

Bill No.1

Proposer: The Ven Leslie Stevenson

Embargo until Delivery · Check against Delivery

The revision of charities legislation, with the establishment of two new regulatory authorities has been almost 15 years in development and we hope to complete the registration of the remaining parishes in the Republic of Ireland within the coming months. This brings a significant phase of work across the Church regarding registration of our Church of Ireland bodies to a conclusion.

As we reach this point, the two regulatory authorities, the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and the Charities Regulatory Authority, have sought the inclusion of certain clauses and phrases in our Constitution, which, having its origins in the Disestablishment of the Church in the 19th Century, understandably needs an element of updating to achieve compliance.

Most of the provisions of this proposed new Chapter of the Constitution were previously approved by General Synod in Statute – No IV of 2015.

The Charities Bill that is now presented to this General Synod contains all of the elements required by the regulatory authorities, to reflect the charitable nature of the work and mission of the Church.

The effect of the bill if, is to bring together in one Chapter, the provisions for statements of charitable purpose and object and, for the UK, the statement of public benefit, along with the other clauses required largely by the Irish regulatory scheme in relation to payments to charitable trustees.

These insertions enable the Regulatory Authorities to recognise the various bodies of the Church as registered charities. Synod would see that objective as both essential as well as the right thing to do.

Once included in the Constitution, the previous Synodical Statute approving these charitable Statements will no longer be required and so this Statute – No IV of 2015, will be repealed.

From the Church's point of view, strong governance and application of these charitable regulations is an important demonstration of our Christian witness and attests to the integrity

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of the Church's structures. This, in turn, offers certainty to Church members and to the wider public in terms of how we raise and manage funds, and how we deliver public worship and pastoral ministry.

One change has been introduced to the wording of the charitable objects in both jurisdictions, and that is to include the word 'educational', in order to embrace more overtly the work of the Boards of Education.

As with many complex things, just as the Working Group felt that its work had been usefully completed, there was spotted a small, and quite unintentional lacuna in our drafting. This related to those Local Ecumenical Partnerships between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church, as regulated in Canon 11A. As an interim measure, it is proposed that such bodies be dealt with by way of the amendment that is supported by the Standing Committee and the Executive of the Representative Body and accepted by the Working Group that I will propose at Committee stage. It is to insert a new section [10] into the Bill, charging Standing Committee to lay down regulations regarding the registration of such bodies as charities in both jurisdictions.

This amendment, as well as the Bill, has the approval of both of the Regulatory Authorities.