

**BlackRock**<sup>®</sup>

# **Innovia British Pension Scheme**

# **Engagement Policy Implementation Statement**

31 December 2020

## 1. Introduction

Under the Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment and Disclosure) (Amendment) Regulations 2019, the Trustee is required to produce an annual Engagement Policy Implementation Statement (“EPIS”). This statement outlines how, and the extent to which, the policies relating to stewardship, voting and engagement as outlined in the Statement of Investment Principles (“SIP”) have been followed.

This statement covers the Scheme’s accounting year to 31 December 2020. It is intended to meet the updated regulations and will be included in the Scheme’s Report & Accounts. In preparing this statement, the Trustee has taken advice from its professional advisers.

This statement details some of the activities taken by the Trustee, the Manager and the investment managers during the period, including voting statistics, and provides the Trustee’s opinion on the stewardship activities over the period.

## 2. Policies

The Trustee’s relevant policies regarding stewardship, voting and engagement are outlined in the SIP. The most recent version of the SIP is publicly available and is published online and will be updated from time-to-time as the SIP is updated.

The Trustee has appointed BlackRock as the adviser and Fiduciary Manager (“the Manager”) to the Scheme. The Trustee delegates the day-to-day investment decisions and asset allocation to the Manager. The Trustee retains responsibility for the strategic investment objective and oversight of the Manager. A number of underlying investment managers (including the Manager) have been appointed to invest the Scheme’s assets. The underlying investment managers are ultimately responsible for carrying out the stewardship, voting and engagement activities in respect of the Scheme’s assets in line with the SIP.

During the year to 31 December 2020 the Trustee updated the SIP twice, in March 2020 following the appointment of BlackRock and again in September 2020, which included extending the policies relating to stewardship, voting and engagement. Given that the SIP was updated towards the end of the accounting period, this statement is written primarily with respect to the policies as outlined in the March 2020 SIP. It is intended that the extended policies as outlined in the September 2020 SIP will form the basis for the EPIS for the subsequent accounting period.

The relevant excerpts from the SIPs are included below.

### **SIP from September 2019 – March 2020**

#### ***Environmental, social and governance considerations***

*The Trustees take into account financially material considerations, including those arising from Environmental, Social and Governance (‘ESG’) factors, through the selection and ongoing monitoring of investment managers employed to manage Scheme assets.*

*The Trustees have delegated overall stewardship of the Scheme’s underlying investments to the investment managers, including the exercise of the rights (including voting rights) attaching to the Scheme’s investments and undertaking engagement activities in respect of the investments.*

*The Scheme’s voting rights are exercised by its investment managers in accordance with their own corporate governance policies, and taking account of current best practice including the UK Corporate Governance Code and the UK Stewardship Code.*

*Investment managers who are regulated by appropriate UK (or other relevant) authorities are expected to report on their adherence to the UK Stewardship Code on an annual basis.*

*These arrangements are periodically reviewed and the ESG activities of the managers are considered where the Trustees see fit. The Trustees, with help from their investment adviser, will seek to engage with managers relating to their ESG policies and approach.*

*Where the Trustees do not believe a managers' approach to ESG matters is consistent with their goals to deliver an appropriate level of long-term returns for the Scheme and the managers have failed to respond to efforts to engage them, the Trustees may seek to switch the manager(s) with a suitable replacement(s).*

*Currently the Trustees do not take into account non-financial matters such as member views. However, the Trustees may take such matters into account where they believe it would be prudent to do so. Where the Trustees do take into account non-financial matters, they will inform the Scheme's employer of their decision to do so, the nature of the non-financial matters taken into account and provide any other information which they feel is appropriate in respect of such a decision.*

## **SIP from March 2020 – September 2020**

### **5. Responsible Investing**

- 5.1 The Trustee recognises that ESG risks could impact the ability of the Scheme to meet its investment objectives and therefore the Trustee has considered how to evaluate and manage these risks when setting its investment strategy as set out in the following paragraphs (along with other matters).*
- 5.2 The Trustee will ensure that the Scheme's Fiduciary Manager shall, alongside other investment risks, integrate consideration of ESG risks throughout its investment decision making processes,*
- 5.3 The Trustee will request that:*
- 5.4 the Fiduciary Manager, as part of its due diligence, assesses the approach of all the Scheme's investment managers in integrating ESG risks considerations into the selection, retention and realisation of investments, before appointing them;*
- 5.5 the Fiduciary Manager, as part of its ongoing monitoring, will review the adherence of the Scheme's investment managers to their ESG principles and, on at least a quarterly basis, will report on key ESG metrics for the Scheme's investment managers and aggregate these to portfolio level where appropriate;*
- 5.6 the Fiduciary Manager, as part of its ongoing monitoring, reviews the execution of voting and engagement responsibilities and periodically reports back its findings to the Trustee (for example where the Scheme invests in pooled funds, the Scheme's investment managers are responsible for exercising voting rights and reporting on how they have exercised those rights); and*
- 5.7 where UK-domiciled investment managers are not signatories to the FRC's UK Stewardship Code, the Fiduciary Manager shall consider the investment manager's rationale for this position and, where appropriate, report back its findings to the Trustee.*
- 5.8 The Trustees do not take into account non-financial matters when selecting, retaining and realising investments. Non-financial matters are defined as the views of members and beneficiaries, including (but not limited to) their ethical views, and their views relating to social and environmental impact and quality of life.*

## **SIP from September 2020 – present**

### **5. Responsible Investing**

- 5.1 The Trustee recognises that ESG risks could impact the ability of the Scheme to meet its investment objectives and therefore the Trustee has considered how to evaluate and manage these risks when setting its investment strategy as set out in the following paragraphs (along with other matters).*
- 5.2 The Trustee will ensure that the Scheme's Manager shall, alongside other investment risks, integrate consideration of ESG risks throughout its investment decision making processes,*
- 5.3 The Trustee has agreed that:*
  - the Manager, as part of its due diligence, assesses the approach of all the Scheme's investment managers in integrating ESG risks considerations into the selection, retention and realisation of investments, before appointing them;*

- the Manager, as part of its ongoing monitoring, will review the adherence of the Scheme's investment managers to their ESG principles and, on at least a quarterly basis, will report on key ESG metrics for the Scheme's investment managers and aggregate these to portfolio level where;
- the Fiduciary Manager, as part of its ongoing monitoring, reviews the execution of voting and engagement responsibilities and periodically reports back its findings to the Trustee (for example where the Scheme invests in pooled funds, the Scheme's investment managers are responsible for exercising voting rights and reporting on how they have exercised those rights); and
- where UK-domiciled investment managers are not signatories to the FRC's UK Stewardship Code, the Manager shall consider the investment manager's rationale for this position and, where appropriate, report back its findings to the Trustee.

5.4 The Trustee does not actively take into account non-financial matters when selecting, retaining and realising investments. Non-financial matters are defined as the views of members and beneficiaries, including (but not limited to) their ethical views, and their views relating to social and environmental impact and quality of life.

## **6. Stewardship**

6.1 The Trustee understands that stewardship can enhance value over the long term and recognises that it has a responsibility to act as a good steward and protect and grow the long-term value of the Scheme for the benefit of the Scheme's members.

6.2 In order to be a good steward, the Trustee has the belief that the Scheme's respective stakeholders should undertake activities in relation to issues that have a material impact on the long-term value of the Scheme's investments.

6.3 The Trustee expects the Manager to ensure that the stewardship belief is appropriately implemented as far as is reasonably practicable. The belief includes ensuring to the extent possible that the underlying or external managers exercise on the Trustee's behalf rights and duties as an investor. This should include, where appropriate, voting and engaging with underlying investee companies, as part of an effective stewardship approach that meets the Trustee's expectations. The Trustee expects that voting and engagement activities are carried out in the best financial interests of the assets being managed.

6.4 The Trustee has delegated monitoring of underlying or external managers to the Fiduciary Manager. As part of this responsibility, the Manager is expected to:

- Request voting and/or stewardship policies of the underlying or external managers.
- Enquire about underlying manager's voting activity with respect to their stated policies, where appropriate.
- Request that underlying investment managers report on an annual basis a summary of the voting actions which have been taken and any votes cast which differ from the stated voting policy of that manager.
- Provide a summary to the Trustee of the overall level of voting activity on an annual basis.

6.5 The Trustee will engage with the Manager to understand any reports which have been provided and challenge any outcomes which it feels are not in keeping with its belief. The Fiduciary Manager is expected to engage with the underlying or external managers as and when required to facilitate this. Where an underlying or external manager is not adhering to the Trustee's belief in line with the Trustee's expectations, the Trustee would expect the Fiduciary to consider appropriate actions having regard to the long-term financial wellness of the Scheme.

## **3. Scope of this statement**

The Trustee acknowledges that the extent to which the policies in relation to stewardship, voting and engagement can be applied varies across the portfolio. For example, in general, voting rights are not attached to fixed income securities, while the applicability to the LDI portfolio is limited. Nonetheless, the Trustee and the Manager expect all investment managers to take an active role in the stewardship of investments where relevant.

## **4. Scheme activity over the year**

During the accounting period, BlackRock was appointed as the Scheme’s fiduciary manager, with the transition taking place in January 2020. Given the timing of this appointment, this statement has been drafted to cover the year to 31 December 2020. It is hoped that this will improve the comparability of this statement with future iterations.

The SIP includes the Trustee’s policy on Environmental, Social and Governance (“ESG”) factors and stewardship. This policy sets out the Trustee’s beliefs on ESG and the processes followed by the Trustee in relation to voting rights and stewardship.

In order to establish these beliefs and produce this policy, the Trustee undertook ESG training provided by the Manager which covered what ESG considerations are, the difference between values- and value-based investing, the Trustee’s beliefs and how these can be incorporated into an investment strategy.

The Trustee receives ESG reporting in the quarterly investment report, which includes aggregate and asset class level reporting of ESG scores relative to an appropriate benchmark. The Trustee uses this to measure how the overall Scheme assets are invested and assess the metrics over time.

The Manager now rates each underlying strategy based on the strength of their ESG policies and actions and provides a summary of the ESG scores to the Trustee on a quarterly basis, as part of the investment report. This allows the Trustee to establish how each underlying manager scores from an ESG perspective as well as measure relative improvements quarter on quarter.

As of 31 December 2020, 4 of the 11 active strategies had an ESG score of “Advanced”, the highest rating. The remaining 7 strategies scored “Aligned”. The Trustee is comfortable that these scores are a strong reflection of their beliefs with all managers having the two highest scores (Advanced and Aligned). Furthermore, the Trustee recognises that the Manager is engaging with the underlying managers to ensure they work to further improve their ESG policies and actions over time. The Manager noted that the ESG rating for one of the Emerging Market Debt managers increased from “Aware” to “Aligned” between March and June 2020, reflecting the progress that manager had made over the year. Further detail was provided to the Trustee in the Q3 2020 Investment Report.

As part of the Trustee’s ESG policy, the Manager is required to request the underlying managers’ policies and their adherence to them. The Manager reviews the policies of each underlying manager to ensure that these are appropriate.

Furthermore, the Manager is required to engage with underlying managers to better understand their actions and understand their level of engagement. As at 31 December 2020, the Manager has noted that the level of voting and engagement varies between managers. Notably, Schroders has been recognised as one of the underlying managers who is very strong in both voting and disclosure. In addition, the Manager has noted that both PIMCO and Wellington have made strong progress in engagement, creating specific teams to focus on engagement of underlying holdings. The Trustee is comfortable that the underlying managers are taking their voting and engagement responsibilities seriously.

The Trustee expects the Manager to continue to work with underlying managers in order to ensure those on the weaker side of voting and engagement take action to make improvements. The Manager has acknowledged that all managers have been taking steps to improve both their voting and engagement and “best in class’ continues to evolve. The Trustee will be closely monitoring developments over the coming years.

The Trustee notes that the manner by which financially material ESG factors will be taken into account in an investment strategy or pooled fund offering will depend on the underlying asset classes within the pooled fund offering and the management style (e.g. active or passive).

The Trustee is satisfied that the fiduciary manager mandate is managed in accordance with its views on financially material considerations, as set out below, and in particular with regards to the selection, retention, and realisation of the underlying investments held.

Asset Class	Actively or Passively Managed?	Comments
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<b>Global equities</b>	Passive	The Trustee acknowledges that the manager must invest in line with specified indices and, therefore, may not be able to disinvest from a particular security if it has concerns relating to ESG. The Trustee does expect the manager to take into account ESG considerations by engaging with companies that form the index, and by exercising voting rights on these companies.
<b>Global equities</b>	Active	Where equities are actively managed, the Trustee expects the manager to integrate ESG factors into the selection, retention, and realisation of the stocks they hold where this is expected to have a material impact on returns. The Trustee also expects the manager to take into account ESG considerations when engaging with companies and by exercising voting rights.
<b>Private markets</b>	Active	The Trustee expects the manager to take financially material ESG factors into account, given the active management style of the fund and the ability of the manager to use its discretion to generate higher risk adjusted returns. Given the nature of the asset class, the Trustee also expects the manager to engage heavily with the underlying investee companies.
<b>Corporate credit</b>	Active	The Trustee expects the manager to take financially material ESG factors into account, given the active management style of the fund and the ability of the manager to use its discretion to generate higher risk adjusted returns. The Trustee also expects the manager to engage with investee companies, where possible, although the Trustee appreciates that fixed income assets do not typically attract voting rights.
<b>Liability driven investment</b>	Active	The underlying assets of the LDI solution consist of government bond funds and derivative contracts, with no underlying investee companies as such. Therefore, the Trustee believes there is less scope for the consideration of ESG issues to improve risk-adjusted returns in this asset class because of the nature of the securities.

## 5. Voting and Engagement

The Trustee has delegated to the Manager the responsibility of collecting the stewardship and engagement reports of the underlying managers and assessing the suitability. The Trustee also expects the Manager to monitor the underlying manager's activity to ensure compliance and confirm that it remains a suitable investment for the Scheme. The Trustee is comfortable that under the governance structure the responsibility sits with the Manager to communicate with the underlying managers and on a regular basis collect information as required.

The Manager has noted that there is variability between managers in the extent of their engagement and voting policies, with equity managers generally having made more progress than fixed income. This Implementation Statement, the first undertaken, focuses on the Scheme's equities managers. It is intended that in future years with the extended policy as set out in the SIP having been in place during the accounting period, there will be greater focus on other asset classes, namely the fixed income managers.

As noted in section 2, the SIP was amended towards the end of the accounting period (in September 2020) to reflect the Trustee's extended policies regarding the stewardship activities and the exercise of voting rights and engagement practices in respect of the Scheme's investment managers. Owing to the changes to the SIP since the accounting period and the emerging best practice and guidance in this area, a proportionate approach has been taken with regards to reporting voting statistics for the period. It is intended that the

Trustee's extended policies in the SIP, through ongoing monitoring, will provide greater transparency and accountability around voting activities by the Scheme's investment managers.

The section below details the investment managers' approach to voting and engagement as well as some examples of significant engagements these managers have made over the 12 months in respect to the funds in which the Scheme is invested.

In addition, summary voting statistics in respect of the Scheme's equities funds over the year to 31 December 2020 have been included.

### **BlackRock:**

The Scheme has a significant portion of its Growth assets invested in funds managed by the Manager. Given the Manager's appointment as both the fiduciary manager as well as one of the investment managers, the Trustee recognises the importance of ensuring that the Manager's own policies and actions are appropriate for the Scheme. The Manager publicises its own policies as well as quarterly updates online (which can be accessed [here](#)) which the Trustee has visibility of. This includes details of any changes to policies and also reports at an aggregate level the impact of its voting and engagement. The Trustee is comfortable that the transparency of the Manager in publicising reports and developments online ensures alignment with the interests of the Scheme.

Whilst it is important to monitor the activities of the Manager at a high level through this publicly available information, it is also important to monitor the voting and engagement activities undertaken on behalf of the Trustee by the Manager on a more granular level.

With the exception of the BlackRock European Equities fund, the Scheme's BlackRock equities funds are passive (i.e. index) strategies. In respect of passive strategies, there is a wide universe of underlying companies which may number in the hundreds if not thousands. Where strategies are actively managed, investments are typically more concentrated. As such, ownership is more concentrated for actively managed strategies and therefore there will be fewer resolutions in which to vote. In addition, actively managed strategies have the option to sell holdings in companies at its discretion. For these reasons, in the context of passive strategies, it is important that voting and engagement rights are exercised and that this is monitored. An example of a significant vote in respect of the BlackRock European Equities fund is included below. The summary voting statistics below illustrate that the voting rights attached the underlying investments in these instances have been exercised to a large extent.

The Manager's approach to voting is described in the table below, along with summary voting statistics for the Manager's equities funds.

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### **Approach to voting**

BlackRock believes it has a responsibility to monitor and provide feedback to companies, in its role as stewards of its clients' investments. The BlackRock Investment Stewardship team does this through engagement with management teams and/or board members on material business issues including environmental, social, and governance matters and, for those clients who have given BlackRock authority, through voting proxies in the best long-term economic interests of its clients.

As long-term investors on behalf of its clients, BlackRock seeks to have regular and continuing dialogue with the companies in which its clients invest. The majority of BlackRock's equity investments are made through indexed strategies, so clients will be invested as long as the companies are in the index. As such, BlackRock places a strong emphasis on engagement with investee companies as disinvestment is often not an option.

BlackRock votes in accordance with BlackRock's Investment Stewardship Global Principles, as well as guidelines for each relevant region. Voting guidelines are reviewed annually and are updated to reflect evolutions in market standards, governance practices and insights gained from engagement over the prior year.

Voting decisions are informed by internally developed proxy voting guidelines, prior engagements with companies, research, and the situational factors for each underlying company. BlackRock ordinarily refrains from abstaining from both shareholder and management proposals, unless abstaining is the valid vote option (in accordance with

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company by-laws) to signal concern to management, there is a lack of disclosure regarding the proposal voted, or an abstention is the only way to implement their voting.

BlackRock appoints an independent fiduciary, Sustainalytics, to vote proxies where BlackRock is required by regulation not to vote itself or where there are actual or perceived conflicts of interest. The independent fiduciary makes voting decisions based solely on BlackRock's publicly available proxy voting guidelines, which aim to advance clients' long-term economic interests, and information disclosed publicly by the relevant companies.

Chr. Hansen is a global bioscience company based in Denmark that develops natural solutions for the food, nutritional, pharmaceutical and agricultural industries.

The 2020 annual general meeting (AGM) included two shareholder proposals which asked the company to align its disclosures with the recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) and to assess the feasibility of country by country (CBCR) tax reporting, in line with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) framework.

BlackRock has engaged with the company to better understand the background of the shareholder proposals and the company's view. The company is in the process of enhancing its annual reporting and is already working on incorporating the recommendations of the TCFD. The company views reporting in line with the TCFD framework as a next step.

However, the board explained that it could not support the shareholder proposal because when and how to commit fully to the TCFD framework will be discussed by Chr. Hansen's Sustainability Board, chaired by the company's CEO, during the financial year 2020/21.

BlackRock recognises that reporting in line with the TCFD is a journey and that companies' TCFD reports will evolve and improve. That said, we believe that companies should be aiming to initiate as soon as is feasible to provide material information to investors, particularly given the urgent need to address climate risk.

BlackRock has been engaging with companies about the importance of climate related disclosures for a number of years. We supported this shareholder proposal given the expectations BlackRock has outlined for all companies to report in line with the TCFD. Support for this resolution is intended to accelerate the company's efforts. If we were dissatisfied with the company's approach, we would have voted against members of Chr. Hansen's Board of Directors, which is typically how we flag significant concerns. BlackRock are confident in the company's commitment to make progress on its TCFD-aligned disclosures.

BlackRock voted for the proposals which required the Company to apply the Recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) as the Framework for Climate-Related Disclosure in the Company's Annual Report (FOR) from Financial Year 2020/21.

**Chr. Hansen  
Holding A/S**  
(Danish  
bioscience  
company)

**Year to 31 December 2020**

<b>BlackRock Europe Equities</b>	Votable proposals	895
	% of resolutions voted	88.7%
	% of resolutions voted against management	8.8%
	% of resolutions abstained	0.7%

**Year to 31 December 2020**

<b>BlackRock US Equities</b>	Votable proposals	7,588
	% of resolutions voted	100.0%
	% of resolutions voted against management	6.1%
	% of resolutions abstained	0.1%



<b>BlackRock UK Equities</b>		<b>Year to 31 December 2020</b>
	Votable proposals	15,622
	% of resolutions voted	97.1%
	% of resolutions voted against management	5.2%
	% of resolutions abstained	1.7%
<b>BlackRock Asia Pacific Equities</b>		<b>Year to 31 December 2020</b>
	Votable proposals	3,133
	% of resolutions voted	99.6%
	% of resolutions voted against management	11.1%
	% of resolutions abstained	0.1%
<b>BlackRock Japan Equities</b>		<b>Year to 31 December 2020</b>
	Votable proposals	6,290
	% of resolutions voted	100.0%
	% of resolutions voted against management	4.2%
	% of resolutions abstained	0.0%
<b>iShares S&amp;P 500 ETF</b>		<b>Year to 31 December 2020</b>
	Votable proposals	6,601
	% of resolutions voted	100.0%
	% of resolutions voted against management	6.1%
	% of resolutions abstained	0%
<b>iShares FSTE MIB ETF</b>		<b>Year to 31 December 2020</b>
	Votable proposals	532
	% of resolutions voted	99.8%
	% of resolutions voted against management	27.1%
	% of resolutions abstained	0.6%

## Other investment managers

The approach to voting and engagement of the Scheme's other two equities managers, Schroders and Wellington, are detailed below. These managers are appointed in relation to the Scheme's Emerging Markets and Global Small Cap holdings respectively..

### Schroders:

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#### Approach

The overriding principle governing Schroders' approach to voting is to act in the best interests of its clients. Schroders' voting policy and guidelines are outlined in its publicly available Environmental, Social and Governance Policy. Schroders evaluates voting issues arising and, where it has the authority to do so, votes on them in line with its fiduciary responsibilities in what it deems to be the interests of its clients. In applying the policy, Schroders considers a range of factors, including the circumstances of each company, performance, governance, strategy and personnel.

It is Schroders' policy to vote all shares at all meetings globally, except where there are onerous restrictions – for example, shareblocking. Schroders utilises the services of ISS and the Investment Association's Institutional Voting Information Services ('IVIS') in conjunction with its own research and policies when formulating voting decisions. With regards to abstaining from votes, Schroders' preference is to support or oppose management and only use an abstention sparingly. Schroders may abstain where mitigating circumstances apply, for example where a company has taken some steps to address shareholder issues.

For certain holdings of less than 0.5% of share capital in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and Hong Kong, Schroders has implemented a custom policy that reflects the views of its ESG policy and is administered by Schroders' proxy voting provider, ISS. Schroders votes on both shareholder and management resolutions.

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#### Anhui Conch (Building materials manufacturer)

Schroders is a member of the Climate Action 100 investor group. In December 2019, the Sustainable Investment team drafted a letter to Anhui Conch on behalf of the group, as part of the group's initiative to engage with the world's 100 largest corporate greenhouse gas emitters.

Schroders encouraged Conch to set a carbon emissions reduction target to 2025 and beyond; to increase its disclosure of climate-related financial information; and to understand more about the CCS (carbon capture and storage) scheme and how effective it is at sequestering carbon.

At the end of December, Schroders received a reply from Conch's Chairman describing the company's efforts to promote environmental protections and reduce carbon emissions. This is a promising start, and Schroders will be following up with recommendations for target setting and reporting.

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#### SK Hynix (Electronic component manufacturer)

Schroders contacted the company to encourage positive change in view of the implementation of the Korean Stewardship Code in 2019, as well as the Financial Services Commission (FSC) and Ministry of Justice's proposed measures to improve corporate practices. Two issues were raised during this engagement:

- Firstly, the shortage of female board members. The lack of gender diversity at board level is common to the South Korean market and reflects the lack of regulatory requirements to improve gender diversity on boards. However, diversity is something Schroders are looking to promote alongside evolving corporate governance codes and best practice in Asia.
  - Secondly, improved disclosure, particularly over attendance at committee meetings. Schroders believe that this information is instructive for shareholders and aligns with the FSC's new focus on corporate disclosure.
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		<b>Year to 31 December 2020</b>
<b>Schroders EM Equities</b>	Votable proposals	1658
	% of resolutions voted	98.3%
	% of resolutions voted against management	6.6%
	% of resolutions abstained	1.1%

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**Wellington:**

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**Approach**

Wellington votes according to its Global Proxy Voting Guidelines and employs a third-party vendor, Glass Lewis, to perform administrative tasks related to proxy voting. Wellington does not automatically vote proxies either with management or in accordance with the recommendations of third-party proxy providers, ISS and Glass Lewis. Wellington has its own ESG Research Team, which provides voting recommendations. Based on these resources and in conjunction with Wellington's Global Proxy Voting Guidelines, individual portfolio managers have authority to make final decisions on voting. There is no "house vote". Wellington's proxy voting system allows different votes to be submitted for the same security. Various portfolio managers holding the same securities may arrive at different voting conclusions for their clients' proxies.

In 2019, Wellington voted against management on one or more proposals at 39% of the annual general meetings in which they voted on behalf of their clients.

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**First Solar**

(Solar panel manufacturer)

First Solar (FSLR) is a solar panel manufacturer that Wellington have held in the portfolio and maintained an ongoing dialogue with other the years. Over 2019 and 2020, portfolio manager Kenny Abrams met or spoke with them on several occasions.

Abrams has believed that First Solar's management team is best in class, as they have been able to sustain an industry-leading balance sheet and technological position over the years. Meanwhile, many of the company's peers have gone bankrupt as the technology moved rapidly and Chinese manufacturers invested in lower cost solutions. Despite headwinds in the industry, the Fund has maintained a position in First Solar due to that high conviction in the management team and in the company's competitive edge.

The high level of competition in the industry led to concerns at First Solar that peers would copy or reverse engineer their technology, and as a result the company disclosed very little about their manufacturing for years. This unfortunately led to low ESG score for the company, which Abrams and his team felt confident was not representative of the company. Through previous site visits and meetings with management, Wellington believed that First Solar were on the leading edge of sustainable manufacturing. Throughout 2019 and 2020, Abrams and the team have encouraged management at First Solar to improve their disclosures, particularly from an environmental standpoint. As a result, they began disclosing their recycling successes and their goal of carbon-neutral lifetime solar cell technology.

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**Tokyo Ohka Kogyo**

(Japanese materials company)

Tokyo Ohka Kogyo (TOK) is a Japanese materials company that specialises in the production of chemicals and equipment used in for manufacturing semiconductors and other electronic equipment. Wellington initiated the position in 2018, as it saw strong demand coming from the semiconductor industry, particularly for the photoresists that TOK specializes in.

While Wellington maintained a favourable fundamental outlook on the company, from an ESG perspective TOK's performance was mixed. It looks quite good environmentally; carbon intensity is 90% below the industry average, and water withdrawal intensity is much lower as well. In social scores, ratings providers have been critical of TOK's chemical safety; Wellington's ESG Team disagrees with this however, as most of the chemicals the company works with dissolve and are safe for both humans and the environment. Relative to other bulk chemical companies, TOK looked fairly strong in both of these regards.

Wellington saw the most room to engage and improve the company's practices in governance, where it did not see enough board independence, diversity, or alignment with shareholder interests. Since the original investment in 2018, Wellington has voted against management ten times, pushing back on board and auditor nominations that were too closely aligned with company management. Through regular engagements, Wellington has also pushed for more transparency on key performance indicators and for a greater portion of compensation to be variable based on meeting these KPIs.

Over the period, Wellington saw a great deal of progress on these initiatives. The board and auditors now have 46% independence from the company and Wellington continues to push them on adding foreign directors, but this domestic bias is common for Japanese boards. Compensation is now 45% variable based on meeting target metrics, up from 30%. In 2020, the company announced new ESG targets, including reducing CO2 emissions by 11%, reducing energy consumption by 15%, and reducing waste by 5%.

Wellington has been encouraged by this progress and the greater transparency offered by TOK. Through regular company meetings and shareholder voting, Wellington will maintain pressure on the board to retain independence, diversify, and ensure that their decision-making is aligned with shareholder interests.

		<b>Year to 31 December 2020</b>
<b>Wellington Small Cap Equities</b>	Votable proposals	1424
	% of resolutions voted	96.6%
	% of resolutions voted against management	2.7%
	% of resolutions abstained	2.9%

## 6. Concluding remarks

The Trustee is comfortable that the policies in the SIP have been followed over the year to 31 December 2020. As this is the first year the Implementation Statement has been required, the Trustee expects that the format and content will evolve over time, in line with guidance and to reflect any future changes in the SIP.

The September 2020 SIP expanded the Trustee's policy in order to incorporate an updated Stewardship Policy as well as a more comprehensive policy on "Engagements with Asset Managers". The Trustee will continue to receive further training in relation to ESG issues and will evolve policies over time, including more widely across the Scheme's assets.

The Trustee recognises the responsibility that institutional investors have to promote high standards of investment stewardship and will continue to use the influence associated with the Scheme's assets in order to positively influence the Scheme's investment managers.

Signed: 

Signed: 

Date: 20/07/2021

On behalf of the Trustee of the Innovia British Pension Scheme

For and on behalf of Align Pensions Limited