

# Independent auditors' report to the members of 3i Group plc

We have audited the Group's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2004, which comprise Consolidated statement of total return, Reconciliation of movement in shareholders' funds, Consolidated revenue statement, Consolidated balance sheet, Parent company balance sheet, Consolidated cash flow statement, Accounting policies and the related notes 1 to 49. These financial statements have been prepared on the basis of the accounting policies set out therein. We have also audited the information in the Remuneration report that is described as having been audited.

This report is made solely to the Company's members, as a body, in accordance with section 235 of the Companies Act 1985. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors' report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Company and the Company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

**Respective responsibilities of directors and auditors** The Directors are responsible for preparing the Annual Report including the financial statements which are required to be prepared in accordance with applicable United Kingdom law and accounting standards as set out in the Statement of Directors' responsibilities in relation to the Financial Statements. Our responsibility is to audit the financial statements and the part of the Directors' Remuneration report to be audited in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements, United Kingdom Auditing Standards and the Listing Rules of the Financial Services Authority.

We report to you our opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view and whether the financial statements and the part of the Remuneration report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985. We also report to you if, in our opinion, the Directors' report is not consistent with the financial statements, if the Company has not kept proper accounting records, if we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit, or if information specified by law or the Listing Rules regarding Directors' remuneration and transactions with the Group is not disclosed.

We review whether the corporate governance statement on pages 33 to 37 reflects the Company's compliance with the seven provisions of the Combined Code specified for our review by the Listing Rules, and we report if it does not. We are not required to consider whether the Board's statements on internal control cover all risks and controls, or form an opinion on the effectiveness of the Group's corporate governance procedures or its risk and control procedures.

We read other information contained in the Annual Report and consider whether it is consistent with the audited financial statements. This other information comprises Chairman's statement, Chief Executive's statement, Operating review, Financial review, Corporate responsibility report, Directors' report, unaudited part of the Remuneration report, Principal subsidiary undertakings and joint ventures, Portfolio valuation methodology and Investment analysis. We consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the financial statements. Our responsibilities do not extend to any other information.

**Basis of audit opinion** We conducted our audit in accordance with United Kingdom Auditing Standards issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements and the part of the Remuneration report to be audited. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgments made by the Directors in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Group's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements and the part of the Remuneration report to be audited are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming our opinion, we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements and the part of the Remuneration report to be audited.

**Opinion** In our opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Company and of the Group as at 31 March 2004 and of the profit of the Group for the year then ended; and the financial statements and the part of the Remuneration report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985.

**Ernst & Young LLP**  
Registered Auditor

London

12 May 2004