

# Responsible Investment Policy

**Border to Coast Pensions Partnership**



November 2019

## Document Control

### 1. Version and Review History

Version no.	Version Description	Approver	Date
V0.1	Initial policy	Joint Committee	October 2017
V0.2	1 <sup>st</sup> draft presented to OOG reflecting review by Robeco, UK Corporate Governance Code, best in class asset managers and asset owners.	CEO	10 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2018
V0.3	2 <sup>nd</sup> draft reflecting OOG amendments	CEO	19 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2018
V0.4	1 <sup>st</sup> draft presented to IC and OOG reflecting review by Robeco, ICGN Governance Principles, best in class asset owners and managers	CEO	26 <sup>th</sup> September
V0.5	2 <sup>nd</sup> draft reflecting OOG amendments	CEO	18 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2019

### 2. Approval and Sign Off

Approved By	Position	Version	Date
Rachel Elwell	CEO	0.3	19 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2018
Rachel Elwell	CEO	0.5	18 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2019

### 3. Board Approval

Approved By	Version	Date
The Board	0.3	7 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2018
The Board	0.5	5 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2019

### 4. Key Dates

Event	Date
Effective Date	01/01/2019
Next Review Date	01/01/2020

### 5. Key Roles

Stakeholder	Role	Status
Head of RI	Document owner responsible for the management and amendment process, along with ensuring distribution of the framework	Drafter
CEO	Review ongoing drafts to ensure completeness	Reviewer

Border to Coast Investment Committee	Review and recommend for approval to Board	Reviewer
OOG	Review ongoing drafts to ensure completeness	Reviewer
Border to Coast Joint Committee	Review policy and any material alterations made thereafter	Reviewer
Border to Coast Board	Approve policy and any material alterations made thereafter.	Approver
Border to Coast Staff	Informed of policy and manage delivery in practice	Informed

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## Responsible Investment Policy

This Responsible Investment Policy details the approach that Border to Coast Pensions Partnership will follow in fulfilling its commitment to our Partner Funds in their delegation of responsible investment (RI) and stewardship responsibilities.

### 1. Introduction

Border to Coast Pensions Partnership Ltd is an FCA-authorized investment fund manager (AIFM). It operates investment funds for its twelve shareholders which are Local Government Pension Scheme funds (Partner Funds). The purpose is to make a difference to the investment outcomes for our Partner Funds through pooling to create a stronger voice; working in partnership to deliver cost effective, innovative, and responsible investment now and into the future; thereby enabling great, sustainable performance.

Border to Coast takes a long-term approach to investing and believes that businesses that are governed well and run in a sustainable way are more resilient, able to survive shocks and have the potential to provide better financial returns for investors. Environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues can have a material impact on the value of financial assets and on the long-term performance of investments, and therefore need to be considered across all asset classes in order to better manage risk and generate sustainable, long term returns. Well-managed companies with strong governance are more likely to be successful long-term investments.

Border to Coast is an active owner and steward of its investments, both internally and externally managed, across all asset classes. The commitment to responsible investment is communicated in the Border to Coast UK Stewardship Code compliance statement. As a long-term investor and representative of asset owners, we will therefore, hold companies and asset managers to account regarding environmental, societal and governance factors that have the potential to impact corporate value. We will incorporate such factors into our investment analysis and decision making, enabling long-term sustainable investment performance for our Partner Funds. As a shareowner, Border to Coast has a responsibility for effective stewardship of the companies it invests in, whether directly or indirectly through mandates with fund managers. It will practice active ownership through voting, monitoring companies, engagement and litigation.

The LGPS (Management and Investment of Funds) 2016 regulations state that the responsibility for stewardship, which includes shareholder voting, remains with the Partner Funds. Stewardship day-to-day administration and implementation have been delegated to Border to Coast by the Partner Funds, on assets managed by Border to Coast, with appropriate monitoring and challenge to ensure this continues to be in line with Partner Fund requirements. To leverage scale and for operational purposes, Border to Coast has, in conjunction with Partner Funds, developed this RI Policy and accompanying Corporate Governance & Voting Guidelines to ensure clarity of approach on behalf of Partner Funds.

### 2. What is responsible investment?

Responsible investment (RI) is the practice of incorporating ESG issues into the investment decision making process and practicing investment stewardship, to better manage risk and generate sustainable, long-term returns. Financial and ESG analysis together identify broader

risks leading to better informed investment decisions and can improve performance as well as risk-adjusted returns.

Investment stewardship includes active ownership, using voting rights, engaging with investee companies, influencing regulators and policy makers, and collaborating with other investors to improve long-term performance.

### 3. Governance and Implementation

Border to Coast takes a holistic approach to sustainability and as such it is at the core of our corporate and investment thinking. Sustainability, which includes RI, is considered and overseen by the Board and Executive Committees. Specific policies and procedures are in place to demonstrate the commitment to RI, which include the Responsible Investment Policy and Corporate Governance & Voting Guidelines. Border to Coast has a dedicated staff resource for managing RI within the organisational structure.

The RI Policy is jointly owned and created after collaboration and engagement with our twelve Partner Funds. The Chief Investment Officer (CIO) is accountable for implementation of the policy. The policy is monitored with regular reports to the CIO, Investment Committee, Board, Joint Committee and Partner Funds. It is reviewed at least annually or whenever revisions are proposed and updated as necessary.

### 4. Skills and competency

Border to Coast will, where needed, take proper advice in order to formulate and develop policy. The Board and staff will maintain appropriate skills in responsible investment and stewardship through continuing professional development; where necessary expert advice will be taken from suitable RI specialists to fulfil our responsibilities.

### 5. Integrating RI into investment decisions

Border to Coast will consider material ESG factors when analysing potential investments. ESG factors tend to be longer term in nature and can create both risks and opportunities. It is therefore important that, as a long-term investor, we take them into account when analysing potential investments.

The factors considered are those which could cause financial and reputational risk, ultimately resulting in a reduction in shareholder value. ESG issues will be considered and monitored in relation to both internally and externally managed assets. The CIO will be accountable for the integration and implementation of ESG considerations. Issues considered include, but are not limited to:

<b>Environmental</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Governance</b>	<b>Other</b>
Climate change Resource & energy management Water stress	Human rights Child labour Supply chain Human capital Employment standards	Board independence/ diversity Executive pay Tax transparency Auditor rotation Succession planning Shareholder rights	Business strategy Risk management Cyber security Data privacy Bribery & corruption Single use plastics Political lobbying

### **5.1. Listed Equities (Internally managed)**

Border to Coast looks to understand and evaluate the ESG-related business risks and opportunities companies face. We consider the integration of ESG factors into the investment process as a complement to the traditional financial evaluation of assets; this results in a more informed investment decision-making process. Rather than being used to preclude certain investments, it is used to provide an additional context for stock selection.

ESG data and research from specialist providers is used alongside general stock and sector research when considering portfolio construction, sector analysis and stock selection. The Head of RI will work with colleagues to raise awareness of ESG issues. Voting and engagement should not be detached from the investment process; therefore, information from engagement meetings will be shared with the team to increase knowledge, and portfolio managers will be involved in the voting process.

### **5.2. Private Markets**

Border to Coast believes that ESG risk forms an integral part of the overall risk management framework for private market investment. An appropriate ESG strategy will improve downside protection and help create value in underlying portfolio companies. Border to Coast will take the following approach to integrating ESG into the private market investment process:

- ESG issues will be considered as part of the due diligence process for all private market investments.
- A manager's ESG strategy will be assessed through a specific ESG questionnaire agreed with the Head of RI and reviewed by the alternatives investment team with support from the Head of RI as required.
- Managers will be requested to report annually on the progress and outcomes of ESG related values and any potential risks.
- Ongoing monitoring will include identifying any possible ESG breaches and following up with the managers concerned.

### **5.3. Fixed Income**

ESG factors can have a material impact on the investment performance of bonds, both negatively and positively, at the issuer, sector and geographic levels. ESG analysis will therefore be incorporated into the investment process for corporate and sovereign issuers to manage risk. The challenges of integrating ESG in practice are greater than for equities with the availability of data for some markets lacking.

The approach to engagement also differs as engagement with sovereigns is much more difficult than with companies. Third-party ESG data will be used along with information from sources including UN bodies, the World Bank and other similar organisations. This together with traditional credit analysis will be used to determine a bond's credit quality. Information will be shared between the equity and fixed income teams regarding issues which have the potential to impact corporates and sovereign bond performance.

### **5.4. External Manager Selection**

RI will be incorporated into the external manager appointment process including the request for proposal (RFP) criteria and scoring and the investment management agreements. The RFP will include specific reference to the integration of ESG by managers into the investment process and to their approach to engagement.

Voting is carried out by Border to Coast for both internally and externally managed equities where possible and we expect external managers to engage with companies in alignment with the Border to Coast RI policy.

The monitoring of appointed managers will also include assessing stewardship and ESG integration in accordance with our policies. All external fund managers will be expected to be signatories or comply with international standards applicable to their geographical location. Managers will be required to report to Border to Coast on their RI activities quarterly.

## 5.5. Climate change

Border to Coast will actively consider how climate change, the shifting regulatory environment and potential macroeconomic impact will affect its investments. These pose significant investment risks and opportunities with the potential to impact the long-term shareholder value of investments across all asset classes. Climate change is a systemic risk with potential financial impacts associated with the transition to a low-carbon economy and physical impacts under different climate scenarios. Transition will affect some sectors more than others, notably energy, utilities and sectors highly reliant on energy. However, within sectors there are likely to be winners and losers which is why divesting from and excluding entire sectors may not be appropriate.

Risks and opportunities can be presented through a number of ways and include:

- Physical impacts – damage to land, infrastructure and property due to extreme weather events, rising sea levels and flooding
- Technological changes - technological innovations such as battery storage, energy efficiency, and carbon capture and storage will displace old technologies with winners and losers emerging
- Regulatory and policy impact - financial impairment due to policy and regulation changes such as carbon pricing or levies, capping emissions or withdrawal of subsidies.
- Transitional risk - financial risk associated with the transition to a low-carbon economy, also known as carbon risk. It may entail extensive policy, legal, technology, and market changes to address mitigation and adaptation requirements related to climate change, creating investment opportunities as well as risks.
- Litigation risk - litigation is primarily aimed at companies failing to mitigate, adapt or disclose.

Border to Coast is:

- Assessing its portfolios in relation to climate change risk where practicable.
- Incorporating climate considerations into the investment decision making process.
- Engaging with companies in relation to business sustainability and disclosure of climate risk in line with the Financial Stability Board's Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD)<sup>1</sup> recommendations.
- Encouraging companies to adapt their business strategy in alignment with a low carbon economy.

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<sup>1</sup> The Financial Stability Board's Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) - The TCFD developed recommendations on climate-related financial disclosures that are applicable to organisations (including asset owners) across sectors and jurisdictions.

<https://www.fsb-tcfd.org/publications/finalrecommendations-report/>

- Supporting climate related resolutions at company meetings which we consider reflect our RI policy.
- Encouraging companies to publish targets and report on steps taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Co-filing shareholder resolutions at company AGMs on climate risk disclosure after due diligence, that are deemed to be institutional quality shareholder resolutions consistent with our RI policies.
- Monitoring and reviewing its fund managers in relation to climate change approach and policies.
- Participating in collective initiatives collaborating with other investors including other pools and groups such as LAPFF.
- Engaging with policy makers with regard to climate change through membership of the Institutional Investor Group on Climate Change (IIGCC).

## 6. Stewardship

As a shareholder Border to Coast has a responsibility for effective stewardship of the companies it invests in, whether directly or indirectly through mandates with fund managers. It will practice active ownership through voting, monitoring companies, engagement and litigation. As a responsible shareholder, we are a signatory to the UK Stewardship Code<sup>2</sup> and the UN Principles of Responsible Investment<sup>3</sup>.

### 6.1. Voting

Voting rights are an asset and Border to Coast will exercise its rights carefully to promote and support good corporate governance principles. It will aim to vote in every market in which it invests where this is practicable. To leverage scale and for practical reasons, Border to Coast has developed a collaborative voting policy to be enacted on behalf of the Partner Funds which can be viewed on our website at: Corporate Governance & Voting Guidelines. Where possible the voting policies will also be applied to assets managed externally. Policies will be reviewed annually in collaboration with the Partner Funds. There may be occasions when an individual fund wishes Border to Coast to vote its pro rata holding contrary to an agreed policy; there is a process in place to facilitate this.

#### 6.1.1 Use of proxy advisers

Border to Coast appointed Robeco as Voting and Engagement provider to implement the set of detailed voting guidelines and ensure votes are executed in accordance with policies. A proxy voting platform is used with proxy voting recommendations produced for all meetings voted managed by Robeco as the Voting & Engagement provider. Robeco's proxy voting advisor (Glass Lewis. Co) provides voting recommendations based upon Border to Coast's Corporate Governance & Voting Guidelines ('the Voting Guidelines'). A Robeco team of dedicated voting analysts analyse the merit of each agenda item to ensure voting recommendations are aligned with the Voting Guidelines. Border to Coast's Investment Team receives notification of voting recommendations ahead of meetings which are assessed on a case-by-case basis by portfolio managers and responsible investment staff prior to votes being executed. A degree of flexibility will be required when interpreting the Voting Guidelines to

<sup>2</sup> The UK Stewardship Code aims to enhance the quality of engagement between investors and companies to help improve long-term risk-adjusted returns to shareholders.

<https://www.frc.org.uk/Our-Work/CodesStandards/Corporate-governance/UK-Stewardship-Code.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> The Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) is the world's leading advocate for responsible investment enabling investors to publicly demonstrate commitment to responsible investment with signatories committing to supporting the six principles for incorporating ESG issues into investment practice.



reflect specific company and meeting circumstances allowing the override of voting recommendations from the proxy adviser.

Robeco evaluates their proxy voting agent at least annually, on the quality of governance research and the alignment of customised voting recommendations and Border to Coast's Voting Guidelines. This review is part of Robeco's control framework and is externally assured. Border to Coast also reviews the services provided by Robeco on a regular basis.

Border to Coast has an active stock lending programme. Where stock lending is permissible, lenders of stock do not generally retain any voting rights on lent stock. Procedures are in place to enable stock to be recalled prior to a shareholder vote. Stock will be recalled ahead of meetings, and lending can also be restricted, when:

- The resolution is contentious.
- The holding is of a size which could potentially influence the voting outcome.
- Border to Coast needs to register its full voting interest.
- Border to Coast has co-filed a shareholder resolution.
- A company is seeking approval for a merger or acquisition.
- Border to Coast deems it appropriate.

Proxy voting in some countries requires share blocking. This requires shareholders who want to vote their proxies depositing their shares shortly before the date of the meeting (usually one week) with a designated depository.

During this blocking period, shares cannot be sold until after the meeting has taken place; the shares are then returned to the shareholders' custodian bank. We may decide that being able to trade the stock outweighs the value of exercising the vote during this period. Where we want to retain the ability to trade shares, we may abstain from voting those shares.

Where appropriate Border to Coast will consider co-filing shareholder resolutions and will notify Partner Funds in advance. Consideration will be given as to whether the proposal reflects Border to Coast's Responsible Investment policy, is balanced and worded appropriately, and supports the long-term economic interests of shareholders.

## **6.2. Engagement**

The best way to influence companies is through engagement; therefore, Border to Coast will not divest from companies principally on social, ethical or environmental reasons. As responsible investors, the approach taken will be to influence companies' governance standards, environmental, human rights and other policies by constructive shareholder engagement and the use of voting rights. The services of specialist providers may be used when necessary to identify issues of concern. Meeting and engaging with companies are an integral part of the investment process. As part of our stewardship duties we monitor investee companies on an ongoing basis and take appropriate action if investment returns are at risk. Engagement takes place between portfolio managers and investee companies across all markets where possible.

Border to Coast has several approaches to engaging with investee holdings:

- Border to Coast and all twelve Partner Funds are members of the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum (LAPFF). Engagement takes place with companies on behalf of members of the Forum across a broad range of ESG themes.

- We will seek to work collaboratively with other like-minded investors and bodies in order to maximise Border to Coast's influence on behalf of Partner Funds, particularly when deemed likely to be more effective than acting alone. This will be achieved through actively supporting investor RI initiatives and collaborating with various other external groups e.g. LAPFF, the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change, other LGPS pools and other investor coalitions.
- Due to the proportion of assets held in overseas markets it is imperative that Border to Coast is able to engage meaningfully with global companies. To enable this and complement other engagement approaches, an external voting and engagement service provider has been appointed.
- Engagement will take place with companies in the internally managed portfolios with portfolio managers and the Responsible Investment team engaging directly across various engagement streams; these will cover environmental, social, and governance issues as well as UN Global Compact<sup>4</sup> breaches.
- We will expect external managers to engage with investee companies and bond issuers as part of their mandate on our behalf and in alignment with our RI policy.

Engagement conducted can be broadly split into two categories: engagement based on financially material ESG issues, or engagement based on (potential) violations of global standards such as the UN Global Compact.

When engagement is based on financially material ESG issues, engagement themes and companies are selected in cooperation with our engagement service provider based on an analysis of financial materiality. Such companies are selected based on their exposure to the engagement topic, the size and relevance in terms of portfolio positions and related risk.

For engagement based on potential company misconduct, cases are selected through the screening of news flows to identify breaches of the UN Global Compact principles or OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises. Both sets of principles, cover a broad variety of basic corporate behaviour norms around ESG topics. Portfolio holdings are screened on 1) validation of a potential breach, 2) the severity of the breach and 3) the degree of to which management can be held accountable for the issue. For all engagements, SMART engagement objectives are defined.

In addition, internal portfolio managers and the Responsible Investment team monitor holdings which may lead to selecting companies where engagement may improve the investment case or can mitigate investment risk related to ESG issues.

We will engage with regulators, public policy makers, and other financial market participants as and when required. We will encourage companies to improve disclosure in relation to ESG and to report and disclose in line with the TCFD recommendations.

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<sup>4</sup>UN Global Compact is a shared framework covering 10 principles, recognised worldwide and applicable to all industry sectors, based on the international conventions in the areas of human rights, labour standards, environmental stewardship and anti-corruption.

### **6.2.1 Escalation**

Border to Coast believe that engagement and constructive dialogue with the companies in which it invests is more effective than excluding companies from the investment universe. However, if engagement does not lead to the desired result escalation may be necessary. A lack of responsiveness by the company can be addressed by conducting collaborative engagement with other institutional shareholders, registering concern by voting on related agenda items at shareholder meetings, attending a shareholder meeting in person and filing/co-filing a shareholder resolution. If the investment case has been fundamentally weakened, the decision may be taken to sell the company's shares.

### **6.3 Due Diligence and monitoring procedure**

Internal procedures and controls for stewardship activities are reviewed by Border to Coast's external auditors as part of the audit assurance (AAF) control review. Robeco, as the external Voting and Engagement provider is also monitored and reviewed by Border to Coast on a regular basis to ensure that the service level agreement is met.

Robeco also undertakes verification of its active ownership activities. Robeco's external auditor audits active ownership controls on an annual basis; this audit is part of the annual International Standard for Assurance Engagements control.

## **7. Litigation**

Where Border to Coast holds securities, which are subject to individual or class action securities litigation, we will, where appropriate, participate in such litigation. There are various litigation routes available dependent upon where the company is registered. We will use a case-by-case approach to determine whether or not to participate in a class action after having considered the risks and potential benefits. We will work with industry professionals to facilitate this.

## **8. Communication and reporting**

Border to Coast will be transparent with regard to its RI activities and will keep beneficiaries and stakeholders informed. This will be done by making publicly available RI and voting policies; publishing voting activity on our website quarterly; reporting on engagement and RI activities to the Partner Funds quarterly; and in our annual RI report.

We will also be voluntarily reporting in line with the TCFD recommendations.

## **9. Training and assistance**

Border to Coast will offer the Partner Funds training on RI and ESG issues. Where requested, assistance will be given on identifying ESG risks and opportunities in order to help develop individual fund policies and investment principles for inclusion in the Investment Strategy Statements.

## 10. Conflicts of interest

Border to Coast has a suite of policies which cover any potential conflicts of interest between itself and the Partner Funds which are applied to identify and manage any conflicts of interest.

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