

DIRECT DEMOCRACY & SORTITION ASSEMBLIES

A Civic Architecture for the British Isles

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The Sortition Architecture

A comprehensive framework for the design, operation, and governance of Sortition Assemblies across the Civic Commonwealth

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"We inherit the lessons of the past, not its chains."

— DD&SA Founding Principle

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"We do not turn time back; we move forward with the wisdom its patterns reveal."

PART I — EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document establishes the definitive, comprehensive framework architecture governing the selection, composition, powers, duties, conduct, consequences, and costs of all Sortition Assemblies operating within the Civic Commonwealth of the British Isles (the New British Isles, or NBI) under the Direct Democracy and Sortition Assemblies (DD&SA) framework.

Sortition — the selection of civic representatives by stratified random ballot from the eligible adult population — is the load-bearing pillar of DD&SA. It replaces election as the mechanism of democratic legitimacy at all three tiers of civic governance. This document provides the full architectural specification for that replacement.

Three tiers of assembly constitute the sortition architecture:

- Local Sortition Assemblies (LSAs): the civic governance layer covering communities of place, approximately matching current local authority areas. There are 420 LSAs across the British Isles.
- Civic Sortition Assemblies (CSAs): the regional governance layer covering the twelve civic regions of the New British Isles, handling cross-community frameworks, resource allocation, and regional identity.
- National Sortition Assembly (NSA): the sovereign civic body of the New British Isles, replacing the House of Commons, the House of Lords, and the Cabinet system in their entirety. It holds supreme civic authority under the NBI Constitution.

The document provides the full specification for each tier, including role, composition, selection methodology, deliberative protocols, rules of conduct, consequence architecture, and remuneration. It also presents a rigorous comparative cost analysis demonstrating that the sortition system costs approximately £60 million less per year in direct democratic overhead than the current Westminster model, whilst delivering incomparably superior representational quality.

The indirect financial case is more powerful still: sortition eliminates the structural incentives for framework capture, donor-responsive legislation, and ideologically motivated waste that cost the British public tens of billions of pounds annually in distorted public spending.

PART II — CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATION AND DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

2.1 The Failure of Election

Modern representative democracy is built on a structural contradiction. It claims to derive authority from the people yet systematically excludes almost all of them from decision-making. The mechanism responsible for this exclusion is election.

Election does not select for wisdom, judgement, or representativeness. It selects for ambition, performative rhetoric, physical presence, name recognition, and access to financial backing. The result, replicated across every liberal democracy without exception, is a permanent political class whose institutional survival depends on securing re-election — not on making good decisions.

The consequences are not incidental. They are structural. Elected representatives cannot ignore donors without losing funding. They cannot ignore their party without losing candidacy. They cannot ignore the media narrative without losing visibility. Every incentive in the electoral system drives behaviour away from the public interest and towards the interest of organised power. This is not a failure of individuals. It is the architecture.

The House of Commons contains 650 Members of Parliament. Of these, as of the 2024 Parliament, 33% are lawyers, management consultants, or political professionals who entered politics directly from political staffing. Fewer than 5% have a background in manual or trades employment. The median MP has never experienced welfare dependency, NHS waiting lists from the patient's perspective, or fuel poverty. They legislate on all three.

The House of Lords is more brazen still: 800 unelected individuals, the majority appointed on the recommendation of a Prime Minister, legislate on the population's behalf with no mandate, no term limit, and no mechanism of public removal. The world's second-largest legislative body by membership, surpassed only by China's National People's Congress, operates in a chamber decorated with medieval heraldry in a building dating to the thirteenth century, and calls itself a democracy.

2.2 The Case for Sortition

Sortition — the selection of civic representatives by random ballot from the eligible population — was the primary mechanism of democratic governance in classical Athens. It was applied to virtually every significant public role between 487 BCE and 322 BCE. Its revival in contemporary political theory has been driven by philosophers, constitutionalists, and political scientists including Bernard Manin, Hélène Landemore, David Van Reybrouck, James Fishkin, and Robert Dahl.

The case for sortition rests on six distinct but mutually reinforcing foundations:

- **Descriptive representativeness.** A randomly selected assembly of sufficient size mirrors the population it governs in age, sex, class, occupation, disability status, ethnicity, educational background, and lived experience. No elected assembly in modern history has achieved this. Sortition achieves it by mathematical necessity.
- **Immunity to capture.** A randomly selected assembly cannot be identified in advance. It cannot be lobbied before it sits. It cannot be bribed into candidacy. It has no donor relationships to protect, no party whip to obey, and no re-election calculation to make. The structural conditions for capture are removed at source.
- **Elimination of careerism.** Because sortition members serve fixed, non-renewable terms, they have no institutional incentive to prioritise visibility over substance. They cannot trade today's decision for tomorrow's promotion. They are, by design, temporary civic servants rather than permanent political actors.
- **Deliberative quality.** Empirical evidence from citizens' assemblies conducted in Ireland, Belgium, France, Canada, Australia, and elsewhere consistently demonstrates that randomly selected residents, given appropriate information and deliberative support, produce nuanced, evidence-based, and practically workable policy recommendations. They outperform elected legislatures on measures of reasoning quality, cross-partisan collaboration, and long-term thinking.
- **Legitimacy through participation.** A sortition system dramatically broadens the class of people who participate directly in governance. Over a twenty-year period, a substantial proportion of the adult

population will have served in a sortition assembly. This produces an electorate that is not merely consulted but genuinely experienced in civic decision-making.

- Democratic equality. Sortition is the only mechanism that gives every resident an equal statistical probability of exercising direct civic power. It is democratic in the strictest mathematical sense.

2.3 The Constitutional Status of Sortition Assemblies

Under the DD&SA Constitutional Architecture, the three tiers of sortition assembly are the sovereign civic institutions of the New British Isles. They derive their authority not from the Crown, not from Parliament, and not from any political party, but from the NBI Constitution itself, which in turn derives its authority from the ratification process undertaken by the population at the moment of civic transition.

No executive body, Civic Administrator, or external institution may override, dissolve, or coerce a sortition assembly. Any attempt to do so constitutes a Civic Constitutional Breach, triggering the full response architecture of the Constitutional Review Assembly.

Sortition Assemblies are not advisory bodies. They are not consultative forums. They are the legislature of the New British Isles, operating at local, regional, and national scale.

PART III — THE THREE-TIER ARCHITECTURE: OVERVIEW

The sortition governance architecture of the New British Isles operates on a principle of subsidiarity: decisions are made at the lowest tier capable of handling them effectively. The three tiers are distinct in jurisdiction, scale, composition, and authority, but connected by formal referral, escalation, and co-deliberation protocols.

Note on total civic participants: at steady state, the New British Isles sortition system involves approximately 27,000 residents in active civic service at any given moment. Over a twenty-year operating period, accounting for term rotation, an estimated 400,000 residents will have served directly in civic governance. This is a qualitative transformation in the meaning of democracy.

PART IV — LOCAL SORTITION ASSEMBLIES (LSAs)

4.1 Purpose and Civic Role

Local Sortition Assemblies are the civic governance body of the community. Each LSA serves a defined civic locality — the geographic successor to current local authority areas, redrawn where necessary to achieve coherent communities of interest and manageable population bands. Each LSA serves a population of between 50,000 and 350,000 residents.

The LSA is the primary interface between the resident and civic governance. It handles everything that directly shapes daily life at community scale: housing and development, local infrastructure, parks and green space, community safety, local market and trader licences, cultural and community facilities, and the local delivery of national civic guarantees.

4.2 Jurisdiction and Powers

Each LSA holds the following powers within its civic locality:

- Approval of all local development and planning proposals above a defined threshold.

- Allocation of the local Civic Budget (annually set by the NSA formula and distributed by the relevant CSA).
- Appointment and oversight of the Local Civic Administrator and their team.
- Setting of local civic rules within the bounds of the National Civic Rulebook.
- Adjudication of first-instance Consequence Hearings for local rule breaches.
- Submission of framework proposals upward to the relevant CSA.
- Commissioning of local civic research through the Independent Epistemic Secretariat.
- Direct consultation mandates: certain categories of decision require a structured community consultation process before the LSA may vote.

LSAs do not hold powers in areas of national or regional jurisdiction: defence, macroeconomic policy, immigration and movement, treaty obligations, and constitutional matters are reserved to the NSA.

4.3 Composition and Stratified Selection

Each LSA comprises 60 sortition members drawn from the Civic Register of the locality. Selection is conducted by stratified random ballot to ensure the assembly reflects the population it serves across seven key dimensions:

Within each stratum, selection is strictly random. No weighting by perceived suitability, prior civic engagement, or social standing is applied. The assembly is drawn from the population as it actually is, not as civic designers might prefer it to be.

4.4 Term Length and Rotation

LSA members serve a two-year term. Terms are staggered: 30 members are replaced each year, ensuring institutional continuity. No individual may serve consecutive terms. After a minimum gap of five years, a former member becomes eligible for selection again.

Staggered replacement ensures that at any given time, approximately half the assembly has at least twelve months of experience. This prevents the institutional knowledge loss that would result from total simultaneous replacement and removes the perverse incentive, visible in elected systems, to award long service to career politicians.

4.5 Session Structure

LSA members serve on a part-time basis, analogous to extended jury service. The standard commitment is 40 civic sitting days per year, structured as follows:

- 10 plenary sessions (monthly, Saturday and Sunday, full day). Mandatory attendance.
- 15 committee days (on working days across the year, distributed across three standing committees: Built Environment, Community Services, Local Economy).
- 10 public deliberation days (community hearings, site visits, evidence sessions).
- 5 reserve days (for extraordinary sessions, Consequence Hearings, emergency deliberations).

Members are expected to undertake approximately 2-4 hours of preparation work per session, supported by pre-briefing materials prepared by the Local Epistemic Support Team.

4.6 Rules of Conduct

All LSA members are bound by the LSA Conduct Code upon taking their Civic Oath at the start of service. The Code comprises the following binding obligations:

- **Attendance.** Members must attend a minimum of 85% of scheduled sessions. Absence below this threshold without certified cause triggers a Conduct Review.
- **Disclosure.** Members must declare all financial interests, commercial relationships, employment arrangements, and personal connections relevant to any matter before the assembly before the relevant deliberation begins.
- **Confidentiality.** Deliberations are open to public gallery attendance but specific personal evidence given in closed session must not be disclosed externally by members.
- **Non-inducement.** Members must not accept any gift, hospitality, payment, or benefit from any party with a material interest in LSA decisions. The threshold for declaration is any item or benefit with a value exceeding £10.
- **Respectful deliberation.** Members must engage with evidence and with fellow members in a manner consistent with the Civic Deliberation Standards, which prohibit personal attack, misrepresentation of evidence, and deliberate disruption.
- **Confidentiality of fellow members.** The personal circumstances of fellow members disclosed during hardship accommodation or support processes must not be shared externally.
- **Post-service restriction.** For twelve months following the conclusion of their term, former LSA members may not accept paid employment with any organisation that had a material interest in LSA decisions during their term.

4.7 Consequence Architecture

Consequences for breaches of the Conduct Code operate on a four-tier scale, administered by the LSA Conduct Panel (three members drawn by secondary sortition from the assembly, plus one Independent Civic Standards Adjudicator appointed by the NSA):

Consequence Hearings are not criminal proceedings. They apply the Civic Rules framework: conduct is assessed against the Conduct Code, evidence is heard from both parties, and consequences are proportionate and prospective in character. The goal is civic integrity, not punishment.

4.8 Remuneration and Support

LSA members receive a Civic Participation Stipend of £225 per sitting day, plus expenses for travel, accommodation where necessary, and subsistence. The annual equivalent for a full-attendance member is approximately £9,000.

The following support provisions are mandatory:

- **Employer protection:** it is a Civic Breach for any employer to dismiss, demote, disadvantage, or penalise an employee for LSA service. The employer must grant civic leave without detriment to terms, conditions, or career progression.
- **Childcare and carer provision:** the LSA must arrange and fund childcare or care provision for any member who requires it to attend sessions, on request.
- **Accessibility:** all sessions must be accessible to members with disabilities. Reasonable adjustments are mandatory, not discretionary.
- **Civic induction:** all new members receive a three-day induction covering the NBI Constitution, the Civic Rulebook, deliberative process, and the LSA's specific civic brief.
- **Pastoral support:** an independent pastoral support officer is available to all members throughout their term.

PART V — CIVIC SORTITION ASSEMBLIES (CSAs)

5.1 Purpose and Civic Role

Civic Sortition Assemblies are the regional governance tier of the New British Isles. Twelve CSAs cover the following civic regions:

CSAs handle framework matters that exceed the capacity or jurisdiction of individual LSAs but do not require national resolution. Their primary functions are: cross-community resource allocation, regional infrastructure planning, civic economic development, regional environment and land stewardship, cross-LSA dispute resolution, and regional delivery oversight of NSA framework decisions.

5.2 Composition and Stratified Selection

Each CSA comprises 100 sortition members drawn from the Civic Register of the region. The same seven-dimensional stratification framework applied to LSAs governs CSA selection, with regional census data as the reference baseline.

An additional representational requirement applies at CSA level: no single LSA area may account for more than 15% of a CSA's membership, preventing geographic concentration of influence from high-population urban areas.

5.3 Term Length and Session Structure

CSA members serve a three-year term, with one-third of the assembly replaced annually. The extended term reflects the greater policy complexity of regional governance and the steeper learning curve for members. No individual may serve consecutive CSA terms, and a minimum gap of seven years applies before re-eligibility.

CSA members serve on a semi-intensive basis: approximately 100 civic sitting days per year. This is structured as:

- 40 plenary days (two per month, full day, plus quarterly extended sessions of three consecutive days).
- 35 committee days across four standing committees: Regional Economy and Infrastructure, Environment and Land, Community Wellbeing, and Civic Standards and Oversight.
- 15 LSA liaison days: each CSA member is linked to a cluster of LSAs and attends at least two LSA plenary sessions per year in an observer and liaison capacity.
- 10 evidence and public deliberation days.

CSA service is not full-time but is substantially more demanding than LSA service. Members receive a Civic Service Allowance of £350 per sitting day, equivalent to approximately £35,000 per year for a full-attendance member.

5.4 Specific Powers of the CSA

- Approval and oversight of the Regional Civic Budget, distributed from the NSA.
- Authority over regional infrastructure: roads, rail connectivity, energy distribution grids, regional water systems.
- Regional land use frameworks and environmental stewardship frameworks, within NSA parameters.

- Cross-LSA dispute resolution: where two or more LSAs cannot resolve a shared matter, the CSA adjudicates.
- LSA conduct oversight: Tier 3 appeals from LSA Conduct Panels are heard by the CSA Standards Review body.
- Regional emergency response coordination.
- Submission of legislative proposals to the NSA.
- Appointment and oversight of Regional Civic Administrators.

5.5 Rules of Conduct

CSA members are bound by the same Conduct Code as LSA members, with the following additional provisions reflecting the higher-stakes regional context:

- Enhanced disclosure: members must declare not only their own interests but those of immediate family members where a conflict may arise.
- Media engagement protocol: members must not make public statements on behalf of the CSA without authorisation from the Assembly Convenor. Personal civic views may be expressed but must be clearly distinguished from assembly positions.
- Lobbying register: all substantive contacts from external organisations seeking to influence CSA deliberations must be recorded on the public Lobbying Register within 48 hours.
- Post-service restriction extended to 18 months for CSA members.

5.6 Consequence Architecture for CSAs

The CSA Consequence Architecture mirrors the LSA four-tier framework, with the following escalations:

- Tier 3 (Suspension) appeals go to a dedicated CSA Standards Panel rather than a peer group within the assembly.
- Tier 4 (Removal) is determined by the NSA Standards Committee rather than within the CSA itself, ensuring independence.
- All Tier 4 removals are publicly reported to the NSA within 28 days.

PART VI — NATIONAL SORTITION ASSEMBLY (NSA)

6.1 Constitutional Status and Sovereign Authority

The National Sortition Assembly is the supreme civic legislative body of the New British Isles. It holds the sovereign authority of the NBI Constitution. No institution, person, or body may override its constitutional decisions except the Constitutional Review Assembly acting within its defined remit, or a direct civic referendum triggered by petition of 5% of the eligible adult population.

The NSA replaces, in their entirety: the House of Commons, the House of Lords, and the Cabinet system as a legislative authority. Executive functions are separated into the office of the Civic Administrator General, who is appointed by, accountable to, and removable by the NSA at any time.

The NSA is the institution that gives DD&SA its national democratic character. It is not a parliament in the traditional sense. It is a civic legislature composed of 600 randomly selected residents, briefed by the Independent Epistemic Secretariat, supported by subject-matter expertise through the Mandated Challenger System, and accountable to the population through transparency, rotation, and

post-service audit.

6.2 Composition and Stratified Selection

The NSA comprises 600 sortition members drawn from the Civic Register of the entire New British Isles. Selection applies the seven-dimensional stratification framework with the following national-level additions:

- Regional proportionality: NSA membership must reflect the regional population distribution of the NBI, ensuring that each CSA region is represented in proportion to its population, with a minimum floor of 10 members per region to prevent complete marginalisation of smaller nations.
- Resident experience: at least 20% of NSA members at any given time must have prior LSA or CSA experience, providing institutional knowledge. This is met through the pool of former assembly members who have re-entered the eligible pool after their gap period.
- First-time participants: at least 60% of each incoming cohort must have no prior sortition assembly experience, preserving freshness of perspective.

Within these constraints, selection is strictly random.

6.3 Term Length and Rotation

NSA members serve a two-year term. The assembly is replaced in two annual cohorts of 300 members each, maintaining continuity. No individual may serve consecutive NSA terms. A minimum gap of eight years applies before re-eligibility for the NSA, though former NSA members may serve in LSAs or CSAs after a five-year gap.

6.4 Session Structure — Full-Time Civic Service

NSA service is full-time. Members commit to approximately 200 civic sitting days per year (equivalent to the current parliamentary sitting calendar), with the expectation that additional preparation and constituency engagement time will be required. The NSA sitting calendar is:

- 100 plenary days: the full NSA debates and votes on legislative proposals. Quorum is 75% of members.
- 60 committee days: NSA members serve on one of eight standing committees, each with 75 members. Committees are: Constitutional Architecture; Civic Economy and Public Finance; Health and Social Wellbeing; Education and Civic Formation; Environment and Natural Capital; Justice and Civic Consequences; International Relations and Civic Security; Civic Infrastructure and Housing.
- 25 evidence and deliberation days: formal evidence sessions with the Independent Epistemic Secretariat, Mandated Challenger testimony, and public hearings.
- 15 community connection days: NSA members are expected to hold open surgeries in their home civic area, allowing any resident to meet them. Unlike MPs, they represent no constituency — their community engagement is civic, not electoral.

6.5 The NSA Convenor

The NSA elects from within its membership, by secret ballot in the first plenary session of each annual cohort, an Assembly Convenor. The Convenor chairs plenary sessions, manages the NSA's internal agenda, and represents the assembly in formal civic communications. The Convenor holds no additional legislative power: they facilitate debate but do not direct framework decisions. They serve in that role for twelve months and may not be re-elected to the Convenor role.

6.6 NSA Powers — Full Specification

The NSA holds the following sovereign civic powers under the NBI Constitution:

- Legislative authority: enact, amend, and repeal Civic Rules at national level, subject to constitutional constraints.
- Budget authority: approve the annual National Civic Budget, allocate resources to CSAs by formula and by deliberated priority, and oversee national fiscal frameworks.
- Appointment of the Civic Administrator General: the NSA appoints the CAG by open civic process, holds the CAG to account through a dedicated Accountability Committee, and may remove the CAG by a vote of 60% of members.
- Treaty and international relations: ratify international agreements and civic partnerships. No international commitment may bind the NBI without NSA ratification.
- Constitutional proposals: the NSA may propose constitutional amendments, but these must be ratified by a civic referendum with a threshold of 60% support and a minimum turnout of 50% of eligible adults.
- National emergency powers: by a two-thirds vote, the NSA may declare a Civic Emergency of national scope, triggering expanded executive powers for the CAG for a maximum of 90 days without renewal vote.
- Referral to referendum: the NSA may, by simple majority, refer any question to a national civic referendum.
- Oversight of the Constitutional Review Assembly: the NSA appoints the Constitutional Review Assembly but cannot direct its deliberations or override its findings.
- Appointment of the Independent Epistemic Secretariat leadership: the NSA confirms the Epistemic Secretariat Director, on recommendation of an independent appointments panel.
- Consequences at national level: the NSA Standards Committee adjudicates Tier 4 consequence proceedings for CSA members and all proceedings involving NSA members themselves.

6.7 Rules of Conduct — NSA Enhanced Code

NSA members are subject to the most stringent conduct requirements in the sortition architecture, commensurate with their sovereign authority:

- Full financial disclosure: complete declaration of all assets, liabilities, income sources, directorships, shareholdings, and commercial interests exceeding £1,000 in value, at the start of term, quarterly thereafter, and within 48 hours of any material change.
- Prohibition on external income: NSA members may not accept any paid employment, consultancy, directorship, or commercial engagement during their term. The Civic Service Remuneration is their sole income. Exceptions apply for creative or literary work not related to civic matters, subject to declaration.

- Lobbying absolute prohibition: NSA members must not engage in private meetings with commercial lobbyists outside of declared, publicly recorded formal evidence sessions. Any attempted contact must be reported to the Lobbying Register within 24 hours.
- Media integrity: public statements by NSA members on civic matters must be factually accurate and sourced. Deliberate misrepresentation of evidence in the public domain is a Tier 3 breach.
- Post-service restriction: five years. Former NSA members may not take up paid roles in organisations with a material interest in NSA decisions for five years after the conclusion of their term. This restriction is enforceable through the Civic Consequence system.
- Epistemic integrity: members must not misrepresent the findings of the Independent Epistemic Secretariat in public communications.
- Non-partisan operation: NSA members may not formally affiliate with political parties during their term. Membership of pre-existing political parties is permitted but must be declared. Acting as an officer of a political party during term is a Tier 2 breach.

6.8 NSA Remuneration

NSA members receive a Civic Service Salary of £45,000 per year. This is deliberately calibrated below the current MP salary (£93,904 in 2025-26) to signal that NSA service is a civic duty rather than a career, while being sufficient to allow full participation regardless of prior income. Members receive:

- Civic Service Salary: £45,000 per year.
- Accommodation support: for members whose primary residence is more than 60 minutes from the National Civic Assembly chamber, provided accommodation in a civic residence. No members may own the property in which they are accommodated during service.
- Travel: full reimbursement for all civic-duty travel. Standard class rail. Air only where rail is unavailable or journey exceeds five hours.
- Childcare and care: as for LSAs, with provision of full-time childcare or care support where required.
- Research support: each NSA member has access to a shared pool of civic researchers (one per five members), provided by the Independent Epistemic Secretariat.
- Pension: NSA members accrue a modest civic service pension of 1% of salary per year of service, not transferable and not indexed to political careers.

PART VII — THE CIVIC POOL: SELECTION METHODOLOGY

7.1 The Civic Register

The foundation of the sortition system is the Civic Register: a comprehensive, automatically maintained record of all adults eligible for sortition selection in the New British Isles. Registration is automatic upon reaching the age of eighteen, upon acquiring NBI civic status, or upon release from civic consequence proceedings that carry temporary disenfranchisement.

The Civic Register is maintained by the Independent Civic Selection Authority (ICSA), a body established by the NSA but operationally independent from all civic assemblies. The ICSA publishes annual reports on register coverage, selection processes, and demographic outcomes.

7.2 Eligibility

All NBI civic adults aged 18 and above are eligible for sortition selection, subject to the following exceptions:

- Individuals currently serving as a sortition assembly member at any tier.
- Individuals within their mandatory post-service gap period.
- Individuals subject to a Civic Consequence that carries temporary disenfranchisement.
- Individuals holding the office of Civic Administrator General, Independent Epistemic Secretariat Director, or Constitutional Review Assembly member.

There are no exceptions based on educational qualification, occupational status, income, or prior civic engagement. The pool is the population.

7.3 Opt-Out and Hardship Provisions

Participation in sortition is a civic duty, not a voluntary act. However, the ICSA operates a structured deferral system for individuals who can demonstrate that service would cause genuine hardship disproportionate to the civic benefit. Grounds for deferral include:

- Serious medical condition preventing participation, certified by a Civic Health Authority practitioner.
- Primary carer responsibility for a dependent with serious illness or disability, where alternative care cannot be arranged despite the assembly's support provisions.
- Bereavement within the twelve months preceding selection notification.

Deferral is temporary, not permanent: it defers to the next selection cycle. Repeated deferral without escalating grounds triggers a Conduct Review. Simple unwillingness is not a ground for deferral.

This approach mirrors the jury service model, which has operated in the UK for centuries on the same basis: civic duty tempered by genuine hardship provision. No functional democracy should permit the wealthy or well-connected to exit civic obligation more easily than others.

7.4 The Selection Process

Selection operates as follows:

- The ICSA draws the stratification profile required for the upcoming replacement cohort, based on the current assembly composition and the demographic targets.
- Within each stratum, eligible individuals are drawn by certified random ballot from the Civic Register. The randomisation process is audited by an independent panel and the methodology published in full.
- Selected individuals receive formal Civic Selection Notice, explaining their role, the duration and nature of service, their rights and the support available, and the deferral process.
- A preliminary interview (not an assessment of suitability but a welfare check) is conducted within 14 days of notice.
- A public announcement of selected members is made at the point their term begins. Members' names are public from the start of service. Personal contact details and home addresses are not disclosed.
- A civic induction programme commences four weeks before the first session.

7.5 Anti-Capture Safeguards in Selection

The sortition selection process is designed with explicit anti-capture architecture:

- The ICSA is operationally independent. Its Director is appointed by the Constitutional Review Assembly, not the NSA or the CAG. This breaks the capture loop.
- The randomisation algorithm is open-source, publicly auditable, and independently verified before each selection cycle.
- No individual or organisation may petition for, lobby for, or campaign for any specific person's inclusion or exclusion from sortition selection. Doing so is a Civic Breach.
- The ICSA publishes the demographic outcomes of every selection: the composition of each new cohort is public information, and statistical divergence from the target profile must be explained and corrected.
- Whistleblower protections apply to all ICSA staff. Any interference in the selection process must be reported to the Constitutional Review Assembly.

PART VIII — EPISTEMIC AND DELIBERATIVE ARCHITECTURE

8.1 The Independent Epistemic Secretariat

The Independent Epistemic Secretariat (IES) is the knowledge infrastructure of the sortition system. It is the mechanism by which randomly selected residents — who are not professional politicians or policy specialists — are equipped to make high-quality decisions on complex matters.

The IES is constitutionally independent. It does not advise the CAG. It does not advise political parties. It serves the three tiers of sortition assembly exclusively, with an obligation of epistemic neutrality: presenting the best available evidence on any question, including evidence that is contested, incomplete, or inconvenient.

The IES comprises:

- A Director, appointed by the Constitutional Review Assembly for a five-year non-renewable term.
- Regional Epistemic Teams, one per CSA region, providing dedicated support to LSAs and CSAs in that region.
- A National Research Division supporting NSA committees and plenary sessions.
- A Public Transparency Unit, responsible for publishing all IES briefing materials in accessible plain language for the general public within 72 hours of their delivery to an assembly.

8.2 The Mandated Challenger System

One of the most distinctive features of the DD&SA architecture is the Mandated Challenger System. For every significant framework deliberation, the IES is required to commission not only the best available evidence in support of any proposed approach but also the most credible available challenge to it.

The challenger's role is to present — with full force and professional rigour — the strongest objections to the proposed approach. The challenger is not a devil's advocate in the theatrical sense: they are a genuine expert who genuinely believes the challenge is correct. Where no credible challenger can be found, that absence is itself reported to the assembly as a significant evidential finding.

The Mandated Challenger System prevents the epistemic failure mode of group consensus without genuine scrutiny. It builds adversarial rigour directly into the deliberative process, rather than relying on political opposition to provide it — an opposition that, in the current system, is structured around electoral incentive rather than evidential quality.

8.3 Deliberative Process Standards

All assembly sessions are governed by the Civic Deliberative Standards:

- Evidence primacy: all claims must be supported by evidence. Members may express values and preferences but must distinguish clearly between empirical claims and normative positions.
- Sequential deliberation: major framework proposals proceed through a structured sequence: framing, evidence presentation, challenger testimony, open deliberation, structured response, and formal vote. No vote may be taken without all preceding stages having been completed.
- Minority reporting: where a significant minority position exists on any vote (more than 25% of members), a formal minority report is produced and published alongside the majority decision.
- Re-deliberation triggers: if new material evidence emerges within 12 months of a decision, any member may trigger a formal re-deliberation process by petition of 20% of the assembly.
- Accessibility of language: all formal documents presented to assembly members must be available in plain English. Technical documents must be accompanied by a plain language summary of no more than two pages. The IES is responsible for producing these summaries.

PART IX — COMPARATIVE COST ANALYSIS: SORTITION vs THE CURRENT SYSTEM

9.1 Current System: The True Annual Cost of Westminster Democracy

The cost of the current UK representative democratic system is distributed across multiple budget lines, obscuring its true total. The following analysis consolidates the direct annual cost of democratic governance as it currently operates. All figures are drawn from published parliamentary accounts and official statistics.

Note: This figure does not include capital maintenance costs for the Palace of Westminster, currently estimated at £7-12bn for the Restoration and Renewal programme. It does not include the cost of the civil service functions that support ministerial decisions. It is the cost of the democratic representation layer only.

9.2 DD&SA Sortition System: Projected Annual Cost

The following projection is based on the assembly specifications set out in this document. All figures are in 2025-26 prices.

9.3 Net Comparison

9.4 Indirect Financial Benefits: The Hidden Cost of Electoral Democracy

The direct cost comparison, while favourable to the sortition model, understates the true financial case. The larger financial argument concerns the cost of bad governance — governance conducted in the service of electoral calculation, donor interest, or party ideology rather than public evidence.

The following estimates are illustrative but grounded in published analysis:

- The Private Finance Initiative (PFI), pursued by successive governments for electoral and political reasons, committed the UK to an estimated £300bn in total repayments on assets valued at £57bn. The annual servicing cost as of 2022 was £10.7bn. A sortition assembly with no electoral incentive to avoid public capital expenditure would not have created this liability.
- The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates that the UK tax system costs approximately £25bn per year more to comply with than a simpler system would. Tax policy complexity is driven substantially by the lobbying of commercial interests through party donor relationships. Sortition eliminates this channel.
- The 2008 financial crisis regulatory failures, which produced direct fiscal costs to the UK of at least £137bn in bank bailouts and economic contraction, were in part the product of a regulatory environment shaped by financial sector lobbying of elected representatives over a decade. The revolving door between parliament and the financial sector was a material structural factor.
- Policy reversal costs: the UK has reversed major policy directions with each change of government in areas including energy policy, social care funding, planning reform, and rail privatisation. The economic cost of framework instability — stranded investment, institutional disruption, regulatory whiplash — is estimated by the Resolution Foundation at £8-15bn per parliamentary cycle.

None of these costs are directly attributable to elections alone. But all are structurally enabled by an electoral system that produces short-termism, donor responsiveness, and ideological signalling over policy coherence. Sortition removes these structural incentives. Over a ten-year horizon, the indirect savings dwarf the modest direct cost advantage.

9.5 Ten-Year Financial Projection

The sortition system is not primarily justified by cost. It is justified by the quality of governance it produces and the democratic legitimacy it provides. But it is emphatically the case that it is also cheaper. The argument that democracy is expensive is not a defence of the current system: it is an argument for sortition.

PART X — LEGITIMACY, ANTI-CAPTURE, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

10.1 Statistical Legitimacy

A sortition assembly of sufficient size is statistically legitimate in a sense that no elected assembly can match. A randomly selected body of 600 from a population of 68 million will, with high probability, mirror that population's demographic character across virtually every measurable dimension. This is not a claim, a goal, or a target: it is a mathematical consequence of random sampling.

By contrast, the 2024 House of Commons — after an election celebrated for its diversity — contained roughly 40% women (compared to 51% of the UK population), 10% from non-white backgrounds (compared to 18% of the population), and fewer than 1% with a background in manual trades. The typical MP has attended a private school at more than three times the national rate. These are not marginal discrepancies: they are structural distortions that have persisted through fifty years of diversity initiatives because the mechanism producing them — election — structurally favours certain profiles over others.

Sortition corrects this not through targets, quotas, or positive discrimination but by changing the mechanism itself.

10.2 Transparency Architecture

The sortition system operates under a transparency regime that exceeds anything currently applied to the Westminster Parliament:

- All assembly sessions (LSA, CSA, NSA) are live-streamed by default. Exceptions for specific closed evidence sessions require a formal vote of the assembly and public justification.
- All voting records are published within 24 hours of any plenary session. Voting is by name: anonymous bloc voting is not permitted at any tier.
- All IES briefing materials and challenger reports are published within 72 hours of delivery to an assembly.
- All lobbying register entries are published in real time.
- All financial disclosures by members are published within 48 hours of submission.
- Annual civic accounts for each assembly are published and audited by the National Audit Authority, itself a constitutionally independent body.

10.3 The Post-Service Audit

One of the most distinctive accountability mechanisms in the DD&SA architecture is the Post-Service Civic Audit. Within six months of the conclusion of their term, a random sample of 10% of former assembly members are selected for a detailed post-service review. This review examines:

- Whether any post-service restrictions on employment or conduct have been honoured.
- Whether any undisclosed interests have emerged.
- Whether the member's public record of voting and deliberation is consistent with the positions they took in closed committee sessions (using the committee transcripts, which are released after a two-year delay).

The post-service audit is not punitive in design. Its primary purpose is systemic learning: identifying patterns, gaps, or failures in the conduct architecture that can be corrected. But its secondary effect — known to members in advance — is a powerful deterrent against conduct breaches that might otherwise only emerge after term.

10.4 The Mandated Challenger System as Anti-Capture Architecture

Beyond selection methodology, the Mandated Challenger System is the primary operational defence against epistemic capture — the process by which expert briefers, interest groups, or ideological frameworks gradually shape assembly deliberations without members being aware of the distortion.

By constitutionally requiring a credible challenge to every significant proposal, the system ensures that the assembly is always confronted with the strongest available counterargument. No interest group can capture assembly decision-making simply by being the dominant provider of evidence, because the IES is required to find and resource the credible dissenting view.

Where no credible challenge exists, that fact is itself reported: if expert consensus is genuinely overwhelming, the assembly should know that, presented not as an argument from authority but as an evidential finding about the state of knowledge.

PART XI — TRANSITION ARCHITECTURE

11.1 The Transition Pathway

The transition from the current Westminster system to full sortition governance is not envisaged as a sudden institutional replacement. The DD&SA framework specifies a phased transition over approximately ten to fifteen years, beginning with the establishment of sortition assemblies at LSA level — the lowest risk, most practically immediate tier — and building institutional capacity, public familiarity, and legitimacy before the NSA assumes full sovereign authority.

11.2 Phase One: LSA Establishment (Years 1-3)

In Phase One, LSAs are constituted across the New British Isles, initially operating in parallel with existing local authorities. Their decisions in Phase One are advisory but are subject to a formal response requirement: existing local authorities must publicly explain any decision not to adopt an LSA recommendation. This creates accountability pressure without immediate legal displacement.

Phase One objectives:

- Establish the Civic Register and ICSEA infrastructure.
- Complete first-round selection and induction of 420 LSAs.
- Develop and test the IES regional team model.
- Publish a full annual report on LSA decision quality, engagement rates, and demographic outcomes.
- Commission an independent evaluation by an international panel of constitutional scholars and democracy researchers.

11.3 Phase Two: CSA Establishment and LSA Full Authority (Years 3-7)

In Phase Two, LSAs transition to full civic authority as existing local authority structures are wound down. CSAs are established, initially in an oversight and coordination role. At the national level, a pilot NSA of 200 members is constituted in a deliberative capacity, working alongside the existing Parliament to develop the institutional architecture, test processes, and build public legitimacy.

11.4 Phase Three: NSA Full Authority (Years 7-12)

Phase Three concludes the transition with the NSA assuming full sovereign authority as the Westminster Parliament is formally dissolved. The moment of transition is confirmed by a national civic referendum requiring 60% support and 50% turnout. The referendum question is not ‘do you want sortition?’ — that question has been answered by the process leading to this point — but ‘do you confirm the NSA as the sovereign civic legislature of the New British Isles?’

This confirmation referendum is the act of popular ratification that grounds the NSA’s constitutional authority. The NSA does not inherit the Crown’s authority or Parliament’s authority. It holds its own authority, derived from the population directly.

PART XII — INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE BASE

12.1 Citizens' Assemblies: The Empirical Record

The intellectual case for sortition is strong. The empirical record is stronger. Citizens' assemblies using randomly selected participants have now been conducted at significant scale in multiple jurisdictions, with consistent findings:

The pattern across all these examples is consistent: randomly selected residents, given adequate information, time, and deliberative support, produce governance decisions of equivalent or superior quality to elected legislatures on complex, contested questions. They do so with greater demographic representativeness, greater willingness to accept evidence that contradicts prior assumptions, and greater public legitimacy among those who engage with the process.

The most important lesson from the French Climate Convention is cautionary rather than discouraging: advisory assemblies are limited by the willingness of elected governments to implement their recommendations. The DD&SA architecture addresses this directly by making sortition assemblies sovereign, not advisory. The Citizens' Assembly is not a recommendation to a parliament. It is the parliament.

12.2 Ancient Athens: The Foundational Evidence

The Athenian democratic system of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE operated with sortition as its primary mechanism of civic selection for the better part of 170 years. The Boule (the civic council of 500, selected annually by lot), the jury courts (empanelled from a pool of 6,000 residents selected by lot), and the majority of administrative magistracies were all sortition-based.

Critics of sortition frequently cite the execution of Socrates as evidence of its failures. This objection deserves serious engagement. The trial of Socrates was conducted by a jury of 501 residents, selected by lot, which voted 280-221 to convict. This is, unambiguously, an error of civic justice. But the comparison with what elected systems have produced in the same timeframe — the Holocaust, the Gulag, the Rwandan genocide, the Iraq War — suggests that the argument from Athenian error should be deployed with considerable restraint by defenders of electoral democracy.

More pertinently, the structural conditions that produced the Socrates verdict — the absence of an independent epistemic framework, the absence of professional judicial administration, the presence of intense post-war civic anxiety — are precisely the conditions the DD&SA architecture is designed to prevent. The Independent Epistemic Secretariat, the Mandated Challenger System, and the Civic Consequence architecture exist to ensure that civic decisions are made on the basis of evidence rather than emotion, and that no assembly can convict or sanction a resident outside a defined procedural architecture.

PART XIII — ADDITIONAL ARCHITECTURAL PROVISIONS

13.1 The Civic Oath

Every sortition member, at the commencement of their term, takes a Civic Oath. The oath is not religious in character; it is a public commitment to the duties of civic service. Its text is:

"I accept this selection as a civic duty freely undertaken. I commit to attend fully, deliberate honestly, decide on evidence, disclose all interests, and serve the common good of the community I represent. I accept that my service is temporary, my authority is conditional on my conduct, and my obligation is

to the people of the New British Isles, not to any party, faction, donor, or private interest. I take this oath publicly and will be held to it."

13.2 Children and Young People's Advisory Panels

At each tier, a Young Persons' Civic Panel (YPCP) is constituted alongside the sortition assembly. YPCPs comprise 20 individuals aged 13-17, selected by sortition from the schools and educational institutions of the relevant area. They have no voting rights but hold formal speaking rights in plenary sessions and the right to submit a Young Persons' Impact Assessment on any framework proposal that materially affects young people. The NSA must publish a formal response to any YPCP assessment within 30 days.

13.3 Civic Participation as Education

The DD&SA Education Architecture mandates that civic participation — including the study of sortition, deliberative democracy, and the history of governance — is a core component of the NBI curriculum from age 11. Every student in the New British Isles will, by the time they reach the age of eligibility for sortition, understand the system they may be called to serve. This is not political education in the partisan sense. It is civic literacy: the knowledge required to exercise democratic responsibility.

13.4 Digital Civic Infrastructure

The Sovereign Digital Network (SDN) provides the technological backbone of the sortition system. It enables:

- Secure, auditable digital voting within assemblies (all plenary votes). Physical attendance remains mandatory; digital voting supplements but does not replace physical participation.
- The public-facing Civic Transparency Portal, where all assembly records, voting logs, financial disclosures, and IES publications are accessible in real time.
- Secure member communication systems, isolated from commercial platforms and subject to the same transparency obligations as other official communications.
- The Civic Participation Portal, through which any resident may submit evidence, comments, or proposed agenda items to their relevant LSA, with a guaranteed acknowledgement within 14 days and consideration within 30 days.

13.5 Review and Amendment of This Architecture

This Sortition Architecture framework is not immutable. It is subject to review by the NSA every five years, with the first review to take place five years after the NSA assumes full sovereign authority. Proposed amendments must be supported by evidence from the five-year operational record, reviewed by the IES, subjected to a mandatory public deliberation period of 90 days, and approved by a two-thirds majority of the NSA. Amendments to the fundamental selection methodology — the use of random stratified selection as the basis of all assembly composition — require constitutional amendment and civic referendum.

PART XIV — CONCLUSION

The case for sortition is not utopian. It does not claim that randomly selected residents are infallible, that deliberation is costless, or that institutional design can eliminate human error. It claims something more modest and more devastating: that randomly selected residents, properly supported, will govern better than a permanently self-selecting professional class whose institutional incentives are systematically misaligned from the public interest.

The evidence supports this claim. The mathematics of representative sampling supports it. The empirical record of citizens' assemblies supports it. The 2,500-year history of democratic theory, from Aristotle's preference for sortition over election to Bernard Manin's modern analysis of the 'aristocratic principle' embedded in election, supports it.

The current British democratic system costs the public approximately £708 million per year in direct democratic overhead. It produces a legislature of 650 people who are statistically unrepresentative of the population they claim to serve, structurally incentivised to serve donors and parties over residents, and institutionally incapable of the long-term thinking that the challenges of the twenty-first century require.

The sortition architecture set out in this document costs approximately £621 million per year. It produces a civic governance system involving 27,000 residents at any given moment, demographically representative by mathematical design, structurally immune to the capture mechanisms that deform electoral democracy, and empirically demonstrated to produce high-quality deliberation on complex questions.

The New British Isles does not need a better parliament. It needs a different kind of governance entirely: one in which the people do not merely consent to be governed, but govern.

Sortition is that governance. This document is its architecture.

"We do not turn time back; we move forward with the wisdom its patterns reveal."

Ian R. Graham BA (Hons) | Direct Democracy & Sortition Assemblies Foundation

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