

Aberystwyth University Pension & Assurance Scheme ('Scheme')

1 August 2025 Implementation Statement

November 2025

1. Introduction

The Trustee is required to make publicly available online a statement (“the Implementation Statement”) covering the Aberystwyth University Pension & Assurance Scheme (the ‘Scheme’) in relation to the Scheme’s Statement of Investment Principles (the “SIP”).

The SIP was amended during the year ending 1 August 2025, and the changes made were predominantly to reflect the change in Investment Advisor from Mercer to Schroders IM Limited, as well as the significant change in investment strategy. This SIP came into force from 29 October 2024.

A copy of the current SIP signed and dated 29 October 2024 is available on the following website:

[https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hr/info-staff/employment/pensions/#aberystwyth-university-pension-assurance-scheme-\(aupas\)-\(closed-to-new-members\)](https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hr/info-staff/employment/pensions/#aberystwyth-university-pension-assurance-scheme-(aupas)-(closed-to-new-members))

This Implementation Statement covers the Scheme year from 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025 (the “Scheme Year”), although the information on engagement and voting statistics relates to the period from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025. It sets out:

- How the Trustee’s policies on stewardship have been followed over the Scheme Year; and
- The voting by or on behalf of the Trustee during the Scheme Year, including the most significant votes cast and any use of a proxy voter during the Scheme Year

The latest guidance (“the **Guidance**”) from the Department for Work and Pensions (**‘DWP’**) aims to encourage the Trustee of the Scheme to properly exercise their stewardship policy including both voting and engagement which is documented in the Scheme’s SIP. With the help of the Scheme’s Fiduciary Manager, to whom the Trustee delegated the implementation of their Stewardship policy, this Implementation Statement has been prepared to provide the details on how the Trustee has complied with the DWP’s statutory guidance.

The Trustee uses the Fiduciary Management service of Schroders IM Limited as their Investment Manager and Adviser (referred to as the **‘Fiduciary Manager’** in the Implementation Statement). The Fiduciary Manager can appoint other investment managers (referred to as **‘Underlying Investment Managers’**) to manage part of the Scheme’s assets, and investments with these managers are generally made via pooled funds, where the Scheme’s investments are pooled with those of other investors.

A copy of this Implementation Statement is available on the following website:

[https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hr/info-staff/employment/pensions/#aberystwyth-university-pension-assurance-scheme-\(aupas\)-\(closed-to-new-members\)](https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hr/info-staff/employment/pensions/#aberystwyth-university-pension-assurance-scheme-(aupas)-(closed-to-new-members))

2. How the Trustee's policies on stewardship have been followed over the Scheme Year

As described in the SIP, the Trustee's approach to stewardship is to delegate the voting and engagement activities to the Fiduciary Manager. The Trustee takes responsibility for regularly reviewing the approach and stewardship policies of the Fiduciary Manager to ensure they are aligned with the Trustee's priorities and objectives. A copy of the Scheme's SIP has been provided to the Fiduciary Manager, who is expected to follow the Trustee's investment (including stewardship) policies when providing Fiduciary Management services.

The Fiduciary Manager aligns its own stewardship activities with Schrodgers' Engagement Blueprint, which identifies six broad themes for their active ownership: Climate Change, Natural Capital & Biodiversity, Human Rights, Corporate Governance, Human Capital Management, and Diversity & Inclusion. From these, the Fiduciary Manager has chosen **Climate Change, Natural Capital & Biodiversity**, and **Human Rights** as its focus for the stewardship actions it performs on behalf of the Scheme. The Trustees expect that the Fiduciary Manager's stewardship activities will result in better management of ESG and climate related risks and opportunities, which is expected to improve the long-term financial outcomes of the Scheme. Therefore, the Trustees have aligned their stewardship priorities with the Fiduciary Manager's.

The Fiduciary Manager is a signatory to the *UK Stewardship Code* which sets high standards for those investing money on behalf of UK pensioners and savers. The UK Stewardship Code describes stewardship as "*the responsible allocation, management and oversight of capital to create long-term value ... leading to sustainable benefits for the economy, the environment and society.*" Thus, the Fiduciary Manager's stewardship activities on behalf of the Trustee encompass a variety of tools, including portfolio ESG integration, manager research and selection, portfolio ESG metric monitoring and voting and engagement.

As part of ongoing monitoring of how the Fiduciary Manager (FM) has exercised the Trustee's stewardship policy, the Trustee reviewed quarterly FM ESG updates and the FM Annual ESG Report during the Scheme Year. The quarterly ESG updates allow the Trustee to monitor the ESG characteristics of the Scheme's portfolio and thereby assess the Fiduciary Manager's allocation, management and oversight of the Scheme's capital. In addition, the quarterly report also details stewardship activities including both voting and engagement the Fiduciary Manager carried out on behalf of the Trustee. The FM Annual ESG Report details various areas concerning the Fiduciary Manager's ESG integration within the investments and stewardship activities over the previous calendar year.

The Trustee is satisfied that the stewardship policy outlined in the SIP has been implemented well over the year, with the Fiduciary Manager taking the Trustee's stewardship policy and priorities into account as part of its stewardship activities and manager selection over the Scheme Year. Examples of how this has been evidenced include:

- The Fiduciary Manager continues to integrate ESG and climate factors via MSCI and SustainEx scores and apply exclusions to its internally managed equity fund (Global Diversified Equity Fund) during the security selection process which includes both Schrodgers Group criteria including UNGC Global Norms Violators, controversial weapons and thermal coal as well as additional exclusions such as Tobacco and Gambling etc such that this internally managed equity fund has greater sustainability characteristics. This ensures a closer alignment of the Scheme's investments with the Trustee's stewardship priorities, as these excluded investments are generally viewed as causing significant harm to the environment and society.
- ESG integration throughout the portfolio, with Underlying Investment Manager and counterparty engagement carried out in the Scheme's Growth, Cashflow Matching Credit and LDI portfolios.
- Manager research identified a hedge fund with sustainability objectives which has been included in the liquid alternatives portfolio. This fund goes beyond simply considering sustainability risks and actively promotes environmental and social objectives.
- Working with the core active credit manager to enhance their mandate to have a specific climate transition focus. This involved the introduction of a net zero target at the strategy level.
- Annual assessment of Underlying Investment Managers' ESG ratings against a comprehensive internal ESG assessment framework. Lower-rated managers are categorised as either Red-Engagement or Red-Exclusion, requiring further engagement to improve their rating, or exclusion on the grounds of poor ESG credentials. The ESG ratings were also used to identify the areas of engagement with Underlying Investment Managers across the engagement priorities.

- Regular investment and operational due diligence on the Underlying Investment Managers to monitor voting and engagement policies concerning the Scheme’s investments.
- In addition to regular reporting, the Fiduciary Manager has developed its ESG reporting to provide voting and engagement examples to the Trustee, facilitating a more regular review throughout the year of the Fiduciary Manager and Underlying Investment Managers’ stewardship activities. In addition, the quarterly ESG reporting also includes “spotlight” pages to provide Trustee with ESG related hot topics and educational material such as ESG integration for particular asset classes.
- Development of biodiversity metric NatCapEx to be used as an engagement tool and to provide a greater understanding of exposure to nature related risks.

Considering the voting statistics and behaviour set out in this Implementation Statement, along with the engagement activity that took place on the Trustee’s behalf during the Scheme Year within the growth, Cashflow Matching Credit and LDI portfolios, the Trustee is pleased to report that the Fiduciary Manager and the Underlying Investment Managers have demonstrated high levels of voting and engagement in line with their stewardship policy.

Specifically, the Trustee noted that:

- Each manager demonstrated high levels of voting rights being acted on, where voting is relevant.
- Where the holdings did not have voting rights attached, the Underlying Investment Managers showed they carried out a good level of engagement activity with the underlying companies over the Scheme Year.
- Challenge to management was demonstrated through votes by the Underlying Investment Managers against management.
- The Fiduciary Manager has carried out a high level of engagement activities with the Underlying Investment Managers, focussing on laggards and material allocations across three different engagement priorities.
- The Fiduciary Manager has also carried out a high level of engagement with different governing bodies for the Liability Hedging mandate to ensure that the Scheme’s liability hedging programme remains robust following the events of the Gilt Crisis of Autumn 2022. Moreover, the Fiduciary Manager provided inputs to those governing bodies to ensure they continue to deliver even better outcomes for their clients, including the Scheme.

Given the activities carried out during the Scheme Year and by preparing this Implementation Statement, the Trustee believes that they have acted in accordance with the DWP Guidance over the Scheme Year.

3. Voting During the Scheme Year

The Trustee has delegated responsibility for voting on their behalf to the Fiduciary Manager and Underlying Investment Managers. Most voting rights associated with the Scheme's investments pertain to the underlying securities within the pooled funds managed by the Underlying Investment Managers. In a general meeting of a company issuing these securities, the Underlying Investment Managers exercise their voting rights according to their own policies, which the Fiduciary Manager may have influenced.

The pooled funds themselves often confer certain rights around voting or policies. These rights are exercised by the Fiduciary Manager on behalf of the Trustee, in line with the Trustee's stewardship policy.

Voting by the Fiduciary Manager

Over the year to 30 June 2025, regarding clients' pooled fund investments¹, the Fiduciary Manager voted on 120 resolutions across 17 meetings. The Fiduciary Manager voted against management on 12 resolutions (10.0% of total resolutions) and abstained on 47 resolutions (39.2% of the total resolutions). The voting topics covered a range of areas, including executive board composition, investment management processes, fund documentation, auditor tenure and fund costs. The Trustee noted that the voting conducted by the Fiduciary Manager shown in this section is in relation to the management of the pooled funds themselves rather than the underlying portfolio securities, whereas the voting statistics of the Schroders Life Global Diversified Fund, conducted by the Schroders Active Ownership team are in relation to the underlying securities where voting rights are attached.

Voting by the Underlying Investment Managers

Most Significant Votes

The following criteria must be met for a vote to be considered 'significant':

1. Must relate to the **Schroders Life Global Diversified Equity Fund**
2. Must be defined as significant by the Fiduciary Manager; and
3. Must relate to the Trustee's stewardship priority themes

The **Schroders Life Global Diversified Equity Fund** constitutes a significant proportion of the Scheme's Growth Asset portfolio and thus constitutes the majority of the Scheme's investments in equity assets – with equity being the main asset class that holds voting rights. Additionally, within the Scheme's Growth Asset portfolio, this is the only fund for which the Fiduciary Manager has responsibility over security selection. For these reasons, the voting activity associated with the securities in this fund holds particular significance for the Scheme.

Schroders Active Ownership team exercises the voting rights, in line with the Schroder's Global Voting Guides (shown in the appendix), which is guided by the Schroders' **Engagement Blueprint**. The Fiduciary Manager believes that all resolutions voted against the board's recommendations should be classified as a significant vote. Generally, the Fiduciary Manager does not communicate their voting intentions to companies regarding shareholder resolutions. Regarding next steps after a vote, in the instance that votes are successful, the Schroders team will typically monitor progress closely. If the votes are unsuccessful, Schroders will typically look to engage with the companies before the next AGM takes place.

Of the votes that satisfy the above criteria, the Trustee has selected one vote relating to each of the priority themes that they deem most material to the long-term value of the investments. These votes are hereby defined as 'most significant votes', and as per DWP guidance, the Trustee has communicated this definition of 'most significant votes' to the Fiduciary Manager. All of the most significant votes over this Scheme Year have been reported below.

¹The voting statistics provided pertain to the Fiduciary Manager's Model Growth portfolio which we believe are a suitable proxy for the pooled fund investments held by the scheme.

CLIMATE CHANGE – At Meta Platforms Inc.’s AGM on 29 May 2025, Schroders supported a shareholder proposal calling for alignment of lobbying activities with the company’s net zero emissions commitment by 2030. This vote, cast against management, reflected Schroders’s belief that shareholders benefit from understanding how lobbying supports long-term climate goals. The proposal was not approved, consistent with other ESG proposals at Meta that have gained significant independent shareholder backing but failed due to the company’s dual-class share structure, which grants Mark Zuckerberg majority voting control.

NATURAL CAPITAL AND BIODIVERSITY - At Amazon.com Inc.’s AGM on 21 May 2025, Schroders voted for a proposal requesting disclosure on the company’s use of unrecyclable flexible plastic packaging, a material widely criticized for its environmental impact, especially on marine ecosystems. Amazon is believed to be one of the largest users of flexible plastic packaging globally, yet it does not disclose the tonnage used. Schroders viewed expanded reporting as beneficial for transparency and reducing environmental risks, particularly to marine ecosystems. Management opposed the proposal, arguing existing reporting was sufficient. While the resolution did not pass, Schroders noted Amazon has reported reduced plastic packaging by more than 25% in 2024.

HUMAN RIGHTS – At Johnson and Johnson’s AGM on 24 May 2025, Schroders supported a shareholder resolution led by Mercy Investment Services, a socially responsible investor, calling for a human rights impact assessment (HRIA) on operations related to access to medicines. Although J has due diligence processes in place, concerns were raised that its lobbying activities may undermine commitments on access. Schroders supported the proposal, which is aligned to international human rights standards, believing it would improve transparency, reduce reputational and regulatory risks, and protect long-term shareholder value. Unfortunately, the resolution was not passed.

Summary Voting Statistics

Only the Scheme’s equity and some alternative (hedge fund) holdings invest in assets with voting rights attached. Below are the voting statistics over the 12 months to 30 June 2025 for the most material funds held on behalf of the Trustee that had voting rights during the period.

Some of the Scheme’s equity holdings are invested via Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs) where voting is also relevant. However, given they are not strategic asset allocations within the Scheme’s growth portfolio, and the Trustee has little influence on the ETF providers’ voting and engagement approach, the Trustee has elected to not include the voting statistics of the ETFs in this Implementation Statement. Instead, the ETF providers’ voting and engagement policies are included in the Appendix.

Equity Funds	Schroders Life Global Diversified Equity Fund	Lazard US Small Cap Equity Fund
Total meetings eligible to vote	356	427
Total resolutions eligible to vote	5,049	3,753
Of resolutions eligible to vote, % of resolutions voted on	91%	99%
Of voted resolutions, % vote with management	87%	85%
Of voted resolutions, % vote against management	13%	15%
Of voted resolutions, % abstained	0%	0%
Of voted resolutions, % vote contrary to the recommendation of proxy adviser (if applicable)	10%	7%
Proxy voting service used	GL	GL & ISS

Note:

- Proxy voting services used are Glass Lewis (“GL”), Institutional Shareholder Services (“ISS”) and ZD Proxy Shareholder Services Ltd. (“ZD”).

- Schroders Investment Management (when exercising voting rights for the Global Diversified Equity Fund use Glass Lewis (“GL”) for proxy voting services and receive ISS’s Benchmark research. Alongside ISS’s research, Schroders receives recommendations from GL in line with their own bespoke guidelines. This is complemented with analysis by their in-house ESG specialists and where appropriate with reference to financial analysts and portfolio managers.
- The voting statistics provided may slightly differ depending on the exact composition the Scheme holds.
- Figures may not total 100% due to a variety of reasons, such as lack of management recommendation, scenarios where an agenda has been split voted, multiple ballots for the same meeting were voted different ways, or a vote of ‘Abstain’ is also considered a vote against management.
- The new equity fund, Lazard US Small Cap Equity Fund, was introduced to the Growth portfolio over the Scheme Year, although the voting data is for the 12 months period to 30 June 2025, sourced from the investment managers per PLSA guidance.

Alternative Funds	Lumyna Marshall Wace - TOPS (Market Neutral) Fund	Lumyna Marshall Wace - TOPS Environmental Focus (Market Neutral) Fund	North Rock Fund	JP Morgan Europe Equity Absolute Alpha Fund	BlackRock Systematic Total Alpha Fund
Total meetings eligible to vote	171	171	449	175	1,852
Total resolutions eligible to vote	4,769	2,490	Data not provided	3,034	17,375
Of resolutions eligible to vote, % of resolutions voted on	100%	100%	100%	98%	94%
Of voted resolutions, % vote with management	80%	60%	100%	96%	93%
Of voted resolutions, % vote against management	6%	5%	0%	4%	7%
Of voted resolutions, % abstained	14%	35%	0%	0%	0%
Of voted resolutions, % vote contrary to the recommendation of proxy adviser (if applicable)	5%	5%	0%	1%	0%
Proxy voting service provider	GL	GL	GL	ISS	BlackRock Investment Stewardship team (BIS) and ISS.

Note:

- The voting statistics provided may slightly differ depending on the exact composition the Scheme holds.
- Lumyna Marshall Wace have included votes withheld in votes abstained (in order to be in line with the PLSA template which other managers have used), although there are differences between votes withheld and votes abstained.

- Figures have been rounded but may not total 100% due to a variety of reasons, such as lack of management recommendation, scenarios where an agenda has been split voted, multiple ballots for the same meeting were voted different ways, or a vote of 'Abstain' is also considered a vote against management.

Four new liquid alternative funds, **JP Morgan European Equity Absolute Alpha**, **BlackRock Systematic Total Alpha**, **AQR Apex Fund** and **AQR Alternative Trend Fund** were introduced to the Growth portfolio over the Scheme Year, although the voting data of JP Morgan and BlackRock funds is for the 12 months period to 30 June 2025, sourced from the investment managers per PLSA guidance. AQR do not allow voting data to be publicly shared.

The Trustee is satisfied that the voting and engagement activities undertaken by both the Fiduciary Manager and the Underlying Investment Managers align with the stewardship priorities determined during the Scheme Year, hence the Trustee believes that they have satisfactorily implemented the Stewardship Policy stated in the Scheme's SIP.

Appendix 1 – ESG, Voting and Engagement Policies

Links to the voting and responsible investment policies for both the Fiduciary Manager and Underlying Investment Managers of the Scheme’s holdings can be found here:

Investment Manager & Underlying Investment Manager	Voting & Engagement Policy
Schroders Solutions	https://mybrand.schroders.com/m/6197143c263420f5/original/Schroders-Group-Sustainable-Investment-Policy.pdf https://mybrand.schroders.com/m/75fa1cd8dd188c3b/original/613798_SC_Listed-Assets-Blueprint-Report-Digital_16_9_V12.pdf
AQR	https://www.aqr.com/-/media/AQR/Documents/ESG/AQR-Proxy-Voting-Policy.pdf?sc_lang=en&hash=7FFEB296D71C2EE923DC5D1F3EC01024
Vanguard (Vanguard ETFs)	Global proxy voting policy A guide to engaging with Vanguard
Lazard	Sustainable Investment and ESG Integration Policy
Lumyna Marshall Wace	https://cdn.mwam.com/download/MW_Engagement_Policy_Jan_2022.pdf
JP Morgan	https://am.jpmorgan.com/content/dam/jpm-am-aem/global/en/institutional/communications/lux-communication/corporate-governance-principles-and-voting-guidelines.pdf Engagement-and-proxy-voting-statement.pdf
BlackRock (including iShares ETFs)	https://www.blackrock.com/corporate/literature/publication/blackrock-active-investment-stewardship-engagement-and-voting-guidelines.pdf
SCOR	SCOR IP_Engagement Policy_052024_EN_0.pdf
T Rowe Price	https://www.troweprice.com/content/dam/trowecorp/Pdfs/esg/proxy-voting-guidelines-TRPA.pdf
Neuberger Berman	https://www.nb.com/handlers/documents.ashx?id=aba155d6-e78e-4668-800f-fa69f05d45d0name=Stewardship%20and%20Engagement%20Policy
Oaktree	https://www.oaktreecapital.com/docs/default-source/default-document-library/esg-policy-2024.pdf
CBRE	https://www.cbreim.com/-/media/project/cbre/bussectors/cbreim/home/about-us/sustainability/cbreim-global-esg-policy.pdf