

UKLA Technical Note

Shareholder votes in relation to hypothetical transactions

Ref: UKLA / TN / 312.1 – Guidance Consultation

LR 13

We are occasionally asked to consider whether an issuer can seek shareholder approval for a hypothetical transaction. By this we mean where there is uncertainty about whether the issuer will pursue the transaction, or on what terms.

We acknowledge that there will rarely be absolute certainty that an issuer will go through with a transaction it is putting to a shareholder vote. However in most cases, all key terms will have been determined and the issuer will intend to pursue the transaction, which is reflected in the Board's recommendation that the transaction is in the best interest of shareholders.

But in hypothetical transaction scenarios, an issuer may not have finalised the terms of a future transaction, or the Board may not have concluded whether to recommend the transaction. We have been asked whether an advance vote can be obtained in such circumstances, eg because the issuer is holding another meeting and it would be convenient to combine the votes.

We would highlight that for premium listed issuers, it may not be possible to obtain a vote at such an early stage, if the issuer is unable to produce a Listing Rule compliant circular. For example, it may not be possible to obtain shareholder approval pursuant to the Listing Rules until negotiations are sufficiently advanced so that the issuer can provide shareholders with all information necessary to make a properly informed decision, as required by LR 13.3.1R.

We would advise premium listed issuers and their sponsors to contact us to discuss specific proposals, if an issuer is hoping to seek shareholder approval at a particularly early stage. In determining whether a vote can be undertaken, we will have particular regards to whether the issuer can provide the information required to be included in a circular under LR 13.