

# **Sisk UK Pension Scheme**

## **Statement of Investment Principles**

September 2023

# Preface

## **Scheme background**

This Statement of Investment Principles (the 'SIP') details the principles governing investment decisions for the Sisk UK Pension Scheme (the 'Scheme').

The Scheme operates for the exclusive purpose of providing retirement and death benefits to eligible participants and beneficiaries, and provides benefits calculated on a defined benefit (DB) basis for members. The Scheme is closed to new entrants and to future accrual.

## **Regulatory requirements and considerations**

Under the Pensions Act 1995 (the 'Act') and subsequent legislation, principally the Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment) Regulations 2005 (as amended) (the 'Investment Regulations'), the Trustees must secure that a written statement of the principles governing investment decisions is prepared and maintained for the Scheme.

This SIP also reflects The Pensions Regulator's investment guidance for trustees running pension schemes that offer defined benefits that was issued in March 2017 and subsequently updated in September 2019.

The Trustees are responsible for all aspects of the operation of the Scheme, including this SIP.

In agreeing their investment strategy, the Trustees have had regard to:

- The requirements of the Act concerning suitability and diversification of investments and the Trustees will consider those requirements on any review of this SIP or any change in the investment policy.
- The requirement of the Investment Regulations: in particular that assets held to cover the Scheme's technical provisions must also be invested in a manner appropriate to the nature and duration of the expected future retirement benefits payable under the Scheme.

## **Responsibilities and appointments**

Only persons or organisations with the necessary skills, information and resources are actively involved in taking investment decisions affecting the Scheme. The Trustees draw on the expertise of external persons and organisations including the investment consultant, the investment manager and the Scheme Actuary. Full details are set out in this SIP.

## **Consultation**

In accordance with the Act, the Trustees have obtained and considered written advice from Buck Consultants (Administration & Investment) Limited (the investment consultant) prior to the preparation of this SIP and have consulted John Sisk & Son Limited ('the Sponsoring Employer'). However, it should be noted that neither the Trustees (nor any investment manager to whom they have delegated any discretion to make decisions about investments) shall require the consent of the Sponsoring Employer to exercise any investment power.

### **History and review**

The Trustees will review this SIP at least every three years and without delay after each significant change in investment policy, taking note of any changes in the Scheme's liabilities. Once agreed, and after consultation with the Sponsoring Employer, a copy of this SIP will be given to the Scheme Actuary and will be made available to Scheme members on request and published on the following publicly available website:

[www.johnsiskandson.com/publications](http://www.johnsiskandson.com/publications)

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# Statement of Investment Principles

## Investment governance structure

All investment decisions are taken by the Trustee Board as a whole. The Trustees believe that collective responsibility is the appropriate structure, given the size of the board, except for specific projects when an investment sub-committee may be set up. The Trustees will undertake training where appropriate to ensure they have the necessary expertise to take the decisions required and to evaluate critically the advice received.

All investment decisions relating to the Scheme are under the control of the Trustee Board without constraint by the Sponsoring Employer. The Trustees will consult with the Sponsoring Employer when changing this SIP.

All day-to-day investment decisions are delegated to a properly qualified and authorised investment manager of pension scheme portfolios. An insurance contract has been exchanged with the investment platform provider and are reviewed from time-to-time to ensure that the manner in which the investment manager makes investments on behalf of the Trustee Board is suitable for the Scheme and appropriately diversified.

## Investment strategy and objectives

The Scheme's investment strategy has been agreed by the Trustees having taken advice from the investment consultant in relation to the suitability of investments and the need to diversify and takes due account of the Scheme's liability profile along with the level of disclosed surplus or deficit.

The agreed investment strategy is based on an analysis of the Scheme's liability profile, the required investment return and the returns expected from the various asset classes over the long-term. Long-term returns from equities are expected to exceed the returns from bonds and cash, although returns and capital values may demonstrate higher volatility. The Trustees are prepared to accept this higher volatility, where applicable, in order to aim to achieve the overall investment objectives.

The Trustees' primary objectives are:

- To provide appropriate security for all beneficiaries.
- To achieve long-term growth sufficient to provide the benefits from the Scheme.
- To achieve an appropriate balance between risk and return with regards to the cost of the Scheme and the security of the benefits.

The Trustees have translated their objectives into a suitable strategic asset allocation benchmark for the Scheme, details of which are included in a separate Summary of Investment Arrangements document ("SoIA").

In accordance with the Financial Services & Markets Act 2000, the Trustees are responsible for setting the general investment policy, but the responsibility for all day-to-day investment management decisions has been delegated to an investment manager authorised under the Act. Details are included in the SoIA.

The Trustees are responsible for reviewing both the Scheme's asset allocation and investment strategy as part of each actuarial valuation in consultation with the Scheme's investment consultant. The Trustees may also reconsider the asset allocation and the investment strategy outside the triennial valuation period where necessary.

The Trustees consider the Scheme's current strategic asset allocation to be consistent with the current financial position of the Scheme. This assessment will be updated with reference to the Technical Provisions set out in the Scheme's Statement of Funding Principles once the next actuarial valuation has been completed. "Technical provisions" is the value of the Scheme's liabilities for funding purposes as at the latest available Scheme-specific actuarial valuation date.

### **The Trustees' policy in relation to the kinds of investments to be held**

The Trustees have full regard to their investment powers as set out in the Trust Deed and Rules.

The Scheme may invest in quoted and unquoted securities of UK and overseas markets including:

- Equities.
- Fixed interest and index-linked bonds.
- Cash.
- Property.
- Private equity.
- Hedge funds and pooled investment vehicles considered appropriate for tax-exempt registered occupational pension schemes.

The Trustees have considered the attributes of the various asset classes (including derivative instruments), these attributes being:

- Security (or quality) of the investment.
- Yield (expected long-term return).
- Spread (or volatility) of returns.
- Term (or duration) of the investment.
- Exchange rate risk.
- Marketability/liquidity (i.e. the tradability on regulated markets).
- Taxation.

The Trustees consider all of the stated classes of investment to be suitable to the circumstances of the Scheme. The Scheme invests (mostly) in pooled funds, other collective investment vehicles and cash. The Trustees have made the decision to invest the majority of assets in pooled funds because:

- The Scheme is not large enough to justify direct investment on a cost-effective basis.
- Pooled funds allow the Trustees to invest in a wider range of assets, which serves to reduce risk.
- Pooled funds provide a more liquid form of investment than certain types of direct investment.

The Trustees have appointed an investment platform provider to manage the Scheme's assets. The platform provider is regulated under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and has been selected in order to effect cost and operational efficiencies in the management of the assets.

**The Trustees' policy in relation to the balance between different kinds of investments**

The appointed investment manager will hold a diversified mix of investments in line with their agreed benchmark and within their discretion to diverge from the benchmark. Within each major market the manager will maintain a diversified portfolio of securities. Full details are set out in the SoIA.

**The Trustees' policy in relation to the expected return on investments**

The investment strategy is believed to be capable of exceeding, in the long run, the overall required rate of return assumed in the Scheme Actuary's published actuarial valuation report in order to reach/maintain a fully funded status under the agreed assumptions.

**The Trustees' policy in relation to the realisation of investments**

In the event of an unexpected need to realise all or part of the assets of the portfolio, the Trustees require the investment manager to be able to realise the Scheme's investments in a reasonable timescale by reference to the market conditions existing at the time the disposal is required and subject to the best interests of the Scheme. The majority of the assets are not expected to take an undue time to liquidate.

**The Trustees' policy in relation to financially material considerations**

The Trustees expect their investment manager, where appropriate, to have taken account of financially material considerations, including environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors as part of their investment analysis and decision-making process.

The Trustees review, from time to time, the investment manager's policies in respect of financially material considerations.

**The Trustees' policy in relation to the extent to which non-financial matters are taken into account**

The Trustees' objective is that the financial interests of the Scheme members is their first priority when choosing investments. The Trustees have decided not to take members' preferences into account when considering these objectives.

**Risk capacity and risk appetite**

The Trustees, after seeking appropriate investment advice, have selected a strategic asset allocation benchmark for the Scheme (see the SoIA).

Subject to their respective benchmarks and guidelines (shown in the SoIA) the investment manager is given full discretion over the choice of stocks and is expected to maintain diversified portfolios.

The Trustees are satisfied that the investments selected are consistent with their investment objectives, particularly in relation to diversification, risk, expected return and liquidity.

### **The Trustees' policy in relation to risks**

The Trustees consider the main risk to be that of the assets being insufficient to meet the Scheme's liabilities as they fall due. The Trustees have assessed the likelihood of undesirable financial outcomes arising in the future.

Investment policies are set with the aim of having sufficient and appropriate assets to cover the Scheme's Technical Provisions, and with the need to avoid undue contribution rate volatility.

The Trustees also take into account the long-term expected returns underlying the most recent actuarial valuation.

Although the Trustees acknowledge that the main risk is that the Scheme will have insufficient assets to meet its liabilities, the Trustees recognise other contributory risks, including the following. Namely the risk:

- Associated with the differences in the sensitivity of asset and liability values to changes in financial and demographic factors.
- Of the Scheme having insufficient liquid assets to meet its immediate liabilities.
- Of the investment managers failing to achieve the required rate of return.
- Due to the lack of diversification of investments.
- Of failure of the Scheme's Sponsoring Employer to meet its obligations.

The Trustees manage and measure these risks on a regular basis via actuarial and investment reviews, and in the setting of investment objectives and strategy.

The Trustees undertake monitoring of the investment managers' performance against their targets and objectives on a regular basis.

Each fund in which the Trustees invest has a stated performance objective against which investment performance will be measured. These are shown in the SoIA. Within each asset class, the investment manager is expected to maintain a portfolio of securities (or funds), which ensures that the risk being accepted in each market is broadly diversified.

The divergence of the actual distribution of the investments from the benchmark weighting for each fund will be monitored by the Scheme's investment manager while the divergence from the overall benchmark will be monitored by the Trustees. Any deviation from the target asset allocations will be discussed periodically with the investment consultant.

### **Stewardship in relation to the Scheme's assets**

The Trustees have a fiduciary duty to consider their approach to the stewardship of the investments, to maximise financial returns for the benefit of members and beneficiaries over the long term. Trustees can promote an investment's long-term success through monitoring, engagement and/or voting, either directly or through each investment manager.

### **The Trustees' policy in relation to engagement and monitoring (including peer-to-peer engagement)**

The Trustees' policy is to delegate responsibility for engaging and monitoring investee companies to each investment manager and the Trustees expect the investment manager to use its discretion to maximise financial returns for members and others over the long term.



The Trustees recognise that each investment manager's ability to influence the companies in which it invests will depend on the nature of the investment.

The Trustees acknowledge that the concept of stewardship may be less applicable to some of their assets, particularly for gilt investments.

The Trustees review each investment manager prior to appointment and monitor them on an ongoing basis through the regular review of the investment manager's voting and engagement policies and a review of each manager's voting and engagement behaviour. The Trustees may use their investment consultants ESG ratings of managers to aid them in this process.

The Trustees have not set out their own stewardship priorities but follow that of the investment manager.

The Trustees will engage with an investment manager should they consider that manager's voting and engagement policy to be inadequate or if the voting and engagement undertaken is not aligned with the investment manager's own policies.

If the Trustees find any investment manager's policies or behaviour unacceptable, they may agree an alternative mandate with the manager or decide to review or replace the manager.

As all of the investments are held in pooled vehicles, the Trustees do not envisage being directly involved with peer-to-peer engagement in investee companies.

### **The Trustees' policy in relation to voting rights**

The Trustees' policy is to delegate responsibility for the exercising of rights (including voting rights) attaching to investments to the investment manager and to encourage the manager to exercise those rights. The Trustees have not set out their own voting policy but follow that of the investment manager. The investment manager is expected to provide regular reports for the Trustees detailing its voting activity.

## **Investment management monitoring**

In addition to the stewardship activities described above, the Trustees will assess the performance, processes and cost effectiveness of the investment manager by means of regular, but not less than annual, reviews of the results and other information, in consultation with the investment consultant.

All investment decisions, and the overall performance of the investment manager, are monitored by the Trustees with the assistance of the investment consultant.

The Trustees assess the investment manager via an investment platform and receive quarterly statements of the assets held, along with a quarterly performance report from the platform provider. The investment manager will also report orally on request to the Trustees. The platform provider will inform the Trustees of any changes to the internal performance objective and guidelines of any pooled funds used by the Scheme as and when they occur.

The Trustees will assess the quality of the performance and processes of the investment manager by means of a review at least once every three years in consultation with the investment consultant.

The Trustees receive an independent investment performance monitoring report from the investment consultant on a quarterly basis.

Appropriate written advice will be taken from the investment consultant before the review, appointment or removal of investment managers.

### **The Trustees' policy in relation to their investment manager**

In detailing below the policies on the investment manager arrangements, the over-riding approach of the Trustees is to select investment managers that meet the primary objectives of the Trustees. As part of the selection process and the ongoing review of the investment manager, the Trustees consider how well the investment manager meets the Trustees' policies and provides value for money over a suitable timeframe.

- **How the arrangement incentivises the investment manager to align its investment strategy and decisions with the Trustees' policies**

The Trustees have delegated the day-to-day management of the Scheme's assets to an investment manager. The Scheme's assets are invested in pooled funds which have their own policies and objectives and charge a fee, agreed with the investment platform provider, for their services. Such fees incentivise the investment manager to adhere to its stated policies and objectives.

- **How the arrangement incentivises the investment manager to engage and take into account financial and non-financial matters over the medium to long term**

The Trustees, in conjunction with their investment consultant, appoint investment managers and choose the specific pooled fund to use in order to meet specific Scheme policies. They expect an investment manager to make decisions based on assessments about the financial characteristics of underlying investments, and that they engage with issuers of debt or equity to improve their performance (and thereby the Scheme's performance) over an appropriate time horizon.

The Trustees have decided not to take non-financial matters into account when considering their policy objectives.

- **How the method (and time horizon) of the evaluation of the investment manager's performance and the remuneration for asset management services are in line with the Trustees' investment policies**

The Trustees expect their investment manager to invest the assets within its portfolios in a manner that is consistent with the guidelines and constraints set out in its appointment documentation. The Trustees review the investment manager periodically. These reviews incorporate benchmarking of performance and fees. Reviews of performance focus on longer-term performance (to the extent that is relevant), e.g. looking at five years of performance.

If the Trustees determine that the investment manager is no longer managing the assets in line with the Trustees policies, they will make their concerns known to the investment manager and may ultimately disinvest.

The Trustees pay their investment managers a management fee, which is a fixed percentage of assets under management.

Prior to agreeing a fee structure, the Trustees, in conjunction with their investment consultant, consider the appropriateness of this structure, both in terms of the fee level compared to that of other similar products and in terms of the degree to which it will incentivise the investment manager.

- **How the Trustees monitor portfolio turnover costs incurred by the investment manager, and how they define and monitor targeted portfolio turnover or turnover range**

The Trustees, in conjunction with their investment consultant, have processes in place to review investment turnover costs incurred by the Scheme on an annual basis. The Trustees receive information prepared by the investment manager which includes the turnover costs incurred by the Scheme.

The Trustees expect turnover costs of the investment manager to be in line with its peers, taking into account the style adopted by the investment manager, the asset class invested in and prevailing market conditions.

The Trustees do not explicitly monitor turnover, set target turnover or turnover ranges. The Trustees believe that the investment manager should follow its stated approach with a focus on risk and net return, rather than on turnover. In addition, the individual mandates are unique and bespoke in nature and there is the potential for markets to change significantly over a short period of time.

- **The duration of arrangements with investment managers**

The Trustees do not in general enter into fixed long-term agreements with investment managers and instead retain the ability to change an investment manager should the performance and processes of the investment manager deviate from the Trustees' policies. However, the Trustees expect their manager appointments to have a relatively long duration, subject to the manager adhering to its stated policies, and the continued positive assessment of its ability to meet its performance objective.

## **Employer-related investments**

The Trustees will not make direct investments in the Sponsoring Employer's own securities. The amount of the Sponsoring Employer's securities, owned by pooled investment vehicles invested in, are monitored. The Trustees have delegated the responsibility for the exercising of any voting rights attached to any Sponsoring Employer investment held to the investment manager.

# Appointments and responsibilities

This section sets out the key appointments and responsibilities with respect to the investment aspects of the Scheme.

A full list of the Scheme's advisers is provided at the front of the Scheme's Annual Report and Financial Statements. However, at the time of writing this SIP:

- The investment consultants are Buck Consultants (Administration & Investment) Limited.
- The investment managers are detailed in the SoIA.
- For pooled funds, custodial duties are undertaken by the relevant investment manager and, therefore, are not detailed in this SIP.
- The Scheme Actuary is Rachael Mills of Quantum Advisory.

## Trustees

The Trustees' primary responsibilities include:

- The preparation of this SIP, reviewing its contents and modifying it if deemed appropriate, in consultation with the Sponsoring Employer and the investment consultant, at least every three years. The SIP will also be reviewed following a significant change to investment strategy and/or the investment managers.
- Appointing investment consultants and investment managers as necessary for the good stewardship of the Scheme's assets.
- Reviewing the investment strategy as part of each triennial actuarial valuation, and/or asset liability modelling exercise, and/or significant changes to the Scheme's liabilities, taking advice from the investment consultant.
- Reviewing the stewardship/voting policies of the investment managers and undertaking the ongoing monitoring and engagement with their investment managers as appropriate.
- Assessing the processes and the performance of the investment managers by means of regular, but not less than annual, reviews of information obtained (including investment performance).
- Monitoring compliance of the investment arrangements with this SIP and with the relevant sections of the Act, the Investment Regulations and any regulatory guidance on a regular basis.
- Monitoring risk and the way in which the investment manager(s) have cast votes on behalf of the Trustees in respect of the Scheme's equity holdings.

## Investment consultant

The main responsibilities of the investment consultant include:

- Assisting the Trustees in the preparation and periodic review of this SIP in consultation with the Sponsoring Employer.
- Undertaking project work including the development and review of investment strategy, investment performance and manager structure as required by the Trustees.
- Advising the Trustees on the selection and review of the investment managers.

- Providing training or education on any investment related matter as and when the Trustees see fit.
- Monitoring and advising upon where contributions should be invested or disinvested on a periodic basis.

### **Investment managers**

The investment manager's main responsibilities include:

- Investing the assets within their portfolio in a manner that is consistent with the guidelines and constraints set out in their appointment documentation.
- Ensuring that the investment of the assets within their portfolio is compliant with prevailing legislation.
- Providing the Trustees with quarterly reports and a review of the investment performance of their portfolio.
- Meetings with the Trustees as and when required.
- Informing the Trustees of any changes in the fee structure, internal performance objectives and guidelines of any pooled fund within their portfolio as and when they occur.
- Considering financially material risks affecting investments within their portfolio.
- Exercising voting rights on shareholdings within their portfolio in accordance with their general policy.

### **Investment platform provider**

The investment platform provider's main responsibilities include:

- Providing the Trustees with quarterly reports and a review of the investment performance of their portfolio.
- Informing the Trustees of any changes advised by the investment managers in relation to the fee structure, internal performance objectives and guidelines of any pooled funds within their portfolio as and when they occur.

### **Scheme Actuary**

The Scheme Actuary's main responsibilities in respect of investment policy include:

- Commenting on the suitability of the Scheme's DB Section investment strategy given the financial characteristics of the Scheme.
- Performing the triennial (or more frequently as required) actuarial valuation and advising on the Scheme's funding level and therefore the appropriate level of contributions in order to aid the Trustees in balancing short-term and long-term investment objectives.

# Compliance

The Scheme's SIP is available to members on request and is also made publicly available free of charge on the following website: [www.johnsiskandson.com/publications](http://www.johnsiskandson.com/publications)

A copy of the Scheme's current SIP is also supplied to the Sponsoring Employer, the Scheme's auditors and the Scheme Actuary.

This SIP, taken as a whole with the Summary of Investment Arrangements, supersedes all others and was approved by the Trustees.



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