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Royal London Sustainable Growth Fund

Quarterly Investment Report

30 September 2024

ROYAL LONDON
ASSET MANAGEMENT

Quarterly Report

The fund as at 30 September 2024

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Royal London Sustainable Growth Fund. The report has been produced by Royal London Asset Management. The report starts with a summary dashboard showing key information about the fund. A glossary is located at the end of the report covering the description of some of the more technical terms used within the report. All data is as at the report date unless otherwise stated.

Contents

ROYAL LONDON
ASSET MANAGEMENT

The fund

Fund performance objective and benchmark

The Fund's investment objective is to achieve capital growth over the medium term, which should be considered as a period of 3-5 years, by investing in a diverse range of equity and fixed income assets. Investments in the Fund will adhere to the Investment Manager's ethical and sustainable investment policy.
The Fund is actively managed, meaning that the Investment Manager will use their expertise to select investments to meet the objective. The IA Mixed Investments 40-85% Shares sector is considered an appropriate benchmark for performance comparison.

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Fund value

	Total £m
30 September 2024	142.33

Asset Mix

	Holdings	Weight
Equity	45	74.36%
Fixed Income	189	23.43%
Cash	13	2.21%

Fund analytics

	Fund
Fund launch date	24 May 2022
Base currency	GBP

Performance and activity

Performance

	Fund (%)
Quarter	0.36
YTD	7.85
1 Year	16.26
Since inception (p.a.)	10.06

Past performance is not a guide to future performance. Please refer to the Glossary for the basis of calculation and impact of fees. Performance and since inception date based on Royal London Sustainable Growth (M Acc). Source: Royal London Asset Management; Gross performance; Since inception date of the share class is 24 May 2022.

Performance commentary

The fund produced a small positive return over the quarter, with a small negative return within our equity exposure and positive returns from the allocation to sterling corporate bonds.

The third quarter was volatile for markets. July and August were impacted by Q2 corporate results announcements, followed by September which in itself was a very volatile month. The best performing sectors during the period were real estate and utilities, while energy and information technology underperformed. Real estate and utilities gained on the back of lower interest rates and benefitted from a rotation into more defensive sectors given the uncertain economic growth outlook. Financials have also been positively impacted by interest rates as the yield curve steepened. In the energy sector, the oil price has been on a downward trend overall, partly due to recession concerns. It was also a volatile quarter for the technology sector, with a notable correction in some artificial intelligence related stocks following a strong run in the prior six months.

Latin American e-commerce and fintech provider MercadoLibre was a top contributor to performance during the third quarter as it continues to deliver strong growth and margin expansion. US electrical installation company Comfort Systems also gained, benefiting from data centre investments amid a general shortage of skilled labour in the US. Pest control and hygiene business Rentokil detracted from performance in Q3. Organic growth in its North American business has disappointed following its acquisition of Terminix, another US pest control company. Another detractor was ASML, a provider of semiconductor manufacturing equipment. The company reported positive quarterly results but was subject to profit taking as one of their customers, Intel, announced capex cuts, potentially impacting near-term orders.

We have a portfolio exposed to some exciting and powerful multi-year structural growth themes – the key ones being the ongoing digitalisation of society through things such as cloud computing and AI, which we think we're incredibly early in. We also have exposure to companies enabling the development of a more sustainable and resilient physical world. These include areas such as HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning), building electrification and more sustainable transport such as rail. We also continue to be excited by the opportunities in the healthcare sector where we observe advancements in computing are accelerating new drug discovery combined with large disease categories such as obesity emerging.

The third quarter was positive for fixed income investors, with strong absolute returns from sterling credit markets. The portfolio outperformed the broader sterling credit market period, with the combination of stock and sector positioning positive. Within the banking sector, our exposure to subordinated bonds was again helpful while in insurance, our exposure to selected long-dated bonds was also beneficial.

Performance and activity

Top 10 holdings

	Weighting (%)
Broadcom Inc.	3.04
Microsoft Corporation	3.02
Alphabet Inc. Class A	3.00
ASML Holding NV	2.62
Amazon.com, Inc.	2.60
Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc.	2.40
Schneider Electric SE	2.39
Visa Inc. Class A	2.38
Standard Chartered PLC	2.36
IMCD N.V.	2.31
Total	**26.12**

Fund activity

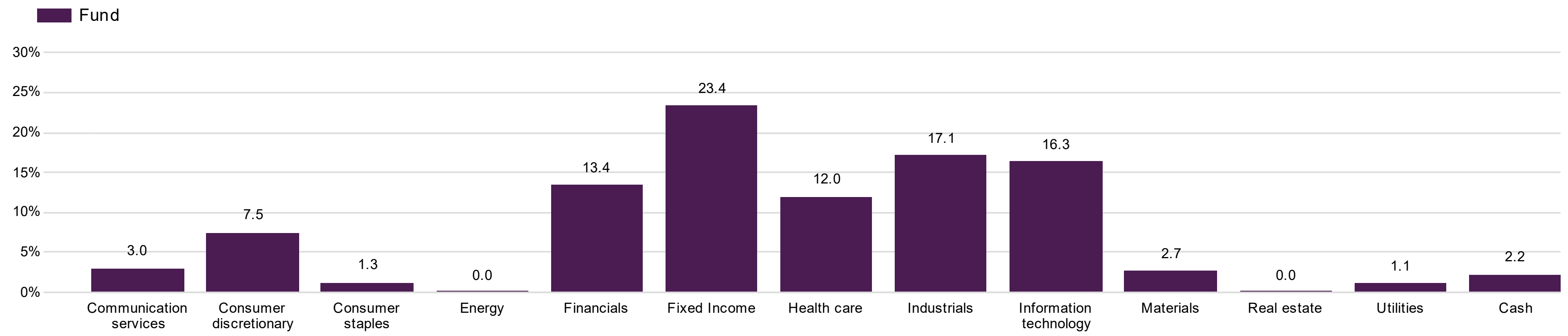
Our sustainable strategies are orientated to those companies that have a net benefit to society and create value for investors through their products and services and the way they manage environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues. Areas such as healthcare and technology remain at the core of the equity portfolios, complemented by engineering, utilities, selected financial services, and companies that lead their industries in ESG performance. This means that we do not invest in some sectors, such as oil & gas, extractive industries, or tobacco. We believe that the exposure to those sectors which offer a positive contribution to society is consistent with outperformance over the medium term.

We did not add any new names to the fund in Q3. However, we continued to build our holding in British pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) during the quarter. We also added to Rentokil, taking advantage of the share price weakness. We reduced our position in IQVIA, a contract research organisation for the pharmaceutical and biotech industry, in favour of better uses of capital elsewhere in the portfolio.

Within our fixed income exposure, while areas such as financials and structured bonds remain the largest in our portfolios, we look for opportunities in other areas to aid overall portfolio diversification. The real estate sector has struggled in recent years, but has recently started to close the valuation gap with European assets while also benefiting from expectations of falling interest rates. During the quarter we added a new issue from Great Portland Estates – prime West End London properties with a low loan-to-value and strong environmental credentials. In the transport sector, we added East Japan Railway, attractive long-dated bonds supporting critical infrastructure.

Fund breakdown

Sector weights



Characteristics and climate

ESG characteristics rationale

The Fund focuses on the sustainability of the products and services of the companies it invests in, as well as their standards of environmental, social, governance ("ESG") management, alongside financial analysis. The investment approach is fundamentally based on positive screening; identifying companies that are making a positive contribution towards a cleaner, healthier, safer and more inclusive society, through assessing both what a company does and how it does it, and through active engagement to encourage continual improvement. The fund will not invest in companies that undertake business activities deemed to be detrimental to society and that breach our Do No Significant Harm principle. Further details of the Funds Sustainable Investment process can be found in the ethical and sustainable investment policy at www.rlam.com/uk/individual-investors/policies-and-regulatory/

ESG characteristics

Royal London Asset Management has a controversial weapons exclusion across all investments. Our full policy can be found on our website: www.rlam.com/globalassets/media/literature/policies/controversial-weapons-policy.pdf

	Yes	No
ESG integration	✓	
Promotes environmental or social characteristics		✓
Sustainable fund objective	✓	
Additional exclusions	✓	

Additional exclusions

Exclusion criteria that make sure a fund does not invest into a specific service or product. Royal London Asset Management has a controversial weapons exclusion across all investments.

Adult entertainment	✓
Alcohol	✓
Animal welfare	✓
Armaments	✓
Fossil fuels	✓
Gambling	✓
High environmental impact	✓
Human rights issues	✓
Nuclear power	✓
Nuclear weapons	✓
Tobacco	✓

Climate metrics

	Fund	Benchmark	Difference (%)
Financed emissions (tCO2e)	1,651	n/a	n/a
Financed emissions coverage	82.42%	n/a	n/a
Carbon footprint (tCO2e/$M invested)	8.87	n/a	n/a
Carbon footprint coverage	82.42%	n/a	n/a
Weighted average carbon intensity (tCO2e/$M sales)	40.14	n/a	n/a
Weighted average carbon intensity coverage	93.24%	n/a	n/a

All climate metrics presented above are for Scope 1-2 emissions. Unless specified in the objective, the data is for information only and should not be taken to mean they are being managed to/controlled.

Implied temperature rise

	Fund (%)	Benchmark (%)	Difference (%)
Implied temperature rise (ITR) coverage	84.33	n/a	n/a
% of portfolio below 2°C ITR	48.95	n/a	n/a
% of portfolio below 1.5°C ITR	31.26	n/a	n/a

SBTi net - zero

	Fund (%)	Benchmark (%)	Difference (%)
SBTi Net-Zero committed	28.21	n/a	n/a
SBTi Near-Term committed	9.87	n/a	n/a
SBTi Near-Term targets set	40.11	n/a	n/a

Fund Engagement

Engagement definition

Engagement is active dialogue with investee companies (or other entities). There are two types: engagement for information, which is dialogue as part of investment research or ongoing monitoring, without specific objectives for change, and engagement for change, which is purposeful dialogue to influence positive change, with defined objectives and demonstrable outcomes.

Engagements

Engagement activity	Fund 3 months	Fund 12 months
Number of entities engaged	25	52
Number of engagements	33	123

This is an estimate. Some engagements at the issuer level may not have been attributed to the specific bond held in the fund, resulting in a lower number of engagement activities.

Engagement focus

Firm-wide engagement activity is centred around six themes which we have identified in consultation with our clients. These are: climate change; nature and biodiversity; health; governance and corporate culture; social and financial inclusion; innovation, technology and society. Portfolio level engagements are not thematic and are focussed on issues specific to managing the portfolio and meeting the investment objective.

Engagement data represents all engagements undertaken at both firm and portfolio level across Royal London Asset Management, and may not be limited to those undertaken solely for the purpose of managing the fund.

Total engagements by theme and topic

Biodiversity	6
Climate	8
Climate - Transition Risk	6
Climate - Physical Risk	2
Diversity	2
Ethnic Diversity	1
Gender Diversity	1
Governance	12
Remuneration	8
Corporate Governance	2
Board	1
Strategy	1
Health	5
Health - Community	4
Mental Health	1
Social & Financial Inclusion	8
Just transition	5
Social & Financial inclusion	2
Labour & Human Rights	1
Technology, Innovation & Society	2
Cybersecurity	1
Technology & Society	1

The numbers of engagements and themes/topics discussed may differ where a single engagement covers multiple themes/topics.

Fund Engagement

Engagement outcomes

HSBC Bank Plc - Just transition

Purpose:

Our engagement purpose was to encourage HSBC to disclose its plans for integrating social issues into its decarbonisation strategy, in line with the just transition considerations outlined in the Paris Agreement.

Outcome:

Since publishing its net zero report, the company has been strategically embedding just transition principles. It prioritised innovation in sustainability-related lending, aiming to extend services to a broader customer base, including smaller businesses. The company is exploring the development of sustainability-linked bonds and loans and assessing the necessity of just transition-linked products. In emerging markets, it continues to work on the Just Energy Transition Partnership project. The company is also increasing integration across its retail bank and asset management divisions. While it faces challenges in applying universal principles to both emerging and developed markets, it is committed to supporting just transition while meeting climate targets. The company is enhancing relationship managers' understanding of just transition and incorporating specific questions into climate transition plans for high-emitting sectors. Although further details on its plans are pending, the company has an ambitious work plan for the next five months and plans to include initial disclosures in existing reports, with potential for a standalone plan in the future.

NatWest - Just transition

Purpose:

We engaged with NatWest as part of a collaborative engagement with banks to integrate just transition principles into their climate transition plans. The aim was to address any questions regarding our recently published investor expectations on just transition and the banking sector. We aimed to encourage the bank to align its strategies accordingly.

Outcome:

NatWest initially expressed concerns about being evaluated solely on financial returns, which it felt constrained its incentives for ESG activities. However, the bank recognised the value of aligning with our just transition investor expectations for the sector. It found these guidelines beneficial in setting ambitious goals and taking subsequent actions. NatWest discussed the establishment of a new energy transition fund with a different risk appetite and committed to a social housing fund. The company acknowledged the importance of integrating just transition principles into its plans to enhance credibility and was receptive to our feedback on improving its communication around the issue.

Fund Engagement

Engagement outcomes

SSE Plc - Multi-thematic

Purpose:

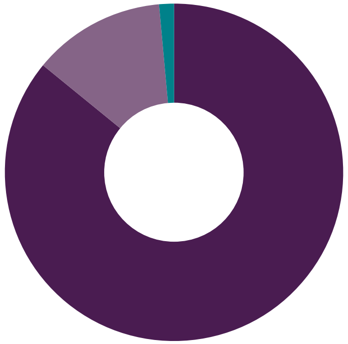
We communicated with SSE through a stewardship letter to outline key sustainability issues identified in our recent analysis. The letter aimed to prioritise areas for progress and arrange a meeting for further discussion.

Outcome:

In the area of health and safety, we highlighted that contractor safety had fallen below expected standards and urged SSE to improve performance. On climate issues, we expressed support for SSE's climate approach and voted for its net zero transition report at the latest AGM, while recommending a more detailed Scope 3 emission reduction plan and alignment of thermal generation assets with a net zero pathway. Regarding nature, we suggested focusing on reducing environmental incidents and incorporating biodiversity considerations in construction project locations. Lastly, we raised concerns about potential share dilution from issuing shares without pre-emptive rights, as reflected in our voting record. SSE has been invited to discuss these issues further in an upcoming meeting.

Fund Voting

Total proxy voting activity



For	85.92%
Against	12.68%
Abstain	1.41%

Executive remuneration voting activity

For	100.00%

Notable votes

Autodesk Inc

Adoption of Right to Call a Special Meeting - abstain: The company will introduce a 25% right which would be a significant improvement. However, given the shareholder proposal requesting that the Company adopt a 15% special meeting right, we are minded supporting a lower threshold instead.
Shareholder Proposal Regarding Right to Call Special Meeting - for: We are supportive of the proponent's request to adopt a 15% threshold for calling special meetings.

Market commentary

Market overview

Markets continued to focus on central bank actions during the quarter, as both the Federal Reserve (Fed) and Bank of England (BoE) followed the European Central Bank (ECB) in making the first rate cuts after raising these significantly through 2022 and 2023 as part of efforts to reduce inflation. Along with a stimulus package in China, this generally helped markets, with bond markets seeing yields fall to reflect lower central bank interest rates, and equity markets recovering from initial weakness with the US S&P 500 index hitting an all-time high. Despite guidance from central banks that further cuts will be measured, markets are still pricing in material rate cuts over the next year or so.

Having spent much of last year worrying about economies being too strong and inflation too high, investor attitudes shifted in the quarter with concerns focusing on whether the economic slowdown was too pronounced. That led the market to take on a more cautious tone. In addition, after elections in the UK and France grabbed headlines in the second quarter, attention is moving firmly to the forthcoming US elections which is leading to significant uncertainty.

The price of WTI crude oil lost 17% over the quarter to $70.1 a barrel, stagnating after the strong gains made in the prior quarter. The geopolitical situation in the Middle East has been worsening and while this would normally lead to oil prices climbing, this was not the case following news that Saudi Arabia would not be managing its production levels to try to achieve and maintain oil prices of $100 per barrel.

Global equities were volatile during the third quarter amid heightened geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and ongoing inflationary pressures on the global economy. However, global equities have still posted gains on a year-to-date basis.

Government yields generally fell over the quarter, reflecting the start of the rate cutting cycle. Benchmark 10-year gilt yields dipped from 4.18% to 4.01%. These gilt yields had been as low as 3.75% in mid-September, many attributed the increase at the end of the quarter to concerns that the Budget might see a further increase in gilt issuance. The sterling investment grade credit market (iBoxx non-gilt index) returned 2.28% over the quarter, with the average sterling investment grade credit spread (the average extra yield available from non-gilt bonds compared with government debt of equal maturity) ending the period unchanged at 1.07% (iBoxx).

Outlook

Despite continued geopolitical uncertainty, concerns over the Chinese economy, worries of a US recession and a US presidential election in November, equity markets hit new all-time highs. The near-term reason is the cutting of interest rates in the US and Europe, which should support future economic activity and reduce recession concerns. The long-term reason is that we are witnessing a level of innovation and investment in the global economy which is arguably unprecedented and is driving earnings of companies.

The physical world is seeing a huge amount of infrastructure investment, due to a need to support the digital world's expansion, tackle climate change through electrification, and bring back manufacturing to home countries (reshoring). The digital world continues to grow rapidly, as new technologies such as generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) are only just beginning to change the way we work. The natural world is also seeing huge potential to improve disease outcomes in areas such as cancer, Alzheimers and obesity.

Each of these areas, which can be described as atoms (physical world), bytes (digital) and genes (natural) will have a significant role to play in defining investment returns in the coming years and we believe the outlook for these remains very positive.

In an uncertain environment we will continue to follow our disciplined process which has served us well over the years and believe our portfolios are diversified and focused on high quality sustainable and financial companies that are well positioned to drive long-term performance.

Further Information

Please click on the links below for further information:

Stewardship and responsible investment at RLAM

Responsible investment

Royal London voting and engagement

TCFD climate report

Find out more

In an uncertain geopolitical and economic environment, we recognise the importance of keeping our clients updated on our current investment thinking.

Articles, videos, podcasts and webinars giving the latest views of our investment experts can be found in the Our Views section of www.rlam.com, including regular updates from our Fixed Income, Global Equity, Sustainable and Multi Asset teams.

Disclaimers

Important information

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Issued in October 2024 by Royal London Asset Management Limited, 80 Fenchurch Street, London EC3M 4BY. Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, firm reference number 141665. A subsidiary of The Royal London Mutual Insurance Society Limited.

The Fund is a sub-fund of Royal London Equity Funds ICVC, an open-ended investment company with variable capital with segregated liability between sub-funds, incorporated in England and Wales under registered number IC000807.

The Authorised Corporate Director (ACD) is Royal London Unit Trust Managers Limited, authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, with firm reference number 144037.

For more information on the fund or the risks of investing, please refer to the Prospectus or Key Investor Information Document (KIID), available via the relevant Fund Information page on www.rlam.com.

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Risks and Warnings

Investment risk

The value of investments and any income from them may go down as well as up and is not guaranteed. Investors may not get back the amount invested.

EPM techniques risk

The Fund may engage in EPM techniques including holdings of derivative instruments. Whilst intended to reduce risk, the use of these instruments may expose the Fund to increased price volatility.

Exchange rate risk

Changes in currency exchange rates may affect the value of your investment.

Liquidity risk

In difficult market conditions the value of certain fund investments may be difficult to value and harder to sell, or sell at a fair price, resulting in unpredictable falls in the value of your holding.

Emerging markets risk

Investing in Emerging Markets may provide the potential for greater rewards but carries greater risk due to the possibility of high volatility, low liquidity, currency fluctuations, the adverse effect of social, political and economic instability, weak supervisory structures and accounting standards.

Counterparty risk

The insolvency of any institutions providing services such as safekeeping of assets or acting as counterparty to derivatives or other instruments, may expose the Fund to financial loss.

Responsible investment risk

The Fund can only invest in holdings that demonstrate compliance with certain sustainable indicators or ESG characteristics. This reduces the number securities in which the Fund can invest and there may as a result be occasions where it forgoes more strongly performing investment opportunities, potentially underperforming non-sustainable funds.

Performance to 30 September 2024

Cumulative (%)

	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	3 Years	Since Inception
Fund (gross)	0.36	1.46	16.26	-	25.35
Fund (net)	0.16	1.07	15.37	-	23.10

Annualised (%)

3 Years (p.a.)	Since Inception (p.a.)
-	10.06
-	9.22

Year on year performance (%)

	30/09/2023 - 30/09/2024	30/09/2022 - 30/09/2023	30/09/2021 - 30/09/2022	30/09/2020 - 30/09/2021	30/09/2019 - 30/09/2020
Fund (gross)	16.26	11.99	-	-	-
Fund (net)	15.37	11.13	-	-	-

Past performance is not a guide to future performance. The impact of fees or other charges including tax, where applicable, can be material on the performance of your investment.

Source: RLAM as at 30 September 2024. All figures are mid-price to mid-price in GBP for the Royal London Sustainable Growth (M Acc); Since inception date 24 May 2022.

Glossary

Carbon footprint

Exposure to high emitters in the portfolio, expressed in tCO2e/$M invested. Financed emissions are divided by the portfolio value, the same approach for listed companies and private issuers is applied in this metric.

ESG Integration

The consideration of environmental, social and governance (ESG) risk as part of the investment process. ESG integration does not mean the fund is trying to achieve a particular positive ESG outcome. Please check prospectus documentation for details on specific fund-level objectives.

Exclusions

Explicitly prohibits investing in a particular company, sector, business activity, country or region.

Financed emissions

The emissions from activities in the real economy that are financed through lending and investment portfolios, expressed in tCO2e. Emissions are attributed to a portfolio based on the portion of the company's value the portfolio holds, and using different accounting values for public and private corporates. We provide financed emissions for scope 1 and 2 emissions.

Fund restrictions definitions

Adult Entertainment: Companies which own or produce adult entertainment services, or engage in the distribution or sale of adult entertainment services.
Alcohol: Companies which have involvement in brewing, distillation or sale of alcoholic drinks.
Animal Welfare: Companies that conduct animal testing (other than for purposes of human or animal health and/or where it is required by law or regulation).
Armaments: Companies who manufacture armaments or nuclear weapons or associated products.
Controversial Weapons: Weapons which have an indiscriminate and disproportional impact on civilians or weapons that are illegal and prohibited by international conventions and treaties.
Fossil Fuels: Companies involved in the exploration, extraction or refining of oil, or gas, or coal, plus any activity relating to thermal coal.
Gambling: Companies who promote irresponsible gambling which includes betting shops, casinos or amusement arcades.
High Environmental Impact: Companies which have a high environmental impact, and which have 'no evidence' of appropriate environmental management systems.
Human Rights Risks: Companies with a strategic presence operating in countries of concern and which have 'no evidence' of policies or systems to manage human rights risks.
Nuclear Power: Companies who generate energy from Nuclear Power.
Nuclear Weapons: Companies that manufacture, nuclear; or are involved in the production of intended-use parts, whole weapons systems, or exclusive delivery platforms.
Tobacco: Companies which are growing, processing or selling tobacco products.

Fund value

Total value of the fund as of the last business day of the calendar month. The fund value is as at close of business and on a mid-price basis.

Implied temperature rise (ITR)

ITR aims to measure the global warming outcome from the emissions trajectory of a company, if the whole economy followed the same trajectory.

Number of holdings

Total number of unique holdings of the Fund excluding cash, currency and derivatives.

Performance

Performance is calculated using the daily end of day NAV per share produced by HSBC based on the mid price.

Promotes environmental or social factors

An ESG Fund promotes, among other characteristics, environmental or social characteristics, or a combination of those characteristics, provided that the companies in which the investments are made follow good governance practices.

Regional weights

Breakdown of holdings by country of risk relative to the benchmark index and grouped using RLAM's proprietary regional classification scheme.

SBTi

The Science-Based Targets initiative is a consortium of organisations that set up the definition and promotion of science-based target setting.

Glossary

Sector weights

Breakdown of holdings by FTSE ICB (Industry Classification Benchmark) sector relative to the benchmark index.

Sustainable fund objective

A product that has sustainable investment or a reduction in carbon emissions as its objective.

Top 10 holdings

Top 10 assets held by market value, excluding derivatives and cash.

Weighted Average Carbon Intensity (WACI)

Portfolio's exposure to carbon-intensive companies, expressed in tCO_2e / \$M revenue. Scope 1 and scope 2 GHG emissions are divided by companies revenues, then multiplied based on portfolio weights (the current value of the investment relative to the current portfolio value). The WACI is calculated as a weighted average sum of the holdings with carbon intensity coverage.