

# **Withers Pension Scheme**

## **Statement of Investment Principles**

**September 2020**

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<b>Glossary</b>	
Barings	Barings Fund Managers Limited
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance (including
Investec	Investec Asset Management Limited
LGIM	Legal & General Investment Management Limited
Royal London	Royal London Asset Management
Scheme	Withers Pension Scheme
Trustee	The Trustee of the Scheme
UNPRI	United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment

## 1. Introduction

This statement is made in accordance with the requirements of legislation<sup>1</sup> and, in determining a suitable investment strategy for the Scheme, the Trustee has considered the Pension Regulator's Investment Guidance for defined benefit pension schemes.

The main body of this statement sets out the principles and policies that govern investments made by the Trustee of the Scheme. Details of the specific investment arrangements in place are set out in the Appendices.

Upon request, a copy of this statement will be made available to members, the Scheme Actuary and any investment managers used by the Trustee.

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<sup>1</sup> In particular, the Pensions Act 1995, the Occupational Pensions (Investment) Regulations 2005 and the Pension Protection Fund (Pensionable Service) and Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment and Disclosure) (Amendment and Modification) Regulations 2018.

## **2. Investment Governance Structure**

### **Investment Advice**

As required by legislation, in the preparation and maintenance of this statement and when considering the suitability of any investments, the Trustee will obtain and consider written advice from its investment adviser.

The Trustee is advised on investment matters by First Actuarial LLP. First Actuarial LLP is regulated by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries and is qualified to provide the required advice through knowledge and practical experience of financial matters relating to pension schemes.

### **Legal Advice**

Whenever deemed necessary, the Trustee will seek advice from its legal adviser on investment matters.

### **Employer Consultation**

Under legislation, the ultimate responsibility for determining the investment strategy rests with the Trustee. However, the Trustee must consult with the sponsoring employer and consultation must comprise a sharing of views, not simply notification of intent.

### **Investment Managers**

Day-to-day management of the Scheme's assets is delegated to one or more investment managers.

To ensure safekeeping of the assets, ownership and day to day control of the assets is undertaken by custodian organisations which are independent of the sponsoring employer and the investment managers. Where pooled investment vehicles are used, the custodians will typically be appointed by the investment manager.

### **Members' Views**

The Trustee recognises that it is likely that members and beneficiaries will hold a broad range of views on ESG and other non-financial matters. Whilst the Trustee will seek to avoid investing in a way that is likely to be strongly opposed by those individuals, the Trustee does not directly take such views into account when determining the Scheme's investment strategy.

The Trustee believes that its duty to members and beneficiaries will be best served by ensuring that all benefits can be paid as they fall due and the Trustee's Investment Objectives are designed to ensure this duty is achieved.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The Trustee is satisfied that the investment strategy described in this Statement meets its responsibility to invest the assets in the best interests of the members and beneficiaries and, in the case of a potential conflict of interest, in the sole interest of the members and beneficiaries.

### **3. Investment Beliefs**

The investment beliefs stated below have been developed by the Trustee and are reflected in the Scheme's investment strategy.

#### **Risk versus Reward**

Targeting higher levels of investment return requires increased levels of investment risk which increases the volatility of the funding position.

#### **Asset Allocation**

Long-term performance of the Scheme's assets is attributable primarily to the strategic asset allocation rather than the choice of investment managers.

#### **Diversification**

Asset diversification helps to reduce risk.

#### **Use of Pooled Funds**

Taking into account the size of the Scheme's assets, it is expected that pooled funds will typically be a more practical way of implementing the Scheme's investment strategy than establishing segregated mandates with investment managers.

#### **Use of Active Management**

Active management has the potential to add value either through offering the prospect of enhanced returns or through the control of volatility. In addition, it is recognised that active management may help to mitigate the financial impact of ESG risks.

For each asset class, the Trustee will consider whether the higher fees associated with active management are justified.

## **4. Investment Objectives**

The Trustee's primary investment objectives are:

- to ensure that the assets are sufficient and available to pay members' benefits as and when they fall due;
- to generate an appropriate level of investment returns – to improve the funding position and thereby improve security for members; and
- to protect the funding position – limiting the scope for adverse investment experience reducing security for members.

The Trustee's investment approach is designed to strike a balance between the above primary objectives but also considers:

- the nature and timing of benefit payments;
- expected levels of investment return on different asset classes;
- expected levels of investment return variability and, specifically, the expected level of short-term volatility of the funding position;
- the sponsoring employer's ability to withstand additional contribution requirements that may arise from volatility in the funding position; and
- the full range of available investments (within the bounds of practicality).

## **5. Use of Investment Managers**

### **Investment Manager Selection**

When selecting an investment manager, the Trustee will:

- ensure that the investment manager has the appropriate knowledge and experience;
- ensure that the investment manager's mandate is appropriate; and
- consider the investment manager's approach to ESG matters.

Where pooled investment vehicles are used, it is recognised that the mandate cannot be tailored to the Trustee's particular requirements. However, the Trustee ensures that any pooled investment vehicles used are appropriate to the circumstances of the Scheme.

The Trustee will normally select investment managers who are signatories to the UNPRI and who publish the results of their annual UNPRI assessment. This principle may be waived if a fund offered by a non-signatory manager is deemed to have investment characteristics which are particularly important for meeting the Trustee's investment objectives.

### **Manager Implementation**

Assets are invested predominantly on regulated markets, as so defined in legislation. Any investments that do not trade on regulated markets are kept to a prudent level.

#### *Use of Derivatives*

The investment managers are permitted to use derivative instruments to reduce risk or for efficient portfolio management. Risk reduction would include mitigating the impact of a potential fall in markets or the implementation of currency hedging whilst efficient portfolio management would include using derivatives as a cost-effective way of gaining access to a market or as a method for generating capital and/or income with an acceptable level of risk.

#### *Leverage*

The instruments used by the investment managers of the Liability Matching Assets may result in the Liability Matching Assets being leveraged. Since these assets are closely aligned to the liabilities, the allocation to Liability Matching Assets (and any associated leverage) reduces the volatility of the Scheme's funding position and therefore reduces risk.

### **Stewardship**

The Trustee recognises that the membership might wish the Trustee to engage with the underlying companies in which the Scheme invests with the objective of improving corporate behaviour to benefit the environment and society. However, the Trustee invests in pooled investment vehicles and accepts that ongoing engagement with the underlying companies (including the exercise of voting rights) will be determined by the investment managers' own policies.

The Trustee recognises that the investment managers' engagement policies are likely to be focussed on maximising financial returns and minimising financial risks rather than targeting an environmental or societal benefit.

## **6. Risk Mitigation**

Identification, measurement and management of risk form an integral part of the process adopted by the Trustee to determine the strategic asset allocation. The principal investment risks are listed in the Trustee's *Investment Risk Policy*. That Policy also provides an explanation of how the investment risks are managed.

### **Risk Capacity and Risk Appetite**

In determining a suitable investment strategy, the Trustee considers how the volatility of the funding position is likely to be affected by changes to the asset allocation. An important consideration for the Trustee is whether a potential investment strategy is consistent with the ability of the sponsoring employer to address any future increase in deficit that may arise due to market movements.

### **Self-Investment Risk**

Legislation imposes a restriction that no more than 5% of a pension scheme's assets may be related to the sponsoring employer. The Trustee does not hold any direct employer-related assets and any indirect exposure is expected to be less than 5% of total assets.

### **ESG Risks**

Since the Trustee invests in pooled investment vehicles, it is accepted that the extent to which ESG factors will be used in the selection of suitable underlying investments will be determined by the investment managers' own policies on such matters.

### **Liquidity Risk**

The majority of the Scheme's investments will be liquid and will be realisable for cash at relatively short notice without incurring high costs. However, the Trustee recognises that the liabilities are long-term in nature and that a modest allocation to less-liquid investments may be appropriate.

Details of the liquidity characteristics of the funds held are provided in a separate Appendix.

## **7. Monitoring**

The Trustee regularly reviews the Scheme's investments to ensure that the assets continue to be managed in accordance with each manager's mandate and that the choice of managers remains appropriate.

Furthermore, the Trustee regularly monitors the position of the investment managers with regards to ESG matters.

The investment adviser regularly meets with the managers of pooled funds on its approved list.

**8. Future Amendments**

This statement will be reviewed at least every three years and without delay after any significant change in circumstances or investment strategy.

The Trustee has consulted with the sponsoring employer as part of the work preparing this statement.

Signed: *A Bore* .....

Date: 18 September 2020 .....

For and on behalf of the Trustee of the Withers Pension Scheme.

## Appendix 1: The Trustee's Investment Strategy

### Strategic Asset Allocation

In determining the strategic asset allocation, the Trustee views the investments as falling into two broad categories:

1. **Growth Assets** – Assets that are expected to deliver long-term returns in excess of liability growth. The use of Growth Assets is expected to deliver a level of investment returns deemed appropriate by the Trustee given the risk involved.
2. **Liability Matching Assets** – Assets that are expected to react to changes in market conditions in a similar way to the liabilities. The use of Liability Matching Assets is expected to protect the funding position of the Scheme.

The strategic allocation of the Scheme's assets is 75% Growth, 25% Liability Matching.

The Trustee will review the strategic asset allocation periodically, and at least every three years, to ensure that the investment strategy remains consistent with the Trustee's funding objectives. As part of such a review, the Trustee will consider the risks associated with the investment strategy.

### Investment Strategy Implementation

The Trustee has selected funds managed by Barings, Investec, LGIM and Royal London to implement the Scheme's investment strategy. Investments in these funds are held directly with their managers.

Further details of the investment strategy and the funds used are provided below.

### Design of the Growth Asset Portfolio

The structure of the Scheme's Growth Assets has been designed to offer diversification across a range of underlying asset classes and to achieve this by combining investment managers with different asset management styles.

The strategic allocation for the Scheme's Growth Assets is as follows:

Pooled Fund	Strategic Allocation of Growth Assets
Barings Multi Asset Fund	36.7%
Investec Diversified Growth Fund	36.7%
Royal London Sterling Extra Yield Bond Fund	26.6%
<b>Total Growth Assets</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The allocation of the Growth Assets is not automatically rebalanced but will be monitored and rebalanced at the discretion of the Trustee.

## **Appendix 1: The Trustee's Investment Strategy (continued)**

### **Design of the Liability Matching Portfolio**

The Scheme's Liability Matching Assets are invested the LGIM AAA-AA-A Corporate Bond All Stocks Index Fund.

### **Cashflow Management Policy**

Any investments or disinvestments will be made at the discretion of the Trustee, but the Trustee will maintain a *Cashflow Management Policy* which will record how such payments should be structured. The *Cashflow Management Policy* will be designed to ensure the allocation of the Scheme's assets remains closely aligned with the strategy described in this statement.

To ensure the Scheme operates efficiently, the Trustee may share the *Cashflow Management Policy* with the individual(s) responsible for processing payments from the Scheme.

The *Cashflow Management Policy* will be reviewed from time-to-time by the Trustee and, as a minimum, at least every three years in line with a review of this statement. Given that the *Cashflow Management Policy* is designed to keep the Scheme's asset allocation aligned with the investment strategy and investment principles described in this statement, the sponsoring employer is satisfied that the *Cashflow Management Policy* can be amended by the Trustee without consulting the sponsoring employer.

### **Insured Pensioners**

The Trustee insures a proportion of the Scheme's pensioner liabilities with Legal & General. These insurance policies will provide a stream of income in respect of named individuals for as long as those individuals remain alive. The income received offsets pension payments made from the Scheme.

## Appendix 2: SRDII

### Purpose of the Appendix

This Appendix is made in accordance with the requirements of the Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment and Disclosure) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 and it updates the Statement of Investment Principles to record how the Scheme complies with the EU Shareholder Rights Directive (SRD II) which comes into effect on 1 October 2020.

### Glossary Update

**ESG** – Environmental, Social and Governance (including, but not limited to, climate change)

In the relevant regulations “non-financial matters” refers to the views of the members. This includes, but is not limited to, ethical views, views on ESG factors and views on the present and future quality of life for the members.

**Financially material considerations**- includes (but is not limited to) ESG considerations (including but not limited to climate change), which the trustee of the trust scheme considers financially material.

**Appropriate time horizon** - means the length of time that the trustee of a trust scheme considers is needed for the funding of future benefits by the investments of the scheme.

## **Investment Manager Arrangements**

As the Scheme's assets are held in pooled funds, the Trustee has limited influence over the investment managers' investment decisions. In practice, investment managers cannot fully align their strategy and decisions to the (potentially conflicting) policies of all their pooled fund investors in relation to strategy, long-term performance of debt/equity issuers, engagement and portfolio turnover.

It is therefore the Trustee's responsibility to ensure that the approaches adopted by investment managers are consistent with the Trustee's policies before any new appointment, and to monitor and to consider terminating any existing arrangements that appear to be investing contrary to those policies.

The Trustee expects investment managers, where appropriate, to make decisions based on assessments of the longer term financial and non-financial performance of debt/ equity issuers, and to engage with issuers to improve their performance. The Trustee assesses this when selecting and monitoring managers.

The Trustee's policy on selecting, monitoring, evaluating and (where necessary) terminating these arrangements is set out in further detail below.

### **Compatibility of Pooled Funds with the Trustee's Investment Strategy**

When selecting a pooled fund, the Trustee considers various factors, including:

- the assets that will be held within that fund and whether the asset allocation of the fund is expected to change over time;
- the risks associated with the fund along with the return that is expected;
- the fund's objective (as stated by the fund's investment manager) and whether the objective is consistent with the performance that the Trustee expects from that fund;
- the fund's fee structure to ensure that this is reasonable and that it does not provide an incentive for the investment manager to manage the fund in a way that differs from the expectations of the Trustee;
- how frequently underlying investments within the fund are expected to be traded by the investment manager;
- how financially material considerations (including ESG factors) over the appropriate time horizon are taken into account by the investment manager;
- the investment manager's policy in relation to the exercise of the rights (including voting rights) attaching to the investments held within the pooled fund; and
- the investment manager's policy in relation to undertaking engagement activities in respect of the investments held within the pooled fund\*.

## **Investment Manager Arrangements (continued)**

*\*This includes engaging with an issuer of debt or equity regarding matters including (but not limited to) performance, strategy, capital structure, management of actual or potential conflicts of interest, risks, and ESG matters. It also includes engaging on these matters with other investment managers, other holders of debt or equity and persons or groups of persons who have an interest in the issuer of debt or equity.*

After analysing the above characteristics for a fund, the Trustee identifies how that fund would fit within its overall investment strategy for the Scheme and how the fund is expected to help the Trustee meet its investment objectives.

### **Duration of Investment Manager Arrangements**

The Trustee normally expects that pooled funds will be held for several years.

However, as part of the periodic strategic asset allocation reviews (which take place at least every three years), the Trustee will review whether the ongoing use of each fund remains consistent with its investment strategy.

The Trustee regularly monitors the financial and non-financial performance of the pooled funds held and details of this monitoring process is set out below. If the Trustee becomes concerned about the ongoing suitability of a pooled fund, it may reduce exposure to it or disinvest entirely. Such action is expected to be infrequent.

### **Monitoring Pooled Funds**

The Trustee regularly assesses the performance of each fund held and this monitoring includes an assessment of whether the investment manager continues to operate the fund in a manner that is consistent with the factors used by the Trustee to select the fund (as listed above).

When assessing the performance of a fund, the Trustee does not usually place too much emphasis on short-term performance although it will seek to ensure that reasons for short-term performance (whether favourable or unfavourable) are understood.

The Trustee expects the investment managers of pooled funds to invest for the medium to long term and it expects investment managers to engage with issuers of debt or equity with a view to improving performance over this time frame.

If it is identified that a fund is not being operated in a manner consistent with the factors used by the Trustee to select the fund, or that the investment manager is not engaging with issuers of debt or equity, the Trustee may look to replace that fund. However, in the first instance, the Trustee would normally expect its investment adviser to raise the Trustee's concerns with the investment manager. Thereafter, the Trustee, in conjunction with its investment adviser, would monitor the performance of the fund to assess whether the situation improves.

## **Investment Manager Arrangements (continued)**

### **Portfolio Turnover**

The Trustee is aware of the requirement to monitor portfolio turnover costs (the costs incurred as a result of the buying, selling, lending or borrowing of investments).

When selecting a pooled fund, the Trustee will consider how the investment manager defines and measures:

- the targeted portfolio turnover (the frequency within which the assets of the fund are expected to be bought or sold); and
- turnover range (the minimum and maximum frequency within which the assets of the fund are expected to be bought or sold).

At least annually, the Trustee, in conjunction with its investment adviser, will consider the transaction costs incurred on each pooled fund. As part of this analysis, the Trustee will consider whether the incurred turnover costs have been in line with expectations.

The Trustee will take the above information on portfolio turnover into account when assessing the ongoing suitability of each pooled fund.

## **Stewardship**

The Trustee's policy in relation to the exercise of rights attaching to investments, and undertaking engagement activities in respect of investments, is that they wish to encourage best practice in terms of stewardship.

However, the Trustee invests in pooled investment vehicles and therefore accepts that ongoing engagement with the underlying companies (including the exercise of voting rights) will be determined by the investment managers' own policies on such matters. For that reason, the Trustee recognises that their ability to directly influence the action of companies is limited.

Nevertheless, the Trustee expects that each investment manager will discharge its responsibilities in respect of investee companies in accordance with that investment manager's own corporate governance policies and current best practice, including the UK Corporate Governance Code and UK Stewardship Code.

The Trustee also expects that each investment manager will take ESG factors into account when exercising the rights attaching to investments and in taking decisions relating to the selection, retention and realisation of investments.

When considering the suitability of an investment manager, the Trustee (in conjunction with their investment adviser) will take account of any particular characteristics of that manager's engagement policy that are deemed to be financially material.

## **Investment Beliefs (additional wording)**

### **Appropriate Time Horizon**

In determining investment objectives and a suitable investment strategy for the Scheme, the Trustee takes into account an appropriate time horizon.

### **ESG and Other Financially Material Considerations**

The Trustee believes that financially material considerations, including ESG factors and the risks related to such factors, can contribute to the identification of both investment opportunities and financially material risks. Consequently, financially material considerations can have a material impact on investment risk and return outcomes.

The Trustee also recognises that long-term sustainability issues, particularly climate change, present risks and opportunities that increasingly may require explicit consideration.

Assessment of how ESG risks are mitigated will be one of the factors considered by the Trustee when selecting and monitoring investment managers.

### **Stewardship**

The Trustee believes that good stewardship can help create, and preserve, value for companies and markets as a whole.