

# Engagement Policy Implementation Statement for the Year Ended 30 September 2021

## Griffith Pension Scheme (“the Scheme”)

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This Engagement Policy Implementation Statement (the “Statement”) sets out the Trustees’ assessment of how, and the extent to which, they have followed their engagement policy and their policy with regard to the exercise of rights (including voting rights) attaching to the Scheme’s investments during the one-year period to 30 September 2021 (the “Scheme Year”). The Trustees’ policies are set out in their Statement of Investment Principles (“SIP”) dated August 2020. A copy of the Trustees’ SIP is available at [https://griffithfoods.com/eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2021/02/EU\\_UK\\_GriffithPensionScheme\\_2020.pdf](https://griffithfoods.com/eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2021/02/EU_UK_GriffithPensionScheme_2020.pdf).

This Statement has been produced in accordance with the *Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment and Disclosure) (Amendment and Modification) Regulations 2018* and the *Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment and Disclosure) (Amendment) Regulations 2019* along with guidance published by the Pensions Regulator.

The Trustees invest the assets of the Scheme in a fiduciary arrangement with Mercer Limited (“Mercer”). Under this arrangement Mercer are appointed as a discretionary investment manager and day-to-day management of the Scheme’s assets is by investment in a range of specialist pooled funds (the “Mercer Funds”). Management of the assets of each Mercer Fund is undertaken by a Mercer affiliate, Mercer Global Investments Europe Limited (“MGIE”). MGIE are responsible for the appointment and monitoring of suitably diversified portfolio of specialist third party investment managers for each Mercer Fund’s assets.

Under these arrangements, the Trustees accept that they do not have the ability to directly determine the engagement or voting policies or arrangements of the managers of the Mercer Funds, However, the Trustees have made Mercer aware that they expect MGIE to manage assets in a manner, as far as is practicably possible, that is consistent with the Trustees’ engagement policy and their policy with regard to the exercise of rights attaching to the Scheme’s investments. The Trustees review regular reports from Mercer with regard to the engagement and voting undertaken on their behalf in order to consider whether their policies are being properly implemented.

Section 2 of this Statement sets out the Trustees’ engagement policy and assesses the extent to which it has been followed over the Scheme Year.

Section 3 sets out the Trustees’ policy with regard to the exercising of rights (including voting rights) attaching to the Scheme’s investments and considers how, and the extent to which this policy has been followed during the Scheme Year. This Section also provides detail on voting activity undertaken by the Scheme’s third party investment managers during the Scheme Year.

**Taking the analysis included in Sections 2 to 3 together, it is the Trustees’ belief that their policies with regard to engagement and the exercise of rights attaching to investments has been successfully followed during the Scheme Year.**

## **2. TRUSTEES' POLICY ON ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND GOVERNANCE (ESG) ISSUES, INCLUDING CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **Policy Summary**

The Trustees believe that good stewardship and the incorporation of ESG factors into their investment decision-making processes can have a material impact on the financial and non-financial performance of the Scheme's assets over the medium and longer term. The Trustees also recognise that long-term sustainability issues, particularly climate change, present risks and opportunities that require the Trustees' explicit consideration.

It is the Trustees' policy that the third party investment managers appointed by Mercer, via Mercer Global Investments Europe (MGIE), report in line with established best practice such as the UK Stewardship Code and UK Corporate Governance Code, where possible, including public disclosure of compliance via an external website, when managing the Scheme's assets. Further, in appointing the third party asset managers, the Trustees' expect MGIE to select managers where it believes the managers will engage directly with issuers in order to improve their financial and non-financial performances over the medium to long term. To monitor the third party investment managers' compliance with this expectation, the Trustees consider regular reports from Mercer that include an assessment of each third party manager's engagement activity.

Should the Trustees consider that Mercer, MGIE or the third party asset managers, have failed to align their own engagement policies with those of the Trustees, the Trustees will notify Mercer and consider disinvesting some or all of the assets held in the Mercer Funds and/or seek to renegotiate commercial terms with Mercer.

### **How the Policy has been implemented over the Scheme Year**

The following page shows the work that was undertaken during the year relating to the Trustees' policy on ESG factors, stewardship and climate change.

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## Policy Updates

The Trustees consider how ESG, climate change and stewardship is integrated within Mercer's, and MGIE's, investment processes and those of the underlying asset managers in the monitoring process. Mercer, and MGIE, have provided reporting to the Trustees on a regular basis.

The Mercer Sustainability Policy is reviewed regularly. In March 2021 there was an update in relation to Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation ("SFDR") implementation.

In line with the requirements of the EU Shareholder Rights Directive II, Mercer have implemented a standalone Engagement Policy to specifically address the requirements of the directive.

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## Approach to Exclusions

As an overarching principle, Mercer and MGIE prefer an approach of positive engagement rather than negative divestment. However Mercer and MGIE recognises that there are a number of cases in which investors deem it unacceptable to profit from certain areas and therefore exclusions will be appropriate.

Controversial and civilian weapons, and tobacco are excluded from active equity and fixed income funds, and passive equity funds. The Mercer sustainability-themed funds (which are part of the Mercer Diversified Growth Fund) have additional exclusions, for example covering gambling, alcohol, adult entertainment and fossil fuels.

In addition, Mercer and MGIE monitors for high-severity breaches of the UN Global Compact ("UNGC") Principles that relate to human rights, environmental and corruption issues.

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## Climate Change Reporting and Carbon Foot-printing

Mercer undertake climate scenario modelling and stress testing on the Mercer multi sector funds used by the Scheme, in line with the Task Force on Climate Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) recommendations. The results of the latest climate scenario modelling are within the TCFD compliant Climate Change Management Report. The findings of the modelling are integrated into the asset allocation and portfolio construction decisions, with portfolios increasingly aligned with a 2°C scenario, where consistent with investment objectives and for consistency with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

The headline Weighted Average Carbon Intensity ("WACI") metric for all equity funds is reporting in the Quarterly Investment Reports whilst an in-depth analysis of top 5 carbon emitters, the top 5 contributors to the WACI, and the trends over time is completed on an annual basis. The latest in-depth analysis is as at 30 June 2021 and also used by the Mercer and MGIE investment team to drive engagement with managers.

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## Sustainability-themed investments

An allocation to passive Sustainable Equities (via Mercer Diversified Growth Fund) is included within the Scheme's portfolio of Growth assets, with the strategic allocation to Sustainable Equities now accounting for c.8% of the Mercer Diversified Growth Fund Portfolio.

A detailed standalone report sustainability monitoring report is produced for the passive Sustainable Global Equity fund on a semi-annual basis, including a more granular breakdown of the fund against ESG metrics, for example the UN Sustainability Development Goals.

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## ESG Rating Review

ESG ratings assigned by Mercer are included in the investment performance reports produced by Mercer on a quarterly basis and reviewed by the Trustees. ESG ratings are reviewed by MGIE during quarterly monitoring processes, with a more comprehensive review performed annually - which seeks evidence of positive momentum on ESG integration. The Mercer funds overall ESG rating compared to the appropriate universe of strategies in Mercer's global investment manager database.

As at 31 December 2021, in the Annual ESG review provided by Mercer, it was reported that 88% of Mercer Funds now have an ESG rating equal to or above their asset class universe. This compares to 97% at the end of 2020 but it should be noted that the scope of the review expanded in 2021 to include all liquid multi-client Mercer Funds.

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## Diversity

From 31 December 2020, gender diversity statistics have also been included in the quarterly reporting for the Mercer equity funds and this is being built into a broader Mercer Investment Solutions International policy on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, sitting alongside Mercer's established Diversity Charter.

Mercer Investment Solutions has made a commitment to target at least 30% of all Key Decision Makers ('KDM's) across Mercer funds being non-male by 2030. This commitment will apply to both the KDM within Mercer's own portfolio management team and the sub-investment manager teams. Mercer consider broader forms of diversity in its decision-making, but the current target explicitly applies to gender diversity. As at 30 September 2021 33% of the KDM's within Mercer IS team are non-male, and the long term target is 50%. Within the Fixed Income universe the average fund has 8% non-male KDM's and within the average EMEA Active Equity universe the average is 12%. Figures relating to Mercer Fixed Income and Active Equity Funds are currently slightly ahead at 9% and 13%.

### 3. TRUSTEES' POLICY ON EXERCISE OF RIGHTS (INCLUDING VOTING RIGHTS) ATTACHING TO SCHEME INVESTMENTS

#### Policy

The Trustees' policy is to delegate responsibility for the exercising of rights (including voting rights) attaching to the Scheme's investments to the third party investment managers appointed by Mercer on the Trustees' behalf.

This is because any voting rights that do apply with respect to the underlying investments attached to the Mercer Funds are, ultimately, delegated to the third party investment managers appointed by MGIE. In delegating these rights, MGIE accepts that managers may have detailed knowledge of both the governance and the operations of the investee companies and so permits the managers to vote based on their own proxy-voting execution policy, and taking account of current best practice including the UK Corporate Governance Code and the UK Stewardship Code. As such the Trustees do not use the direct services of a proxy voter.

Voting: As part of the monitoring of managers' approaches to voting, MGIE assesses how managers are voting against management and seeks to obtain the rationale behind voting activities, particularly in cases where split votes may occur (where managers vote in different ways for the same proposal). MGIE portfolio managers will use these results to inform their engagements with managers on their voting activities.

Set out below is a summary of voting activity for the year to 30 September 2021 for a range of Mercer Funds that the Scheme's assets are invested in directly or via the Mercer Diversified Growth Fund. This may include information in relation to funds that the Scheme's assets were no longer invested in at the year end. The statistics set out in the table below are drawn from the Glass Lewis voting system (via Mercer's custodian). Typically, votes exercised against management can indicate a thoughtful and active approach. This is particularly visible where votes have been exercised to escalate engagement objectives. The expectation is for all shares to be voted.

"Unvoted" reflects instances where managers have not actioned a vote – these are specific areas where MGIE will follow up to ensure managers have appropriate systems in place to ensure all votes are actioned. "Other" reflects instances where managers have withheld votes in Power of Attorney markets, share blocking markets or where conflicts of interest may be present. "Mixed" refers to occasions where underlying managers have voted differently for the same proposal. Vote decisions of this nature are monitored and fed into the wider engagement process with manager.

Fund Name	Total Proposals	Vote Decision					For/Against Mgmt	
		For	Against	Abstain	Do not vote	Others*	For	Against
Mercer Passive Emerging Markets Equity Fund	24,889	84%	14%	2%	0%	0%	85%	15%
Mercer Passive Low Volatility Equity UCITS CCF	3,966	84%	14%	0%	0%	2%	82%	18%
Mercer Passive Sustainable Global Equity UCITS CCF	15,947	80%	17%	1%	0%	2%	80%	20%
Mercer Passive Emerging Markets Equity Fund	24,889	84%	14%	2%	0%	0%	85%	15%
Mercer Passive Global Listed Infrastructure UCITS	3,681	77%	18%	4%	0%	1%	80%	20%
Mercer Passive Global REITS UCITS CCF	3,006	82%	14%	0%	0%	4%	82%	18%

**Significant Votes:** Mercer has based its definition of significant votes on its Beliefs, Materiality and Impact (“BMI”) Framework. In order to capture this in the monitoring and reporting of managers voting activities, significant votes focus on proposals covering priority areas identified by the BMI Framework.

## Sample of the most significant votes (1/2)



Fund	Shareholder Proposal (“SHP”)	Issuer	Vote Decision
<b>Mercer Passive Global Listed Infrastructure UCITS</b>	Shareholder Proposal Regarding Annual Shareholder Vote on Climate Action Plan	Canadian Pacific Railway Ltd	For
	Shareholder Proposal Regarding Formation of a Human Rights Risk Oversight Committee	American Tower	Against
	Shareholder Proposal Regarding Lobbying Activity Alignment with the Paris Agreement	Norfolk Southern Corp., Sempra Energy	For
	Shareholder Proposal Regarding Decarbonisation of Power Generation Business	Kansai Electric Power Company Incorporated	For
<b>Mercer Passive Global Small Cap Equity</b>	Shareholder Proposal Regarding GHG Emissions Report	Bloomin Brands Inc.	For
	Shareholder Proposal Regarding Increasing Renewable Energy	Shikoku Electric	Against
	Shareholder Proposal Regarding Report on Climate-Related Activities	PNM Resources Inc	Against
<b>Mercer Passive Low Volatility Equity UCITS CCF</b>	Shareholder Proposal Regarding Climate Report	Berkshire Hathaway	For
	Shareholder Proposal Regarding Deforestation Report	Proctor & Gamble	For
	Shareholder Proposal Regarding Report on Climate related Activities	Walmart	Against
	Shareholder Proposal Regarding Formation of a Human Rights Risk Oversight Committee	American Tower Corp	Against

## Sample of the most significant votes (2/2)



Fund	Shareholder Proposal ("SHP")	Issuer	Vote Decision
<b>Mercer Passive Sustainable Global Equity UCITS CCF</b>	Shareholder Proposal Regarding Aligning Business Strategy to the Paris Agreement	Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group, INc.	For
	Shareholder Proposal Regarding Exclusion of Fossil Fuels as Investment Objects	Scandinaviska	Against
	Shareholder Proposal Regarding Lobbying Activity Alignment with the Paris Agreement	RIO Tinto Ltd., Delta Air Lines, Inc.	For
	Shareholder Proposal Regarding Report on Plans to Reduce Total Contribution to Climate Change	United Parcel Service, Inc.	For
<b>Mercer Passive Emerging MARKETS Equity Fund</b>	Management Proposal Regarding The Company's Eligibility for the public issuance of green corporate bonds	Shanghai Lingang Holdings Corporation Limited	For
	Management Proposal Regarding Implementation of a Green Production Base Construction Project by a Company	Angel Yeast Co., Ltd.	For