

# **Implementation Statement**

Bank of Baroda (1976) Pension and Life Assurance  
Scheme  
December 2020

# 1. Introduction

Under regulatory requirements, trustees are required to prepare and review an implementation statement outlining their approach dealing with certain specific matters with regards to their Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principals outlined in their latest Statement of Investment Principles (SIP).

This Statement sets out the principles governing decisions about the ESG aspect of investment of the assets of the Bank of Baroda (1976) Pension and life Assurance Scheme (the Scheme). In preparing it, the Trustees obtained written reporting on these matters from Goddard Perry Consultants Limited as its investment consultants.

## 2. ESG Principles

### Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance Policies

In endeavouring to invest in best financial interests of the beneficiaries, the Trustees have elected to invest through pooled funds. They acknowledge that they cannot directly influence the environmental, social and governance (“ESG”) policies and practices of the companies in which the pooled funds invest. The Trustees also acknowledge that where pooled index fund vehicles are employed which track composite market indices it is not always possible to take ESG considerations into account due to the nature of the investment.

In Principle, the Trustees believe that ESG factors can have an impact on the performance of its investments and that the management of ESG risks and the exploitation of ESG opportunities, especially in relation to climate change, can add value to the portfolio. To that effect, the Trustees expects its fund managers, where appropriate, to have integrated ESG factors as part of their investment analysis and decision-making process.

Appropriate weight will be given to ESG factors in the appointment of fund managers.

The Trustees’ views that the stewardship responsibilities attached to the ownership of shares is important but recognise that investment in pooled funds limits their ability to be fully involved. The Trustees expect their investment managers to report in detail on how they have exercised voting rights attached to shares (including across passive equity mandates). Managers are expected to be signatories to the FRC UK Stewardship Code.

Further information on the Trustees’ policies can be found in the latest SIP dated September 2019.

In the Trustees’ opinion, their policies, as recorded in the SIP, have been followed over the 12 -month period to 31 December 2020.

The following pages illustrate how the Trustees, through their fund managers, have followed their stewardship and engagement policies.

### 3. Investments Attitudes to ESG

Fund Manager/Fund	ESG Description
<b>LGIM</b>	
<p>Matching Plus 2035 Fixed Fund</p> <p>Matching Plus 2050 Fixed Fund</p> <p>Matching Plus 2045 Real Fund</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fund Manager Overview</b>            LGIM’s ultimate goal is to protect and enhance the investment returns generated by their clients’ assets whilst aiming to have a long standing commitment to raising corporate governance and sustainability standards to ultimately enhance the value of companies in which they invest.</li> </ul> <p>LGIM has publicly committed to the following three goals as part of their five-year strategic plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influencing the transition to a low-carbon economy</li> <li>• Making society more resilient with our financial solutions</li> <li>• Creating new investments for the future economy</li> </ul> <p>Further information on how they can receive these goals is publicly available on the parent company <a href="#">Legal &amp; General Group plc’s reporting on corporate responsibility</a>.</p> <p>The funds invested with LGIM by Bank of Baroda do not have voting rights given the instruments in which they invest. Gilts and Index-Linked Gilts do not have a mechanism in the market for voting. Environmental and social issues are not applicable either.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>References</b>            LGIM aims to implement best practice reporting to stakeholders including an:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Annual Active Ownership report</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Fund Manager/Fund	ESG Description
<b>Blackrock</b>	
<p>Blackrock Life Aquila Emerging Markets Equity Fund</p> <p>Blackrock Ascent UK All Stocks Corporate Bond Fund Buy &amp; Hold</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fund Manager Overview</b>  BlackRock claim responsible investment is an area they take extremely seriously. They believe responsibly managed companies are better placed to achieve sustainable competitive advantage and provide strong long-term growth. They believe that companies and their boards should be accountable to shareholders and structured with appropriate checks and balances.   Blackrock vote on principles that cover seven key themes, these are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Boards and directors</li> <li>○ Auditors and audit-related issues</li> <li>○ Capital structure, mergers, asset sales</li> <li>○ Compensation and benefits</li> <li>○ Environmental and social issues</li> <li>○ General corporate governance matters and shareholder protections</li> <li>○ Shareholder proposals</li> </ul> </li>   <li>• <b>ESG Integration</b>  Blackrock believe that well-managed companies will deal effectively with material ESG factors relevant to their business and appropriate risk oversight of ESG considerations stems from this.   Blackrock views the recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) and the standards put forward by the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) as appropriate and complementary frameworks for companies to adopt for the disclosure of financially material sustainability information. They ask companies to disclose the identification, assessment, management, and oversight of sustainability-related risks in accordance with the Four pillars of TCFD as well as publish SASB-aligned reporting with industry-specific, material metrics and rigorous targets.   BlackRock believes that climate change has become a defining factor in companies’ long-term prospects. They expect every company to help their investors understand how the company may be impacted by climate-related risk and opportunities, and how they are considered within strategy. Specifically, they expect companies to articulate how they are aligned to a scenario in which global warming is limited to well below 2°C and is consistent with a global aspiration to reach net zero GHG emissions by 2053.</li> </ul>



Fund Manager/Fund	ESG Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p data-bbox="493 254 1252 317">• <b>Active Ownership across all eligible Blackrock funds (1 year to 31 December 2020)</b></p> <p data-bbox="537 321 1292 384">Blackrock over the period for the Aquilla Connect Emerging Markets Equity Fund:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• were eligible to vote on 22,849 proposals</li> <li>• voted on 22,174 proposals on the behalf their clients</li> <li>• voted with the management 20,252 (88.63%) times, against the management 1,922 (8.41%) and abstained on 678 (2.97%) of votes.</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="537 594 805 621">Some examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AECC Aviation Power Co. Ltd – SGM – 24 February 2020 Blackrock voted against the company 26 times during a restructuring voting as they did not believe the proposals were “not in shareholders’ best interests”</li> <li>• Agile Group Holdings Ltd – AGM – 11 May 2020 Blackrock voted against the election of two Directors as they did not believe these directors would be able to offer sufficient oversight on this board.</li> <li>• Southern Copper Corporation – AGM – 24 Jul 2020 Supported the vote against director for insufficient progress with respect to climate-related reporting.</li> </ul> </li> <li> <p data-bbox="493 1035 659 1062">• <b>References</b></p> <p data-bbox="537 1066 1360 1161">More information on Blackrock ESG policies and principles can be found in their document called “Blackrock Investment Stewardship Global Principles.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="https://www.blackrock.com/corporate/literature/fact-sheet/blk-responsible-investment-engprinciples-global.pdf">https://www.blackrock.com/corporate/literature/fact-sheet/blk-responsible-investment-engprinciples-global.pdf</a></li> <li>○ BlackRock-responsible-investment-engprinciples-global.pdf</li> <li>○ BlackRock-2021-stewardship-expectations (1).pdf</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Fund Manager/Fund	ESG Description
<b>Aberdeen Standard</b>	
GARS Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p data-bbox="493 304 812 331">• <b>Fund Manager Overview</b></p> <p data-bbox="537 338 1347 533">Aberdeen Standard Investments (ASI) believe environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations have been an integral part of their decision-making process for almost 30 years. At Aberdeen Standard they state their vision is to make a difference for their clients, society and the wider world. It is about aiming to achieve their clients’ goals whilst doing the right thing.</p> <p data-bbox="537 573 1292 632">They centre their approach to responsible investing on the following principles.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="537 638 1354 732">1. Their investment process: they integrate and appraise environmental, social and governance factors in their investment process, with the aim of generating the best long-term outcomes for clients.</li> <li data-bbox="537 739 1344 833">2. Their investment activity: they actively take steps as active owners to deliver long-term, sustainable value consistent with their clients’ objectives.</li> <li data-bbox="537 840 1357 963">3. Their client journey: they clearly define how they act in clients’ interests in delivering stewardship and ESG (environmental, social and governance) principles). They transparently report on actions to meet those interests.</li> <li data-bbox="537 970 1304 1064">4. Their corporate influence: they actively advance policy, regulation and industry standards as they seek to deliver a better future for clients, the environment and society.</li> </ol> <p data-bbox="537 1104 1166 1134">Client feedback helps to shape their views and approach.</p> </li> <li> <p data-bbox="493 1176 711 1203">• <b>ESG Integration</b></p> <p data-bbox="537 1209 1357 1404">ESG considerations are central to the way Aberdeen Standard invest. They believe ESG factors are financially material and can meaningfully affect an asset’s performance. An asset’s ability to sustainably generate returns for investors depends on the management of its impact on the environment, its consideration of the interests of society and stakeholders, and on the way in which it is governed.</p> <p data-bbox="537 1444 1354 1671">They believe that a thorough understanding of ESG factors allows them to make better investment decisions, leading to better outcomes for their clients. This begins with rigorous research. They undertake thorough due diligence before investing, considering material ESG risks and opportunities alongside other financial metrics. They seek to understand whether such risks are being adequately managed, and whether the market has understood and priced them accordingly.</p> <p data-bbox="537 1711 824 1740">ESG is integrated through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="581 1747 1328 1806">• Implementation – Taking into account investor preferences and excluding companies with controversial exposures.</li> <li data-bbox="581 1812 1344 1906">• Asset Allocation – Asset allocation decisions and ESG are closely linked, as changes associated with ESG issues shape the way they allocate capital.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Fund Manager/Fund	ESG Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk Management- Scenario analysis also allows us to work with clients on risk-mitigation strategies.</li> <li>• Stewardship – Being committed to always acting in the best interests of clients. They believe in active, constructive engagement. For both active and passive strategies, they vote all shares globally wherever they have voting authority.</li> </ul> <p>Aberdeen Standard has an approach to climate-change which is built around six areas of focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and Data – Provide high-quality climate change insights and thematic research across asset classes and regions.</li> <li>• Investment Integration - Understand the potential financial impacts of climate-change risks and opportunities across regions and sectors, integrate these into investment decisions and understand the implications to their portfolios.</li> <li>• Client Solutions - Understand client needs in relation to climate change and low-carbon product demand.</li> <li>• Investee Engagement &amp; Voting - Better understand investee exposure and management of climate change risks and opportunities.</li> <li>• Collaboration &amp; Influence - Collaborate with climate-change-related industry associations and participate in relevant initiatives.</li> <li>• Disclosure - Disclose climate-change-related data using the TCFD reporting framework across the four pillars: governance, strategy, risk management, metrics &amp; targets.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Active Ownership Aberdeen Standard GARS Fund (to 31 December 2020)</b> As shareholders, Aberdeen Standard votes in a considered manner and work with companies to drive positive change. They also engage with policymakers on ESG and stewardship matters. ASI maintain close contact with the companies in which they invest, generally meeting representatives of investee companies at least once a year. They recognise the importance of effective communication and value having a focused dialogue with directors and senior executives about issues such as corporate strategy and performance, risk management, corporate governance and relations with stakeholders. Their activities include a regular engagement programme to discuss a range of relevant ESG issues, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• board balance and composition</li> <li>• remuneration policies</li> <li>• audit and risk issues</li> <li>• environmental and social issues.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>ASI takes part in voting issues across the globe for all investments where they have voting rights. The exceptions are when they are otherwise instructed by the beneficial owner or where, for practical reasons such as share-blocking, this is not appropriate.</p>

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	<p>Over Quarter 4 2020, Aberdeen Standard was eligible to vote at 1,164 meetings and on 8,285 resolutions. Aberdeen Standard voted 86.1% in line with management recommendations, 11% against management recommendations and abstained 1.7%.</p> <p>A case study by Aberdeen Standard looks at Johnson and Johnson. A shareholder proposal for the upcoming AGM was a request that J&amp;J enhance its disclosure around steps the board is taking to mitigate risks related to the manufacture and marketing of opioid- related products. (128 people die every day in the US after overdosing on opioids.) Following engagement and taking into account efforts being made by the board, Aberdeen Standard felt comfortable voting against the proposal, with the caveat that J&amp;J continues to expand on its current disclosures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>References</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Aberdeen Standard Brochure ESG Q4 2020</li> <li>○ ASI Listed Company Stewardship Guidelines</li> <li>○ Responsible Investing page on the Aberdeen Standard website</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Fund Manager/Fund	ESG Description
<b>NinetyOne</b>	
Diversified Growth Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p data-bbox="493 310 813 338">• <b>Fund Manager Overview</b></p> <p data-bbox="537 344 1360 842">The Ninety One Multi-Asset team believes that sustainability is aligned with successful long-term investing: companies and countries that respond successfully to the global sustainability challenges will outperform over time. They have been integrating active stewardship and environmental, social and governance (ESG) research into their multi-asset investment processes across all asset classes for many years. Increasingly though, they realise that more needs to be done. The headwinds are mounting for companies and countries with material negative environmental and social footprints. There is growing recognition that, collectively, asset owners and managers have a responsibility to redirect the flow of capital towards sustainable investments with the potential for positive impact. They believe that there is also a financial incentive to invest sustainably: in a world where global real yields are now negative, the opportunity to access untapped growth enriches the potential for attractive long-term risk-adjusted returns.</p> <p data-bbox="537 884 1341 1045">Their global engagement policy is driven by a clear purpose to preserve and grow the real value of the assets entrusted to them by their clients over the long term. As a business, they are active (not passive or activist) investors. They believe that effective boards and management that are aligned with their long-term objectives should be supported.</p> <p data-bbox="537 1087 1162 1115">There are four pillars to their assessment of governance:</p> <ol data-bbox="537 1121 862 1247" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Capital allocation</li> <li>2. Culture</li> <li>3. Incentivisation</li> <li>4. Management and the Board</li> </ol> <p data-bbox="493 1289 711 1316">• <b>ESG Integration</b></p> <p data-bbox="537 1323 1352 1581">In relation to exposure to climate risk, the lower carbon footprint of the Diversified Growth portfolio versus the MSCI ACWI comparator can be explained by a combination of sector and stock selection. For example, at September 2020, the energy sector represents a 24% contribution to the MSCI ACWI's carbon footprint whereas it represented a c.4% contribution to the Diversified Growth portfolio carbon footprint. The portfolio had a meaningfully lower allocation to the energy sector compared to the MSCI ACWI.</p> <p data-bbox="537 1623 1357 1818">In Ninety One's view, ESG ratings should not be used to make investment decisions and instead, the underlying research should be used to inform and prioritise fundamental research. Scores and data are just the beginning, offering an efficient means by which they can identify potential issues. They remain conscious that dispersion in data quality will continue to be a challenge and cannot be relied upon on a standalone basis.</p> <p data-bbox="537 1860 1308 1915">The first question they ask is whether the drivers and scores are a fair representation of the analysts' own understanding of the company.</p> </li> </ul>

Fund Manager/Fund	ESG Description
	<p>Ninety One’s analysts make their own judgement on materiality informed by MSCI data, but primarily founded upon their understanding of each company’s business model and its drivers of returns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p>• <b>Active Ownership – Ninety One Diversified Growth Fund (1 year to 31 December 2020)</b></p> <p>Over the period Ninety One were eligible to vote at 150 shareholder meetings. They participated in 1,794 resolutions. At 33% of the meetings, they cast a dissenting vote (i.e., against, abstained or withheld) on one or more resolutions. On a resolution -by-resolution basis 93.5% of their votes were on recommendation of management and the remaining 6.5% of votes cast were against.</p> <p>A case study by Ninety One looks at engagement with JP Morgan Chase &amp; Co. The resolution wanted a professional report on Climate change, Ninety One felt that the Shareholders would benefit from additional information on the company’s plans regarding aligning its GHG emissions with the Paris Agreement climate goals.</p> </li> <li> <p>• <b>References</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Diversified Growth Strategy – Environmental, social and governance review. Executive Summary. December 2020</li> <li>○ Annual Stewardship Report 01.01.20 to 31.12.20</li> <li>○ Engagement and Voting Highlights</li> </ul> </li> </ul>