

Schroders

Environmental,  
Social and Governance  
Policy for Listed Assets

December 2020



This document is intended to be for information purposes only  
and it is not intended as promotional material in any respect

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# Schroders' ESG Definition and Philosophy

## Defining ESG

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**ESG investment** covers the range of investment activities which recognise the relationship between companies and the societies and environments in which they operate, and between companies and the shareholders which control them.

**ESG integration** explicitly and systematically includes analysis of a range of risks and opportunities related to environmental, social and governance (ESG) drivers.

In principle, this leads to a broader assessment of the environment in which companies operate and their performance in managing different stakeholders, giving a fuller understanding of future opportunities and risks than traditional financial analysis alone.

**Screening** excludes companies involved in controversial activities. We recognise that many investors have concerns over specific activities to which they do not want their investment exposed. Where appropriate,

we work with them to define the criteria used to avoid investment in companies operating in those industries and maintain that exclusion on an ongoing basis.

**Sustainable investment** is an approach in which a company's sustainability practices are paramount to the investment decision and in which ESG analysis forms a cornerstone of the investment process. Sustainable products look for sustainability leaders with a superior sustainability profile relative to their peers. As a result they are longer term with their investment horizon, and step away from opportunities that may appear attractive in valuation terms but have challenges on an aspect of ESG.

**Impact investment** intends to achieve specific, positive social and environmental benefits while also delivering a financial return. This is not the same as impact measurement, which looks at how companies' activities affect the world both positively and negatively.

## Schroders' Philosophy

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At Schroders, we see ourselves as long-term stewards of our clients' capital, and this philosophy leads us to focus on the long-term prospects for the assets in which we invest. It is central to our investment process to analyse each investment's ability to create, sustain and protect value to ensure that it can deliver returns in line with our clients' objectives. Where appropriate we also look to engage and to vote with the objective of improving performance in these areas.

We believe the responsibility of investors includes protecting the interests of our clients from the impacts of financial and non-financial risks. Assessing and engaging on sustainability is becoming more important to investment processes.

In our view, ESG and industrial trends are intrinsically linked. Companies face

competitive pressures from a wider range of sources, on a larger scale and at a faster pace than ever before. Investors no longer have a choice over whether to seek exposure to ESG risks and opportunities; all companies and portfolios will be impacted.

This is why we have committed to integrate ESG across all of our investment teams by the end of 2020.

The policies outlined in this document apply to ESG integrated strategies, spanning equities, fixed income, multi-asset and alternatives. They incorporate what we have learnt from over twenty years of integrating ESG analysis across asset classes and geographies across the Schroders group. Given our commitment to integration and the growing data supporting effective implementation, we expect our approaches to continue to evolve.

## Integration

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We seek to integrate ESG considerations into our research and overall investment decisions across investment desks and asset classes. We recognise that different asset classes, portfolio strategies and investment universes require different lenses to most effectively strengthen decision-making.

We measure and track levels of ESG integration using an internal accreditation framework. Schroders' Sustainability Accreditation is our approach to formally recognising investment teams who have successfully integrated ESG into investment decisions.

The accreditation process starts with a collaborative effort between the Sustainable Investment team and the investment team to map out the end-to-end investment process from idea generation to portfolio construction, and ensuring ESG is integrated systematically and meaningfully into the relevant steps.

Our approach is pragmatic – we want to integrate ESG into established investment processes rather than create separate processes, which run the risk of becoming an after thought or a box ticking exercise. It is also robust; teams should be able to articulate and demonstrate how relevant issues are identified, investments are examined, portfolio decisions are influenced and how they monitor and manage emerging ESG risks. The Sustainable Investment team provides research, proprietary tools, and support to implement these steps.

The accreditation documents are reviewed and refreshed; over time investment teams are expected to have improved levels of ESG integration.

Our integration approach spans the breadth of the investment process, from identifying trends, analysing securities, constructing portfolios, through to engagement, voting and reporting. We believe that the investment decision makers must own true ESG integration. Below we outline how our fund managers, analysts and Sustainable Investment team work together to integrate ESG into each team's investment processes:

- The Sustainable Investment team works directly with the investment teams and provides ongoing advisory services to ensure that ESG is integrated in a relevant way for the asset class, investment philosophy, and market,

taking into account rapidly evolving best practices. This does not remove accountability remaining with each investment team to ensure ESG is integrated in its research, analysis and decision making processes.

- Our ESG analysts - like our investment analysts - have a sector focus. This enables them to gain a deeper understanding of sector-specific ESG issues and work in tandem with our investment analysts and portfolio managers to identify and assess ESG risks and opportunities, as well as incorporate consideration of these factors into their company models where appropriate. Regular sector updates are distributed to analysts across the capital structure to ensure that they are kept apprised of the latest developments.
- Our Sustainable Investment team produce regular multi-sector and multi-region thematic research to ensure investors keep abreast of the latest ESG trends, and how they can impact valuation and risk.
- Our Sustainable Investment team has produced a number of proprietary tools to help our analysts and fund managers identify, understand and manage ESG risks and opportunities. We outline these tools in the section below. The Sustainable Investment team provides on-going training to investors to ensure that they are aware of developments in this rapidly evolving area of interest. The team also creates training content which is available to investors on the in-house L&D system. Investors have ESG training included in their personal objectives.
- Our equity and fixed income analysts analyse relevant ESG risks and opportunities for securities under their coverage within their research notes. Our Sustainable Investment team provide support by adding sector views and reviews of research notes for some teams periodically to highlight where ESG analysis can be enhanced and to promote best practice.
- Each quarter the Sustainable Investment team screens desk portfolios against third-party ESG ratings from specialist ESG research providers and these ratings are distributed to investment desks. We do not believe that third-party ESG research views are the definitive view of a company's ESG performance but it provides a catalyst for further research and discussions

### Our proprietary tools

Our Sustainable Investment team has developed a number of proprietary ESG tools to help our fund managers and analysts identify, understand and manage ESG risks and opportunities. CONTEXT and SustainEx, our flagship tools currently available for equity and corporate credit, are outlined below.

- **CONTEXT** looks at logical and wide ranging data to assess how a company's relationship with its stakeholders (customers, suppliers, regulators, environment, employees, communities) and calculates a score for each company. The score will vary across investment strategies - CONTEXT is interactive and highly customisable, enabling analysts to select the most material ESG factors for each sector, weight their importance and apply relevant metrics. Analysts are then able to compare companies based on the metrics selected, their own company assessment scores or adjusted rankings

(by size, sector or region). The unique features of the tool give analysts the flexibility to make company specific adjustments to reflect their specialist knowledge.

- **SustainEx** is our award-winning impact measurement tool. It scientifically combines measures of both the harm companies can do and the good they can bring to arrive at an aggregate measure of each firm's social and environmental impact, allowing investors to target their ESG investments effectively. It quantifies the extent to which companies are in credit or deficit with the societies to which they belong, and the risks they face if the costs they externalise are pushed into companies' own costs.

## Company Analysis

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We believe that analysing exposure to and management of ESG factors, in addition to traditional financial analysis, will enhance our understanding of a company's fair value and its ability to deliver long-term returns

We pay particular focus to ensuring that stakeholder relationships across the board (suppliers, customers, employees, communities, the environment, regulators, fixed income and equity providers) are managed in a sustainable manner

## Sovereign Analysis

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The social and environmental backdrop facing countries and their governments is changing quickly. As pressures become more acute, the financial importance of effectively managing social and environmental change is rising. Identifying and understanding relevant ESG issues and assessing how challenges are being met, help with our long term analysis of Sovereign risk.

The thematic research and tools constructed by the Sustainable Investment team are available for investment teams. These have been developed to ensure that data relating to countries' ESG performance is easily accessible. The Sustainable Investment team also work with the Economics team seeking to quantify how these long term challenges may impact their regional forecasts.

## Structured Credit and SPV Analysis

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We believe an in-depth understanding of collateral cash flow and the impact of the securitised loan's structure is the foundation of generating returns in a market where size and complexity leads to exploitable inefficiency. The consideration of ESG factors provides a more holistic assessment of the quality of the collateral and the sustainability of the cash flows. Broadly speaking, ESG integration for securitised assets has always been present in some respects, however, post financial crisis there has been stronger documentation on the quality of the loan origination process and regulation has brought several elements of lending more apace with ESG. However, we have developed a more holistic sustainability assessment framework based on five principal pillars: ; lawfulness, fairness, purposeful, contractual and sustainable.

Also, fundamentally embedded within our research is a review of governance, fair lending / predatory lending, and the health of the loan for the consumer. Counterparty considerations are a part of the asset consideration and governance. Additionally, we have developed proprietary analytics consisting of asset specific models, surveillance and forecast/ trend analysis to assist in assessing the sustainability of investment ideas. Our investment process begins with the identification of fundamental and technical factors that drive performance for both the overall securitised market and specific sectors. The fundamental framework incorporates the five principal pillars of our sustainability analysis.

## Insurance Linked Securities

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Insurance Linked Securities (ILS) are primarily linked to the (re-) insurance of natural catastrophe, mortality and pandemic risk, extreme events that can cause severe disruption to individuals' lives and the communities they live in. A fundamental concept of insurance is to provide financial security and protection against unforeseen events by spreading the cost of events impacting a few across a broader community of insureds. The larger the pool of risk sharers (policyholders), the lower the cost of risk transfer. Reinsurance and ILS help to broaden the pool of potential risk sharers to make the transfer of risk more efficient. ILS can help reduce the cost of purchasing protection against adverse fortuitous events for individuals. In addition, the performance of ILS is positively correlated with the experience of the policyholders. When nothing happens,

we make a return. When disaster strikes, the proceeds generated by the payments under ILS help families and communities rebuild their lives.

By nature, certain types of ILS products, e.g. catastrophe bonds, in themselves are already exposed to social and environmental trends such as climate change. We follow and examine social and environmental trends we believe will emerge over the investment horizon and consider their potential impact on returns. For example, we adjust Natural Catastrophe models to reflect our own views on the frequency and severity of extreme weather events. In non-weather related ILS we seek to avoid investing in risks that may contain ethical or social concerns (for example where investment returns are dependent on the outcome of insurance lottery jackpots).

## Convertible Bonds

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Convertible bonds are hybrid securities that entitle the investor to convert a bond into a certain number of associated shares. They combine the protection of a fixed income investment with the potential return of a stock. The blend of individual elements that make up a convertible bond - bond, equity and right of conversion - produces an asset class that has unique risk-return characteristics. If the price of the underlying share is relatively low, the convertible bond has more of the characteristics of a bond; for example, the risk of loss is reduced in difficult times. In contrast, if the share price rises, the price of the convertible bond also increases and it is more like an equity.

The unique characteristics of this asset class means that ESG analysis is done on a security by security basis, requires a degree of flexibility and draws on a range of tools. Traditional fixed income ESG analysis focus on material issues that will impact over the duration of the instrument and are likely to be seen as credit events, impacting the balance sheet. Examples include behaviours or risks that might lead to an issuer losing their "license to operate" such as major litigation or an environmental disaster. For convertible bonds we will also include an assessment of the longer term ESG issues which will impact the equity valuation at the time of conversion. Material additional ESG issues from this analysis are more likely to manifest themselves in the profit and loss statement, impacting top line growth, operating margins, investment levels and tax rates.

## Active Ownership

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Effective and responsible active ownership has long been part of Schroders' approach. It is essential to question and challenge companies about issues that we perceive may affect their value. As such, engagement and voting is integral to our investment process.

Share interests carry ownership rights and exercising those rights is an integral part of our overall investment process. The overriding principles in exercising these are to enhance returns for clients and to work in their best interests. Credit fixed income instruments less frequently have voting rights attached to them, but we will exercise the same processes in instances where these do arise.

Companies should act in the best interests of their owners, and must also have due regard for other stakeholders including lenders, employees, communities, customers, suppliers, regulators and the environment in order to have sustainable business models.

Our Stewardship Code Statement outlines our approach in this area in more detail for all of our international holdings. For Australia (SIMAL) and Japan there are local statements which apply for locally managed assets. All codes are publically available.

### Purpose

Companies are at the centre of our framework and we monitor their abilities to navigate stakeholder relationships. Schroders firmly believe companies that are well governed, operate transparently, responsibly and sustainably will support the long-term health of the company and increase stakeholder value.

When engaging our purpose is to seek additional understanding, share our expectations or, where necessary, to seek change that will protect and enhance the value of investments for which we are responsible. The following four attributes are critical to the success of our engagement approach:

- 1 Knowledge:** We leverage the knowledge of our analysts and portfolio managers to really understand which sustainability issues matter to a company's long-term performance.
- 2 Relationships:** We have built strong, long-standing relationships with the companies in which we invest, with our engagement history dating back to the year 2000.
- 3 Impact:** The insight gained through engagement can directly influence the investment case
- 4 Incentive:** We have the power to reduce or even sell out of a holding if engagement is unsuccessful, or the option to avoid investing at all.

We focus on issues material to the value of the company's shares or debt instruments. These include a full range of stakeholder issues from employees, customers, and communities to the environment, suppliers regulators. The governance structure and management quality that oversee these stakeholder relationships are also a key focus for our engagement discussions. These issues may be identified through our thematic research, company level-investment research, stakeholder scores within our proprietary tools or responding to controversies.

We prioritise our engagement activities based on the materiality of the issue and our exposure to the individual company, which is based on the absolute amount invested or percentage owned on an instrument.

### Process

Our engagement activities are undertaken by our portfolio managers, fixed income and equity investment analysts and the Sustainable investment team. In the past few years, we have developed a number of new engagement tools to support our investors in undertaking their own engagements.

A company engagement generally begins with a process of enhancing our understanding of the company and helping the company to understand our position on the particular position on a topic. The extent to which we expect to effect change depends on the specific situation, the amount that we own and where we sit in the capital structure. We track engagement progress over time to ensure we can systematically monitor outcomes. Where we have engaged repeatedly and seen no meaningful progress, then we will escalate. This can include voting against management at a company's annual general meeting (AGM).

Our mechanism for engagement typically involves one of the following methods which may vary by region:

- One-to-one meetings with company representatives (e.g. members of the Board including Board Committee chairs, senior executives, Investor Relations, managers of specialist areas such as a sustainability or environmental manager)
- Written correspondence;
- Phone calls;
- Discussions with company advisers and stakeholders;
- Voting;
- Collective engagement with other investors
- Events to educate companies or collaborate on new reporting frameworks

## Transparency

Our engagement activities help to drive the sustainability agenda. Reporting on the outcome of all of our engagement activities is therefore key. We report on the number of engagements across the firm reflecting our full sphere of influence. This recognises the engagement undertaken not only by the dedicated sustainability team but also investment desk led engagements.

We also capture the influencing power of our voice through proxy voting and acknowledge how our involvement in industry bodies and public policy work also push the sustainability agenda at a market level. These efforts help to shape industry best practice, new governance norms and reporting practices. To acknowledge all these tools we have, and the scope of our influence, we report our engagements through a tiered structure within our quarterly and annual sustainable investment reports.

## Voting: Coverage

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We recognise our responsibility to make considered use of voting rights.

The overriding principle governing our approach to voting is to act in line with our fiduciary responsibilities in what we deem to be the interests of our clients.

We aim to support company management of investee companies; however, we will oppose management if we believe that it is in the best interests of our clients.

The majority of resolutions we target incorporate specific corporate governance issues which are required under local stock exchange listing requirements. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Approval of directors,
- Accepting reports and accounts
- Approval of incentive plans
- Capital allocation
- Reorganisations and mergers

We vote on both shareholder and management resolutions.

Our Corporate Governance analysts assess resolutions, applying our voting policy and guidelines (as outlined in this Environmental, Social and Governance Policy) to each agenda item. These analysts draw their own expertise as well as on

external research, such as the Investment Association's guidelines, the Institutional Shareholder Services (ISS), and public reporting.

Our own research is integral to our process and this is conducted by both our investment and ESG analysts. Corporate Governance analysts consult with the relevant financial analysts and portfolio managers to seek their view and better understand the corporate context, ensuring the company receives one voice from us.

The final decision will reflect what investors and Corporate Governance analysts believe to be in the best long term interest of their client.

In order to maintain the necessary flexibility to meet client needs, local offices of Schroders may determine a voting policy regarding the securities for which they are responsible, subject to agreement with clients as appropriate, and/or addressing local market issues. Both Japan and Australia have these.

Our Stewardship Code Statement outlines our approach in this area in more detail for all of our international holdings and is publicly available. Japan and Australia have additional statements reflecting their local regulatory requirements.

## Voting: Operational

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As active owners, we recognise our responsibility to make considered use of voting rights. It is therefore our policy to vote all shares at all meetings globally, except where there are restrictions that make it onerous or expensive to vote compared with the benefits of doing so (for example, share blocking practice whereby restrictions are placed on the trading of shares which are to be voted). In these cases we will generally not vote.

An example of this is in Australia for locally managed clients where SIMAL will not vote where we are excluded from doing so by the Corporations Act or other laws, or in cases of conflicts of interest or duty which cannot be resolved lawfully or appropriately.

We use a third party service to process all proxy voting instructions electronically. We regularly review our arrangements with these providers and benchmark them against peers.

## Voting: Conflicts of Interest

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Schroders accepts that conflicts of interest arise in the normal course of business. We have a documented Group wide policy, covering such occasions, to which all employees are expected to adhere, on which they receive training and which is reviewed annually. There are also supplementary local policies that apply the Group policy in a local context. More specifically, conflicts or perceived conflicts of interest can arise when voting on motions at company meetings which require further guidance on how they are handled. Outlined below are the specific policies that cover engagement and voting.

Schroders' Corporate Governance analysts are responsible for monitoring and identifying situations that could give rise to a conflict of interest when voting in company meetings.

Where Schroders itself has a conflict of interest with the fund, the client, or the company being voted on, we will follow the voting recommendations of a third party (which will be the supplier of our proxy voting processing and research service). Examples of conflicts of interest include (but are not limited to):

- where the company being voted on is a significant client of Schroders,
- where the Schroders employee making the voting decision is a director of, significant shareholder of or has a position of influence at the company being voted on;
- where Schroders or an affiliate is a shareholder of the company being voted on;
- where there is a conflict of interest between one client and another;

- where the director of a company being voted on is also a director of Schroders plc;
- where Schroders plc is the company being voted on.

Separation of processes and management between Schroder Investment Management and our Wealth Management division helps to ensure that individuals who are clients or have a business relationship with the latter are not able to influence corporate governance decisions made by the former.

If Schroders believes it should override the recommendations of the third party in the interests of the fund/client and vote in a way that may also benefit, or be perceived to benefit, its own interests, then Schroders will obtain the approval of the decision from the Schroders' Global Head of Equities with the rationale of such vote being recorded in writing. If the third-party recommendation is unavailable, we will vote as we see is in the interests of the fund. If however this vote is in a way that might benefit, or be perceived to benefit, Schroders' interests, we will obtain approval and record the rationale in the same way as described above.

In the situation where a fund holds investments on more than one side of the transaction being voted on, Schroders will always act in the interests of the specific fund. There may also be instances where different funds, managed by the same or different fund managers, hold stocks on either side of a transaction. In these cases the fund managers will vote in the best interest of their specific funds.

Where Schroders has a conflict of interest that is identified, it is recorded in writing, whether or not it results in an override by the Global Head of Equities.

## Voting Client Choice/Delegating Authority

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Given our focus on ESG integration and Stewardship with the aim of enhancing returns, we believe it is appropriate for clients to give voting discretion to Schroders.

Clients may elect to retain all or some discretion in relation to voting, engagement and/or corporate governance issues. In these cases we suggest such clients use an external voting service to vote their interests.

We welcome a dialogue with our clients on voting policy and its application

## Disclosure

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We believe transparency is an important feature of effective Stewardship.

We produce a public Quarterly Sustainable Investment Report on our ESG activities over the period for activities across the Schroders group. We report on the total number of engagements, the companies engaged with and this is broken down by region, type and sector. We also highlight engagement case studies after these have come to a close, as it is our view that ongoing engagement is most effective on a confidential basis.

On a monthly basis, at a Group level, we publish a public voting report which details shareholder proposals for companies during the period and how the votes were cast, including votes against management and abstentions, along with the rationale behind these decisions. We view the latter as significant votes.

As part of our reporting collateral, we also produce an Annual Sustainable Investment Report. This provides additional details on our stewardship activities, our ESG integration efforts across asset classes,

thematic research reports, detailed case studies, engagement progress, voting highlights, our shareholder resolution voting record, our involvement in industry initiatives and collaborative engagements.

All of these reports above are available on our website: <https://www.schroders.com/en/about-us/active-ownership/sustainability-analysis-in-practice/>

Institutional clients receive a more specific report which includes their personal voting activity and more detailed information on the progress of company engagements that are ongoing.

Schroders obtains an independent opinion on our engagement and voting processes based on the standards of the AAF 01/06 Guidance issued by the Institute of Chartered Accounts in England and Wales.

The value of investments and the income from them may go down as well as up and investors may not get back the amounts originally invested. All investments involve risks including the risk of possible loss of principal.

## Stock Lending

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We do not currently Stock Lend for our pooled funds.

## Screening and Exclusions

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We fully support the following international conventions:

- The Convention on Cluster Munitions (2008): prohibits the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of cluster munitions
- The Anti-Personnel Landmines Treaty (1997), also known as The Ottawa Treaty (1997): prohibits the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of anti-personnel landmines
- The Chemical Weapons Convention (1997): prohibits the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of chemical weapons
- Biological Weapons Convention (1975): prohibits the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of biological weapons.

We will not knowingly hold any security that is involved in the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of these weapons. We do not exclude those companies whose business activities or products only have the potential to be used for these purposes, or where these activities or products have not been undertaken or created with these uses in mind.

Schroders will apply this policy to all Schroders funds that we directly manage. On occasion there may be additional securities recognised by clients or local governments; these will be added to the Schroders group exclusion list for those relevant jurisdictions or specific mandates. These are publicly disclosed and available on our website: <http://www.schroders.com/sustainability>

We recognise that many investors hold views that their investments should not be associated with companies engaging in specific activities. We implement a wide range of negative screens and exclusions according to specific ethical exclusion criteria requested by our clients. We draw on a number of different data sources to ensure that their views are reflected in the most accurate way possible.

In addition to the firm wide restrictions outlined above, SIMAL also excludes nuclear weapons and tobacco for locally managed funds. The list of their restrictions can be found on their website.

# Corporate Governance: Our Core Principles

The following pages set out the corporate governance principles that we consider when determining how to vote. All are subject to the overriding principles that we will vote and act to enhance returns for clients and act in the best interests of clients.

## Strategy, Performance, Transparency and Integrity

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### Strategic Focus

Companies must produce adequate returns for shareholders over the long term. Companies must also have due regard for other stakeholders including lenders, employees, communities, customers, suppliers, regulators and the environment in order to have viable business models that create value over the long term.

If a company is not making or will not make returns above the cost of capital, it should improve performance or consider returning capital to shareholders in a tax-efficient manner.

### Shareholders' Interests

We will oppose any proposal or action which materially reduce or damage shareholders' rights.

Major corporate changes or transactions that materially dilute the equity or erode the economic interests or ownership rights of existing shareholders should not be made without the approval of shareholders.

With the exception of those that could reasonably be deemed insignificant, any transactions with related parties should not be made without prior independent shareholder approval. Where these are allowed to proceed, we expect these to be subject to proper oversight and regular review by the board.

Shareholders should be given sufficient and timely information about any voting proposal to allow them to make an informed judgement when exercising their voting rights.

Companies should provide secure methods of ownership of shares. Further, there should be no unreasonable restrictions on the transfer of shares.

### Reporting

The annual report and accounts of companies should be properly prepared, in accordance with relevant accounting standards.

Companies must communicate clearly with investors. This obligation extends to producing quality accounts and communicating timely and relevant information. Transparency, prudence and integrity in the accounts of companies are factors which are highly valued by investors.

### Auditors

Audits provide a valuable protection to investors across the capital spectrum and should ensure the integrity of accounts.

In order to provide objectivity and a robust assessment of the accounts, the auditors should be independent. Where independence is compromised or perceived as being compromised due to a conflict of interest, a firm's suitability as auditor will be called into question. Independence may be compromised, for example, where the level of non-audit work is excessive or inappropriate or where the auditors or relevant individuals have a connection with the company. The tenure of an auditor should also be assessed to ensure rotation for independence.

### Internal Controls

The level of risk a company faces and the way a company manages those risks can have a significant effect on a company's value and viability. We understand and recognise that risks must be taken.

However, risks must be recognised and managed. Linked to this, internal controls should be in place to ensure a company's managers and board are aware of the state of the business

### Status and Role

The boards of the companies in which our clients' monies are invested should consider and review, amongst other things, strategic direction, the quality of leadership and management, risk management, relationships with stakeholders, the internal controls, the operating performance and viability of those companies. Above all, they should be focused on the long term sustainable generation of value.

Board members must be independent, competent and have relevant expertise.

The board of directors, or supervisory board, (as an entity and each of its members as individuals) should be accountable to shareholders.

The discharge or indemnification of a board or management will not normally be supported where we are aware of outstanding issues or have concerns regarding that board or company.

Every member of the board should stand for re-election by shareholders no less than every three years. We generally only support yearly elections.

Companies should disclose sufficient biographical information about directors and commit to regular board evaluations to enable investors to make a reasonable assessment of the value they add to the company.

Board members should have enough time to devote to the role so that they can effectively discharge their duties. Members with multiple external appointments will be deemed over-boarded.

### Board Leadership

Our preference is for leadership of the board and leadership of the company to be separate. This reflects the important role the board plays in oversight and challenge of the senior management team. Where the Chairman and CEO are not separate there should be a Lead Independent Director identified to act an effective conduit for shareholders to raise issues.

### Board Structure

Boards should consider the diversity and balance of the board:

- The board should be balanced, such that no group dominates the board or supervisory body.
- There should be a material number of genuinely independent non-executive directors on the board or supervisory body. Companies and boards should be able to demonstrate that they are diverse organisations across gender, ethnicity, sexuality and thought. As well as monitoring board diversity, the board should be monitoring the internal pipeline of talent and the wider workforce using these metrics

Board gender diversity is one of the most transparent metrics that we currently have on a global basis. We actively vote against individuals on boards that are not making enough progress on this area to hold them accountable.

Independent non-executives can give shareholders a degree of protection and assurance by ensuring that no individual or non-independent grouping has unfettered powers or dominant authority. Independence is assessed on a case by case basis, but generally, after nine years we will no longer classify board members as independent. However, the issue of independence is not, of itself, a measure of an individual's value or ability to contribute as a board member

### Board Performance

The process for selecting, refreshing and retaining board members should be transparent, robust and rigorous and ensure that the make up of the board remains appropriate and dynamic, with a particular emphasis on individuals with business success.

Boards should regularly undertake a review of their performance. A review of performance must not be an academic exercise. Any review should seek to consider the performance of individuals and the board as a whole. It will also be appropriate to ensure that the skills in the boardroom are appropriate given the future strategic direction of the company.

Any issues identified should be resolved through, if necessary, operational changes or changes of personnel. We advocate an ongoing process of board refreshment. A variety of tenures will ensure that different perspectives are brought to discussions and ensure orderly succession.

We will oppose directors and may seek their replacement where the leadership of an organisation is not sufficiently objective or robust in reviewing performance.

#### **Committees**

Boards should appoint an audit committee and a remuneration committee, ideally with a majority of independent non-executive board members.

#### **Succession Planning**

The success of a company will be determined by the quality and success of its people, in particular the senior leadership team. Boards should develop short, medium and long term succession plans for senior management and keep these updated.

The internal pipeline of talent should be monitored and benchmarked on a regular basis. We expect this pipeline to be a diverse one.

Boards have an important role in assessing management's performance and holding them to account. It is important that companies which fail to achieve a satisfactory level of performance should review the performance of senior executives. It is an inevitable part of any organisation that there will be changes of staff – people might not have, or no longer have, the right skills, abilities or attitude to properly and successfully fulfil or continue in their role. This applies at all levels in an organisation.

It is equally important that boards ensure that companies are managed to achieve long term success. Boards need to consider the implications of strategy in this light and discuss the impact of decisions on timeframes beyond a single CEO's tenure.

The board should ensure that it too is subject to rigorous succession planning and skills-based assessment. They should regularly seek to appoint new non-executive directors.

## **Capital**

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#### **Efficient Use of Capital**

Companies should earn a return on capital that exceeds the company's weighted average cost of capital.

Companies should have efficient balance sheets that minimise the cost of capital, with an appropriate level of gearing which recognises the significant risks attaching to debt across the cycle.

Where companies cannot or will not use capital efficiently, they should consider returning the capital to shareholders: the capital may then be allocated to investments earning an appropriate return.

Capital should not be used for value-destroying acquisitions.

#### **Issuing Shares**

Companies should not propose general authorities to allow unlimited or substantial capital authorisations or blank cheque preferred stock.

The creation of different classes of equity share capital must be fully justified.

#### **Pre-emption Rights**

Pre-emption rights are a key investor protection measure. For our UK holdings

we ask that companies follow the Statement of Principles issued by the Pre-emption Group.

We recognise that in some instances it is appropriate for companies to have a certain amount of flexibility to issue shares for cash without offering them first to shareholders on a pre-emptive basis.

Accordingly, authorities to issue shares non-pre-emptively should not exceed recognised market guidelines or practice or, in the absence of guidelines or a recognised practice, an overall limit of 10%.

We will consider powers to issue shares on a non-pre-emptive basis in excess of these limits, where a company can provide a reasoned case that the issue of shares on a non-pre-emptive basis (whether directly or, for example, through the issue of convertible bonds or warrants or for vendor placings) would be in the best interests of existing shareholders.

#### **Share Voting Rights**

Companies should provide strong arguments to justify the introduction or maintenance of equity shares with special voting rights, golden shares or other split capital structures.

## Executive Remuneration

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In considering the pay arrangements of senior executives at companies, we are concerned with the structure of total compensation and to ensure that potential rewards are aligned with shareholder interests.

We recognise the value of high-calibre executives and note that in order to hire the best individuals, it is necessary for companies to pay at levels which allow them to compete in the market to recruit successful executives. However, the existence of this effect does not justify unwarranted transfers of value to executives. It follows that where individuals have failed, their continuation in the role should be reviewed and, if necessary, they should be removed.

In formulating proposals, remuneration committees and boards should, in particular:

- Avoid creating arrangements or policies that could result in excessive dilution of shareholders' interests or create excessive or unwarranted costs. It is expected that average dilution through the commitment to issue shares to directors, executives and employees would not exceed 1% per year;
- Link significant elements of total remuneration to genuine performance and in particular focused on the achievement of above average performance;
- Encourage significant share ownership amongst the executive team and look to widen share ownership throughout the organisation;
- Avoid arrangements that would encourage the destruction of shareholder value;
- Achieve an appropriate balance between long- and short-term elements of pay, with an emphasis on reward for sustainable longer-term performance;
- Avoid service contracts and provisions providing compensatory arrangements in excess of one year, except following appointment where for a limited time a longer period may be acceptable;
- Appoint remuneration committees consisting of independent non-executive directors. These committees should be responsible for determining and recommending to the board the pay policies in respect of executive directors and senior managers;
- Not re-price, adjust, or otherwise amend stock options and awards;
- Use financial and ESG metrics for measuring executive performance which focus on outcomes rather than inputs to potential corporate performance;
- Avoid complex scorecards of numerous performance measures, thereby diluting a focus on long term success for the company and shareholders;
- Focus long-term incentive arrangements for board members primarily on total corporate performance and only secondarily on areas of individual responsibility. Special incentive arrangements concerning specific ventures or projects may distort alignment with total corporate performance and shareholder returns.
- Long term incentives to be paid in shares which have a performance and vesting period of at least five years.

## Environmental and Social Performance and Resolutions

We examine E&S performance and resolutions on a case by case basis according to the following framework.

### 1 Materiality

We view ESG practices as a proxy for management quality. We will focus on issues that are relevant to a company within the context of its sector and its relationship with stakeholders which enable a company to maintain its licence to operate.

### 2 Transparency

As investors, we support transparency as this helps us to better understand how companies are identifying and managing the ESG issues that impact their business.

### 3 Asymmetric knowledge

As active owners, we engage with companies to promote good environmental and social practices. However, we recognise that beyond the broad management systems and ESG issues, it is the company that has the day-to-day operational knowledge and expertise to manage these issues. We do not intend to micro-manage companies, but rather provide oversight and guidance on ESG practices.

### 4 Alignment with evolving ESG best practice

Through our voting and engagement, we encourage companies to move towards ESG best practice, whilst acknowledging sector and individual company differences.

### 5 Evidence of policy implementation and progress

Whilst transparency is key, we want re-assurance that the policies and practices published by companies are being implemented effectively. We want to see evidence of progress on mitigating ESG risks.

### 6 Responsible conduct

Whilst we encourage companies to move towards best practice we accept that with large, multinational companies there are occasionally E&S related controversies.

Where these do occur, we seek evidence that the company has understood the cause of the issue and has been proactive in strengthening its management systems to ensure that probability of future controversies has been minimised.

## Other Environmental & Social Issues

### Climate

Limiting temperature rises to two degree above preindustrial levels or lower – in line with the commitments made through the Paris Accord – is among the most urgent and biggest challenges facing global economies and societies. We support efforts we believe will help achieve that goal.

Our analysis shows that climate change is a major structural challenge that will have a significant impact on the operating backdrop for the majority of companies and sectors. We believe that significant winners and losers will emerge based on how companies respond to this challenge. We support the Task Force on Climate Related Financial Disclosure (TCFD) and encourage companies to report against the key elements of this framework. We also look for membership of industry associations and lobbying groups to be aligned with corporate commitments on climate changes. We use our influence as investors through engagement and voting to push companies to prepare and demonstrate the efforts they take to

address key climate risks. We will generally vote against directors at companies where we feel that climate change is a major risk and the boards cannot demonstrate publicly that they are preparing sufficiently for it.

### UN Global Compact (UNGC) violations: Human Rights, Labour Rights, Environment, Anti-corruption

We recognise the importance of companies respecting and protecting human rights, ensuring decent working conditions and upholding labour rights, promoting greater environmental responsibility and having robust anti-corruption measures and practices in place. As UNGC signatories we are committed to ensuring companies align their operations and strategies to the UNGC's ten universally accepted principles.

Through our ESG integration and active ownership process we take into consideration how companies are interacting with all their stakeholders (customers, suppliers, environment, regulators, employees and communities) and the

contribution this might have (both negative and positive) to their long-term success. The UNGC principles are embedded within this framework. Our holistic approach goes beyond the ten principles and incorporate a broader range of issues. That analysis also informs our engagement with companies; where we consider companies' business practices may be unsustainable we regularly engage management teams to better understand their plans, and to promote more responsible behavior, and if we believe the action taken is not appropriate will vote against individual directors.

### **Biodiversity**

The variety of plants and animals, and where they live – is critical for our everyday lives. It provides us with food, water, clean air, shelter and medicines. Loss of biodiversity and changes to ecosystems can increase the risk of infectious diseases in animals, plants and humans. We recognise that deforestations, changes in land use, increasing agricultural intensity, over-population, climate change and pollution contribute to biodiversity loss and we therefore take these factors into consideration in our ESG analysis of companies and engage with companies where we believe their practices are unsustainable.

### **Water use**

Water is critical to human and ecosystem health, necessary in many industrial processes, indispensable in food and energy production, an important vehicle for disposing of wastes, and integral to many forms of recreation. While ~70% of the earth's surface is covered in water, less than 1% of this is water available for consumption by people and business, and the supply of clean, fresh water is decreasing. At the same time, there is an

increasing demand for water through agriculture, a growing global population and economic development. Supply side and demand side pressure means that water is increasingly becoming a material risk for companies that are struggling to source scarce, clean water.

Understanding and managing water risk may be fundamental to a company's ability to continue as a going concern. As a result, the water intensity of companies' operations, scarcity in the regions in which they operate and their strategies to manage their use all feature in our ESG analysis of companies. We also engage companies on water risk.

### **Taxation**

Taxes are probably the clearest form of companies' social contribution. They are reinvested by the state into society, providing vital public services. We believe it is important that companies behave responsibly and conduct their tax affairs in an open and transparent way. Responsible tax payment is reflected in the tools available to our analysts when examining ESG performances and is regularly included in our engagement with companies.

### **Oppressive regimes**

These are commonly associated with systematic human rights abuses, and often an absence of the rule of law, a lack of freedom of expression and land rights abuses. Through our ESG integration and active ownership process we seek to understand whether companies operate or have supply chains in countries governed by oppressive regimes.

We comply with the sanctions regimes issued by the EU, the UN, Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT), and the Office of Foreign Asset Control

## **Other Corporate Governance Issues**

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### **Takeover Bids**

Takeovers are an important part of an efficient market. However, takeovers do not always create value for shareholders. Accordingly, each case will be judged on its merits. Factors considered will include the quality of a company's management, the long-term prospects for the company's share price and investors and, ultimately, whether the price offered should be accepted in the best interests of our clients.

### **Poison Pills and Takeover Defences**

Poison pill arrangements, takeover defences or other equivalent

arrangements have as their purpose the benefit of management rather than the owners of the company and are frequently contrary to shareholder interests. Such arrangements should not be introduced and existing arrangements that have been put in place should be removed.

### **Company Constitutions**

The documents defining the constitution of a company are key documents providing protection to the interests of shareowners. Any changes to these documents should be clearly justified.

# Environmental, Social and Governance Policy for Listed Assets



EST. 1804

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