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*Dear Patricia Gibson MP*

Thank you for your letter dated 11 October 2017, setting out your concerns around the increase in retirement age for Civil Nuclear Constabulary (CNC) officers, from the age of 60 to 67/68 years old, when they become members of the Alpha pension scheme.

I note your point about the security risk of maintaining an older workforce. Maintaining safety and security at nuclear sites is paramount to the Government. CNC officers face stringent fitness testing to determine deployability, and all officers are firearms trained and tested to College of Policing standards. Due to the nature of the tests, it will not be possible to mask underlying health conditions in the way that you suggest. Officers who are able to meet the required standards, regardless of age, are deployable. Officers who are not able to carry firearms weapons or maintain the required fitness standards, are not deployed. Security of nuclear material will not therefore be compromised.

You note the difference that police officers from Home Office forces will continue to retire at 60 years old. However, Parliament defined 'members of a police force' in the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 in such a way as to exclude CNC officers from the arrangements that were made for Home Office police forces. This interpretation was confirmed by the High Court in August last year, following an application for Judicial Review brought by the Civil Nuclear Police Federation (CNPf).

I also note your point about the quoted economic savings of maintaining the lower pension age. In particular you have mentioned that the Civil Nuclear Police Authority (CNPA) estimate that maintaining the current pension age of 60 would save £4.3m per year (net) during 2023 – 2030.

I have looked at the rationale, submitted by the CNC, of the higher costs associated with a pension age of 67/68. I note that these costs include estimates of the CNC's case management costs as well as costs for ill-health retirement, both of which are likely to have a high degree of sensitivity. The added detail is helpful but overall the cost difference between maintaining a pension age of 60 or increasing in line with the State pension age as per the legislation is still marginal, and is not a fundamental driver for introducing legislation to change Government policy on pension age.

I appreciate this is a very important issue and I recently met with Mike Griffiths, Chief Constable of the CNC, and Vic Emery, Chair of the Civil Nuclear Police Authority, to hear their concerns.

Due to other diary commitments I am unable to meet with the CNPF until early next year. In the interim, my officials are continuing to work with the CNC on this matter.

I can assure you that I am more than happy to carefully review any written representations, which raise any new points, submitted by the CNPF. I also assure you that I will fully consider all relevant evidence when considering whether or not to seek to introduce new legislation, in order to change government policy, so that CNC officers would be exempt from the increase in pension age that is currently provided for in legislation.

pp: 

**RICHARD HARRINGTON MP**  
Minister for Energy and Industry

