



# **Direct Party and Representative Voting**

**(DPR Voting)**

**[www.dprvoting.org](http://www.dprvoting.org)**

**a description of an electoral system**

A form of Proportional Representation

for multi party parliamentary democracies based on single member constituencies

S Johnson v1.8 Feb 2016

Direct Party and Representative Voting is an electoral system intended to replace the 'First Past the Post' voting system used to elect the House of Commons in the UK

# Direct Party and Representative Voting (DPR Voting) – a description of an electoral system

## Table of contents

- 1**     [Summary – The System, principal outcomes and comment](#)
- 2**     [Introduction](#)
  - 2.1    A brief description of DPR Voting
  - 2.2    Why we need a new electoral system
  - 2.3    Parliamentary divisions and the logic of the parliamentary vote value.
  - 2.4    An illustration of the parliamentary vote value
- 3**     [Objectives](#)
  - 3.1    To elect a parliament where each party's votes are proportional to votes in the General Election.
  - 3.2    To retain the existing system of single member constituencies
  - 3.3    To retain simple voting and counting procedures.
  - 3.4    To allow the voter a free vote for both party and candidate.
- 4**     [Secondary outcomes](#)
  - 4.1    Safe Seats
  - 4.2    Marginal constituencies
  - 4.3    Constituency boundaries and gerrymandering
  - 4.4    Party Lists
  - 4.5    The significance of each vote
  - 4.6    Tactical voting
  - 4.7    Small parties:
  - 4.8    Extremist parties
  - 4.9    Independent candidates:
- 5**     [Electoral Procedures and exceptional events](#)
  - 5.1    Party qualification
  - 5.2    Votes threshold and automatic election
  - 5.3    By-elections, and defection or expulsion of members.
  - 5.4    Abuse of the system - attempts to cheat or exploit the system
- 6**     [Electoral administration.](#)
  - 6.1    Before the election
  - 6.2    Election day
  - 6.3    The Election count
- 7**     [Campaign issues](#)
  - 7.1    Election campaigning
  - 7.2    Candidates
  - 7.3    'Election night' and psephology
- 8**     [Parliamentary and constitutional matters](#)
  - 8.1    Changes to procedures for divisions in Parliament
  - 8.2    'Non party political' divisions
  - 8.3    Select Committees
  - 8.4    The effect of the system on MPs
  - 8.5    Fragmentation of parties
  - 8.6    Coalition Government
  - 8.7    Election of the Speaker
- 9**     [Significant aspects of the system](#)
  - 9.1    MPs and parliamentary vote values rather than 'One MP one Vote'
  - 9.2    MPs are elected by a plurality system
  - 9.3    Proportionality for minor parties
  - 9.4    The smallest parties, the threshold vote, and coalition building.
  - 9.5    'Pork barrel politics and the 'heavy vote'
  - 9.6    Multimember constituencies or single member constituencies
  - 9.7    PR may lead to coalition government and 'third party' power
- 10**    [Conclusion](#)

## Direct Party and Representative Voting (DPR Voting)

### 1 Summary – the system, principal outcomes and comment

#### The System

Direct Party and Representative Voting (DPR Voting) is an electoral system specifically intended to introduce a form of proportional representation to elections for the House of Commons in the UK while requiring the least change to the familiar 'First Past the Post' system (FPTP). It is a form of Proportional Representation for the UK based on the existing single member constituencies.

DPR Voting is especially suitable as a replacement for FPTP because much of the voting process is unchanged. It is a PR system that addresses both the weaknesses of FPTP, and the disadvantages of the MMP and STV systems, and so neutralises most of the arguments for keeping FPTP.

Voters cast two votes – one for the political party of their choice - the 'Party' vote, and the other to elect their constituency representative - the 'Representative' vote. Each vote is a single choice - the voter marks their choice with a single X. (Voting is similar to MMP, but the outcomes are different. MMP is a 'Mixed Member' system. DPR Voting is a 'Single Member, Party Proportional' system)

The voting (and counting) in DPR Voting is as simple as FPTP. It's different because each voter has one vote for the party to form the Government, as well as the vote for the candidate to be the local MP.

The 'Party' votes are aggregated nationwide, and this determines proportionately the number of votes each parliamentary party has in the parliament and therefore which party, or parties, can form the Government. The Representative vote elects an individual in each constituency. The candidate who gets the most Representative votes is elected as the constituency MP.

Rather than 'elect' additional MPs from a Party List, in DPR Voting each Parliamentary Party's votes are shared out equally amongst its members, its MPs. As a result, each MP will have a parliamentary vote value which may be more or less than one. The system requires changes to the way parliament conducts votes (divisions). On 'non party political' issues, each MP has an equal vote value of one. Electronic voting would save time and improve parliamentary administration efficiency.

#### Principal outcomes:

- A form of proportional representation is achieved with minimal change to the voting system.
- The system of single member constituencies and the relationship between the MP and their electorate is retained.
- The system of electing MPs, and their democratic accountability, is retained.
- The votes each party has in parliament are proportional to the votes won in the election.
- This determines which party, or parties, can form the government
- Simplicity of voting and counting is comparable with FPTP.
- The election is not decided by voting in 'marginal' constituencies.
- The system does not encourage numerous small parties.
- The system is resistant to gerrymandering
  - Frequent revision to constituency boundaries is not necessary.
- Separating the vote for the MP from the vote for the party means there are no safe party seats.
  - It encourages independent and independent minded candidates
  - The MP becomes more responsive to his/her constituents and less dependent on the Party.
- Each ('Party') vote in every constituency makes a difference to the result of the election.

#### Comment

DPR Voting is a 'Single Member, Party Proportional', not a 'Mixed Member' electoral system

Simple and quick voting and counting procedures are retained (unlike STV)

DPR does not require constituency boundaries to be redrawn (unlike STV and MMP).

The vote to elect the party to govern and to elect the local MP are not conflated (unlike FPTP).

No MPs are elected from a Party List (unlike MMP)

The system does not use either preferential voting or multimember constituencies (unlike STV). There is no 'Overhang' issue with DPR Voting (unlike MMP)

The cost of introducing the new system would be low. It would be straightforward to reverse the change.

## 2 Introduction

This paper describes Direct Party and Representative Voting (DPR Voting) which is an electoral system for parliamentary democracies designed to replace the 'First past the post' (FPTP) voting system used to elect the House of Commons in the UK.

No electoral system satisfies all requirements. DPR Voting is specifically intended to introduce a form of proportional representation to the House of Commons, but with the least change to our familiar FPTP system. It is a combination of party proportional and majoritarian single member voting systems.

### 2.1 A brief description

Direct Party and Representative Voting (DPR Voting) is a form of Proportional Representation based on single member constituencies designed to replace the 'First past the post' - FPTP - voting system used to elect the House of Commons in the UK.

The system would not require a change to the total number of MPs or existing constituency boundaries.

There is nothing complicated about voting in a DPR Voting election.

Voters cast two votes – one for the political party of their choice - the 'Party' vote, and the other to elect their constituency representative - the 'Representative' vote. Each vote is a single choice - the voter marks their choice with a single X.

The 'Party' votes are aggregated nationwide, and this determines proportionately the number of votes each parliamentary party has in the parliament and therefore which party, or parties, can form the Government.

The Representative vote elects an individual in each constituency. The candidate who gets the most Representative votes is elected as the constituency MP.

The voting (and counting) in DPR Voting is as simple as FPTP.

It's different because each voter has one vote for the party to form the Government, and another vote for the candidate to be the local MP. Although this is different, it is more straightforward for those who know which party they support, and gives more options for those for which the relative merits of the candidates is important.

Rather than 'elect' additional MPs from a Party List, in DPR Voting each party's parliamentary votes are shared out equally amongst its democratically elected members, its MPs. As a result, each MP will have a parliamentary vote value which may be more or less than one. The system requires changes to the way parliament conducts votes (divisions). On 'non party political' issues where the parliamentary party whip system is not involved, each MP has an equal vote value of one. Electronic voting would save time and improve parliamentary administration efficiency.

### 2.2 Why we need a new electoral system

'First past the post' has advantages and disadvantages.

The perceived disadvantages of FPTP are that results tend to favour two larger parties and be unfair to minor parties, and thus the parliament does not fairly reflect the balance of parties and political opinion in the country. It is one of the least proportional systems. It focuses campaigning effort on marginal constituencies but at the same time allows some candidates to be re-elected in 'safe' seats. It tends to lead to adversarial politics, and is not certain to produce a fair democratic result. It is possible for the party that is second in the election in terms of overall votes cast to have a majority of the votes in the House of Commons.

It continues to be used because it is perceived to have important advantages (simple voting and counting, and the democratic accountability and simplicity of the single member constituency).

Proposed alternatives to FPTP such as MMP and STV may have some perceived advantages, but have failed to attract majority support because of their perceived disadvantages

Eg MMP needs larger constituencies requiring either boundaries to be redrawn, or an increase in the number of MPs. In addition, there are two types of MP with list MPs effectively appointed by the party, and larger work loads for constituency MPs.) The argument against list MPs is that the party has excessive power over Party List MPs since it controls who is on the Party list, and more importantly, the batting order which will determine the chances of a candidate being elected.

STV needs much larger multimember constituencies (MMC) and so changes the relationship between voter and MPs. The (preferential) voting is more complicated, and it has very complicated counting. The ballot paper for a contest where five or six parties compete in a four or five seat MMC will be quite long. Making the necessary preferential voting choices on the basis of a knowledge of the candidates places heavy demands on the voter, if the system is to work as its proponents intend. It should also be said that STV is not technically a PR system and can end up with the party with fewer votes getting a majority (see the Malta experience).

For electoral reform to succeed, an electoral system is needed that will appeal both to advocates of PR and to supporters of FPTP who nevertheless recognise the disadvantages of FPTP. This is not a search for a perfect PR system, or even the best PR system.

What is needed is a PR electoral system that shares the key advantages of FPTP ie simple voting and counting, and the single member constituency. DPR Voting does that.

From a pragmatic administrative viewpoint, it would be simple to change from FPTP to DPR Voting.

### **Why we should replace FPTP**

The FPTP voting system is a simple system for electing a single winner in a straightforward constituency contest, but it has perceived shortcomings as a method of electing a legislature and government for a multi party representative democracy. (see above)

FPTP has some positive features. It incorporates the single member constituency – one representative is elected for each local area or community. This means that for a given number of MPs in the parliament, the MP has, on average, the smallest geographical area of responsibility and the smallest number of constituents. This encourages local political engagement.

FPTP also has process advantages. These are principally the simplicity of the voting and counting.

The problems arise not because FPTP is used to elect a single winner in each constituency, but because how these results are treated. The election of each MP is treated as a single vote for the party. Thus the fine details of the actual votes cast is, after this stage, lost. Once the election of the MPs is declared, the votes cast in the election for both winning and losing parties/candidates are effectively forgotten.

A majority of 1, or 10,000, makes no difference. Similarly 10,000 votes cast for a losing candidate are completely ignored. It is not surprising that the results are often disconnected from the wishes of the voters as expressed by the total votes cast, or in a comparable opinion poll, and fail to reflect the real balance of party support or political opinion.

The problem arises because FPTP conflates the election of the MP for the constituency with the election of the party of Government. Votes can only be cast for the individual.

### **2.3 The Parliamentary Party, and the logic of sharing the vote amongst the Members**

Voting for a party is common to PR electoral systems. In DPR Voting, like MMP/AMS, voters are asked to vote both for the party to form a government and an individual to represent the electorate of the constituency. In MMP the system is made 'party proportional' (so that the parliament reflects the 'party' votes cast) by giving each constituency MP one vote in the parliament and appointing variable numbers of other MPs from a 'party list' each with one vote so that the overall numbers of MPs are roughly proportional.

DPR Voting achieves proportionality in a different, arguably more logical, way. In DPR Voting the party votes cast determine how many votes each parliamentary party should have in the parliament. The votes each parliamentary party has in parliament are shared out equally amongst the members of the parliamentary party, ie the democratically elected constituency MPs, (rather than, for example, giving

each MP one vote and appointing additional MPs (who have not been democratically elected in their own right) to achieve this mathematical proportionality,

This equal share of their Parliamentary Party's vote is called the parliamentary vote value. When each MP votes on 'party' issues in parliamentary divisions, the value of the vote they cast is the parliamentary vote value. How this vote is exercised is up to each MP in the same way that MPs decide how to vote under the current system. This vote value may be more or less than one.

The use of the parliamentary vote value ensures that the total of votes the MPs of each party can exercise in parliament is proportional to the votes the party won in the General Election.

Normally, all divisions are 'party political', so this is the default voting rule. The exception is when an issue before parliament is agreed to be non party political. For a division to be dealt with as 'non party political' a unanimous formal agreement involving all the parties must be reached.

As far as the mechanics of a parliamentary vote are concerned, the process would benefit from some form of electronic voting method. For example a card (similar to a credit card) could be used which identified the MP and the value of the MP's vote so that voting results could be swiftly returned, and voting records kept in an electronic form.

## 2.4 An illustration of the parliamentary vote value

After a General Election, the parliamentary vote values of party sponsored MPs can easily be calculated.

### Example 1

A Parliament with two major parties, where all the MPs are party MPs (ie there are no independents)

There are currently 650 seats in the House of Commons.

If party A got 40% of the votes in the 'Party' vote but 50% of the MPs in the Representative Vote, each of their MPs would have a vote value 0.8 .ie 40% (the share of the vote) divided by 50% (the share of the number of MPs)

Party A would have a total of 260 (= 650 x 40%) votes shared equally amongst 325 (=650 x 50%) MPs. If a party got 40% support in the 'Party' vote but 30% of the MPs, each of their MPs would have a vote value 1.333 ie 260 votes shared equally amongst 195 (=650 x 30%) MPs

### Example 2

A Parliament with two major parties, where most MPs are party MPs but there are some independents. If 10 Independent MPs are elected, there will be 640 'party' MPs. Collectively these 'party' MPs will be able to exercise 640 votes.

If party 'A' got 40% support in the 'Party' vote but 50% of the 'party' MPs, each of their MPs would have a vote value of  $40/50 = 0.8$

40% of the 640 votes is 256 votes (shared equally amongst the 320 party 'A' MPs that were elected.)

If party 'B' got 40% support in the 'Party' vote but 30% of the party MPs, each of their MPs would have a vote value of  $40/30 = 1.333$

40% of the 640 votes is 256 votes (shared equally amongst the 192 party 'B' MPs that were elected.)

### Example 3

With several parties and some independents:

Note in this scenario:

Party E gets one constituency MP elected.

Party F fails to get any constituency MPs elected.

Party	votes	MPs	% of votes	% of Party MPs	% of party votes	Parliamentary Vote Value	Total votes
A	8,800,000	335	35.20%	51.86%	36.67%	0.707	236.9

B	7,500,000	254	30.00%	39.32%	31.25%	0.795	201.9	
C	5,000,000	45	20.00%	6.97%	20.83%	2.991	134.6	
D	1,000,000	10	4.00%	1.55%	4.17%	2.692	26.9	
E	650,000	1	2.60%	0.15%	2.71%	17.496	17.5	
F	650,000	1	2.60%	0.15%	2.71%	1.000	1	One MP elected by automatic election
G	400,000	0	1.60%	0.00%	1.67%		0	
Ind	1,000,000	4	4.00%			1.000	4	
Total	25,000,000	650	100%	100%	100%		622.7	

The threshold level of votes had been set at 2.5% (For the purposes of this example)

Points to note include

In an FPTP election, Party A, with 335 MPs would have a clear majority over all the other parties combined, and thus would be the single party of government, despite the fact that they only won 35.2% of the popular vote, and almost 2/3 of voters voted for other parties.

If the same votes were cast in a DPR Voting election each party who gets at least one constituency MP elected has parliamentary votes relative to their share of the General Election vote.

The result would probably be a coalition government (a minority government is a theoretical possibility.)

The small parties: The system largely maintains the imperative for small parties to get at least one MP elected as a constituency MP.

Party E got one constituency MP elected and thus has a 'heavy' p.v.v. The MP exercises the heavy vote on behalf of party E which is proportional to the party E share of the popular vote (when it is a party political issue).

Party F got the same number of votes as Party E but failed to get a constituency MP elected. Party F did exceed the threshold level for automatic representation (which had been set at 2.5%) and so has one MP (the Party Leader) elected without constituency with a single vote.

Party G failed to get any constituency MPs elected and failed to exceed the vote threshold for automatic election, and so has no representation in the parliament.

### 3 Objectives

#### 3.1 The votes a party has in parliament are proportional to the votes cast in the election.

Party Votes cast in the election determine the number of parliamentary votes for each Party. This determines which party or parties can form the Government.

DPR Voting achieves relative proportionality for each party that wins at least one constituency MP.

A small party has a better chance of getting at least one MP elected under DPR Voting than under the existing FPTP system because the vote for the party is not conflated with the vote for the representative.

'Automatic election' (see 5.2) allows the election of a single party representative for a party which wins enough votes to exceed a predetermined threshold level but fails to get a single constituency MP elected.

#### 3.2 The existing system of single member constituencies is retained

DPR Voting is based on using single member constituencies. Most other electoral systems require either larger (and fewer) constituencies or much larger (and many fewer) multimember constituencies.

Smaller constituencies encourage personal and local involvement in politics:

The MP can be better aware of, and responsive to, the concerns of constituents.

Individual candidates can be known locally, even if they are not nationally prominent.

Election campaigns can be conducted by small organisations at lower cost per candidate.

Smaller constituencies encourage local involvement in campaigns rather than central control.

Personal contact between MPs, candidates, and constituents is easier, and thus more likely. Larger constituencies disadvantage Independent candidates.

A change to the size of constituencies requires changes to constituency boundaries, and resulting cost, upheaval, the suspicion of gerrymandering and breakdown of electoral continuity.

DPR Voting does not require any change to constituency boundaries, and is resistant to gerrymandering, which would save costs in the introduction of the new system. Future frequent boundary changes are not necessary to maintain the fairness of the system.

### **3.3 Simple voting and counting procedures are retained.**

The simplicity of voting and counting is comparable with FPTP. The constituency MP is elected by a simple plurality, just as at present. It is not a preferential voting system. Multimember constituencies are not used.

#### **Voting:**

A simple voting method makes an election process more inclusive, and thus more democratic. The voting (and counting) in DPR Voting is as simple as FPTP. It's different because each voter has one vote for the party to form the Government, and another vote for the candidate to be the local MP. This form of voting is more straightforward for those who know which party they support, and gives more options for those for which the relative merits of the candidates is important.

#### **Counting:**

A simple counting process that everyone understands makes the result more transparent, reduces the risk of fraud, and improves confidence in the system.

The counting of the Representative vote is identical to the current electoral system. The winner could be declared in a similar manner, within a similar timescale.

The counting of the Party vote is also very similar. This is counted on a constituency basis, and then the individual constituency results are aggregated nationwide to give the final result. This count should be achieved in not much more than the time it takes to bring in all the constituency results.

### **3.4 The voter is allowed a free vote for both party and candidate**

In an election under FPTP, the voter cannot distinguish between voting for the party and voting for the candidate. Voting for the best candidate may mean voting against the party you support. But voting solely on party lines can result in unsatisfactory candidates being elected.

For example, certain constituencies can be considered safe party seats for the party with a natural majority, so the process of selecting the candidate is akin to appointing an MP to parliament. An MP in a safe seat may be less conscientious with constituency work and less engaged with his/her constituents.

Voting against a lazy or incompetent MP may require the voter to vote against the party he or she supports, and this is anathema for some voters.

Conversely honest hardworking constituency MPs with small majorities may lose their seats because of swings in party popularity despite their impeccable track record.

DPR Voting allows voters to vote for the candidate on merit. The vote for the party is separate. This will result in the election of better MPs. 'Better' in this context means 'better' in the judgement of the electorate. Similarly the party vote will reflect the level of support for each party more accurately than FPTP. The party vote is not mixed up with the vote for the local candidate. A party who does not field a local candidate may still be present on the party ballot paper and win party votes in that constituency.

Outstanding Independent candidates will have a better chance of being elected. This also applies to outstanding minor party candidates.

More choice and better MPs will improve our Parliament and democracy.



## **4 Secondary outcomes**

The party vote, aggregated nationwide, and the separate representative vote have additional outcomes.

### **4.1 Safe Seats**

Separating the Party vote and the Representative vote means that there are no safe seats in a DPR Voting election. No candidate can be certain to win based on the popularity of their party in that particular constituency, because support for the party is expressed through the Party vote.

Thus DPR Voting will weaken 'safe' seats and encourage MPs to be more responsive to their constituents. It will mean that every candidate will have to campaign locally on their individual merits and track record.

It will be clear to voters that they can express their support for or disapproval of particular candidates by using their Representative vote, without compromising their support for their preferred party, as determined by their Party vote. Indeed the result of the individual constituency contest will be less predictable, and thus may attract more voter interest.

### **4.2 Marginal Constituencies**

In DPR Voting, the voting in marginal constituencies cannot unduly influence the outcome of the election because the votes a party has are determined by the nationwide aggregate of the Party vote, not the result of individual constituencies.

Some constituencies will be considered marginal in respect of the election of the individual MP, but the significance is limited to the constituency and the individuals concerned. Those individuals may be important within the party, and may be potential Ministers or senior party officials, so the results in these constituencies would still be of special interest.

There will be constituencies of particular significance to a small party who have an imperative to win at least one constituency in the Representative vote.

### **4.3 Constituency Boundaries and Gerrymandering**

How constituency boundaries are drawn makes no difference to the outcome of the Party vote (and therefore the number of votes each party has in the parliament) because it is aggregated nationally. Gerrymandering the boundaries would be futile, and so frequent revision of constituency boundaries is not necessary.

Constituency boundaries retain some significance. Ideally each MP should represent roughly the same number of constituents, and boundaries should follow natural communities.

How boundaries are drawn could have an effect on the election of the representatives of the constituencies concerned, but the consequences would be limited.

Adoption of the system would improve continuity, and save Boundary Commission related costs and the associated administrative changes that result from continuous boundary reviews.

### **4.4 Party Lists**

All MPs are elected for a geographical constituency. No party lists are required. The exceptional circumstance is the provision of automatic election of one MP when a party fails to get a single constituency member elected but does win enough Party votes to exceed a predetermined threshold.

The most frequently voiced criticisms of MMP(AMS) relate to the election of party list MPs, the power this gives parties over 'list' MPs, their reduced democratic credibility, and the change to the relationship with the electorate. These factors do not apply to DPR Voting.

## **4.5 The significance of each vote (Every vote 'counts')**

In DPR Voting, every 'party' vote cast is significant in that it changes the result of the election. That is, it changes the votes of the different parties in the parliament. Every Party vote, regardless of where it is cast, counts equally towards the final result of the election.

The voter knows in advance that their vote not only 'counts', but will make a mathematical difference to the result. This is an answer to the question 'Why should I bother to vote?'

The only exception would be where a small party fails to get an MP elected. Even in this instance, the party vote cast for that small party would reduce the votes of all the other parties relative to the votes of any independent MPs elected. (see 4.7 [small parties](#))

As regards the Representative vote, the situation is similar to the existing FPTP system. However since the voter is not restricted by the desire to support the party of choice, the voter has more freedom as to how to cast the representative vote and the election outcome is more uncertain.

## **4.6 Tactical Voting**

### **The Party Vote**

Each Party vote cast strengthens the party voted for (and weakens every other party). As a result there is no sensible rationale for tactical voting in the party vote.

### **The Representative Vote**

Tactical voting can play a part in the Representative election, but any impact would be limited. Tactical voting may be more likely to occur in the Representative vote where a particularly high profile or contentious candidate is standing.

Tactical voting may be of special significance to a small party who may win in only one constituency.

## **4.7 Small parties:**

The system allows small parties to have a number of votes in parliament proportional to the votes they won in the election provided one of their MPs is elected to a constituency. This may be perceived as a barrier to small parties. However, for a small party, winning one seat might be easier than under FPTP, for the following reasons.

A small party might be expected to have at least one outstanding or charismatic candidate. Such a candidate of a small party could have a better chance of being elected under DPR Voting because it is possible for voters to use their Party vote to support the party of their choice, and then use their Representative vote to choose the best MP regardless of party. A small party does not need to have a natural plurality of party supporters in the constituency to get their candidate elected.

For a small party to have some representation in the parliament, the hurdle of having to get at least one MP elected in a constituency is reduced by 'automatic election' which depends on a party reaching a predetermined threshold of Party votes.

While small parties would fare better under DPR Voting than under FPTP, DPR Voting does not encourage the formation of a multiplicity of small parties.

## **4.8 Extremist Parties**

Extremist parties are a special case of the small party. The Party vote gauges the level of support for each party, extremist or mainstream, accurately. An extremist party like any other small party would need to have a constituency MP elected. A high profile extremist candidate might be expected to attract tactical voting in the representative vote.

Whether or not this would make it more or less difficult for an extremist party to be fully represented in the parliament is a matter of conjecture, and would depend on local circumstances and voter behaviour.

## **4.9 Independent candidates:**

Independent candidates are candidates not sponsored by a party that has qualified to be present on the

Party ballot paper.

The main disadvantage that Independent candidates have under FPTP is that voters are obliged to vote for their party sponsored candidate if they wish to support a particular party to form the Government. DPR Voting removes this constraint. Voting behaviour may still favour party sponsored MPs, but a well known, charismatic local independent candidate could have a better chance than under FPTP.

The retention of the single member constituency is also an advantage for the Independent candidate, in that most independent candidates will be best known in a small local area, and it is easier for an Independent candidate to campaign in a single member constituency compared with a larger multimember constituency.

As an independent candidate, the only description allowed on the Representative ballot paper would be 'Independent'. Independent Candidates would only be differentiated by their name.

## **5 Electoral Procedures and exceptional events**

In order to conduct a DPR Voting election, some additional procedures are necessary.

### **5.1 Party qualification**

In order to determine which political parties appeared in the Party section of the ballot paper, there should be a qualification process. The details of this procedure are not fundamental to the election process, so this paper does not seek to define or specify this process, but rather to suggest how it could be implemented.

Qualification could be a national or regional qualification process. Parties might need to obtain numbers of signatures across a number of constituencies or perhaps achieve a threshold level in a regulated opinion poll.

Parties that qualified to be on the Party ballot paper could win Party votes even if there was no candidate of that party standing in the representative section of the vote.

If a party failed to qualify, its candidates could still stand as independents, but there would be no mention of their party either in the Party section or in the representative section of the ballot paper.

### **5.2 Votes threshold and automatic election**

In DPR Voting small parties must get at least one party sponsored MP elected in order to exercise their party vote. An additional feature, automatic election, allows representation in the parliament for small parties who fail to get any MPs elected, based on a threshold level of Party votes.

If a party exceeds the threshold level of Party votes in the election, but fails to get any MP elected, the leader of the party would automatically be elected as an MP. In this way the party would be represented in the Parliament but the MP elected in this manner would only have a single vote.

Such a 'Party Leader' MP would have no constituency link, but this would be an exception.

### **5.3 By-elections, and defection or expulsion of members.**

In normal circumstances each MP retains their vote value until the next General Election.

#### **By-elections**

In the event of the death or resignation from parliament of an MP, a by-election is held.

The winner of the Representative ballot becomes the new MP, and exercises a vote value of one.

A Party ballot is not necessary. It could be included but the result would have no significance. It would allow the voter to send a message to the different parties. This message would have no parliamentary significance, but would allow the electorate the opportunity to 'let off steam'

Alternatively, the election could be held exactly as a by-election would be conducted under the existing FPTP system without a Party vote ballot.

### **Defection or expulsions**

In the event of an MP resigning the party whip, the consequences are governed by a rule:

An MP who resigned the party whip would retain the same value vote or a vote value of one, whichever is the lower, for the remainder of the Parliament.

This rule is designed to deal with particular situations.

- 1 An MP from a small party with a heavy vote defects.  
It would be unfair and inappropriate for such an MP to take a heavy vote to the new party.
- 2 An MP should not be able to gain a heavier vote by resigning from the party.

There is no rule to stop an MP defecting.

The party who loses the MP loses the vote value of one MP.

The party who gains an MP does not gain a heavy vote (ie a vote value greater than one).

There is no redistribution of votes between General Elections (eg after a by-election). The party vote mandate is only significant when aggregated nationwide at a General Election.

### **5.4 Abuse of the system - attempts to cheat or exploit the system**

Theoretically there is one potential loophole that should be blocked by electoral legal sanction.

Consider the situation where party A has a large majority in a constituency. If party A decides not to field a candidate but instead supports an independent who, once elected, defects to or always votes with Party A, that party would gain one parliamentary vote more than would be the case if Party A had fielded a winning candidate.

For this reason, for a party not to field a candidate in a constituency where it wins the highest share of the party vote, would be a contravention of electoral law.

This tactic cannot be hidden, because it is apparent immediately the election result is declared.

It is difficult to know whether or not this tactic would be adopted, or whether it would be successful.

In any event, it should be straightforward for a court to impose a penalty on the party, either financial, or electoral, or both. It would require concerted action to be taken in a number of constituencies for a party to get a significant advantage. Conversely it is possible for a contravention in one constituency to happen accidentally, and the penalty could be graduated accordingly.

## **6 Electoral administration.**

There would not be a great deal of change to the administrative arrangements for an election using DPR Voting.

### **6.1 Before the election**

No changes to the electoral constituencies mean that there would be little change to administration of elections prior to polling day.

Party Qualification: The process of finalising party qualification could occur well before the election was called.

### **6.2 Election day**

The retention of the existing system of constituencies would mean no changes to polling station administration would be required.

There would be two ballot papers.

The 'Party' ballot paper would list the qualifying parties.  
It would be possible to have an option 'None of the above'

The Representative ballot paper would list the Candidates.  
The description for party sponsored candidates should match the party description on the Party ballot paper.  
The only permitted description for Independent candidates would be 'Independent'

Voting and counting would be similar to the existing system, with a single vote cast for the party on one ballot paper, and a single vote cast for the candidate on the other.  
The ballot papers would be collected in separate ballot boxes.

It would be possible for a voter to cast a vote on only one of the ballot papers and abstain or spoil the ballot on the other, and the vote still to be valid.

### **6.3 The Election Count**

The two sections of the ballot paper are counted separately. The counts in both sections are similar to the current counting system, so virtually no change to administration is required.

The representative ballot count determines the election of the MP by simple plurality. This can be done quickly and easily, and thus results in some constituencies could be available, as at present, on the night.

The Party vote would be counted for each constituency and results declared as soon as available. As constituency counts were declared it would be possible to make reasonably accurate projections of the final results.

The Party vote would only have practical significance when aggregated with all the other votes to reach a national total, but local constituency results would be of psephological and political interest.

The overall party vote result would be available soon after the last constituency result was declared.

## **7 Campaign issues**

As a result of the nature of DPR Voting, political parties would change some aspects of their campaigning.

### **7.1 Election Campaigning**

Campaign strategies based on campaigning in 'marginals' would be redundant, except for very small parties not certain of getting a single candidate elected.  
Party votes in the parliament depends on Party votes aggregated nationally, so parties would have to campaign nationwide for the Party vote, and locally for their individual candidates.

### **7.2 Candidates**

There would be increased pressure to find good local candidates. Constituency campaigns would need to focus on the merits and track record of the candidates.

Party organisations would be wary of pressuring a local party organisation to accept a parachuted candidate because this might not be accepted by the voters. It would be possible for a party to win a plurality in the Party vote, but fail to get their candidate elected.

### **7.3 'Election night' and psephology**

Election results would be declared at a similar speed to the existing FPTP system. Thus election night

television would not be adversely affected.

The system would add an extra dimension to political analysis because it would be possible to compare party voting results directly with opinion polls taken prior to polling day.

It would also be interesting to compare the votes for the candidates with the votes for the parties in particular constituencies, and thus identify politicians who did better, and worse, than their parties in terms of the share of the vote.

## **8 Parliamentary and Constitutional matters**

### **8.1 Changes to Commons voting procedures (Divisions) in Parliament**

The main change to parliamentary procedure is the way parliamentary votes are conducted.

A form of electronic voting (for example, each MP could be given a machine readable card and a card reader could be placed in each division lobby) would be introduced to the Commons to make the voting (division) process foolproof and simple.

### **8.2 'Non party political' divisions**

'Party political' divisions and the related system of MPs vote values is the default system for deciding divisions in parliament. If Parliament votes on a matter which is unanimously agreed to be a 'non party political' vote, where no party has a policy on the matter, the system of parliamentary vote values does not apply.

Specifically a particular vote is deemed a 'non party political' vote if all political parties unanimously agree, and inform the speaker accordingly.

For such a vote each MP then has a vote with a value of one.

### **8.3 Parliamentary Committees**

Under DPR Voting, the Party Political balance of the members of Committees would be determined by the Party votes cast in the election. In addition to MPs, parties could put forward members of the Upper House to stand on Committees as happens currently with Joint Committees.

Voting on Committees would not change. Each Member would have one vote. The DPR Voting system that makes votes in parliament 'party proportional' does not apply to Committees. The proportionality has been dealt with by determining that the Members that makeup of the Committee reflect the overall party political balance.

### **8.4 The effect of the system on MPs**

**Job security.** Change to the system of single member constituencies is not required by a change to DPR Voting, so constituency boundaries would not need to be changed. A change to the voting system would not oblige any MPs to seek a new constituency.

The representative vote is similar in certain respects to the existing FPTP voting method, so an MP who is well liked and respected within the constituency should have a good chance of retaining their seat after a change of the electoral system.

For this reason, a change to DPR Voting would not necessarily offer a very much greater threat to the employment of most MPs than an election under FPTP. In asking MPs to agree to legislation introducing DPR Voting, MPs would not, in effect, be asked to vote for a change that would make large numbers of MPs redundant, as might be considered the case with some other electoral systems.

**The relationship between MP and constituency, and MP and Party.** Unlike other PR systems the constituency link between the MP and the electorate is preserved very much as at present. MPs' link with the constituency will be closer because the personal qualities and record in public life of the candidates

in election will carry more significance, and an MP will not be able to rely on the party label to be elected. This will also give MPs a measure of independence since a popular MP has a better chance of retaining their seat when his or her party suffers an electoral setback. Of course the converse is also true as regards unpopular MPs.

After the election result, the Representative votes cast for the candidate will be compared with the Party vote in the constituency. This will give observers a measure the personal success or otherwise of the candidate.

As a further consequence, in Parliament, the whips may find their influence and patronage diminished. MPs may feel they have more independence when it comes to voting. For similar reasons, a party might be wary of imposing a candidate on a local party.

## **8.5 The fragmentation of parties**

It is argued that PR results in many small parties. There is no reason to suggest that DPR Voting would necessarily encourage the formation of many small parties, or cause schisms within existing parties.

**Formation of new parties:** The decision as to whether or not to launch a new party would be influenced by several factors: The difficulty of the qualification process, the difficulty for a new party to get at least one MP elected, and the level that is set for the threshold for automatic representation.

**Schisms within the larger parties:** There is no reason to suggest that DPR Voting would encourage schisms within the larger parties. There would be no particular benefit or incentive from the system, and the disincentive that applies to small parties would apply to new breakaway parties

## **8.6 Coalition Government**

The system seems as likely as any other PR system to result in a coalition government if the public does not back any one party strongly enough to give them a clear majority of votes cast. This cannot be assumed. Recent experience shows FPTP can result in a coalition and PR can lead to a majority Government.

From a democratic standpoint it would seem better to improve the way we manage coalition government than devise an electoral system that forces an arbitrary or capricious 'strong government' result when this does not reflect the clear desire of the electorate.

Currently unresolved issues, such as a coalition claiming a mandate for a programme for government after an election where no party won a majority of votes cast, are not resolved by this or any other electoral system.

## **8.7 Election of the Speaker**

The convention is that the speaker is returned to Parliament unopposed. If convention is followed, there is no competition, and thus the constituents of the Speaker's constituency do not have the chance to vote for the party of their choice.

With DPR Voting the constituents of the Speaker's constituency would not be disenfranchised. The election would take place with electors completing the Party Ballot section only (assuming there were no candidates standing to oppose the Speaker). Accordingly their Party votes would still count alongside every other Party vote in the election.

# **9 Contentious aspects of the system**

## **9.1 MPs and parliamentary vote values rather than 'One MP one Vote'**

The DPR Voting electoral system reflects the fact that there are two aspects to the work of a party MP. One side is the constituency representative. The other is as a member of the party's parliamentary party.

In a Parliament elected by DPR Voting, the mandate for voting on party political issues derives from the Party votes cast. The number of votes that a party has at its disposal depends on its share of the 'party votes' it wins. This is common to other PR systems.

How these votes are exercised differs from one PR system to another. Other PR systems achieve proportionality by employing a Party List mechanism. Additional MPs are appointed from a list of candidates prepared by the party in advance of the election. Rather than 'elect' additional Party List MPs, who do not have the democratic credentials of being elected in their own right, in DPR Voting each party's parliamentary votes are shared out equally amongst its democratically elected members, its MPs. No additional MPs are required. Arguably this is a more logical and democratic way of achieving party proportionality than employing a party list method.

### **A small number of MPs with high value (or 'heavy') votes**

It might be anticipated that the single elected representative of a small MP might have a high value vote. This 'heavy' vote is the outcome of the overall support for the party and its under-representation in the parliament. Such an MP, as the sole representative of the party, might expect to get more attention and wield more influence than the average Labour or Conservative member of parliament. The PTV system extends this influence to the vote that the MP would exercise on behalf of their party in the House. The different values of the PTVs simply correct the imbalance that results from the 'First Past the Post' system of voting.

Normally, all divisions are 'party political', so this is the default voting rule. The exception is when an issue before parliament is agreed to be non party political. (See 8.2) Thus when voting on behalf of their constituents on matters that are apolitical, every MP has a vote with a value of one.

## **9.2 MPs are elected by a plurality**

Each constituency elects their MP by a plurality. The candidate who gets the most votes wins. This is the simplest and most easily understood system of election.

As regards the consequences, plurality voting within DPR Voting has very limited significance for the overall election result and the formation of the government. It determines the single winner in each constituency, not which party can form the government.

The local constituency election campaign ensures a local dimension to a General Election. It encourages candidates to engage with their voters directly, and gives the electorate a better chance of meeting, seeing or getting to know about their local candidates. It is the basis of the relationship between the MP and the constituency electorate which is considered one of the benefits of FPTP.

DPR Voting does not necessarily result in a parliament which is a microcosm of British Society. It does not necessarily result in a Parliament that consists of balanced proportions of age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation etc.

MPs that are elected will be popular in their constituencies. Each MP who is elected will be the choice of the local people, elected on individual merit, not because he or she has the right party credentials.

## **9.3 Proportionality for minor parties**

Parties strong enough to get one constituency MP elected will have parliamentary votes proportional to their share of the vote in the General Election.

Parties that gather enough votes to exceed the vote threshold but do not win a single constituency will be represented in the parliament by their party leader with a single vote. See 'Automatic election' 5.2 Unlike other PR systems DPR Voting encourages small parties to contest constituency elections, rather than hoping to win party list seats through a centralised media campaign.

## **9.4 The smallest parties, the threshold vote, and coalition building.**

Small parties who do not get a constituency MP elected but manage to exceed the threshold level of votes in the General Election would still be represented in parliament by one member, usually the party



leader, with one vote. See 'Automatic election' 5.2 Such an MP would not be a constituency MP. In any parliament the number of such MPs would probably be less than five, more probably one or two, depending on the threshold.

Because such small parties would have only a single vote, their ability to contribute votes to a working coalition would be limited and would be unlikely to be able to exert undue power over a government. However having the party leader present in the Parliament would give that party more media coverage and expose their policies to the spotlight of more critical analysis than happens at present.

### **9.5 'Pork barrel politics' and the 'heavy' vote.**

It might be conjectured that an MP with a 'heavy' vote could negotiate benefits for their constituency that other MPs might not be able to get, as a 'quid pro quo' for the MP's 'heavy' vote support for a specific issue. In practice an MP with a particularly heavy vote is likely to belong to a small party. The extreme situation is where a party has a single constituency MP.

It is difficult to know to what extent this hypothetical problem would occur. However if it did occur there might be a self correcting mechanism that would mitigate the problem, as follows.

If there was a perception that this type of 'pork barrel politicking' occurred, the electorate might form the view that a constituency benefits from having the leader or sole representative of a small party 'A' with a 'heavy' vote as an MP. As a result, and in anticipation of this effect, the leading figure of party 'A' might have a better chance being elected in the constituency, and thus there would be a better chance of Party 'A' being represented in Parliament. This also applies to a lesser extent to a second MP, provided there is enough support for the party to give two MPs 'heavy' votes, and of course third and fourth representatives. As the number of small party MPs that are elected increases, the size of the heavy vote declines and so any potential 'pork barrel' effect declines.

There could be two significant consequences:

Firstly small party 'A' has a better chance of being represented in parliament (and this might apply to all parties with widespread geographical support) than under FPTP.

Secondly the effect might encourage the election of other party 'A' MPs so that the number of Party 'A' MPs tends towards proportionality (and their vote value tends towards unity).

### **9.6 Multimember constituencies or single member constituencies**

Some electoral systems depend on the use of multimember constituencies (MMCs) in order to achieve proportionality. Proportionality in part depends on the average district magnitude, the higher the magnitude the more proportional the result. It also depends on the number of political parties competing in the election. The more political parties, the higher the magnitude is required to achieve proportionality: The higher the magnitude, the more proportional the result, but the longer the ballot paper.

The ballot paper for a contest where five or six parties compete in a four or five seat MMC will be quite long. Perhaps between 10 and 15 candidates, perhaps more. Making the necessary preferential voting choices on the basis of a knowledge of even 10 candidates places heavy demands on the voter, if the system is to work as its proponents intend.

If the number of MPs in the legislature is to remain fixed, MMCs must be geographically considerably larger than the single member constituency, and where the population density is low, such as in the highlands of Scotland, this can be a practical problem.

A further problem with MMCs is that the larger the constituency, the more remote the MPs. Having several MPs can mean that responsibility and accountability is blurred. Multimember constituencies are necessarily larger which makes it more difficult for candidates to campaign, for MPs to meet their constituents and for constituents to think of their MP as their local MP.

Conversely with a single member constituency the electorate have the closest link to their MP, and the single member constituency is the system of smallest possible constituencies. Campaigns are more local, and politics is more direct.

Independent candidates are disadvantaged by larger constituencies

DPR Voting does not use multimember constituencies. It does not offer the electorate as large a choice of candidates as would be the case with multimember constituencies, and does not offer a choice of candidates from within the major parties.

It is self evident that the greater the number of candidates the greater the choice. However a larger number of candidates is not necessarily better, and does not always offer a better practical choice. In a multimember constituency the choice of candidate may still be conflated with the choice of party, which effectively restricts the election choice of the voter.

### **9.7 PR may lead to coalition government and 'third party' power**

DPR Voting is as likely as any other PR system to result in a coalition government, if the public does not back any one party strongly enough to give them a clear majority of votes cast.

It is argued that PR could lead to a third party remaining continuously in power as the minor coalition partner. This is not the only possible scenario. Actual results depend on voter behaviour (as indeed they should). Support for a third party that is in Government for several terms might well be expected to decline. The third party may split into two competing parties, or another party may grow up to compete for the third place position, or the two largest parties may form a coalition excluding the third party.

Small parties who do not get a constituency MP elected but manage to exceed the threshold level of votes in the General Election would still be represented in parliament by one member see section 9.4 However there would be limited scope for such small parties with only one vote to contribute to coalition building.

## **10 Conclusion (see over)**

## 10 Conclusion

'First past the post' has advantages and disadvantages. Despite perceived disadvantages, FPTP continues to be used because of its advantages. (simple voting and counting, and the democratic accountability and simplicity of the single member constituency.)

Proposed alternatives to FPTP such as MMP/AMS and STV may have some advantages, but have failed to attract majority support because of their perceived disadvantages

Direct Party and Representative Voting (DPR Voting) is an electoral system specifically intended to introduce a form of proportional representation to elections for the House of Commons in the UK while requiring the least change to the familiar FPTP system. It has similarities to both MMP/AMS and FPTP.

It is a form of Proportional Representation based on single member constituencies. In an election, voters cast two votes – one for the political party of their choice - the 'Party' vote, and the other to elect their constituency representative - the 'Representative' vote.

The Party votes directly determine the level of support for each party.

Constituency MPs are elected (the Representative Vote) by a simple plurality vote.

The system requires a change to the way parliamentary votes are conducted. MPs of each party have a parliamentary vote value, when voting in parliamentary divisions on party political issues.

DPR Voting has a unique combination of advantages:

- Proportional representation is achieved with minimal change to the voting system.
- The existing system of single member constituencies is retained.
- The existing system of electing MPs is retained.
- The relationship between the constituency electorate and their MP is retained.
- The votes each party has in parliament are proportional to the votes won in the election.
- This determines which party, or parties, can form the government
- Simplicity of voting and counting is comparable with FPTP.
- The election is not decided by voting in 'marginal' constituencies.
- The system does not encourage numerous small parties.
- The system is resistant to gerrymandering
  - Frequent revision to constituency boundaries is not necessary.
- Separating the vote for the MP from the vote for the party means there are no safe party seats.
  - It encourages independent and independent minded candidates
  - The MP becomes more responsive to his/her constituents but less dependent on the Party.
- Each ('party') vote in every constituency makes a difference to the result of the election.

Note: Voting is not preferential, Multimember constituencies are not used, Party Lists are not used

The introduction of DPR Voting would involve only the smallest change to our current electoral system. It would preserve the relationship between MPs and their constituents on the basis of a method of constituency election which is familiar. DPR Voting would achieve greater equality for the voter, greater voter choice, and a significant increase in proportionality with the minimum disruption to our current electoral system.

It could be presented to the electorate, simply and powerfully, as a fairer electoral system for Westminster.

Stephen Johnson, edit Feb 2016, first published 2010