

# Climate Change Policy

## Border to Coast Pensions Partnership



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# Climate Change Policy

This Climate Change Policy details the approach that Border to Coast Pensions Partnership will follow in fulfilling its commitment to managing the risks and opportunities associated with climate change across the assets managed on behalf of our Partner Funds.

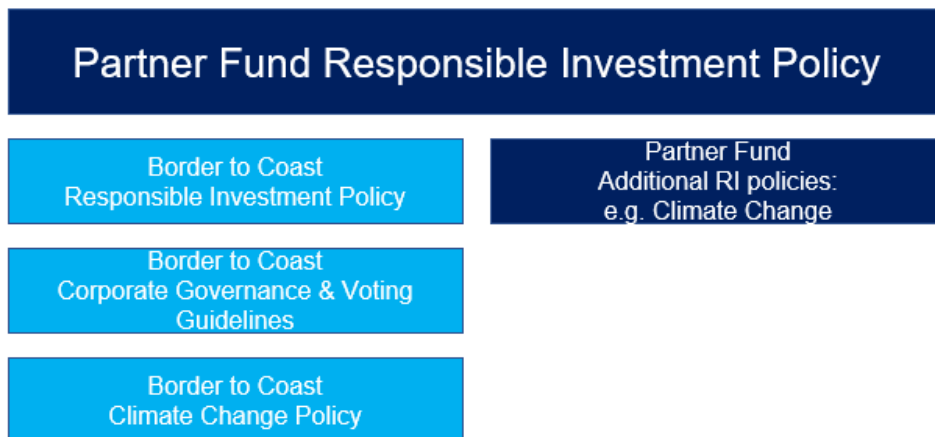
## 1 Introduction

Border to Coast Pensions Partnership Ltd is an FCA regulated and authorised investment fund manager (AIFM), operating investment funds for its eleven shareholders which are Local Government Pension Scheme funds (Partner Funds). As a customer-owned, customer-focused organisation, our purpose is to make a sustainable and positive difference to investment outcomes for our Partner Funds. Pooling gives us a stronger voice and, working in partnership with our Partner Funds and across the asset owner and asset management industry, we aim to deliver cost effective, innovative and responsible investment thereby enabling sustainable, risk-adjusted performance over the long-term.

### 1.1 Policy framework

Border to Coast has developed this Climate Change Policy in collaboration with our Partner Funds. It sits alongside the Responsible Investment Policy and other associated policies, developed to ensure clarity of approach and to meet our Partner Funds' fiduciary duty and fulfil their stewardship requirements. This collaborative approach resulted in the RI policy framework illustrated below with the colours demonstrating ownership of the various aspects of the framework:

## RI Policy Framework



## 2 Policy overview

### 2.1 Our views and beliefs on climate change

The world is warming, the climate is changing, and the scientific consensus is that this is due to human activity, primarily the emissions of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from burning fossil fuels. Our planet has warmed by over 1°C relative to the pre-industrial average temperature, and we are starting to experience the significant effects of this warming. This changes the world in which we live, but also the world in which we invest.

Atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> is at unprecedented levels in human history. Further warming will occur, and so adaptation will be required. The extent of this further warming is for humankind to collectively decide, and the next decade is critical in determining the course. If the present course is not changed and societal emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases (GHG) are not reduced to mitigate global warming, scientists have suggested that global society will be catastrophically

disrupted beyond its capability to adapt, with material capital market implications.

Recognising the existential threat to society that unmitigated climate change represents, in 2015, the nations of the world came together in Paris and agreed to limit global warming to 2°C and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C. A key part of the Paris Agreement was an objective to make finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low GHG emissions and climate resilience. This recognises the critical role asset owners and managers play, reinforcing the need for us and our peers to drive and support the pace and scale of change required.

In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a special report, “Global warming of 1.5°C”<sup>1</sup>, which starkly illustrated how critical successful adaptation to limit global warming to 1.5°C is. The report found that limiting global warming to 1.5°C would require “rapid and far-reaching” transitions in land, energy, industry, buildings, transport, and cities. This includes a need for emissions of carbon dioxide to fall by approximately 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030, and reach ‘net zero’ around 2050. We support this scientific consensus; recognising that the investments we make, in every asset class, will both impact climate change and be impacted by climate change. Urgent collaborative action is needed to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions globally by 2050, and everyone has a part to play in ensuring the goal is met.

## 2.2 Why climate change is important to us

The purpose of embedding sustainability into our actions is twofold: we believe that considering sustainable measures in our investment decisions will increase returns for our Partner Funds, in addition to positively impacting the world beneficiaries live in.

Our exposure to climate change comes predominantly from the investments that we manage on behalf of our Partner Funds. We develop and operate a variety of internally and externally managed investments across a range of asset classes both in public and private markets for our Partner Funds to invest in.

We try to mitigate these exposures by taking a long-term approach to investing as we believe that businesses that are governed well and managed in a sustainable way are more resilient, able to survive shocks and have the potential to provide better financial returns for investors. Climate change can have a material impact on the value of financial assets and on the long-term performance of investments, and therefore needs to be considered across all asset classes in order to better manage risk and generate sustainable, long-term returns.

Climate change is a systemic risk which poses significant investment risks, but also opportunities, with the potential to impact long-term shareholder value. There are two types of risks that investors are exposed to, the physical risk of climate change impacts and the transitional risk of decarbonising economies, both can also impact society resulting in social risks.

Transition to a low carbon economy will affect some sectors more than others, and within sectors there are likely to be winners and losers, which is why divesting from and excluding entire sectors may not be appropriate. We actively consider how climate change, the shifting regulatory environment and potential macroeconomic impact will affect investments. We believe that we have the responsibility to contribute and support the transition to a low carbon economy in order to positively impact the world in which pension scheme beneficiaries live in.

In addition, the transition to a low-carbon economy will undoubtedly affect the various stakeholders of the companies taking part in the energy transition. A just transition refers to the integration of the social dimension in the net zero transition and is part of the Paris Agreement, the guidelines adopted by United Nations’ International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2015, and the European Green Deal. These stakeholders include the workforce and the communities in which the companies’ facilities are located. We expect companies to consider the potential stakeholder risks associated with decarbonisation.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

Our climate change strategy is split into four pillars: **Identification and Assessment, Investment Strategy, Engagement and Advocacy, and Disclosures and Reporting.** We will continue to monitor scientific research in this space; evolving and adapting our strategy in order to best respond to the impacts of climate change.

### 2.3 How we execute our climate change strategy

*We integrate climate change risks within our wider risk management framework and have robust processes in place for the identification and ongoing assessment of climate risks.*

*We consider climate change risks and opportunities within our investment decision making process.*

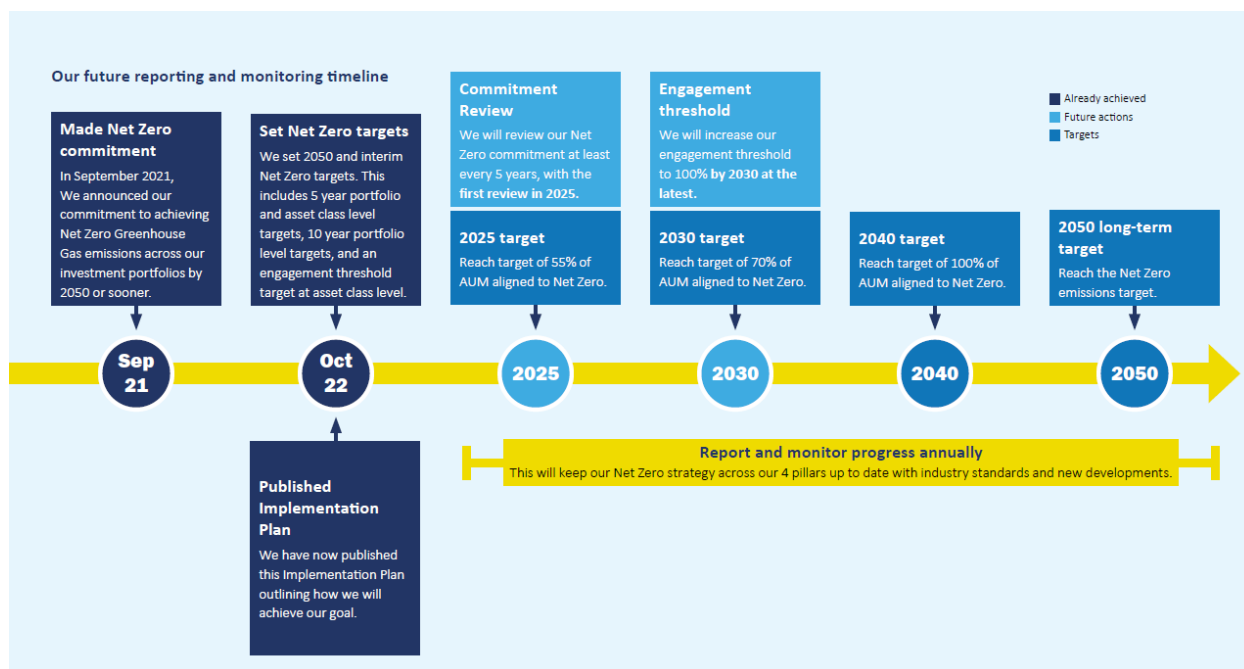


*Border to Coast, as a large investor, aims to influence companies to adapt and articulate their climate change strategy, to enable them to be well prepared for the transition to a low carbon economy. This in turn will improve investment outcomes.*

*We are committed to transparency regarding our climate change issues and activities.*

## 2.4 Roadmap

The roadmap demonstrates the future reporting and monitoring timeline for implementing our Net Zero plan.



## 3 Climate change strategy and governance

### 3.1 Our ambition – Net Zero

Our climate change strategy recognises that there are financially material investment risks and opportunities associated with climate change which we need to manage across our investment portfolios. We have therefore committed to a net zero carbon emissions target by 2050 at the latest for our assets under management, in order to align with efforts to limit temperature increases to under 1.5°C.

We recognise that assessing and monitoring climate risk is under constant development, and that tools and underlying data are developing rapidly. There is a risk of just focusing on carbon emissions, a backwards looking metric, and it is important to ensure that metrics we use reflect the expected future state and transition plans that companies have in place or under development. We will continue to assess the metrics and targets used as data and industry standards develop.

As a supporter of the recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), we continue to embed climate change into our investment process and risk management systems, reporting annually on our progress in the TCFD report.

To demonstrate our Net Zero commitment, we joined the Net Zero Asset Manager initiative (NZAM) pledging to decarbonise investment portfolios by 2050 or sooner.

We are using the Net Zero Investment Framework to support us in implementing our strategy to being Net Zero by 2050. We have developed an implementation plan which sets out the four pillars of our approach: governance and strategy, targets and objectives, asset class alignment, and stewardship and engagement. We believe success across these four elements will best enable us to implement the change needed. The Net Zero Implementation Plan can be found on our website.

### **3.2 Governance and implementation**

We take a holistic approach to the integration of sustainability and responsible investment; it is at the core of our corporate and investment thinking. Sustainability, which includes RI is considered and overseen by the Board and Executive Committee. We have defined policies and procedures that demonstrate our commitment to managing climate change risk, including this Climate Change Policy, our Responsible Investment Policy and Corporate Governance & Voting Guidelines which can be found on our [website](#).

### **3.3 Division of roles and responsibilities**

The Board determines the Company's overall strategy for climate change and with support from the Board Risk Committee, more broadly oversees the identification and management of risk and opportunities. The Board is responsible for the overarching oversight of climate related considerations as part of its remit with respect to Border to Coast's management of investments. The Board approves the Responsible Investment strategy and policies, which includes the Climate Change Policy. Updates on Responsible Investment are presented to the Board at regular intervals, this includes activities related to climate change. The Board reviews and approves the TCFD report prior to publication.

The Climate Change Policy is owned by Border to Coast and created after collaboration and engagement with our Partner Funds. We will, where needed, take appropriate advice in order to further develop and implement the policy.

The Chief Investment Officer (CIO) is responsible for the implementation and management of the Climate Change Policy, with oversight from the Investment Committee, which is chaired by the Chief Executive Officer. Each year the CIO reviews the implementation of the policy and reports any findings to the Board. The policy is reviewed annually, taking into account evolving best practice, and updated as needed.

The Investment Team, which includes a dedicated Responsible Investment Team, works to identify and manage environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues including climate change. Climate change is one of our responsible investment priorities and sits at the core of our sustainability dialogue. We are on the front foot with UK, European and Global climate change regulation, horizon scanning for future regulation and actively participate in discussions around future climate policy and legislation through our membership of industry bodies.

### **3.4 Training**

Border to Coast's Board and colleagues maintain appropriate skills in responsible investment, including climate change, maintaining and increasing knowledge and understanding of climate change risks, available risk measurement tools, and policy and regulation. Where necessary expert advice is taken from suitable climate change specialists to fulfil our responsibilities. We also offer our Partner Funds training on climate change related issues.

### **3.5 Regulatory change management**

Regulatory change horizon scanning is a key task undertaken by the Compliance function, which regularly scans for applicable regulatory change. This includes FCA, associated UK financial services regulations, and wider regulation impacting financial services including Responsible Investment, and climate change. The relevant heads of functions and departments, as subject matter experts, also support the process and a tracker is maintained to ensure applicable changes are appropriately implemented.

## **4 Identification and assessment**

### **4.1 How we identify climate-related risks**

The Identification and Assessment pillar is a key element of our climate change strategy. Our investment processes and approach towards engagement and advocacy reflect our desire to culturally embed climate change risk within our organisation and drive change in the industry.

The risk relating to climate change is integrated into the wider Border to Coast risk management framework. The Company operates a risk management framework consistent with the principles of the 'three lines of defence' model. Primary responsibility for risk management lies with the Investment and Operations teams. Second line of defence is provided by the Risk and Compliance functions, which report to the Board Risk Committee, and the third line of defence is provided by Internal Audit, which reports to the Audit Committee and provides risk-based assurance over the Company's governance, risk and control framework.

We consider both the transition and physical risks of climate change. The former relates to the risks (and opportunities) from the realignment of our economic system towards low-carbon, climate-resilient and carbon-positive solutions (e.g. via regulations). The latter relates to the physical impacts of climate change (e.g. rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, increased risk arising from rising sea levels and increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events).

## **4.2 How we assess climate-related risks and opportunities**

We currently use a number of different tools and metrics to measure and monitor climate risk across portfolios. We acknowledge that this is a rapidly evolving area, and we are developing our analytical capabilities to support our ambition. Carbon data is not available for all equities as not all companies disclose, therefore there is a reliance on estimates. Data is even more unreliable for fixed income and is only just being developed for Private Markets. We will work with our managers and the industry to improve data disclosure and transparency in this area.

We utilise third party carbon portfolio analytics to conduct carbon footprints across equity and fixed income portfolios, analysing carbon emissions, carbon intensity and weighted carbon intensity and fossil fuel exposure when assessing carbon-related risk, on a quarterly basis. The Transition Pathway Initiative (TPI)<sup>2</sup> tool and climate Action 100+ Net Zero Company Benchmark analysis is used to support portfolio managers in decision making with respect to net zero assessments. We use research from our partners and specific climate research, along with information and data from initiatives and industry associations we support.

We continue to develop climate risk assessments for our listed equity investments that combines several factors to assess overall whether a company is aligned with the Paris Agreement (to limit global warming to 2°C), so that we can both engage appropriately with the company on their direction of travel and also track our progress. This is an iterative process, recognising that data, tools and methodologies are developing rapidly.

We understand that scenario analysis is useful for understanding the potential risks and opportunities attached to investment portfolios and strategies due to climate change. We note that scenario analysis is still developing, with services and products evolving as data quality and disclosure from companies continues to improve. During 2022 we will be evaluating our third-party scenario analysis tools and conducting analysis using a number of different scenarios.

## **5 Investment strategy**

### **5.1 Our approach to investing**

We believe that climate change should be systematically integrated into our investment decision-making process to identify related risks and opportunities. This is critical to our long-term objective of improving investment outcomes for our Partner Funds.

Border to Coast offers Partner Funds a variety of internally and externally managed investment funds covering a wide-ranging set of asset classes with different risk-return profiles. Partner Funds then choose the funds which support their strategic asset allocation.

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<sup>2</sup> The Transition Pathway Initiative ('TPI') is a global initiative led by asset owners and supported by asset managers. Aimed at investors, it is a free-to-use tool that assesses how prepared companies are for the low carbon transition.



Partner Funds retain responsibility for strategic asset allocation and setting their investment strategy, and ultimately their strategic exposure to climate risk. Our implementation supports Partner Funds to deliver on their fiduciary duty of acting in the best interests of beneficiaries.

We consider climate change risks and opportunities in the process of constructing and developing investment funds. Engaging with our investee companies and **fund managers** will be a key lever we will use to reach our Net Zero goals, but we also recognise the role of screening, adjusting portfolio weights, and tilted benchmarks in decarbonising our investments.

Climate change is also considered during the external manager selection and appointment process. We monitor and challenge our internal and external managers on their portfolio holdings, analysis, and investment rationale in relation to climate-related risks.

We monitor a variety of carbon metrics, managing climate risk in portfolios through active voting and engagement, whilst also looking to take advantage of the long-term climate-related investment opportunities.

We believe in engagement rather than divestment and that by doing so can effect change at companies. Our investment approach is not to divest or exclude entire sectors, however there may be specific instances when we will look to sell or not invest in some industries based on investment criteria, the investment time horizon and if there is limited scope for successful engagement. Using these criteria and due to the potential for stranded assets, we interpret this to cover public market companies with 70% of revenue derived from thermal coal and oil sands and will therefore not invest in these companies. For illiquid assets a revenue threshold of 25% is in place, this is due to the long-term nature of these investments. Any companies excluded will be monitored with business strategies and transition plans assessed for potential reinstatement.

## 5.2 Acting within different asset classes

We integrate climate change risks and opportunities into our investment decisions within each asset class. The approach we take for each asset class is tailored to the nature of the risk and our investment process for that asset class. The timeframe for the impact of climate change can vary, leading to differing risk implications depending on the sector, asset class and region. These variations are considered at the portfolio level. This policy gives our overall approach and more detail on the processes and analysis can be found in our annual TCFD report.

Climate risks and opportunities are incorporated into the stock analysis and decision-making process for **listed equities** and **fixed income**. Third-party ESG and carbon data are used to assess individual holdings. We also use forward looking metrics including the TPI ratings, Climate Action 100+ ('CA100+') Net Zero Company Benchmark and the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) to assess companies' transition progress. Internal, sell-side and climate specific research, and engagement information are also utilised. Carbon footprints are conducted relative to the benchmark. Climate scenario analysis is also conducted for listed equity and fixed income portfolios using third-party data.

For our **alternative funds**, ESG risks, which includes climate change, are incorporated into the due diligence process including ongoing monitoring. Across both funds and co-investments, we consider the impact of carbon emissions and climate change when determining our asset allocation across geographies and industries. We assess and monitor if our GPs track portfolio metrics in line with TCFD recommendations. Climate change presents real financial risks to portfolios but also provides opportunities with significant amounts of private capital required to achieve a low-carbon transition. We have therefore launched a Climate Opportunities offering and will be facilitating increased investment in climate transition solutions taking into account Partner Fund asset allocation decisions.

To meet our commitment to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050 or sooner, we have developed targets for our investments in line with the Net Zero Investment Framework (NZIF). We have set targets at two levels: portfolio level, which refers to our combined total investments in the asset classes covered by this plan, and asset class level, which refers to our investments split by investment type (i.e. listed equity, corporate fixed income etc). This covers 60% of our AUM (at 31/03/2022) and we will look to increase coverage across the rest of our investments



when appropriate.

### **5.3 Working with External Managers**

Assessing climate risk is an integral part of the External Manager selection and appointment process. It also forms part of the quarterly screening and monitoring of portfolios and the annual manager reviews. We monitor and review our fund managers on their climate change approach and policies. Where high emitting companies are held as part of a strategy managers are challenged and expected to provide strong investment rationale to substantiate the holding. We expect managers to engage with companies in line with our Responsible Investment Policy and to support collaborative initiatives on climate, and to report in line with the TCFD recommendations. In addition, we encourage managers to make a firm wide net zero commitment. We will work with External Managers to implement specific decarbonisation parameters for their mandate. We will monitor our managers' carbon profiles and progress against targets on a quarterly basis and as part of our annual reviews. We will also consider the suitability of those targets on an annual basis. Where carbon profiles are above target, this will act as a prompt for discussion with the manager to understand why this has occurred, any appropriate actions to be taken to bring them back to target, and the timescales for any corrective action.

## **6 Engagement and advocacy**

As a shareholder, we have the responsibility for effective stewardship of all companies or entities in which we invest, whether directly or indirectly. We take the responsibilities of this role seriously, and we believe that effective stewardship is key to the success for our climate ambition. As well as engaging with our investee companies it is important that we engage on systemic risks, including climate change, with policymakers, regulators and standard setters to help create a stable environment to enhance long-term investment returns.

### **6.1 Our approach to engagement**

As a long-term investor and representative of asset owners, we will hold companies and asset managers to account regarding environmental, social and governance issues, including climate change factors, that have the potential to impact corporate value. We support engagement over divestment as we believe that constructive dialogue with companies in which we invest is more effective than excluding companies from the investment universe, particularly with regard to promoting decarbonisation in the real world. If engagement does not lead to the desired results, we have an escalation process which forms part of our RI Policy, this includes adverse voting instructions on related AGM voting items, amongst other steps. We practice active ownership through voting, monitoring companies, engagement and litigation. Through meetings with company directors, we seek to work with and influence investee companies to encourage positive change. Climate is one of our key engagement themes. We believe it is vital we fully understand how companies are dealing with this challenge, and feel it is our duty to hold the boards of our investee companies to account.

Our primary objective from climate related engagement is to encourage companies to adapt their business strategy in order to align with a low carbon economy and reach net zero by 2050 or sooner. The areas we consider in our engagement activities include climate governance; strategy and Paris alignment; command of the climate subject; board oversight and incentivisation; TCFD disclosures and scenario planning; scope 3 emissions and the supply chain; capital allocation alignment, a just transition and exposure to climate-stressed regions.

In order to increase our influence with corporates and policy makers we work collaboratively with other like-minded investors and organisations. This is achieved through actively supporting investor RI initiatives and collaborating with various other external groups on climate related issues, including the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change (IIGCC), CA100+, the UN-supported Principles for Responsible Investment, the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum and the TPI.

In particular, we are currently focusing on the following actions:

- When exercising our voting rights for companies in high emitting sectors that do not sufficiently address the impact of climate change on their businesses, we will oppose the agenda item most appropriate for that issue. To that end, the nomination of the accountable board member takes precedence. Companies that are not making sufficient progress in mitigating climate risk are identified using recognised industry benchmarks including the TPI and CA 100+ Net Zero Company Benchmark. Additionally, an internally developed framework is used to identify companies with insufficient progress on climate change. Our voting principles are outlined in our Corporate Governance & Voting Guidelines. We are also transparent with all our voting activity and publish our quarterly voting records on our [website](#).
- Support climate-related resolutions at company meetings which we consider reflect our Climate Change Policy. We will co-file shareholder resolutions at company AGMs on climate risk disclosure and lobbying, after conducting due diligence, that we consider to be of institutional quality and consistent with our Climate Change Policy.
- Engage with companies in relation to business sustainability and disclosure of climate risk in line with the TCFD recommendations.
- Encourage companies to publish targets and report on steps taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Work collaboratively with other asset owners in order to strengthen our voice and make a more lasting impact for positive change. Engagement is conducted directly, through our engagement partner and through our support of collaborations. We also expect our external asset managers to engage with companies on climate-related issues.
- Use the IIGCC's Net Zero Stewardship Toolkit to develop our net zero stewardship strategy.
- Use carbon footprints the TPI toolkit, CA100+ Net Zero Company Benchmark and SBTi to assess companies and inform our engagement and voting activity. This will enable us to prioritise shareholder engagement, set timeframes and monitor progress against our goals.
- Engage collaboratively alongside other institutional investors with policy makers through membership of the IIGCC. We will engage with regulators and peer groups to advocate for improved climate related disclosures and management in the pensions industry and wider global economy.

## 7 Disclosures and reporting

Transparency is one of our key organisational values. We disclose our RI activity on our website, publishing quarterly stewardship and voting reports, annual RI & Stewardship reports and our TCFD report. We are committed to improving transparency and reporting in relation to our RI activities, which include climate change related activities.

We will keep our Partner Funds and our stakeholders informed on our progress of implementing the Climate Change Policy and Net Zero commitment, as well as our exposure to the risks and opportunities of climate change. This will include:

- Reviewing annually how we are implementing this policy with findings reported to our Board and Partner Funds. report in line with the TCFD recommendations on an annual basis, including reporting on the actions undertaken with regards to implementation of this policy and progress against our Net Zero commitment.
- We will disclose our voting activity and report on engagement and RI activities, including climate change, to the Partner Funds quarterly and in our annual RI & Stewardship report.
- Disclose climate metrics and targets that help to analyse the overall exposure of our portfolios to the risks and opportunities presented by climate mitigation and adaptation.