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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** looks at investment decisions in a wider context than traditional financial analysis and explicitly includes analysis of a range of risks and opportunities related to environmental, social and governance (ESG) drivers. In principle, this can lead 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 fundamental analysis. In practice, its effectiveness in doing so hinges on how that integration is approached and implemented.

**Responsible investment** focuses on companies' citizenship and their contribution to social outcomes. We appreciate that many clients want to use their investment to support more responsibly run businesses.

**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.

## 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. As the effects of structural industry changes grow, how companies are run and their abilities to adapt to changing pressures are becoming increasingly important.

The policies outlined in this document apply to investments across equities, fixed income and alternatives. They incorporate what we have learnt from over twenty years of integrating ESG analysis across asset classes and geographies. 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.

Our integration approach spans the breadth of the investment process, from identifying trends, analysing securities, constructing portfolios, through to engagement, voting and reporting.

We facilitate the integration of ESG into the overall investment processes through the following:

- Our ESG analysts work with investment teams, which facilitate regular dialogue with our analysts and investors.
- Our ESG analysts - like our investment analysts - have a sector focus. This enables them to gain a deep understanding of sector-specific ESG issues and in turn, 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.
- The ESG team provides ongoing training to investment analysts to ensure that all investment desks are aligned in their efforts to integrate ESG considerations into their analysis. The team also provides sector-specific ESG training and tailored training for individual investment teams upon request.
- Our ESG specialists produce regular multi-sector and multi-region thematic research to ensure our investment analysts and investors keep abreast of the latest ESG trends, and how they can impact valuation and risk.
- Our equity and fixed income analysts analyse relevant ESG risks and opportunities for securities under their coverage within their research notes. Our ESG specialists review research notes periodically to highlight where ESG analysis can be enhanced and to promote best practice.
- Each quarter the ESG 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 with the ESG team.

## 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 conducted by the ESG team feeds into this analysis. The ESG analysts 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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Consideration of ESG factors complements the assessment of the quality of the collateral and the sustainability of the cash flows. The factors include, but are not limited to, analysing the environmental or social benefits of the structured credit bonds and screening any exposure to originator or borrowers in the collateral pool without proper corporate governance. Positive examples are solar asset-backed

bonds where the bond proceeds are used to lend to borrowers with solar panels, auto asset-backed bonds where the bond proceeds are used to build electric vehicles or commercial mortgage-backed bonds, where the bond proceeds are used to fund affordable housing projects.

## 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.

ILS are typically short term in duration. Before investing, we examine social and environmental trends we believe will emerge over our investment horizon and consider their potential impact on returns. For example we adjust the models that we use 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). We also consider how the underlying insurance policies are sold – where potential issues about the selling process become apparent, we will not buy the security.

## 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. As part of the overall process, we combine the perspectives of our portfolio managers, investment analysts, and ESG analysts to form a rounded view of each company and the issues it faces.

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.

## Company Engagement

Companies are at the centre of our framework and we monitor their abilities to navigate the social and environmental trends in their industries. Schroders firmly believe companies that are well governed, operate transparently, responsibly and sustainably will support the long-term health of the company and increase shareholder value. Therefore, engagement with companies is a key part of our investment process as an active investor. It has the advantage of enhancing communication and understanding between companies and investors.

When engaging with companies our purpose is to either seek additional understanding or, where necessary, to seek change that will protect and enhance the value of investments for which we are responsible.

Our focus will be on issues material to the value of the company's shares or debt instruments. These may include, but are not limited to, business strategy, performance, financing and capital allocation, management, acquisitions and disposals, internal controls, risk management, the membership and composition of governing bodies/ boards and committees, sustainability, governance, remuneration, climate change, environmental and social performance.

Our engagement activities combine the perspectives of our portfolio managers, fixed income and equity investment analysts and ESG specialists in order to form a rounded and deep opinion of each company and the issues it faces. Intervention will generally begin with a process of enhancing our understanding of the company and helping the company to understand our position. The extent to which we would expect to effect change will depend on the specific situation, the amount that we own and where we sit in the capital structure.

We generally engage for one of three reasons:

- 1 To seek improvement in performance and processes in order to enhance and protect the value of our investments
- 2 To monitor developments in ESG practices, business strategy and financial performance within a company
- 3 To enhance our analysis of a company's risks and opportunities

Our mechanism for engagement typically involves one of the following methods:

- 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) either collaboratively with our investment analysts and portfolio managers, or focused ESG engagements undertaken by the ESG specialists;
- Written correspondence;
- Phone calls;
- Discussions with company advisers and stakeholders;
- Voting;
- Collective engagement with other investors.

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. Our equity, fixed income and ESG teams work together to identify areas that warrant discussion with companies.

We proactively arrange meetings with any companies which we own that we see as ESG laggards. We also undertake reactive engagement as a result of any negative incident involving a company, in order to understand why it may have occurred, the actions the company is taking as a result, and what the current and future investment risks may be.

Our UK Stewardship Code Statement outlines our approach in this area in more detail for all of our international holdings and is publicly available.

## Stewardship

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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 UK Stewardship Code Statement outlines our approach in this area in more detail for all of our international holdings and is publicly available.

## 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 normally hope to support company management; however, we will withhold support or oppose management if we believe that it is in the best interests of our clients to do so.

We vote on a variety of resolutions issues; however the majority of resolutions target specific corporate governance issues which are required under local stock exchange listing requirements, including but not limited to: approval of directors, accepting reports and accounts, approval of incentive plans, capital allocation, reorganisations and mergers. We do vote on both shareholder and management resolutions.

Our Corporate Governance specialists assess resolutions, applying our voting policy and guidelines (as outlined in this Environmental, Social and Governance Policy) to each agenda item. These specialists draw on external research, such as the Investment Association's Institutional Voting Information Services, the Institutional Shareholder Services (ISS), and public reporting.

Our own research is also integral to our process and this will be conducted by both our investment and ESG analysts. Corporate Governance specialists will consult with the relevant analysts and portfolio managers to seek their view and better understand the corporate context. The final decision will reflect what investors and Corporate Governance specialists believe to be in the best long term interest of their client. When voting, where there is insufficient information with which to make a voting decision we may not vote.

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 UK Stewardship Code Statement outlines our approach in this area in more detail for all of our international holdings and is publicly available.

## 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.

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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Our UK Stewardship Code Statement outlines our approach in this area in more detail for all of our international holdings and is publicly available.

## 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.

## 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. 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, 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.

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: <http://www.schroders.com/sustainability>

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.



## Stock Lending

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We do not currently Stock Lend.

## Cluster Munitions

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Schroders fully supports the international conventions on cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines (APM). Consistent with this, and in line with our commitment to responsible investment, we will not knowingly hold any security that derives revenue from or provides funding for cluster munitions or APMs.

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>

## Screening

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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.

# 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.

### 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 (the term 'boards' as used in this document includes the governing bodies of corporations, however described (for example, 'supervisory boards')) of the companies in which our clients' monies are invested should consider and review, amongst other things, the 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 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.

Companies should disclose sufficient biographical information about directors 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. We will assess this on a case by case basis looking at the number of public, private and third sector roles that an individual is committed to.

## 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.
- The board should recognise the benefits of diversity and seek to promote it within the board and the business.

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 and Diversity

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 regulator 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.

## 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.

## Environmental and Social Performance and Resolutions

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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 pro-active in strengthening its management systems to ensure that probability of future controversies has been minimised..

## Other 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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