Church of England Adopts New Climate Policy

The Church Commissioners and the Church of England Pensions Board said they have divested 12 million pounds ($ million) from their investments in thermal coal and tar sands companies as part of an initiative aimed at promoting transition to a low carbon economy.

The Church Commissioners also said they would adopt the new climate change policy recommended by the Church's Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG) that sets out how the three national investing bodies (NIBs) will support the transition to a low-carbon economy.

"The Church has a moral responsibility to speak and act on both environmental stewardship and justice for the world's poor who are most vulnerable to climate change", said Reverend Canon Professor Richard Burridge, deputy chair of the EIAG.

"This responsibility encompasses not only the Church's own work to reduce our own carbon footprint, but also how the Church's money is invested and how we engage with companies on this vital issue".

Under the policy, no investments will be made in any company in which more than 10 percent of its revenues are derived from the extraction of thermal coal or the production of oil from oil sands on the basis that such companies are unlikely to be able to assist with the transition to a low-carbon economy. ()

The three NIBs have also decided to increase their low-carbon investments subject to such investments meeting their risk and return criteria over the long term.

The Church of England, mother church of the world's 80 million Anglicans, holds total investments worth about 8 billion pounds ($13 billion) are used to pay clergy pensions and fund the church’s work.

Some is invested in funds, but the church also has direct investments of more than 10 million pounds in Royal Shell, BP Plc, Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton.

Last December, the Church of England had said it was in the process of filing shareholder resolutions on climate change at BP and Royal Dutch Shell.

Earlier in the month, BP shareholders voted overwhelmingly to publish regular updates on how the company’s strategies were affecting climate change from next year, making it one of the first global oil companies to disclose such details.

($1 = pounds)