

Bill No.6

Proposer: Mr Robert Neill

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This Bill is to correct an anomaly whereby someone retiring after Normal Retirement Age (NRA) could be at a disadvantage by foregoing a pension increase implemented between their NRA and their actual date of retirement.

You will recall that pensions were frozen in 2013 when the Pension Fund was insolvent. A Funding Proposal was agreed with the Pensions Regulator and the Fund exited the funding proposal 10 years later in 2023 when solvency was restored.

In January 2024, significant catch-up inflationary pension increases were awarded of 25% in Northern Ireland and 12% in the Republic. That created unintended consequences for those still in service after their NRA. Under the existing rules, Pensionable Stipend was fixed at NRA and anyone serving beyond NRA was compensated by late retirement factors agreed with the Trustee of the Fund but which did not compensate for the significant increases awarded last year.

To address the anomaly, and to provide for any possible repetition in the future, this Bill provides that Pensionable Stipend be fixed at actual date of retirement – with revised late retirement factors to compensate for pension payments foregone.

Since there are a few long serving clergy who would still do better under the old arrangements, the Bill allows flexibility to accommodate that choice.

Bishop, I commend the Bill to the House.