

This week's second Silk Commission report has called for the Assembly to be expanded in size, possibly gaining an extra twenty members taking the Assembly to eighty members. The most obvious way of doing this is to generate twenty more regional members, which would mean equal numbers of constituency and regional list members. But that should not, in my opinion, mean that we just add an extra four regional members into the electoral regions as they stand at the moment; one reason for this argument is the electoral region of Mid and West Wales.



Mid and West Wales covers a vast chunk of Wales. At its widest part (from Marloes in Pembrokeshire to Hyssington in Powys) the region is 113 miles wide; and at its tallest part (from Llyn Cwmffynnon in Gwynedd to the Gower estuary in the south) the region is 99 miles tall. In total, the region accounts for well over half of Wales' total land area of 8,023 square miles. It is, I believe, far too big for an electoral region.

Therefore I believe that instead of have five electoral regions (electing eight regional members each), in an enlarged Assembly we should have eight electoral regions (based on the old, or should that be reconstituted) counties of Wales, with each region electing five members. This is not impossible as, thanks to how the constituencies of Wales have been drawn up, the current constituencies slot into the old counties like a glove, as the following table shows:

Gwynedd	Aberconwy, Arfon, Dwyfor Meirionnydd, Ynys Môn
Clwyd	Alyn and Deeside, Clwyd South, Clwyd West, Delyn, Vale of Clwyd, Wrexham
Powys	Brecon and Radnorshire, Montgomeryshire
Dyfed	Ceredigion, Carmarthen East and Dinefwr, Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire, Llanelli, Preseli Pembrokeshire
West Glamorgan	Aberavon, Gower, Neath, Swansea East, Swansea West
Mid Glamorgan	Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cynon Valley, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, Ogmore, Pontypridd, Rhondda
South Glamorgan	Cardiff Central, Cardiff North, Cardiff South and Penarth, Cardiff

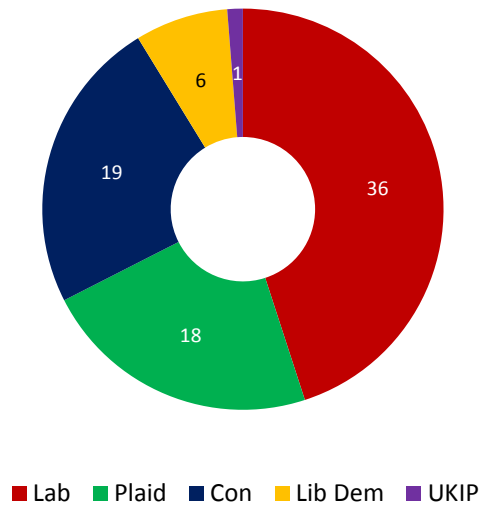
	West, Vale of Glamorgan
Gwent	Blaenau Gwent, Islwyn, Monmouth, Newport East, Newport West, Torfaen

Even though the scheme of the regional lists (or to give it its proper name, the Additional Member System) has been going since the start of the Assembly in 1999, it still seems to cause a lot of confusion amongst electors. To best explain it, let's take the electoral region (under my suggestions) of Mid Glamorgan. In the Assembly elections of 2011, Labour polled 57% of the constituency vote and won all seven constituencies (despite the fact that 43% of the votes cast were not for Labour), therefore the Additional Member System allows those parties who did not win constituency seats to have a second bite of the cherry. The formula for allocating additional members is what confuses most people but it basically starts off by saying "How many votes has a party won on the regional list in that region, how many constituency seats has it won, add one to the number of constituency seats and divide the regional vote by that number".

	Labour	Plaid Cymru	Conservatives	Liberal Democrats
Number of regional votes	74,803	26,560	14,607	7,303
Number of constituencies	7	0	0	0
Starting Count	9,350	26,560	14,607	7,303
Winner of First Regional		X		
Second Count	9,350	13,280	14,607	7,303
Winner of Second Regional			X	
Third Count	9,350	13,280	7,304	7,303
Winner of Third Regional		X		
Fourth Count	9,350	8,853	7,304	7,303
Winner of Fourth Regional	X			
Fifth Count	8,311	8,853	7,304	7,303
Winner of Fifth Regional		X		
Regional Members Elected	1	3	1	0
Total Members Elected	8	3	1	0

This means that the number of members elected in that region is more like the percentage share of the constituency vote, so that when you apply this calculation across the whole of Wales, you get an Assembly (that if my scheme had been in operation in 2011) comprised of the following:

## Seats



Although there is currently no threshold for parties to qualify for regional members, if the Assembly were to be enlarged to eighty, I believe a five percent regional threshold should be established, perhaps in conjunction with the amount of votes needed to retain a deposit lowered from the current five percent to two and a half percent.