

**STEWARDSHIP
CODE REPORT
2026**

Foreword from the Deputy CEO

Stewardship sits at the heart of Epworth Investment Management's purpose. This report sets out how we have exercised that responsibility over the past year. It has been a period of increasing complexity, where climate pressures, labour standards, technological change and geopolitical tension continue to shape markets in profound ways. In this environment, stewardship must be active, thoughtful and prepared to challenge where needed.

Our approach remains grounded in a clear and consistent ethical framework applied across all client portfolios. This provides clarity and accountability, particularly in areas where expectations may differ, including where faith, client priorities and market practice intersect. We believe these tensions are best addressed through transparency, strong governance and ongoing dialogue. Over the year, we have continued to strengthen the integration of stewardship into our investment process. Engagement has informed investment decisions, voting has been used more deliberately, and where appropriate we have escalated concerns. In some cases, this has supported continued investment with greater confidence. In others, it has led to more cautious positioning or exclusion.

Looking ahead, we are encouraged by the role stewardship can play in shaping better outcomes. Whether through strengthening climate accountability, advancing children's rights, or improving the governance of emerging technologies, we see clear opportunities for stewardship to contribute to more resilient companies and more credible markets.

This report reflects our progress, but also the work still to be done. Stewardship is inherently long-term. It requires persistence, partnership and a willingness to engage constructively, even where change is slow.

We remain grateful for the trust our clients place in us, and we are committed to continuing to steward their assets with care, conviction and a clear sense of purpose.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Harper'.

Rev. Andrew Harper
Deputy CEO

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POLICY AND CONTEXT DISCLOSURE

A. Organisation, investment beliefs and beneficiaries

Epworth Investment Management is the asset management subsidiary of the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church and manages assets on behalf of UK churches, charities and related institutions. Its stewardship approach reflects both the long-term financial interests of those clients and the ethical expectations arising from their charitable purposes and values.

Epworth invests across a range of asset classes and investment structures, including directly held listed securities and externally managed pooled vehicles. It applies a common stewardship framework across those holdings, adapted where necessary to reflect the rights and influence available in each asset class and structure.

Epworth's assets under management (AUM) sit just over £1.1bn, split 69% cash, 8% UK equities, 14% global equities and 7% other. The directly held equity allocations are actively managed; with the use of index funds to manage liquidity and emerging market exposure (approx. 3% AUM). A further 7% of AUM is externally managed for exposures such as property and bonds.

All clients are UK-based. 100% of our clients are registered UK charities, comprising a mix of religious and faith-affiliated organisations (70%) and other charitable bodies (30%). Our client split is 80% cash fund clients, and 20% unit holders and discretionary clients.

Epworth's approach is grounded in the belief that long-term sustainable value creation depends upon the responsible exercise of capital. Stewardship is therefore integrated into investment analysis, portfolio construction, manager oversight and client reporting. This includes the assessment of environmental, social and governance risks and opportunities, together with alignment to Epworth's Ethical Investment Pillars and Levels of Tolerance.

The firm's seven Ethical Investment Pillars are Earth and Ecosystem, Labour, Equality, Conflict, Society, Health and Wellbeing, and Fairness, Responsibility and Transparency. These pillars provide the framework through which Epworth assesses investment risk and ethical alignment.

A. Organisation, investment beliefs and beneficiaries

They are intended to support disciplined decision-making, clearer accountability and better alignment between the financial interests of clients and the wider social and environmental conditions on which long-term returns depend.

Epworth's clients are UK-based charities and church bodies whose beneficiaries are affected by a wide range of market outcomes, including climate instability, labour abuses, weak corporate governance, harmful products and failures of accountability. Stewardship is therefore not treated as a parallel activity, but as part of the firm's professional duty to manage assets with care, prudence and integrity.

Epworth's investment beliefs reflect this approach. The firm believes that stewardship is an important component of long-term value creation, that environmental and social issues can be financially material, and that active ownership is a core responsibility owed to clients. It also believes that clearly defined ethical boundaries can contribute to better market discipline by signalling that certain business models and behaviours are inconsistent with responsible capital allocation.



B. Governance and resources

Epworth's stewardship activity is supported by a governance framework intended to ensure that stewardship priorities, decisions and reporting are subject to appropriate oversight and challenge. Stewardship is overseen through the firm's Board and relevant internal committees, with regular reporting on engagement activity, voting decisions, emerging ethical issues and the progress of priority themes.

Ethical oversight is further informed by the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI), which plays an important role in shaping the application of Methodist ethical thinking to evolving investment and stewardship questions. This helps the firm maintain consistency between its stewardship activity and the values-based framework on which its approach is founded.

At an operational level, stewardship activity is coordinated through internal governance forums, including the Epworth Responsible Investment Meeting, which reviews engagements, client-facing stewardship matters, emerging risks and the development of future priorities. This is intended to ensure that stewardship remains current, coherent and aligned with both portfolio realities and client expectations.

Responsibility for stewardship delivery sits across the organisation rather than within a standalone specialist function.

Between five and ten members of staff across the investment and responsible investment functions are actively involved in stewardship activity. This includes portfolio managers who hold primary responsibility for stewardship relevant to the assets they manage, responsible investment specialists who provide ethical analysis, engagement coordination and policy oversight, and senior leadership who provide governance accountability. This integrated model is intended to ensure that stewardship insights inform research, portfolio construction, escalation decisions and ongoing monitoring, rather than being treated as a separate reporting exercise.

Epworth also uses external tools and research inputs to support stewardship, including proxy research from Institutional Shareholder Services (ISS). These tools are used to improve the quality, consistency and coverage of stewardship analysis, but they do not replace internal judgment. The firm retains responsibility for all stewardship decisions, including voting and escalation.

Staff involved in stewardship receive ongoing development relevant to emerging issues, including climate risk, labour standards, governance, children's rights, artificial intelligence and other developing ethical topics. This is intended to support stewardship that remains proportionate, informed and responsive to the issues most relevant to clients and beneficiaries.

C. Stewardship policies and processes

Epworth's stewardship activity is underpinned by a set of policies and frameworks intended to provide consistency, transparency and accountability across the investment process. These include the firm's Ethical Investment Pillars, Levels of Tolerance, voting policy, pooled fund policy, conflicts of interest policy and internal escalation processes. Together, these frameworks guide how stewardship priorities are identified, how companies and managers are assessed, how escalation decisions are made, and how outcomes are reported.

The firm's stewardship priorities are informed by a combination of ethical conviction, client dialogue, portfolio exposure and market developments. Engagement priorities are reviewed periodically and are shaped by the issues most relevant to long-term sustainable value and to the interests of Epworth's clients and beneficiaries. These may include climate transition, biodiversity, labour standards, human rights, diversity, product responsibility, responsible tax, children's rights and the governance of emerging technologies.

Epworth's usual approach is to begin with constructive engagement, seeking to understand company practice, challenge where necessary and set clear expectations for improvement. Where progress is insufficient, the firm may escalate through voting action, shareholder resolutions, collaboration with other investors, public commentary or, where appropriate, divestment or exclusion.

The choice of tool depends on the nature of the concern, the rights available, the likelihood of achieving change and the implications for client interests and long-term value.

Voting forms part of this wider policy architecture rather than standing apart from it. Votes are cast in accordance with Epworth's voting policy and may be used either as a routine expression of stewardship expectations or as part of an escalation pathway where dialogue has not produced sufficient progress. The firm publishes voting records to its clients, and selected rationales in order to support transparency and accountability. These records are available upon request to non-clients.

Stewardship-related policies are reviewed on an ad hoc basis as circumstances require, rather than on a fixed annual cycle. Reviews are triggered by material portfolio developments, significant changes in regulatory expectations, evolving good practice or where client feedback indicates that existing policy no longer reflects expectations. All policy changes are reviewed and approved internally, with significant revisions subject to Board oversight. External assurance is not currently used for policy review, reflecting the firm's size and the integrated nature of its governance. This approach is intended to ensure that the stewardship framework remains relevant and robust without imposing unnecessary administrative burden on a firm of Epworth's scale.

D. Conflicts of interest

Epworth recognises that conflicts of interest can arise in stewardship activity as well as in investment management more broadly. The firm therefore maintains a Conflicts of Interest Policy and related controls designed to identify, manage, mitigate and, where necessary, disclose conflicts that could affect stewardship decisions or compromise the fair treatment of clients.

Potential stewardship-related conflicts may arise in a number of ways. These include situations where different clients may hold different views on ethical priorities or escalation, where the firm's relationship with a stakeholder could create pressure to soften challenge, where personal account dealing could create the appearance of benefiting from stewardship activity, or where the use of external managers, proxy research or third-party data could introduce bias, inconsistency or over-reliance into stewardship decision-making.

As a faith-based investment manager, Epworth also recognises that conflicts or tensions can arise where clients, Church stakeholders or the firm's parent organisation hold differing views on the appropriate stewardship or investment response to particular ethical issues.

This may be especially relevant in areas sometimes described as life issues, where questions relating to matters such as abortion, fetal tissue research or adjacent areas of medical ethics can give rise to differing expectations across a client base that is not uniform in its theological or ethical outlook. Epworth's approach is not to resolve such tensions on an ad hoc basis, but to manage them through a clear and published ethical framework, structured governance and transparent dialogue with clients where appropriate.

Responsibility for oversight of conflicts sits within the firm's governance framework, with relevant matters capable of escalation to senior management, the Board or other appropriate governance forums depending on their nature. Staff and Board members are required to disclose relevant interests, and controls are in place in relation to personal account dealing, gifts and hospitality, and the handling of confidential information. Where stewardship activity relates to a company in respect of which there is heightened sensitivity, the firm may apply additional internal review before determining its engagement or voting response.

As a values-led investment manager serving churches and charities, Epworth is also conscious of the potential for tension between short-term financial opportunity and adherence to its ethical framework.

D. Conflicts of interest

The firm addresses this not by treating ethics as an ad hoc overlay, but by being clear in advance about the stewardship and investment approach it applies across client assets. This is intended to reduce ambiguity, support consistent decision-making and ensure that clients understand the basis on which stewardship judgments are made.

No material unresolved conflicts were identified during the reporting period that prevented Epworth from carrying out its stewardship activities. Where potential conflicts arose, they were managed in accordance with the firm’s policy and governance processes.



E. Client and beneficiary dialogue

Dialogue with clients and beneficiaries is central to Epworth's stewardship approach. Its clients seek not only competitive financial performance but also alignment with their charitable purposes, values and ethical expectations. Epworth therefore seeks to ensure that stewardship priorities are informed by ongoing dialogue rather than determined solely by internal analysis.

This dialogue takes place through a range of channels, including client meetings, surveys, webinars, forums and bespoke consultations. Through these conversations, Epworth seeks to understand which ethical and social issues matter most to clients and where clients expect the firm to apply particular attention.

Epworth also reviews its portfolios to understand where it has meaningful leverage over corporate behaviour. Client priorities and portfolio influence are then considered together through a priority-setting approach that identifies the issues sitting at the intersection of high client concern and high Epworth influence. This helps inform engagement focus, escalation decisions and voting attention.

The priority framework is reviewed periodically to reflect new survey results, emerging issues and changes in portfolio exposure, so that stewardship activity remains aligned with evolving client expectations and the firm's wider ethical framework.

A clear example of this feedback loop in operation occurred during the reporting period: direct conversations with clients identified artificial intelligence and digital technologies as an area of growing ethical concern, particularly in relation to surveillance, labour displacement and dual-use applications. This feedback directly informed the development of a structured analytical framework for assessing AI-related risk, and led to formal written engagement with Accenture, Microsoft, Cisco and IBM during the year. The issue would not have been prioritised to the same degree without that client-driven signal.

Epworth's reporting to clients seeks to support transparency and understanding. This includes stewardship reporting, case studies, voting disclosure and explanation of how ethical principles are applied in practice. Through this ongoing dialogue, the firm aims to ensure that stewardship remains accountable, intelligible and relevant to the people and purposes its clients serve.

A further initiative under consideration is the development of a broader client ethical forum capable of bringing together perspectives from a wider range of denominational and non-denominational backgrounds. The purpose of such a forum would not be to dilute Epworth's framework, but to improve understanding of how client expectations are developing and where additional ethical scrutiny may be warranted.

ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES REPORT

1. Integrating stewardship and investment to deliver long-term sustainable value

Stewardship is integrated into Epworth's investment process from initial research through to portfolio oversight and sell discipline. For directly held securities, this includes consideration of governance quality, environmental and social risk, conduct, controversy exposure and alignment with Epworth's Ethical Investment Pillars alongside financial analysis. For externally managed holdings, it includes assessment of the manager's stewardship capability, voting approach, exclusions, engagement track record and broader ethical alignment.

During the reporting period, stewardship insights informed both ownership decisions and the intensity of monitoring applied to particular holdings. In some cases, engagement supported continued ownership by providing greater confidence in management responsiveness, governance quality or the credibility of remediation. In others, stewardship concerns contributed to a more cautious investment stance, closer monitoring, or a decision not to hold exposure where risks were judged incompatible with Epworth's framework or with the long-term interests of clients.

This was evident in Epworth's engagement with Cranswick following material animal welfare concerns at a newly acquired farming operation. The issue raised operational, governance and reputational risks relevant to long-term value. Epworth engaged with senior leadership, assessed the quality and speed of remediation and monitored whether the company's response indicated a credible commitment to improved oversight. The subsequent actions taken by the company gave sufficient evidence of responsiveness to support continued monitoring rather than immediate divestment.

1. Integrating stewardship and investment to deliver long-term sustainable value

Where stewardship work indicated that risks were more fundamental or less capable of remediation, Epworth was prepared to take firmer action. During the year, this included maintaining the exclusion of Palantir on ethical grounds, reflecting the firm's view that the nature of the concerns and the risk of involvement in serious human rights harms were inconsistent with Epworth's framework.

During the reporting period, Epworth also increased its focus on the risks associated with artificial intelligence and digital technologies. Client feedback and ethical oversight identified AI as an emerging area requiring more structured analysis, particularly where dual-use systems affect surveillance, labour management or military applications. This informed engagement with companies where such risks were considered material and reinforced the firm's view that stewardship must evolve as new market risks emerge.

2. Identifying and responding to market-wide and systemic risks to promote well-functioning markets

Epworth's stewardship activity seeks not only to protect and enhance the value of individual assets, but also to support better-functioning markets through improved corporate accountability, more decision-useful disclosures and stronger expectations of responsible conduct. The firm regards market integrity, credible governance and effective stewardship standards as important conditions for long-term sustainable value creation.

During the reporting period, this was reflected in Epworth's work on climate accountability, labour standards, children's rights and the governance of emerging technologies. In each of these areas, the firm sought to contribute to broader market expectations rather than limiting its efforts to firm-specific dialogue. This included collaborative engagement, public commentary where voluntary frameworks appeared insufficient, and the development of analytical approaches intended to strengthen how systemic issues are assessed within stewardship practice.

Epworth's response to developments at Barclays and HSBC, including concerns arising from the weakening of their respective climate-related commitments and net zero targets, was one example.

The firm engaged directly with both institutions and issued public commentary through appropriate channels, setting out its expectation that climate commitments should be credible, transparent and capable of independent scrutiny. This public commentary was not intended solely to challenge the conduct of those individual institutions, but to reinforce broader market expectations at a point when voluntary climate commitments across the financial sector were facing renewed pressure.

The firm also advanced work on children's rights as an under-recognised stewardship issue with market-wide relevance. By developing its internal framework and incorporating external benchmark data, Epworth sought to improve the way corporate impacts on children are identified and assessed across sectors including food, digital services, consumer products and conflict-affected settings.

Epworth's work on artificial intelligence and dual-use digital infrastructure similarly reflected a market-wide perspective.

2. Identifying and responding to market-wide and systemic risks to promote well-functioning markets

The firm considers that the governance of such technologies has implications not only for individual company risk but for wider market confidence, human rights protection and the responsible allocation of capital. Engagement in this area therefore aimed to strengthen expectations of due diligence, oversight and accountability in a rapidly evolving part of the market.



3. Engaging to maintain or enhance the value of assets

Engagement is one of Epworth's principal stewardship tools and is used to protect and enhance long-term sustainable value by improving corporate accountability, reducing unmanaged risk and testing the credibility of company responses to material concerns. Engagements may be undertaken directly or collaboratively, and their intensity varies depending on the seriousness of the issue, the level of exposure, the rights available and the prospect of achieving meaningful change.

Through its stewardship reporting process, Epworth undertook a deliberate review of its participation in collaborative engagement initiatives. This exercise surfaced an honest reflection: in some cases, participation had amounted to little more than adding its name to a signatory list, without the meaningful follow through that effective stewardship demands. As a result, Epworth stepped back from a number of initiatives where genuine involvement could not be demonstrated. In total, Epworth undertook 15 direct engagements during the year — fewer than in prior years, but ones where it played an active and purposeful role with trackable outcomes. Epworth views this recalibration as a sign of a maturing stewardship practice.

Epworth's engagement with Nestlé reflected the use of stewardship to assess long-term operational resilience and human rights risk. The firm's dialogue focused on labour conditions, child labour exposure, living income and gender equity within cocoa supply chains. These issues were relevant not only to ethical alignment but also to supply chain resilience, regulatory risk and the durability of corporate reputation. Through continued engagement, Epworth assessed the quality of the company's programmes and the extent to which implementation appeared capable of reducing underlying risk.

3. Engaging to maintain or enhance the value of assets

Epworth also used collaborative engagement where it considered that investor influence would be stronger when exercised collectively. During the year, this included work with ShareAction in relation to Next plc and wider collaboration through the Church Investors Group and other networks. In the case of Next, the issue concerned disclosure and accountability in relation to low pay and Real Living Wage practices. Epworth supported collaborative engagement and the subsequent shareholder resolution because it considered workforce conditions to be relevant to human capital management, reputational resilience and long-term value.

During the year, Epworth engaged with Home Depot through the Nature Action 100 coalition. Epworth met with the company with other investors, however was dissatisfied with the response from the company, and did not see this engagement providing sufficient answers in the future either. It was decided to end the engagement. Given this was not an exclusionary factor, the decision was made to continue to hold the company.

3. Engaging to maintain or enhance the value of assets

Where constructive engagement was not considered sufficient on its own, Epworth was prepared to escalate. This included the use of public commentary in relation to climate accountability in the banking sector. Public comment was used selectively as part of an escalation pathway where the firm considered that wider accountability and stronger market expectations were needed.

Where risks were judged incompatible with Epworth's stewardship and investment framework, exclusion or divestment remained available. During the reporting period, this was illustrated by the continued exclusion of Palantir. In that case, stewardship analysis informed a conclusion that ownership was no longer an appropriate route to client protection or responsible capital allocation.

Across these examples, the purpose of engagement was not simply to record dialogue but to improve investment judgment, shape company behaviour where possible and determine whether assets continued to offer an acceptable balance of financial and ethical risk over the long term.

4. Actively exercising rights and responsibilities

Voting is an important expression of Epworth's stewardship approach and is used both as a routine mechanism of accountability and, where appropriate, as part of escalation. The firm votes all eligible shares where it has voting rights and applies its own voting policy in doing so. Voting decisions are informed by governance, remuneration, environmental and social considerations, and by the specific context of individual engagements.

During the reporting period, Epworth voted at 193 meetings where clients were entitled to vote, representing 100% coverage of votable meetings in the year. At 144 of those meetings, the firm opposed management on at least one resolution, and overall it voted against management on 17% of ballot items.

The highest levels of dissent related to executive remuneration and director elections, reflecting the firm's view that governance and accountability remain central to long-term value protection. Dissent on environmental and social resolutions also featured, consistent with Epworth's Ethical Investment Pillars. Voting records and rationales are available to clients on request; the firm is working to establish a publicly accessible voting disclosure in future reporting periods. Epworth does not operate a stock lending programme, so no shares were on loan during the reporting period and no recall decisions were required. No conflicts of interest arose in relation to voting during the reporting period.

One of the most significant voting examples during the year was Next plc, where Epworth co-filed a shareholder resolution calling for greater disclosure in relation to low pay and Real Living Wage practices. This vote formed part of a wider stewardship process that included engagement ahead of the meeting and collaboration with other investors. The level of shareholder support demonstrated meaningful investor concern and helped reinforce expectations of better workforce-related disclosure in the UK market.

4. Actively exercising rights and responsibilities

Epworth also used voting in support of wider labour-rights concerns in the case of Amazon, where developments relating to warehouse closures in Quebec raised questions about freedom of association and collective bargaining. In that case, voting formed part of a broader pattern of stewardship pressure rather than being treated as a substitute for engagement.

Through these actions, Epworth used its rights not only to register dissent but to hold boards to account, reinforce engagement objectives and signal the standards it expects of investee companies.



5. Integrating stewardship into the selection, appointment and oversight of managers

Where Epworth uses external managers or pooled vehicles, stewardship forms part of both manager selection and ongoing oversight. The firm recognises that its influence over externally managed assets differs from that exercised in directly held securities, and its approach is therefore focused on setting clear expectations at appointment, assessing alignment on an ongoing basis and challenging managers where stewardship standards, ethical alignment or portfolio exposures raise concern.

Manager selection includes assessment of the external manager's responsible investment framework, voting practice, engagement capability, exclusions, governance arrangements and willingness to provide sufficient transparency for oversight. This is considered alongside financial and portfolio-construction factors. Epworth's review is intended to determine not only whether a manager has a stewardship policy, but whether that policy is credible in implementation and compatible with the firm's Ethical Investment Pillars and Levels of Tolerance.

During the reporting period, this approach informed Epworth's review of the UBS MSCI Emerging Market Socially Responsible ETF held within the Epworth Global Equity Fund. The review considered the vehicle's index methodology, exclusion framework, carbon and ESG characteristics and its suitability within the broader portfolio. It also considered whether the fund continued to provide appropriate market access in an area where direct investment may be less practical. Following review, Epworth concluded that the holding remained acceptable within the portfolio at that time, while keeping under observation the extent to which the structure could continue to meet the firm's ethical and stewardship expectations.

5. Integrating stewardship into the selection, appointment and oversight of managers

To strengthen governance over this area, Epworth established the Fund Selection Committee and the Asset Allocation Committee during the year. These forums were introduced to provide more consistent challenge over manager selection, ethical alignment and portfolio-level exposures. Their purpose is to ensure that the use of external managers is subject to a level of stewardship oversight proportionate to its significance within client portfolios and that the firm retains active responsibility for the stewardship implications of those allocations.

Where an external manager or pooled vehicle falls short of expectations, Epworth's options include further information requests, enhanced monitoring, reassessment of suitability, or the decision not to allocate or to redeem, depending on the nature and severity of the concern.

6. Monitoring and holding to account stewardship service providers

Epworth uses a range of external service providers and stewardship-supporting organisations, including Institutional Shareholder Services (ISS) as its proxy research provider, ESG and controversy data providers, and collaborative investor initiatives. ISS research and voting recommendations are used to inform, but not determine, Epworth's voting decisions. Internal review is applied where resolutions raise issues of particular ethical significance or where ISS recommendations do not appear consistent with Epworth's voting policy or wider stewardship approach. The firm retains responsibility for all stewardship decisions and does not delegate judgment to those providers. Its approach is therefore to use third-party inputs selectively, assess their relevance and quality, and challenge them where necessary.

Proxy research and voting support are used to inform, but not determine, voting decisions. Internal review is applied where resolutions raise issues of particular ethical significance or where third-party recommendations do not appear consistent with Epworth's voting policy or wider stewardship approach.

Data providers are used to support research, controversy monitoring and due diligence across portfolios.

During the year, Epworth challenged its data provider on a biodiversity-related data point following internal analysis that identified a significant and unexpected increase in measurements quarter on quarter. Upon raising these concerns, Epworth worked with the provider to investigate the discrepancy, which resulted in the provider amending the data to reflect the correct figures. This demonstrates Epworth's commitment to the integrity of the data underpinning its stewardship and investment decisions, and its willingness to hold service providers to account where the quality of information falls short of expectations.

6. Monitoring and holding to account stewardship service providers

Epworth also participates in collaborative initiatives and investor networks, including organisations such as ShareAction, FAIRR (the Farm Animal Investment Risk and Return initiative), the Church Investors Group (CIG), CDP (formerly the Carbon Disclosure Project) and other thematic initiatives. These are not treated as substitutes for Epworth's own stewardship responsibilities, but as mechanisms through which influence can be amplified and systemic issues better understood. The firm periodically reviews whether participation in such initiatives remains effective, aligned with its priorities and proportionate in terms of resource and outcomes.

During the year, Epworth reviewed its relationship with FAIRR and refreshed alignment with ShareAction ahead of the 2025/26 cycle. The FAIRR review concluded that the initiative remained relevant to Epworth's work on animal welfare and food system risks, and engagement continued on that basis. The ShareAction review confirmed the value of the collaborative relationship, particularly in the context of the Next plc shareholder resolution on workforce disclosure, and the relationship was maintained and strengthened ahead of the forthcoming cycle. These reviews were intended to ensure that participation in external initiatives remains purposeful, proportionate and genuinely aligned with Epworth's stewardship objectives rather than a matter of passive membership.

Annex 1: Selected stewardship activities during the reporting period

This annex provides a summary of selected stewardship activities undertaken during the reporting period. It is intended to complement, rather than replace, the main narrative in the Activities and Outcomes Report. The examples included illustrate how Epworth used engagement, voting, collaboration, escalation and exclusion across a range of issues relevant to long-term sustainable value and to its ethical framework. They are not intended to represent the full universe of stewardship activity undertaken during the year.

Engagement area / company	Issue identified	Stewardship action	Escalation	Voting considerations	Outcome and relevance to long-term
Barclays and HSBC	Weakening of climate-related	Direct engagement on climate	Public commentary as part of	Heightened scrutiny of director	Reinforced expectations of credible
Cranswick	Animal welfare failings at a newly	Intensive dialogue with senior	Further escalation reserved if	Continued focus on governance	Helped assess whether the issue was
Nestlé	Human rights, child labour and gender	Long-term engagement on living	No formal escalation during the	Support for relevant human rights	Informed assessment of supply chain
Next plc	Limited disclosure on low pay and	Collaborative engagement and co-filing of	Shareholder resolution	Resolution received significant	Reinforced investor expectations
Children's rights	Insufficient recognition of children as	Development of internal framework and	Not applicable	Voting implications under	Strengthened analysis of a systemic but
Accenture, Microsoft, Cisco, IBM	Potential use of dual-use AI and digital	Formal correspondence seeking	Discrete escalation through	Future voting to reflect adequacy of	Extended stewardship analysis into
Palantir	Persistent concerns relating to	Ethical review and stewardship	Exclusion and divestment	Not applicable following exclusion	Removed exposure to risks judged
Amazon	Labour-rights concerns linked to	Engagement supported by collaborative	Voting-aligned escalation	Votes reflected concerns on	Reinforced expectations on freedom of
Portfolio-wide voting	Governance, pay, climate and labour	Voting all eligible shares	Votes against management where	Epworth voted at 193 meetings	Demonstrated active ownership and



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Epworth managed funds are designed for long term investors. The value of units in funds can fall as well as rise and past performance is not a guide to future returns. The level of income is also variable and investing in Epworth's funds will not be suitable for you if you cannot accept the possibility of capital losses or reduced income. Any estimates of future capital or income returns or details of past performance are for information purposes and are not to be relied on as a guide to future performance.