

Engagement Policy Implementation Statement (“EPIS”)

Biddle Pension & Life Assurance Plan (the “Plan”)

Plan Year End – 5 April 2023

The purpose of the EPIS is for us, the Trustees of the Biddle Pension & Life Assurance Plan (the “Plan”), to explain what we have done during the year ending 5 April 2023 to achieve certain policies and objectives set out in the Statement of Investment Principles (“SIP”). It includes:

1. How our policies in the SIP about asset stewardship (including both voting and engagement activity) in relation to the Plan’s investments have been followed during the year; and
2. How we have exercised our voting rights or how these rights have been exercised on our behalf, including the use of any proxy voting advisory services, and the ‘most significant’ votes cast over the reporting year.

Our conclusion

Based on the activity we have undertaken during the year, we believe that the policies set out in the SIP have been implemented effectively. In our view, most of the Plan’s material investment managers were able to disclose good evidence of voting and/or engagement activity. We delegate the management of the Scheme’s assets to our fiduciary manager Aon Investments Limited (“Aon”), and we are comfortable with the management and the monitoring of ESG integration and stewardship of the underlying managers that has been carried out on our behalf.

How voting and engagement policies have been followed

The Plan is invested entirely in pooled funds, and so the responsibility for voting and engagement is delegated to the Plan's investment managers. We reviewed the stewardship activity of the material investment managers carried out over the Plan year and in our view, most of the investment managers were able to disclose adequate evidence of voting and/or engagement activity. More information on the stewardship activity carried out by the Plan's investment managers can be found in the following sections of this report.

Over the reporting year, we received updates on important issues from our investment adviser, Aon Investments Limited ("Aon"). These updates covered a number of areas including performance, strategy and risk. Aon also reports quarterly Environment Social Governance ("ESG") ratings for the funds the Plan is invested in, where available.

The Plan's stewardship policy can be found in the SIP: <https://www.biddle-air.co.uk/en/sectors/public>.

Our Engagement Action Plan

Some of our underlying managers were not able to provide all the information requested:

- Legal and General Investment Management Limited ("LGIM") and BlackRock provided a comprehensive list on fund level engagements, which we find encouraging, but they did not provide detailed engagement examples specific to the fund in which we are invested, as per the Investment Consultants Sustainability Working Group ("ICSWG") industry standard, and also did not provide firm level engagement information.
- Aegon's provision of fund-level engagement themes was limited.

Our fiduciary manager, Aon, will continue to engage with these managers to better understand their engagement practices and discuss the areas that are behind their peers.

What is stewardship?

Stewardship is investors using their influence over current or potential investees/issuers, policy makers, service providers and other stakeholders to create long-term value for clients and beneficiaries leading to sustainable benefits for the economy, the environment and society.

This includes prioritising which ESG issues to focus on, engaging with investees/issuers, and exercising voting rights.

Differing ownership structures means stewardship practices often differ between asset classes.

Source: UN PRI

Our fiduciary manager's engagement activity

We delegate the management of the Plan's defined benefit assets to our fiduciary manager, Aon Investments Limited ("Aon"). Aon manages the Plan's assets in a range of funds which can include multi-asset, multi-manager and liability matching funds. Aon selects the underlying investment managers on our behalf.

We delegate monitoring of ESG integration and stewardship of the underlying managers to Aon. We have reviewed Aon's latest annual Stewardship Report and we believe it shows that Aon is using its resources to effectively influence positive outcomes in the funds in which it invests.

Over the year, Aon held several engagement meetings with many of the underlying managers in its strategies. Aon discussed ESG integration, stewardship, climate, biodiversity and modern slavery with the investment managers. Aon provided feedback to the managers after these meetings with the aim of improving the standard of ESG integration across its portfolios.

Over the year, Aon engaged with the industry through white papers, working groups, webinars and network events, as well as responding to multiple consultations.

In 2021, Aon committed to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, with a 50% reduction by 2030 for its fully delegated clients' portfolios and defined contribution default strategies (relative to baseline year of 2019).

Aon also successfully renewed its signatory status to the 2020 UK Stewardship Code.

What is fiduciary management?

Fiduciary management is the delegation of some, or all, of the day-to-day investment decisions and implementation to a fiduciary manager. But the trustees still retain responsibility for setting the high-level investment strategy.

In fiduciary management arrangements, the trustees will often delegate monitoring ESG integration and asset stewardship to its fiduciary manager.

Our underlying managers' voting activity

Good asset stewardship means being aware and active on voting issues, corporate actions and other responsibilities tied to owning a company's stock. Understanding and monitoring the stewardship that investment managers practice in relation to the Plan's investments is an important factor in deciding whether a manager remains the right choice for the Plan.

Voting rights are attached to listed equity shares, including equities held in multi-asset funds. We expect the Plan's equity-owning investment managers to responsibly exercise their voting rights.

Voting statistics

The table below shows the voting statistics for each of the Plan's material funds with voting rights for the year to 31 March 2023. Managers collate voting information on a quarterly basis. The voting information provided is for the year to 31 March 2023 which broadly matches the Plan year.

	Number of resolutions eligible to vote on	% of resolutions voted	% of votes against management	% of votes abstained from
LGIM – Multi Factor Equity Fund	11,712	99.8%	20.2%	0.1%
BlackRock – Emerging Markets Equity Fund	33,350	97.0%	11.0%	3.0%

Source: Managers.

Use of proxy voting advisers

Many investment managers use proxy voting advisers to help them fulfil their stewardship duties. Proxy voting advisers provide recommendations to institutional investors on how to vote at shareholder meetings on issues such as climate change, executive pay and board composition. They can also provide voting execution, research, record keeping and other services.

Responsible investors will dedicate time and resources towards making their own informed decisions, rather than solely relying on their adviser's recommendations.

The table below describes how the Plan's managers use proxy voting advisers.

	Description of use of proxy voting advisers <i>Wording provided directly by managers</i>
LGIM	LGIM's Investment Stewardship team uses Institutional Shareholder Services' (ISS) 'ProxyExchange' electronic voting platform to electronically vote clients' shares. All voting decisions are made by LGIM and we do not outsource any part of the strategic decisions. To ensure our proxy provider votes in accordance with our position on ESG, we have put in place a custom voting policy with specific voting instructions.
BlackRock	Voting decisions are made by members of the BlackRock Investment Stewardship team with input from investment colleagues as required, in each case, in accordance with BlackRock's Global Principles and custom market-specific voting guidelines. While we subscribe to research from the proxy advisory firms ISS and Glass Lewis, it is just one among many inputs into our vote analysis process, and we do not blindly follow their recommendations on how to vote. We primarily use proxy research firms to synthesise corporate governance information and analysis into a concise, easily reviewable format so that our investment stewardship analysts can readily identify and prioritise those companies where our own additional research and engagement would be beneficial. Other sources of information we use include the company's own reporting (such as the proxy statement

Why is voting important?

Voting is an essential tool for listed equity investors to communicate their views to a company and input into key business decisions. Resolutions proposed by shareholders increasingly relate to social and environmental issues

Source: UN PRI

Why use a proxy voting adviser?

Outsourcing voting activities to proxy advisers enables managers that invest in thousands of companies to participate in many more votes than they would without their support.

and the website), our engagement and voting history with the company, and the views of our active investors, public information and ESG research.

Source: Managers

Significant voting examples

To illustrate the voting activity being carried out on our behalf, we asked the Plan's investment managers to provide a selection of what they consider to be the most significant votes in relation to the Plan's funds. A sample of these significant votes can be found in the appendix to this statement.

Our underlying managers' engagement activity

Engagement is when an investor communicates with current (or potential) investee companies (or issuers) to improve their ESG practices, sustainability outcomes or public disclosure. Good engagement identifies relevant ESG issues, sets objectives, tracks results, maps escalation strategies and incorporates findings into investment decision-making.

The table below shows some of the engagement activity carried out by the Plan's material managers. The managers have provided information for the most recent calendar year available. Some of the information provided is at a firm level i.e. is not necessarily specific to the fund invested in by the Plan.

Funds	Number of engagements		Themes engaged on at a fund-level
	Fund specific	Firm level	
LGIM – Multi-Factor Equity Fund	279	<i>Not provided</i>	Environment – Climate change Social – Human and labour rights (e.g. supply chain rights, community relations), Human capital management (e.g. inclusion & diversity, employee terms, safety), Inequality, Public health Governance – Board Effectiveness - Diversity, Board Effectiveness - Other, Remuneration Strategy, Financial and Reporting – Reporting (e.g. audit, accounting, sustainability reporting), Strategy/purpose, and Others
BlackRock – Emerging Markets Equity Fund	450	<i>Not provided</i>	Environment – Climate Risk Management, Operational Sustainability, Social – Human Capital Management, Social Risks and Opportunities Governance – Corporate Strategy, Board Composition and Effectiveness, Business Oversight/Risk Management, Remuneration
Aegon – European Asset Backed Securities Fund	132	441	Environment – Climate change, Social Governance Other – Proprietary ESG assessment
Robeco – Sustainable Development Goals Credit Income Fund	11	252	Environment – Climate change, pollution and waste Social – Human and labour rights (e.g. supply chain rights, community relations) Governance – Board Effectiveness Others – SDG Engagement
Abrdn – Climate Transition Bond Fund	44	2,484	Strategy, Financial and Reporting – Capital allocation, Reporting (e.g. audit, accounting, sustainability reporting), Financial performance, Strategy/purpose, Risk management (e.g. operational risks, cyber/information security, product risks), Other – Climate, Environment, Human Rights & Stakeholders, Corporate Behaviour, Corporate Governance.

Source: Managers

Data limitations

At the time of writing, the following managers did not provide all the information we requested:

- LGIM and BlackRock did not provide firm-level engagement information.
- Aegon's provision of fund-level engagement themes was limited.

This report does not include commentary on the Plan's annuity policies, liability driven investments or cash, because of the limited materiality of stewardship to these asset classes. Further this report does not include the additional voluntary contributions ("AVCs") due to the relatively small proportion of the Plan's assets that are held as AVCs.

Appendix – Significant Voting Examples

In the table below are some significant vote examples provided by the Plan's managers. We consider a significant vote to be one which the manager considers significant. Managers use a wide variety of criteria to determine what they consider a significant vote, some of which are outlined in the examples below.

LGIM – Multi Factor Equity Fund	Company name	Synopsys, Inc.
	Date of vote	12-Apr-2022
	Approximate size of fund's/mandate's holding as at the date of the vote (as % of portfolio)	0.8%
	Summary of the resolution	Resolution 1a - Elect Director Aart J. de Geus
	How you voted	Against
	Where you voted against management, did you communicate your intent to the company ahead of the vote?	LGIM publicly communicates its vote instructions on its website with the rationale for all votes against management. It is our policy not to engage with our investee companies in the three weeks prior to an AGM as our engagement is not limited to shareholder meeting topics.
	Rationale for the voting decision	Joint Chair/CEO: A vote against is applied as LGIM expects companies to separate the roles of Chair and CEO due to risk management and oversight. Independence: A vote against is applied as LGIM expects a board to be regularly refreshed in order to maintain an appropriate mix of independence, relevant skills, experience, tenure, and background.
	Outcome of the vote	Failed
	Implications of the outcome eg were there any lessons learned and what likely future steps will you take in response to the outcome?	LGIM will continue to engage with our investee companies, publicly advocate our position on this issue and monitor company and market-level progress.
	On which criteria have you assessed this vote to be "most significant"?	LGIM considers this vote to be significant as it is in application of an escalation of our vote policy on the topic of the combination of the board chair and CEO (escalation of engagement by vote). LGIM has a longstanding policy advocating for the separation of the roles of CEO and board chair. These two roles are substantially different, requiring distinct skills and experiences. Since 2015 we have supported shareholder proposals seeking the appointment of independent board chairs, and since 2020 we have voted against all combined board chair/CEO roles.
BlackRock – Emerging Markets Equity Fund	Company name	Grupo Mexico S.A.B. de C.V.
	Date of vote	28-Apr-2022
	Approximate size of fund's/mandate's holding as at the date of the vote (as % of portfolio)	BlackRock does not typically provide this information. We have directed clients to look this information up themselves.
	Summary of the resolution	Elect or Ratify Directors; Verify Independence of Board Members; Elect or Ratify Chairmen and Members of Board Committees
	How you voted	Against

Where you voted against management, did you communicate your intent to the company ahead of the vote?	We endeavor to communicate to companies when we intend to vote against management, either before or just after casting votes in advance of the shareholder meeting. We publish our voting guidelines to help clients and companies understand our thinking on key governance matters that are commonly put to a shareholder vote. They are the benchmark against which we assess a company's approach to corporate governance and the items on the agenda to be voted on at the shareholder meeting. We apply our guidelines pragmatically, taking into account a company's unique circumstances where relevant. Our voting decisions reflect our analysis of company disclosures, third party research and, where relevant, insights from recent and past company engagement and our active investment colleagues.
Rationale for the voting decision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Company does not meet our expectations of having adequate climate risk disclosures against all 4 pillars of TCFD. 2. The company does not meet our expectations of having adequate climate-related metrics and targets. 3. Vote against due to lack of disclosure.
Outcome of the vote	Pass
Implications of the outcome eg were there any lessons learned and what likely future steps will you take in response to the outcome?	BlackRock's approach to corporate governance and stewardship is explained in our Global Principles. Our Global Principles describe our philosophy on stewardship, including how we monitor and engage with companies. These high-level principles are the framework for our more detailed, market-specific voting guidelines. We do not see engagement as one conversation. We have ongoing direct dialogue with companies to explain our views and how we evaluate their actions on relevant ESG issues over time. Where we have concerns that are not addressed by these conversations, we may vote against management for their action or inaction. Where concerns are raised either through voting or during engagement, we monitor developments and assess whether the company has addressed our concerns.
On which criteria have you assessed this vote to be "most significant"?	Vote Bulletin

Source: Managers