

These notes refer to the Assembly Members (Reduction of Numbers) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (c.29) which received Royal Assent on 22 July 2016

Assembly Members (Reduction of Numbers) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

EXPLANATORY NOTES

BACKGROUND AND POLICY OBJECTIVES

3. The need for this Act arises from the provisions set out in the Stormont House Agreement and Section F, paragraph 56 of the Stormont Agreement and Implement Plan which state: “The number of Assembly members should be reduced to five members per constituency, or such other reduction as may be agreed, in time for the 2021 Assembly election, and the Assembly will legislate accordingly”.
4. [Section 33](#) (Constituencies and numbers of members) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (NIA) provides for each parliamentary constituency in Northern Ireland to return six members to the Northern Ireland Assembly. The purpose of the Act is to reduce this number from six to five. As there are at present 18 constituencies, the effect of the Act will therefore be to reduce the number of members of the Assembly from 108 to 90.
5. Section 6 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014 provides for the alteration of the number of members of the Assembly returned for each constituency to be a reserved matter, except where the alteration is to a number lower than five or higher than six, or where provision is made for different numbers for different constituencies. As a reserved matter, the Secretary of State’s consent to the Bill was required and granted. Section 6 also required that a Bill brought by the Assembly making provision for such a change had to have cross community support at the point at which the Bill was passed by the Assembly. This support was demonstrated on 23 February 2016.
6. The provisions of the Act will be brought into effect in advance of the 2021 election to the Northern Ireland Assembly and will also apply to any Extraordinary election which might be held between the election in 2016 and that in 2021 in accordance with Section 32 of the NIA.