

Mr. Terence O'Rourke
Chair
RTÉ Board

25th June 2024

Dear Mr O'Rourke,

I hope all is well with you and wish you well in your role as Chair of the RTÉ Board.

As you are probably aware, the RTÉ Defined Benefit Pension Scheme (RTÉSA) has a very healthy surplus after the provision for ongoing cost of living increases.

I am writing on behalf of the members of the RTÉRSA (RTÉ Retired Staff Association) to request that there is no undue delay in RTÉ communicating its support for the 4% increase in pensions proposed by the RTÉSA Scheme Trustees.

In recent years RTÉ has been very tardy in answering Government queries as to RTÉ's support for pension increases proposed by the scheme trustees with the approval of the Scheme Actuary.

When RTÉ were asked in May 2022 to respond to certain financial queries by the parent department – they did not reply until the 10th of January 2023. The trustees submitted a claim for a 2.5% pension increase in September 2022 and RTÉ only confirmed their support for the increase on the 10th February 2023. The unnecessary delay in granting pension increases has a detrimental financial impact on our members.

Since national wage agreements recommenced in 2020 public sector pensioners received 9% increases – an average of 3% per annum - with lower paid being awarded 12% or 4% per annum. (Source; Minister for Finance, Sunday Business Post January 14th. 2024).

The recently concluded new national wage agreement provides for 8.5% increase in public sector pensions over three years – with 12% for lower paid. So public sector pensioners will benefit from a minimum increase of 17.5% under post economic crash pay agreements. To date RTÉ pensioners have received just 8.5% since 2008.

The Actuarial report states *“Prior to 2008 the RTÉSA operated a long-term historical practice under which pensions in payment were indexed, under regulation 85, in line with changes in pay levels within RTÉ and reflecting national pay agreements and their various equivalents”*

The RTÉ Superannuation Scheme has never failed to implement public sector wage round increases in the past. The policy of the Scheme Trustees has always been to protect the members against the erosion of the real value of pensions by inflation. Additionally, members have been assured that pensions would be aligned with salary increases in RTÉ.

Identical Quotes from

1. RTE Superannuation Scheme Explanatory Booklet 1979
2. RTE Superannuation Scheme "Your Questions Answered" 1993

"In practice, the increases heretofore granted have been on a parity basis, i.e., on revised "retiring salaries" in line with salary increases in RTÉ"

Several hundreds of scheme members were incentivised by RTÉ to avail of early retirement schemes in the early 2000's and their contractual letter of offer stated that past practice would continue. Letters of offer stated

"you will receive a pension of xx gross for life and linked to general wage changes...."

In addition, in a recent letter (23rd March '23) to the RTÉRSA, Ms Siún Ní Raghallaigh, the former RTÉ Chair, noted the following:

"RTÉ is very conscious of the fact that pensioners have only received one increase since 2008. It has, at every stage, supported the requests for increases, and continues to support and advocate for regular increases for pensioners of the Scheme. The Board understands that RTÉ and the Trustees are working with DPER towards this end."

The RTÉRSA would urge you to ensure that RTÉ does not repeat the lengthy delays of the past in communicating to Government support for increases proposed by the Scheme Trustees with the approval of the Scheme Actuary.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards

Stephanie Fitzpatrick
Chair, RTÉRSA