



Andy Burnham's pledge on using proportional representation for the UK's House of Commons

On 18 June 2026, the [Rt Hon Andy Burnham PC](#) - who was a former Labour MP, and a Minister in the Labour Party governments of both Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, and was, more recently, the former Mayor of Greater Manchester - won a by-election to the UK's House of Commons by a significant majority. A Labour MP, who had supported Mr Burnham's return to the Commons, resigned his seat of [Makerfield](#) to enable Mr Burnham to stand for it.

As the sole candidate of both the Labour Party, and the [Co-operative Party](#), he improved their vote in the Makerfield constituency by 9.6 percentage points over the result in [2024](#), and gained a clear absolute majority, with 54.8% of the vote. He easily defeated his main rival, a candidate of the Reform Party, whose candidates had won most of the council wards within the Makerfield constituency in municipal elections there in May 2026.

Importantly, Mr Burnham had declared while campaigning that if he rejoined the House of Commons as a Labour MP he would seek the position of Leader of the Labour Party, and hence Prime Minister.

In the lead up to his election, Mr Burnham made a [major pledge](#) when he said, *"I am committed to proportional representation"*, adding that, *"I think it would change the political culture. I don't see how first past the post and the point-scoring inherent within it lifts Britain out of the doom loop it is in"*.

Unfortunately, Mr Burnham gave no indication of whether his commitment to introducing proportional representation related to a direct [PR-STV](#) system like Hare-Clark, or instead some form of indirect election of MPs using a [party list](#) system.

Lloyd George was the UK's last Liberal Prime Minister: might Scott Morrison be Australia's last?

A recent [article](#) on the website of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation discussed the result of the 2026 election for South Australia's House of Assembly. It started with a reference to the demise, in the early 20th Century, of the Liberal Party of the United Kingdom as a party of the British government.

The article pointed to the distorting [winner-take-all](#) nature of single-member electoral districts as a significant aspect of that demise.

It mentioned a leading Liberal MP, [Leonard Courtney](#), later Lord Courtney of Penrith, who was - unusually in his era - very wary of the UK's [1880 electoral landslide](#), which had given the Liberal Party a large majority in the House of Commons. Lord Courtney later became one of the [founders](#) in 1884 of what is now the UK's [Electoral Reform Society](#). In 1897-99 he was the [President](#) of the Royal Statistical Society

That landslide had swept away many of the MPs that had supported Benjamin Disraeli, who was the leader of the UK's Conservative Party, the *Tories*, as the Prime Minister. That landslide gave Mr Courtney's Liberal Party, the *Whigs*, an absolute majority of the Commons seats, which was much more than its minority of the vote warranted.

Until the rise of the Labour Party, the UK's plurality system resulted in the party of government continuing to be either the Liberals or the Conservatives. That pattern was remarked on in Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera, *Iolanthe*, in the line, *"...every boy and every gal that's born into the world **alive** is **either** a little Liberal or else a little Conservative ..."*

Many Liberal MPs in the early 20th Century saw that by continuing with such a crude electoral system as single-member constituencies with plurality counting - but with three parties polling at similar levels - one of those three parties would fall behind in popular support, and thus no longer be a realistic contender for providing a government.

The last election to result in a Liberal Party MP becoming Prime Minister was in [December 1910](#), when the Rt Hon [Herbert Asquith](#) KG PC KC, was appointed. David Lloyd George, who was the last Liberal to lead a Liberal Party Government, replaced Asquith as PM in that term during World War I.

That growing awareness increased the support for changing to proportional representation with the single transferable vote (PR-STV) to the extent that a 1914 Bill to change to that system, originating in the House of Lords, gained a majority vote there, but it was narrowly defeated when it went to the House

of [Commons](#), as not all Liberal MPs there supported it, despite Liberal Party leaders, Asquith and Balfour, supporting it.

The [UK election in December 1918](#) resulted in the Liberal Party no longer being one of the two largest parties in the House of Commons. It never regained that position, which used to frequently give it the Treasury benches without its needing to be in a coalition with other parties. It changed its name more than once, but it is now known as the Liberal Democrats Party.

The Liberal Democrats’ most recent presence in government was as the junior party in David Cameron’s Coalition Government from the [2010](#) election. It managed to get that Coalition to hold a national plebiscite on a transferable vote system, as used for Australian mainland Lower Houses, with the intention of replacing the UK’s plurality counting, but the plebiscite was not supported by a majority vote.

The Party now has a small presence in the Commons, and the Lords, as the Liberal Democrats Party. Its strongholds are the north of Scotland and south-west England, but even those can sometimes depend on a low share of the vote. [In 1992](#), an extremely low vote of 26% elected a Liberal Democrat to a seat in Northern Scotland, leaving 74% of that constituency’s voters being “represented” by a candidate they did not vote for.

It is easy to see the parallels between the decline of the United Kingdom’s Liberal Party, and that of Australia’s Liberal Party, even though the latter more closely resembles the UK’s Conservative and Unionist Party than its Liberals or Liberal Democrats.

2026 election of the Scottish Parliament



The [elections](#) for all 129 members of Scotland’s unicameral Parliament were held on 07 May 2026, using its ‘additional member system’, where 73 single-member constituencies that cover the whole of Scotland elect MSPs using [plurality](#) counting.

That system has an extra 56 MSPs elected by [party list](#) proportional representation in eight 7-member

regions, which also cover the whole of Scotland, using a modified D’Hondt method.

The election of those extra party list MSPs, unlike New Zealand’s MMP system for instance, takes no account of the 73 constituency elections, and does not attempt to make the various parties’ share of the Parliament’s 129 seats correspond to their overall share of the vote.

Unlike the election for the *Senedd* in Wales, and in English municipal elections held on the same day, the Reform Party did not make very large gains.

The Reform Party won no single-member constituencies, but won altogether 17 MSPs (as they are termed). [Wikipedia](#) gives the full results, which are summarized in Table 1 below.

Party	The 73 single-member constituencies		The eight 7-member regions		All the 129 seats
	% vote	% seats	% vote	% seats	% seats
Scottish Nationalist	38.2	78.1	27.2	1.8	45.0
Labour	19.2	4.1	16.0	25.0	13.2
Reform UK	15.8	0.0	16.7	30.4	13.2
Greens	2.3	2.7	14.0	23.2	11.6
Conservative	11.8	5.5	11.8	14.3	9.3
Liberal Democrats	11.4	9.6	9.4	5.4	7.8
Others	0.4	0.0	4.9	0.0	0.0
TOTALS	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 1: Results of the 2026 elections to the Scottish Parliament

Compared with the previous Scottish election, the biggest loser was the Conservative Party. Labour had been hoping to repeat its result of 35.3% in Scotland at the UK general election in July 2024, but it fell well short of that.

The Greens won two constituency seats in central Edinburgh, and one in Glasgow Southside, which was the seat previously held by the former First Minister, Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon PC, of the Scottish National Party.

The Reform Party had its strongest results in the parts of Scotland closest to England, in the South Scotland electoral region, and in Central Scotland and West Lothian, with some 20% support. It did worst in Edinburgh, with only 10% support.

2026 election of the Welsh Parliament



On **07 May 2026**, on the same day as the elections for the devolved Scottish Parliament, the *Senedd Cymru*, the unicameral Welsh Parliament - with 96 members - was elected.

That was the first *Senedd* election using a **new electoral system** where the 32 House of Commons electoral districts for Wales were 'paired' into 16 six-member 'constituencies' in which all six MSs were indirectly elected by a closed party list form of proportional representation, using the **D'Hondt method**.

The previous *Senedd* system elected its then 60 members using an Additional Member system, which was similar to that used for Scotland's devolved Parliament. It had mainly used plurality counting, but some of its MSs were elected by a party list form of proportional representation.

See a sample of the *Senedd* **ballot paper**. It was bilingual in Welsh and English. It listed the name of each candidate, but tells voters to mark a single cross in the box for the party voted for, as party list systems preclude voting for individual candidates.

The Welsh Parliament's Facebook page explained the closed list aspect unapologetically by stating, "*Parties decide the order before the election, and it cannot be changed by voters.*" A ballot paper without a unique cross marked is informal.

The result of the election was a huge increase in support for two of the parties, *Plaid Cymru* (Party of Wales) and Reform UK. Remarkably, this election was the first election in Wales, since the **1922** UK General election, at which Labour had not won the largest number of votes and seats. Many Labour MPs in the House of Commons would have seen that result as ominous for their future prospects of national government.

The Labour vote fell by 25.1%, along with the defeat of most Labour MSs, including their leader, **Eluned Morgan**, the Rt Hon the Baroness Morgan of Ely PC, who had led Labour in government as the First Minister of Wales before this election. Labour was left with only nine MSs.

The detailed results appear on **Wikipedia**, and are summarized in Table 2 below.

Party	% votes in 2026	% seats in 2026	Change in no. of seats from 2021
<i>Plaid Cymru</i>	35.4	44.8	+30
Reform UK Wales	29.3	35.4	+34
Labour	11.1	9.4	-21
Conservative	10.7	7.3	-9
Greens	6.7	2.1	+2
Liberal Democrats	4.5	1.0	0
Others	2.2	0.0	0
TOTALS	100.0	100.0	+36

Table 2: Results of the 2026 elections to the Welsh Parliament

The D'Hondt count is shown [here](#) where, in the top row, is the name of the leading candidate for each of the six parties (other candidates are ignored). If the first candidate is elected by gaining a D'Hondt quota, the total vote is divided in two in the second row, three in the third, four in the fourth, etc. Until the remaining vote becomes less than that quota.

Some results were quite close. The Greens' Paul Rock was the first elected in the Caerdydd Ffynnon Tal six-member constituency with 9,036 votes, ahead of a second Reform candidate with 8,667.5 votes, a Conservative with 8,479, a Liberal Democrat with 8,442 and a fourth *Plaid Cymru* candidate with 8,154.25 votes. Under a PR-STV system, such a close result might easily have resulted in someone else being elected.

Plaid Cymru 'topped' the poll in eleven of the 16 six-member constituencies, while Reform UK Wales topped the poll in the other five. Those five constituencies that Reform did best in were mostly those that were closer to the border with England.

It cannot be said with any certainty what this result would have been under a plurality system with single-member electoral districts, but it would not be unreasonable to suggest that *Plaid Cymru* would win most of the seats in the 11 constituencies that its candidates topped, and Reform most of the others, so the result there might have been *Plaid Cymru* 66 seats, and Reform 30 seats.

Devolution of powers from Westminster to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has curiously been implemented by prescribing a different electoral system for each of those provinces. Those systems are also different from that in Westminster, which is also the only legislature for the UK's largest province, England.

The four systems are:

- United Kingdom, at Westminster – single-member electorates with plurality counting
- Scotland, at Edinburgh - single-member plurality electorates, but additional members by party list
- Wales, at Cardiff – six-member electorates with a closed party list
- Northern Ireland, at Belfast – five-member [electorates](#) with PR-STV.

2026 election of the Hungarian Parliament



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The [election](#) for the unicameral Hungarian Parliament, the National Assembly, on 12 April 2026 led to the defeat of the party led by the long-term Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who had been in power for 16 years, and was widely described by his many detractors as being “authoritarian”.

The Assembly, with 199 members, is elected by a mixed-member system of 106 single-member districts elected using plurality counting, and 93 from nationwide party lists with electoral thresholds. [Wikipedia](#) describes Hungary’s system well. It has a page of detailed results including individual constituency [results](#).

The winning party was Tisza, a conservative but pro-European party. It won 96 of the 106 single-member constituencies, and overall it won a two-thirds ‘supermajority’ of MPs with 55.26% of the constituency vote and 53.18% of the party list vote.

A social-democratic party that did have representation in the previous parliament lost all its seats, and it appears that left-leaning voters decided to join with pro-European conservatives and liberals to vote for Tisza as a way of ensuring that the former Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, was defeated.

The result of the election is that a significant majority of voters (about 55%) delivered a much larger majority of seats (71% of seats). The so-called ‘supermajority’ allows the new Assembly to amend the ‘Fundamental Law of Hungary’. This has been amended 16 times since it was adopted in 2010, most recently by the newly-elected government in June 2026.

Perhaps the most commented-on feature of that amendment was a limit to two terms for any Prime Minister, backdated to 1990. That means that - rather undemocratically - the former Prime Minister, Victor Orbán, would be rendered ineligible to become Prime Minister again, even if an absolute majority of the Assembly voted for him.