

Investors demand diversity plans

By Louise Armitstead

SEVEN institutional investors have written to 250 FTSE 350 chairmen demanding they disclose their plans for employing more women directors – in a regulatory statement, by the end of next week.

The investors, which include Jupiter Asset Management, Insight Investment Management and Co-Operative Asset Management, said they are “keen to understand” each chairman’s “plans and progress” on diversity.

The letter follows revelations that few companies have responded to the Davies Review. The Government-sponsored report, published in February, called for companies to ensure 25pc female board representation by 2015.

Lord Davies recommended



The Davies Review wants to see more women follow in the footsteps of Angela Ahrendts, chief executive officer of British fashion house Burberry

that UK-listed companies should lay out their plans by the end of September. But at the beginning of this month just eight companies had publicly agreed to meet the targets. Denise Wilson, non-executive director and

member of the Davies Steering group, said: “Today, around a third of FTSE 100 chairmen have made a public statement of their goals. We expect many more to do so by the end of September. This letter shows that there is

strong investor interest in their response.”

In the letter the investors say: “We trust that you have decided to respond and will set and report positive and forward-looking goals within the context of your company’s particular circumstances ... If you have not yet responded to this recommendation of the Davies Review, we do hope that you will do so by the end of the month.”

The letter adds: “We believe use of a Regulatory News Service (RNS) is an effective way to announce this information to the wider market and would encourage you to consider this.”

Helena Morrissey, chief executive of Newton Investment Management, said: “There is a growing body of evidence that greater diversity at a board level can improve corporate financial performance.”