

NEXT Retail Limited: 04521150

Section 172 statement

The Company is a wholly-owned subsidiary of NEXT Holdings Limited, and its ultimate parent company is NEXT plc. The principal activities of the Company during the year comprised the supply of merchandise including Womenswear, Menswear, Childrenswear, Lingerie, Footwear, Sportswear, Accessories, Fashion Jewellery, Cosmetics and Home Furnishings. Therefore the Company considers that, indirectly, its key stakeholders reflect those of NEXT plc. The Company has no direct external debt funding and it therefore considers its relationships with its workforce, customers and suppliers to be of direct relevance and long term importance to its long-term success.

References to Group refer to the wider NEXT plc Group structure (hereafter the “Group” or “NEXT”).

Relationship and engagement with stakeholders

Workforce

The strength of our business is built on the hard work and dedication of all of the Company’s people. We also consider the interests of former employees who are members of a Group pension scheme. Our colleagues rely on us to provide stable employment and opportunities to realise their potential in a working environment where they can be at their best. The Group executive directors have a combined service of over 120 years in the NEXT Group. This gives them extensive knowledge of the business as well as an acute insight into the mood, culture and views of their colleagues. The Group executive directors have a high degree of personal oversight and engagement in the business. The Board also engages in the following ways:

- Annual Business Review Meetings.
- Reviewing the output of employee engagement surveys and agreeing follow up actions.
- Presentations on performance and strategy from the Chief Executive and the Chief Financial Officer (both are directors of the Company) to our workforce following the announcement of our key Group trading results. Where possible, the directors present to the business in person, but a video link is sent to remote employees.
- Visits to stores and warehouses, providing an opportunity to meet a wide range of our workforce.
- Online performance, development and feedback tools.

Engagement with our employees has always been vital to the success of our business. We continued to engage with our workforce about their health and safety.

Business Review Meetings

Our Business Review Meetings form the workforce advisory panels as referred to in the UK Corporate Governance Code and focus on specific business outputs such as efficiencies and ideas to improve engagement. These meetings offer our employees the chance to voice their opinions on the issues that are important to them.

Agreed actions from matters raised in 2024 included further training on handling challenging customers safely and increasing the visibility and impact of our ‘Respect in Retail’ initiative, and reviewing the questions of employee engagement survey to elicit responses to which management are able to take action, as well as providing additional support to management to enable them to respond to comments. Our Business Review Meetings were supplemented by Your Team Voice meetings which take place regularly throughout the year. Each business function and area has a nominated Your Team Voice representative, and employees are able to submit questions to Business Review Meetings via Your Team Voice meetings. One purpose of Your Team Voice meetings is to agree initiatives coming out of the Business Review Meetings.

Employee engagement surveys

Our Group wide employee engagement survey, 'Your Voice Counts', spans the majority of the wider Group. The survey, conducted anonymously using a third-party tool, was sent to approximately 43,000 employees and response rates at 78% were improved from the year before. The overall engagement score for the whole NEXT Group was marginally higher than the prior year. Employees believe that our main strengths as a Group are recognition for performance and championing equality and health. Wellbeing remains an area of focus for our people and we encourage our managers to make it an every day part of their role, through promotions and campaigns as well as access to our wellbeing intranet site, which hosts a whole range of support and resources for all NEXT colleagues. The Board considered the results of the survey as well as the initiatives planned to address the matters raised.

Continuous performance management and feedback

Our online performance and development tool provides a forum for positive and constructive feedback by individuals, peers and managers. The Group HR Director attended a meeting of the Board to brief the directors on employee-related matters, including workforce demographics, engagement activities, the results of employee engagement surveys, staff retention rates, diversity, whistleblowing, disciplinary and grievance procedures, learning and development activity, pay and reward including gender pay gap and HR initiatives. With a focus on developing great people, senior management attended workshops in 2024 aimed at maximising performance to bring out the best in their teams.

Customers

As a large retail business, the sentiment of customers can be seen in the Company's underlying sales performance figures, which the Company reviews regularly. The interests of customers are considered in key decisions, e.g. relating to: store portfolio changes; selection of product lines including third-party brands; selection and monitoring of suppliers to ensure quality and safety standards are met; freight and logistics arrangements to maximise efficiencies from order to delivery; the availability of customer credit products; and the development of the NEXT Online platform.

With the interests of customers in mind, during the year the Board reviewed proposals in respect of capital expenditure on warehouses, major freight forwarding and customer order delivery contracts.

Regulators

The business is subject to a wide range of regulations. Of particular note is our Finance business which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) in respect of the provision of consumer credit. As a responsible authorised company, we seek always to co-operate and engage constructively with the FCA and meet its standards. The NEXT plc Audit Committee exercises independent oversight over the regulated Finance business that includes updates on matters under discussion with the FCA. During the year we engaged with the FCA in relation to monthly 'cost of living' returns and other periodic returns including financial resilience and performance and complaint handling. We have responded positively to the Financial Ombudsman Service's annual plans and budget consultation in relation to the proposal to levy a charge on professional representatives.

NEXT manages its tax affairs responsibly and proactively to comply with tax legislation. The Company's approach is to seek to build solid and constructive working relationships with all tax authorities. The Group's UK tax policy can be found at nextplc.co.uk and was reviewed and approved by the NEXT plc Board during the year. This policy includes that the Company engages with HMRC constructively, honestly and in a timely and professional manner, and seeks to resolve disputed matters through active and transparent engagement. Engagement with HMRC is led by the Company's in-house tax team of qualified tax professionals.