

GENERAL SYNOD 2016

Bill No. 4 Secunder: Mr Robert Neill

Embargoed Against Delivery Check Against Delivery

At last year's Synod we floated the idea of putting the Church's redundant assets to work in order to improve our ministry and outreach. Parishes and dioceses were inhibited from bringing forward proposals by the Constitution which is very much focussed on preserving our assets and on investing for the future. We were recommending that we invest in the future, not just for the future.

This Bill is intended to ease the restrictions on the use of the proceeds of sale of church buildings. Up to now the monies either had to be applied to a replacement building or divided 80/20 between the parish and the Church Fabric Fund. The 80% was to be held as an endowment for the parish and the 20% in the Church Fabric Fund was available for any church building in the country.

This Bill provides that in future the monies held as a parochial endowment may be applied to the development of initiatives supporting the long term mission of the Church, when proposed by the parish and supported by the diocese and the RCB.

In addition the Bill provides that the future income earned on the capital held for the Church Fabric Fund may also be accessed by any parish in the Church of Ireland in support of development initiatives as well as on fabric and repair.

In future the Church Fabric Fund, under the provisions of the Bill, would be known as the Church Fabric and Development Fund.

The principles underpinning the Bill include:

- enabling support for future growth.
- investing in/support of project driven initiatives/activities with specified 'Long Term Church' outcomes rather than, as is currently the case, being confined to capital or fabric maintenance initiatives.
- developing a mechanism which involves Parishes, Dioceses and the RCB working together at all levels for the future benefit of the Church.

The initiatives must start with select vestry of the parish and be endorsed by the diocesan council and by the RB. The initiative begins at parish level, and where the endowment is held for the parish, is retained by the parish owning the asset.

The meat of the Bill is contained in paragraph 3 and the second part of paragraph 4. It provides for regulations and guidelines for applications to be drawn up by Standing Committee and the RB. The rules will include a provision that allocations from the Fund will be reported to General Synod.

The current value of the Church Fabric Fund is reported on pages 32 and 33 of the Book of Reports.

This Bill does not deal with other assets such as church silver, paintings, or other material or financial assets. It only covers church buildings. The Bill is the result of much internal debate and is a distillation of many ideas. More ambitious proposals to create a war chest to support initiatives to enable growing and supporting the Church for the future will await the views expressed by Synod.

I have great pleasure in seconding this Bill.