the UK Parliament (except that Orkney and Shetland will have one seat each). In Scotland there will be 73 constituency members, in Wales 40.

Votes for additional members will be counted on the basis of the current European Parliamentary constituencies. In Scotland, 7 members will be elected from each of the current 8 European Parliamentary constituencies. In Wales, 4 members will be elected for each of the existing 5 European constituencies. Additional member seats will be allocated correctively, that is to say account will be taken of the number of constituency seats gained within the European Parliamentary constituency, on the following basis:

- a. the number of votes cast for each party within the European constituency will be counted.
- b. The number of votes cast for each party will then be divided by the number of constituency members gained in Parliamentary constituencies contained wholly within the European constituency plus 1.
- c. The party with the highest total when the calculation in b is done gains the first additional member.
- d. The remaining additional members are allocated in the same way, but additional members gained are included in the calculations.

The additional members are taken from lists submitted in advance by the political parties and are elected in the order in which they appear in their party's lists. A necessary precondition of this system is legislation providing for the registration of political parties in order to provide the means of identifying the parties which will nominate the additional members.

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The AMS system was adopted in elections to the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly for the following reasons:

it provided more proportional representation of the views of the electorate than the first past the post system, although it is held not to be as "pure" a form of proportional representation as the single transferable vote;

it retains the link between a constituency and an identifiable constituency member;

it retains voting by marking a cross, which is familiar to voters in Scotland and Wales, rather than by ranking candidates " 1, 2,3...

it is reasonably comprehensible and ballot papers are simple and clear; and

the regional "top up" seats can be used by parties, if they wish, to promote gender balance and ethnic minority representation.

Copies are available of an annex from the Welsh Devolution White Paper "A Voice for Wales" (Cm 371 8) setting out the technical details of the AMS system, with an illustration of how it would apply in Wales using voting figures from the 1 997 General Election.