

The Representative Body of the Church in Wales Staff Retirement Benefit Scheme – Implementation Statement

31 March 2021

This document reviews the extent to which the Trustees of The Representative Body of the Church in Wales Staff Retirement Benefit Scheme (“the Scheme”) have adhered to the exercise of rights (including voting), the undertaking of engagement activities and monitoring of the investment manager (the Stewardship Policies) during the Scheme’s accounting year (ending 31 March 2021) as set out in the Scheme’s Statement of Investment Principles (“SIP”) dated September 2020. The Trustees further updated their SIP after the end of the Scheme’s accounting year.

Furthermore, this report provides examples of voting behaviour and most significant votes cast on behalf of Trustees during the year.

1. Trustees’ policy regarding engagement

The Trustees acknowledge the constraints they face in terms of influencing change due to the size and nature of the Scheme’s investments and given the Scheme invests in pooled funds. Furthermore, the Trustees note that the investment strategy and decisions of the investment manager cannot be tailored to the Trustees’ policies and the manager is not remunerated directly on this basis. The Trustees, with the help of their advisers, set the investment strategy for the Scheme and select appropriate managers and funds to implement the strategy.

The Trustees do not directly incentivise the investment manager to engage with the issuers of debt or equity to improve their performance. The Trustees do, however, expect the investment manager to participate in such activities as appropriate and necessary to meet the investment objectives of the respective fund. The funds utilised typically include an objective that is expected to result in a positive return over the medium-to-longer term and, as such, the investment manager engagement with the issuers of debt or equity is expected to be undertaken so as to target medium-to-long term value creation. Over the period, the Trustees monitored the performance of the Scheme’s funds through investment reports, produced by EdenTree Investment Management (“EdenTree”).

The Trustees acknowledge the need to be a responsible steward and exercise the rights associated with the Scheme’s investments in a responsible manner. With regards to equity investments, the Trustees have provided the appointed investment manager with full discretion concerning the stewardship of investments.

During the Scheme’s accounting year the Trustees sold the EdenTree Higher Income Fund and transferred their equity holdings to the EdenTree Responsible & Sustainable Global Equity Fund (previously called the Amity International Fund) in order to increase the focus on Environmental, Social and Governance (“ESG”) factors (including climate change) within the Scheme’s investment portfolio.

During the year, the Scheme therefore invested in equities through the following funds:

- EdenTree Responsible & Sustainable Global Equity Fund
- EdenTree Higher Income Fund

The Trustees have reviewed the manager’s voting policies and processes (including most significant votes cast over the period) and the manager’s declared conflicts of interest and have no concerns. If any concerns did arise, the Trustees would engage directly with the investment manager.

The Trustees believe they have followed their engagement policy (as detailed in the Statement of Investment Principles) over the year to 31 March 2021.

2. Manager’s voting policies

During the year, the Scheme invested in equities (which have voting rights) with EdenTree (who manage the underlying securities in the funds in which the Scheme invests).

The Trustees have delegated voting rights to the manager. The Trustees do not have legal rights to the underlying votes of the funds. However, the Trustees review the manager’s voting behaviour and would raise any concerns with the manager. A frequent occurrence of disagreement would result in the Trustees reviewing and potentially terminating the fund if the Trustees felt that the manager’s beliefs were not consistent with those of the Scheme.

EdenTree supports the principle of considered voting believing that proxies have an economic and stewardship value, and that shareholders have a vital role play in encouraging and upholding high standards of global corporate governance from the perspective of being long-term investors. EdenTree therefore seek to vote at all meetings in which the firm has a shareholding.

For international company holdings, EdenTree wholly delegates responsibility for both research and proxy-voting to Glass Lewis & Co.

Further information relating to the manager’s policies and quarterly reports on voting activity can be found at the following website: <https://www.edentreeim.com/insights#screening>

3. Votes cast

The table below provides information relating to voting statistics and most significant votes cast over the year to 31 March 2021. Whilst the Trustees acknowledge that they were not invested in the Higher Income Fund from 18 March 2021, or in the Responsible & Sustainable Global Equity Fund before 18 March 2021, they have chosen to review the voting details of both funds over the Scheme’s accounting year to enable comparisons to be drawn more easily.

	EdenTree Responsible & Sustainable Global Equity Fund	EdenTree Higher Income Fund
Voted in favour of management	85%	90%
Voted against management	15%	9%
Abstained	0%	1%
Number of meetings	69	92
% of resolutions voted on for which Fund manager was eligible	97%	97%
% of meetings voted at least once against management	67%	45%

Source: EdenTree.

4. Manager's conflicts of interest

The manager was asked whether there were any conflicts of interests concerning holdings in their respective funds, with regard to the following criteria, over the period:

1. The asset management firm overall having an apparent client-relationship conflict e.g. the manager provides significant products or services to a company in which they also have an equity or bond holding;
2. Senior staff at the asset management firm holding roles (e.g. as a member of the Board) at a company in which the asset management firm has equity or bond holdings;
3. The asset management firm's stewardship staff having a personal relationship with relevant individuals (e.g. on the Board or the company secretariat) at a company in which the firm has an equity or bond holding;
4. A situation where the interests of different clients diverge. An example of this could be a takeover, where one set of clients is exposed to the target and another set is exposed to the acquirer;
5. Differences between the stewardship policies of managers and their clients; and
6. Any other conflicts across any of the holdings.

EdenTree confirmed that no conflicts of interest (pursuant to the above described criteria) were recorded over the period.

5. Most significant votes cast

The following tables set out a cross section of significant votes undertaken by the investment manager.

EdenTree Responsible & Sustainable Global Equity Fund

Company Name	GSK	Prudential
Date of Vote	May 2020	May 2020
Summary of the resolution	Remuneration proposal	Remuneration proposal
How the firm voted	Against the proposal	Against the proposal
On which criteria has the vote been deemed as 'significant'?	EdenTree deemed the vote to be significant on the basis they voted against the proposal.	EdenTree deemed the vote to be significant on the basis they voted against the proposal.
Outcome of the vote	The vote passed	The vote passed.

Source: Investment Manager

EdenTree Higher Income Fund

Company Name	3 Group	AstraZeneca
Date of Vote	June 2020	April 2020
Summary of the resolution	Governance proposal	Remuneration proposal
How the firm voted	Against the proposal	Against the proposal
On which criteria has the vote been deemed as 'significant'?	EdenTree deemed the vote to be significant on the basis they voted against the proposal.	EdenTree deemed the vote to be significant on the basis they voted against the proposal.
Outcome of the vote	The vote passed	The vote passed.

Source: Investment Manager