

## **17. Royal Meteorological Society**

### **17.1 Aims and policies**

The Royal Meteorological Society (RMetS) is a small professional body with about 3,300 members. [1] The organisation dates back to 1850 with the foundation of its predecessor organisation, the British Meteorological Society. [2]

#### *Statement of purpose and values*

The society's vision, mission and strategic themes are stated on its website, [3] and are as follows.

*"The Society's **vision** is to be a world-leading learned and professional society for weather and climate, exemplifying its Royal Charter and charitable status and to engage, enthuse and educate all."*

*"The Society's **mission** is: to promote the understanding and application of meteorology for the benefit of all."*

#### *"Strategic themes:*

- To strengthen the science of weather and climate, and related disciplines so that it advances, is applied and made accessible.*
- To support and develop meteorologists and climate scientists through professional accreditation, career advice, communication of opportunities, provision of information and networking.*
- To enhance the lives of all those interested in weather and climate through opportunities to access events, information and engagement with meteorology and the work of the Society.*
- To share our enthusiasm about weather and climate and to extend our reach and impact within the teaching community, the wider public and with strategic partners, to provide informal and formal education in meteorology.*
- To increase awareness of the importance of weather and climate in policy and decision-making and its relevance to society, and to be an independent voice of authority, advice and advocacy for meteorology and the profession."*

#### *Environmental policy*

Environmental and climate issues are obviously central to the activities of the Royal Meteorological Society, as exemplified by its vision, mission and strategic themes. And as a professional scientific society, RMetS of course focuses on advancement of the science, education work and input to policy-makers. However, the society does not appear to have brought these two broad aspects of its work together within a specific environmental policy statement covering the impacts of its own activities or those of its members. Nevertheless, our investigations have found that its 2009-2010 strategic plan included the objective to reduce its carbon emissions by 20% by 2012, and in 2017 it claimed to have achieved a 56% reduction in carbon emissions over an unspecified timescale. [4] However, within the 2018-

2020 strategic plan, the only mention of efforts on curbing environmental impacts was to “take advantage of modern technology that is environmentally friendly” for any required upgrades to its headquarters. [5]

The society was one of 24 UK-based professional and learned societies which endorsed the joint Climate Communiqué that was published in the run up to the 2015 intergovernmental negotiations (which led to the Paris Agreement). The communiqué called on national governments to take immediate action to avert the serious risks of climate change. [6]

## **17.2 Investments**

### *Size and location of funds*

The Royal Meteorological Society had investments totalling £670,000, according to a recent annual report. [7] Beyond a breakdown of the types of investments it held, the society did not provide details of the companies or funds in which it was invested.

<i>Investment category</i>	<i>Amount in investment category (£)</i>
Government stock / Corporate bonds	173,000
UK equities	271,000
Overseas equities / Other investments	226,000
<i>Total</i>	<i>670,000</i>

*Table 17.1 – Investments held by the Royal Meteorological Society<sup>a</sup> [7]*

### *General investment policy*

The society did not respond to our request for information on its investments and investment policies. However, a recent annual report [7] stated the organisation’s general policies in this area as follows.

#### *“The Management of Investments*

*The Council, advised by the House Committee, is responsible for overseeing the Society’s investments. At present the management of investments is delegated by Council to a professional Fund Manager. The House Committee reviews performance of the Fund Manager twice a year and Council reviews investments normally quarterly, but at least annually. The choice of Fund Manager is kept under annual review in line with performance and the Society’s investment requirements.”*

#### *“Choice of Investments*

*Investments may be made in cash deposits, property, gilts, bonds and equities in such proportions as to endeavour to maximise the total return to the Society over the longer term, typically a period of the Society’s Strategic Plan, in order to deliver the required*

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<sup>a</sup> All figures rounded to the nearest thousand.

*investment for the Society's strategic development programme and to mitigate the Society's major risks. To this end investments should not be held in companies whose activities are contrary to the aims of the Society or its social, environmental and ethical responsibilities as the Professional Body and Learned Society for Meteorology. Where investment is made in equity shares, these should be mainly in FTSE-100 companies and no purchase of a single equity should represent more than 5% of the total portfolio value. This guideline excludes shares held indirectly through, for example, Investment Trusts, where there is already an underlying diversity. If anyone holding reaches 20% of the value of the portfolio a partial sale should be considered. The portfolio should be diversified over both market sectors and geographic markets, and no one sector should represent more than 25% of the total portfolio value."*

### *Ethical investment policy*

RMetS did not respond to our request for information about the existence or otherwise of an ethical investment policy, and we were unable to find a specific ethical investment policy document in its publicly available materials. However, from the society's investment policy quoted above, it was evident that at least some ethical considerations were made when investing, as it stated that "investments should not be held in companies whose activities are contrary to the aims of the Society or its social, environmental and ethical responsibilities as the Professional Body and Learned Society for Meteorology." [7] Nevertheless, it did not list explicitly what the society's social, environmental and ethical responsibilities were, and thus did not give a clear indication about what specific companies or industries may or may not be excluded from the society's investments.

### **17.3 School education programmes**

RMetS publishes an extensive range of education resources on weather and climate aimed at primary and secondary school teachers and pupils. This is mainly available via the society's own educational website, 'Metlink'. [8] A number of these materials have been produced by the Met Office, the government agency tasked with providing weather forecasts and other related information. We did not find evidence of much involvement or funding from any other external organisations.

### **17.4 Events and sponsorship**

The society organises numerous events aimed at its members and others, and some are supported by external organisations. We carried out a brief survey of the events listed on its website in mid-2017, and those involving external organisations are listed in table 17.2, together with the relevant sponsors and supporters.

None of the organisations involved were part of the fossil fuel or arms industries.

<i>Event</i>	<i>External organisations</i>	<i>Role</i>
Message Impossible? Communicating weather information in the digital age [9]	Grantham Institute (Imperial College London), Environmental Physics Group (Institute of Physics)	'Supporting organisation'
The Meltdown: Abrupt climate change since the last ice age [10]	Environmental Change Research Centre (University College London)	'Supporting organisation'
WeatherLive: The ultimate day out for weather enthusiasts [11]	Royal Horticultural Society, Royal Photographic Society	'Working with'

*Table 17.2 – Events organised by the Royal Meteorological Society involving external organisations, 2017*

### **17.5 Corporate membership**

RMetS operates a corporate membership scheme. [12] Members and costs of membership used to be listed on its website. Data from 2017 are given in table 17.3.

<i>Corporate membership type</i>	<i>Membership rate (£)</i>	<i>Organisations</i>
Gold	£5,000	Arabia Weather, Met Office
Single	£2,500	none
Bronze	£500	Campbell Scientific, Equinox Instruments, Ground Control, Vaisala, Dartcom, Meteogroup, Metra Weather, Biral, Lake Street Consulting

*Table 17.3 – Corporate members of the Royal Meteorological Society [13] [14]*

In summary, none of the society's corporate members were part of the fossil fuel or arms industries.

### **17.6 Other corporate links**

RMetS offers a number of different advertising options to external organisations. The largest of these is through the members' magazine/journal, *Weather*. [15] Unfortunately, we were not able to access copies of the magazine during this study.

### **17.7 Overall assessment**

Reviewing the information in this case study, we have given the Royal Meteorological Society the assessment as shown in tables 17.4a and b.

In terms of transparency, we found RMetS to have a mixed record. While it was sufficiently open about links to external organisations within its events, school education programmes and corporate membership scheme, its annual accounts revealed little specific information about its investments.

	<i>Investments</i>	<i>School education programmes</i>	<i>Events</i>	<i>Other</i>
Involvement with arms corporations	Medium	None	None	None
Involvement with fossil fuel corporations	Medium	None	None	None

*Table 17.4a – Corporate involvement ratings for the Royal Meteorological Society*

	<i>Ethical issues covered in this study</i>
Positives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No financial links with fossil fuel industry in school education programmes or events</li> <li>• No financial links with arms industry in school education programmes or events</li> <li>• Some environmental policies and practices</li> </ul>
Negatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specific ethical investment policy</li> <li>• Investments in arms and fossil fuel companies likely</li> </ul>

*Table 17.4b – Positives and negatives for the Royal Meteorological Society*

Environmental issues were clearly central to the society’s work and it had in the past set strong carbon reduction targets for its activities. However, we could not find evidence of a specific environmental policy covering the organisation or its members. The organisation also did not have a specific ethical investment policy, although it mentioned ethical and environmental concerns within its main investments policy.

We found no evidence of financial links between RMetS and the arms industry in the society’s school education programmes, events or among its corporate members. However, the lack of a clear ethical investment policy, coupled with a marked lack of public data on its investment funds, meant that significant links to the arms industry were likely to be present in this area.

We again found no evidence of financial links between RMetS and the fossil fuel industry in the society’s school education programmes, events or among its corporate members. However, the lack of a clear ethical investment policy, coupled with a marked lack of public data on its investment funds, meant that significant links to the fossil fuel industry were likely to be present in this area.

## **References**

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