

which is based on historical trends and, therefore, allows for some increase due to changes in common law and statute. Costs for both direct and indirect claims handling expenses are also included. Outward reinsurance recoveries are accounted for in the same accounting period as the direct claims to which they relate. The outstanding claims provision is based on information available to management and the eventual outcome may vary from the original assessment. Actual claims experience may differ from the historical pattern on which the estimate is based and the cost of settling individual claims may exceed that assumed.

Goodwill

The Group capitalises goodwill arising on the acquisition of businesses, as discussed in accounting policy 5. The carrying value of goodwill as at 31 December 2006 was £17,889 million (2005 – £18,823 million).

Goodwill is the excess of the cost of an acquisition over the fair value of its net assets. The determination of the fair value of assets and liabilities of businesses acquired requires the exercise of management judgement; for example those financial assets and liabilities for which there are no quoted prices, and those non-financial assets where valuations reflect estimates of market conditions such as property. Different fair values would result in changes to the goodwill arising and to the post-acquisition performance of the acquisition. Goodwill is not amortised but is tested for impairment annually or more frequently if events or changes in circumstances indicate that it might be impaired.

For the purposes of impairment testing, goodwill acquired in a business combination is allocated to each of the Group's cash-generating units or groups of cash-generating units expected to benefit from the combination. Goodwill impairment testing involves the comparison of the carrying value of a cash-generating unit or group of cash-generating units with its recoverable amount. The recoverable amount is the higher of the unit's fair value and its value in use. Value in use is the present value of expected future cash flows from the cash-generating unit or group of cash-generating units. Fair value is the amount obtainable for the sale of the cash-generating unit in an arm's length transaction between knowledgeable, willing parties.

Impairment testing inherently involves a number of judgmental areas: the preparation of cash flow forecasts for periods that are beyond the normal requirements of management reporting; the assessment of the discount rate appropriate to the business; estimation of the fair value of cash-generating units; and the valuation of the separable assets of each business whose goodwill is being reviewed.

Accounting developments

International Financial Reporting Standards

The IASB issued IFRS 7 'Financial Instruments: Disclosures' in August 2005. The standard replaces IAS 30 'Disclosures in the Financial Statements of Banks and Similar Financial Institutions' and the disclosure provisions in IAS 32. IFRS 7 requires disclosure of the significance of financial instruments for an entity's financial position and performance and of qualitative and quantitative information about exposure to risks arising from financial instruments. The standard is effective for annual periods beginning on or after 1 January 2007.

In August 2005, the IASB issued an amendment, 'Capital Disclosures', to IAS 1 'Presentation of Financial Statements'. It requires disclosures about an entity's capital and the way it is managed. This amendment is also effective for annual periods beginning on or after 1 January 2007.

The Group is reviewing IFRS 7 and the amendment to IAS 1 to determine their effect on its financial reporting.

The International Financial Reporting Interpretations Committee ('IFRIC') issued interpretation IFRIC 9 'Reassessment of Embedded Derivatives' in March 2006. Entities are required to assess financial instruments for the existence of embedded derivatives; this interpretation prohibits subsequent reassessment unless there is a change of terms that significantly changes the terms of the financial instrument. The interpretation is effective for accounting periods starting on or after 1 June 2006 and is not expected to have a material effect on the Group or company.

The IFRIC issued interpretation IFRIC 10 'Interim Financial Reporting and Impairment' in July 2006. Entities recognising an impairment of an intangible asset, goodwill or a financial asset in their interim financial statements are not allowed to reverse that impairment if the asset had recovered its value at the next reporting date. The interpretation is effective for accounting periods beginning on or after 1 November 2006 and is not expected to have a material effect on the Group or company.

The IFRIC issued interpretation IFRIC 11 'Group and Treasury Share Transactions' in November 2006. Entities which buy their own shares, or whose shareholders buy shares in the reporting entity, in order to provide incentives to employees shall account for those incentives on an equity-settled basis. This principle applies also to the accounting by subsidiaries. The interpretation is effective for annual accounting periods beginning on or after 1 March 2007 and is not expected to have a material effect on the Group or company.

The IFRIC issued interpretation IFRIC 12 'Service Concession Arrangements' in December 2006. Entities providing infrastructure and services to governments under concession arrangements shall account for each component of the arrangement separately. Infrastructure provided under these arrangements may be recognised as either a financial asset or an intangible asset. The interpretation is effective for accounting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2008 and is not expected to have a material effect on the Group or company.

The IASB issued IFRS 8 'Operating Segments' in December 2006. This will replace IAS 14 'Segment Reporting' for accounting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2009. IFRS 8 is very similar to US Statement of Financial Accounting Standards No. 131 'Disclosures about Segments of an Enterprise and Related Information' and requires entities to report segment information as reported to management and reconcile it to the financial statements. Disclosures required by SFAS 131 are included on pages 203 to 207.

US GAAP

For a discussion of recent developments in US GAAP relevant to the Group, see Note 47 on the accounts.