

**From the Office of the
Minister for Finance & Personnel**



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Your reference:

Our reference: COR/189/2012

Conor Murphy MP MLA
Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

24 April 2012

Dear Conor

Thank you for your letter of 2 April 2012 which raised the issue of the Department's engagement with trade unions on the provisions of the Superannuation Bill.

The Department of Finance and Personnel has been engaging in informal consultation with trade unions on the Superannuation Bill since October 2011.

In October 2011 the Department of Finance and Personnel established a Pensions Forum with the aim of engagement and consultation between civil service management side and trade union side (TUS) on pension and compensation reform issues affecting NICS employees. At the first meeting of the Forum held on 25 October 2011 TUS proposed that the Forum should be used as an informal arena for information sharing on pension and compensation reform. This was agreed to by Management Side. My officials will now review the efficacy of the Pensions Forum and liaise with TUS with the intention that it be re-constituted on a more formal basis specific to consultation on pension and compensation scheme reforms.

The Superannuation Bill has been discussed at each meeting of the Pensions Forum held on 25 October 2011, 12 December 2011 and 14 March 2012. Further meetings of the Pension Forum have been scheduled for 16 April 2012, 15 May 2012 and 19 June 2012. At the next meeting Departmental officials will propose a further meeting is dedicated to consultation on the clauses of the Bill.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service trade unions have also had direct input to the central process for policy consultation on the provisions of the Superannuation Bill as introduced in Great Britain in December 2010 through their representation on the Council of Civil Service Unions of which both NIPSA and FDA were members. The Council was involved in central negotiations with HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office on the reform of Home Civil Service compensation arrangements.

The Department wrote directly to trade unions on 1 March 2012 to inform TUS of the Executive decision taken on 23 February 2012 to introduce the Bill in

the Assembly. A copy of the draft Bill was provided to TUS at this time. TUS was also informed at this time of the Department's intention to initiate formal consultation with trade unions on draft secondary legislation which will amend the rules of the compensation scheme, as is required under Article 3(2) of the Superannuation (Northern Ireland) Order, and as is the normal procedure. My Departmental officials raised the issue of consultation on proposed secondary legislation at the meeting of the Pensions Forum on 16 April 2012.

Officials will provide a further update on the outcome of these consultations in due course.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sammy Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

SAMMY WILSON MP MLA