



# DYFED PENSION FUND

Responsible Investment Policy

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Administered by:



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## **Introduction**

Carmarthenshire County Council is the Administering Authority for the Dyfed Pension Fund (the Fund). The Fund administers the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) on behalf of around 51,500 members and 69 employers.

The Pension Committee is the decision-making body for the Fund, advised by Fund officers in their role as scheme administrators and the Independent Investment Adviser.

The day-to-day management of the Fund's investments are delegated to Investment Managers. Regular meetings are held with these Managers, where performance and governance issues including responsible investment topics are discussed.

## **Responsible Investment**

The Fund is a long-term investor aiming to deliver a sustainable pension fund for all stakeholders and has a fiduciary duty to act in the best, long-term, interests of the Fund's employers and scheme members.

Responsible Investment is a fundamental part of the Fund's overarching investment strategy as set out in the Investment Strategy Statement. That is, to maximise returns subject to an acceptable level of risk whilst increasing certainty of cost for employers and minimising the long-term cost of the scheme. The Fund believes that consideration of Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance ("ESG") factors are fundamental to this, particularly where they are likely to impact on the overarching investment objective.

The Fund's approach aims to ensure that consideration of ESG factors is embedded in the investment process, utilising the various tools available to manage ESG risks and to harness opportunities presented by ESG factors.

The Fund's core principles of responsible investment are:

1. To apply long-term thinking to deliver long-term sustainable returns. from well-governed assets.
2. To use an evidence-based long term investment appraisal to inform decision-making in the implementation of Responsible Investment principles.
3. To consider the costs of Responsible Investment decisions consistent with our fiduciary duties.

To date, the Fund's approach to Responsible Investment has largely been to delegate this to its underlying investment managers and WPP, in particular, as part of their overall ESG duties.

## Investment Beliefs

The primary objective of the Fund is to provide pension and lump sum benefits for members on their retirement and/or benefits on death before or after retirement for their dependants, in accordance with LGPS Regulations.

The investment objective is therefore to maximise returns subject to an acceptable level of risk (including climate and other ESG risks) whilst increasing certainty of cost for employers and minimising the long term cost of the scheme. Having a thorough understanding of the risks facing the Fund is crucial and these are covered later in this Policy.

The Fund's investment beliefs which help to inform the investment strategy are as follows:

- Funding, investment strategy and contribution rates are linked
- The strategic asset allocation is the key factor in determining the risk and return profile of the Fund's investments
- Effective governance structures, which promote decisiveness, efficiency and accountability, can add value to the Fund.
- Investing over the long term provides opportunities to improve returns and allows the Fund to take some risks (e.g. volatility, illiquidity) which might not otherwise be acceptable.
- Diversification across and within asset classes can help to mitigate against adverse market conditions and assist the Fund to produce a smoother return profile due to returns coming from a range of different sources.
- Managing risk is a multi-dimensional and complex task but the overriding principle is to take the appropriate level of risk, to achieve the Fund's objectives
- ESG factors are important drivers of investment returns and risks over the long term. Climate change (UN SDG 13), in particular, has the potential materially to impact the returns and risk profile of various assets. The committee believes that both adjusting its investment allocations and engagement with investee companies can help to achieve its responsible investment goals.
- Stewardship is an important responsibility and one which can be delegated. Engaging with investee companies is an important part of this and is likely to be more effective than divestment in improving desired outcomes.
- Value for money from investments is important, not just absolute costs. Asset pooling can help reduce costs whilst providing more choice of investments and will therefore be additive to Fund returns
- Active management can add value to returns over the long term.

## **Environmental, Social and Governance Risks**

The Fund's investment strategy includes its own approach on Responsible Investment. Non-compliance would expose the Fund to financial and reputational risk. The Fund believes that effective management of financially material Responsible Investment risks should support the Fund's requirement to protect returns over the long term. The Fund will seek to further integrate Responsible Investment factors into the investment process across all relevant asset classes.

## **Role of the Pension Board**

The Local Pension Board ('the Board') is established in accordance with the Public Service Pensions Act 2013.

The role and purpose of the Board is to:

- Secure compliance with the regulations, and other legislation relating to the governance and administration of the Scheme as prescribed by the Pensions Regulator and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)
- Ensure effective and efficient governance and administration of the Scheme.

The Board provides oversight of compliance and governance matters, including Responsible Investment, and can make recommendations to the Pension Committee accordingly. The members of the Board do not have the right to vote on Fund decisions but can input positively and support improvements in overall service delivery.

## **Stock Lending**

The Committee believes that stock lending can be an effective way to generate additional revenue in accordance with its investment strategy. However, the Committee also recognises that stock lending should not be used to the detriment of being a responsible investor. It is recognised that stock lending may inhibit the full application of a voting policy as votes may not be cast on stock on loan and so there is a balance to be achieved as a result.

The Committee has agreed to stock lending activity being undertaken on the WPP's actively managed pooled fund investments. However, within the WPP's stock lending policy is an explicit requirement not to lend 100% of holdings in any single stock so that the WPP, in collaboration with its Constituent Authorities and advisors, can express views and take a policy stance on any topic it deems worthy through its right to vote.

The Committee, via the WPP, will continue to monitor the impact of this policy stance and revise its stance if required. The Fund, via the WPP, also retains the right to recall stock, if required, as part of its stock lending arrangements.

## Engagement

The Committee believes that engagement with investee companies can help to achieve its responsible investment goals. Additionally, the Committee encourages the Fund's asset managers to engage with the companies they invest in, where they believe that value can be added, or risk can be reduced.

The Wales Pension Partnership is a signatory to the UK Stewardship Code 2020 and is an affiliate member of Pensions for Purpose. It has appointed Robeco as its voting and engagement manager, to ensure a proactive approach to engagement with WPP's investee companies, as well as effective use of its voting power as a shareholder.

In addition, the Fund believes in collective engagement and is a member of the LAPFF, through which it exercises a voice across a range of ESG topics.

The Fund also engages with groups such as Divest Dyfed and Friends of the Earth Wales on a regular basis where there is an exchange of views and informed discussions take place.

In addition, the Fund engages with its members via the annual newsletter, Annual Consultative Meeting and a dedicated website.

## Climate Change

The Fund recognises the importance in addressing the financial risks associated with climate change through its Investment Strategy Statement, and believes that:

- Climate change presents a systemic risk to the overall stability of every economy and country, with the potential to impact on the members, employers, and all of the holdings in the Fund's investment portfolio.
- Considering the impacts of climate change is not only the legal or fiduciary duty of the Fund but is also consistent with the long-term nature of the Fund. The Fund's investments need to be sustainable to be in the best interests of all key stakeholders. To this end, the Fund is committed to transition its investments towards net zero GHG emissions over the medium term. The Fund will regularly report on progress, including establishing intermediate targets, one of which is reducing the carbon intensity of the Fund's equities by at least the Paris aligned target of 7% per annum.
- Engagement is the best approach to enabling the change required to address the Climate Emergency. However selective risk-based divestment is appropriate to facilitate the move to a low carbon economy.
- As well as creating risk, it also presents opportunities to make selective investments that achieve the required returns, whilst at the same time make a positive social and environmental impact, such as environmental infrastructure and clean energy and energy efficiency products and services.

The Fund also takes account of WPP's Responsible Investment and Climate Risk Policies.

## Human Rights

Societal expectations of companies with regard to human rights are increasing, as are legal and regulatory obligations. There is an increasing expectation on companies to ensure that they protect human rights in line with international, legal and regulatory obligations on a global scale. The Committee recognises its role in supporting this principle and to urge improvement in company practice through its Voting & Engagement activity where this is warranted.

The Committee recognises that it has an obligation to respect human rights as outlined within the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Humans Rights (UNGP's) and to encourage good practice which protects against violation and exploitation. This extends to expecting compliance with normative standards and relevant legislation.

Stewardship activity around human rights is pursued both through the Fund's membership of LAPFF and via the engagement activity undertaken by WPP's Voting and Engagement provider, where the latter has specific focus on engagement themes tied to human rights issues over a three-year time horizon.

The Committee expects these efforts to result in greater transparency in order to drive real world improvements.