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The Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP  
Leader of the House of Commons  
Office of the Leader of the House of Commons  
70 Whitehall  
London, SW1A 2AS

Gosforth Suite,  
Cinnamon House,  
Crab lane  
Warrington  
Cheshire  
WA2 0AP

01925 661745  
07860704601  
07879494064

29<sup>th</sup> October 2018

Dear Ms. Leadsom,

### **Civil Nuclear Constabulary Pensions Age**

We very much welcome your response as Leader in the House to the request last Thursday (18th October) during Business Questions from Ms Patricia Gibson MP for a statement on an appropriate Normal Retirement Age (NRA) for Authorised Firearms Officers (AFOs) of the Civil Nuclear Constabulary. You may recall that we had begun to raise this issue with you while you were Energy Minister. Your invitation to Ms Gibson that she might write to you as well as to BEIS is helpful.

We noted from your reply that you referred to 'some' being officers being redeployed 'to other areas' at 'the end of their working life'. People are generally living longer and obviously this is the basis of the Public Service Pensions Act which is introducing a Normal Retirement Age (NRA) of 67/68 for the public sector.

Specifically, for the CNC, an officer will reach the end of his or her working life as an AFO long before the anticipated NRA of 67/68 because he or she can no longer meet the mandatory fitness and weaponry levels set by the College of Policing. It is medically incontrovertible that fitness and dexterity decline from the mid-fifties and it will be very difficult for male officers and almost certainly impossible for female officers to continue in their AFO roles into their 60s. This inequality has been the subject of an Equality Impact Study, the findings of which we are anxious for the Business and Industry Minister, Richard Harrington MP, to share with us, as well as with our Police Authority and the CNC.

The problem of unarmed roles is that there are very few 'other areas' or desk type jobs for officers who fail the College of Policing standards and, as a direct consequence, their employment will be terminated well before they reach the new pension age with the indignity of a medical discharge. Since premature retirement means a deduction of 4 per cent for each year the officer fails to reach pension age, the loss for leaving at 60 is around 24 per cent of the pension. This financial shortfall is proving unacceptable and as a result recruitment has halved and officer turnover is now 12 per cent. CNC AFOs are leaving for other police forces and even for civilian employment where pension age is not an issue. Our Chief Constable Mike Griffiths warned the Government two years ago that the CNC would "become humanly unsustainable" if this issue of an unachievable pension age was not addressed.

[All correspondence to chief executive](#)



It is an indication of the high professionalism of the CNC that in order to meet the terror threat to the UK nuclear industry our AFOs are required to train and acquire skills beyond that of a standard Home Department police AFO. The College of Policing are updating the National Police Firearms Training Curriculum to reflect these higher standards and also intend to designate our officers as 'Counter-Terrorist AFOs'. Home Office police have a normal retirement age of 60 and their AFOs have the right that they can step back from an armed role without career penalty any time they choose. Out of the UK's 6,500 police AFOs we are led to believe that such is the challenge of maintaining the College of Policing standards fewer than a dozen are aged over 50.

Given the role that our AFOs play in anti-terrorist events in our cities it will give the public no confidence in their personal security to learn that the Government expects to deploy on the streets CNC AFOs in their mid-60s wearing heavy protective gear and fully armed with three automatic weapons.

The current position on our pursuit of an NRA of 60 is that in July 2018 we had initial discussions with Treasury and Cabinet officials courtesy of Ms Liz Truss MP, Chief Secretary to HMT and the Oliver Dowden MP Implementation Minister in the Cabinet Office. We are waiting for further meetings which will include officials from BEIS. My Federation members would welcome your support in bringing home to your Government colleagues that a NRA of 67/68 would be wholly inappropriate and would eventually undermine the viability of the CNC. While we understand the need for a higher pension age among the public sector, there must be some sensible flexibility especially with a specialist armed police force whose officers must maintain extraordinarily high physical and weapon standards and are prepared to put themselves in harm's way to protect national security assets and the public.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'N. C. Dennis'.

Nigel Dennis  
CEO  
[gensec@cnpolfed.co.uk](mailto:gensec@cnpolfed.co.uk)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mark Nelson'.

Mark Nelson  
Chairman  
[chair@cnpolfed.co.uk](mailto:chair@cnpolfed.co.uk)

CC: Patricia Gibson MP, Member of Parliament for North Ayrshire and Arran