

Statement of Directors Responsibilities

The following statement, which should be read in conjunction with the auditors' report on pages 22 and 23, is made with a view to distinguishing for shareholders the respective responsibilities of the directors and of the auditors in relation to the financial statements.

Irish company law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the group as at the end of the financial year and of the profit or loss of the group for that year. With regard to the financial statements on pages 26 to 76, the directors have determined that it is appropriate that they continue to be prepared on a going concern basis and consider that in their preparation:

- suitable accounting policies have been selected and applied consistently;
- judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent have been made; and
- applicable accounting standards have been followed.

The directors are responsible for ensuring that proper books of account are kept which disclose the financial position of the company and of the group and which enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Acts, 1963 to 2001, and the European Communities (Credit Institutions:Accounts) Regulations, 1992. They also have a general responsibility for taking such steps as are reasonably open to them to safeguard the assets of the company and of the group and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.