# Constitution Review 2025

## Introduction

This document serves to give our members a summary of our process for the Constitution Review programme Disabled Persons Assembly (DPA) undertook in 2025. It aims to give you the information you need to make a decision about your support for the proposed constitution we will consider at the Special General Meeting on Saturday 18 October 2025.

## Background

In April 2025, we engaged a Programme Manager and Lawyers to support our constitution review. This was to help us engage our members in a process to understand what we need in a constitution, and ultimately ensure our next constitution is compliant with the new legislation, the Incorporated Societies Act 2022. This process was designed to help us reregister as an Incorporated Society by April 2026.

This year, we have run six members’ hui online, delivered three surveys to members, run an open consultation on the proposed constitution, amongst many National Executive Committee (NEC) and Constitution Committee meetings to consider the governance and membership arrangements for our constitution. These engagements helped us build a picture of what DPA’s constitution may need. Thank you for engaging in this process. We know it hasn’t been easy; there has been lots of information to process. Thank you for staying with us while we navigate this significant change for DPA.

The programme also included legal review at key points in the journey to ensure the constitution is compliant and that we have considered everything we need to consider. After the final legal review, we are confident that the constitution is compliant with the new Act and puts us in the best position to forge a stronger path for DPA.

## Key Considerations

Throughout the process we have considered the feedback of members and where possible incorporated that feedback. There are a few things that we believe will help contextualise the changes. They are set out below.

### What we need in the Constitution versus policy and procedure

One of the guiding principles in determining what goes into the constitution was thinking about the question, “what needs to go in the Constitution that will support us to achieve our mission?” It was challenging, because we would love to be very detailed. However, being too detailed can affect our flexibility to adapt as systems change or new challenges arise. We do need some detail somewhere and we want to assure you that we are working on it. The NEC expect to have a Charter complete by early 2026 to provide some of the detail we need to effectively manage our work as an Assembly. Examples of what will be included in the charter are:

* The delegation policy for the Chief Executive
* Detailed policy and procedure for setting up a Community and Interest Group
* Forms and other procedures for members including for Proxy Voting
* Detailed process for Elections.

The Charter is set and managed by the NEC, however, the membership will have access to the Charter. Nothing in the Charter can contradict or go against our constitution or the Incorporated Societies Act.

### Language we use in the Constitution

There is lots of new language in the constitution that may feel unfamiliar to us, or we don’t agree with. We want to reassure you that the language used in our constitution is consistent with the legislation – either taken directly from the Act or adapted as needed. No issues were raised through our legal review on the language used in the constitution.

### Disestablishing the Regional Executive Committees

Disestablishing the Regional Executive Committees (REC) was a tough decision. The RECs have been a very important part of our whakapapa / story as a community. We still believe in the ability of our members to run RECs, but we had to consider the legal implications of the REC structure.

The legal advice provided said that under the new legislation any REC member may be considered an Officer of DPA. Being an Officer of the Assembly comes with significant responsibility, and you must meet the eligibility criteria under the law. This is a burden we did not want our members to carry. It would also be administratively difficult to manage for the NEC with compliance work to be done to ensure the RECs are run according to the legislation and our constitution.

### What this new constitution means for members?

There are many changes to the administration for membership and the introduction of the Community and Interest Groups that are quite different to how we have operated to date. Alongside this constitution review programme, we have had ongoing work that will help us to deliver better member engagement.

Your experience as a member engaging with DPA, we believe, will only improve with these changes. There are greater accountability mechanisms for DPA through a disputes resolution process, and clearer and more adaptable ways of working together as members through Community and Interest Groups.