

# VT Blackfinch Defensive Portfolio Fund Factsheet June 2024

Signatory of:



Targeting CPI

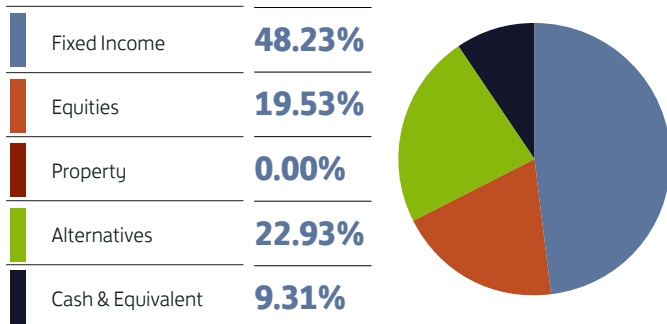
**+1%**

per annum, over a rolling 5 year basis net of fees.

## Investment Objective

The Defensive portfolio is designed to achieve a total return in excess of the Consumer Price Index plus 1% per annum, over a rolling 5 year basis net of fees. The portfolio is globally diversified and contains multi asset investments including fixed income, equities, property, alternatives and cash. Exposure to fixed income, equities, property, alternatives is via collective investment schemes. There is no guarantee that the objective will be met or that a positive return will be delivered over any time period. Capital at risk.

## Asset Allocation (as at 30/06/2024)



## Tactical Deviation

Fixed Income	<b>4.23%</b>	Overweight
Equities	<b>-1.47%</b>	Underweight
Property	<b>-5.00%</b>	Underweight
Alternatives	<b>1.93%</b>	Overweight
Cash & Equivalent	<b>0.31%</b>	Overweight

## Market Commentary

Politics dominated headlines in June – from a snap election in France to the concerning performance by Joe Biden in the televised US Presidential debate. While political noise had little material impact on markets overall, French markets were volatile due to the uncertainty surrounding the lack of a majority in government and potential knock-on effects. In India, despite expectations of a landslide victory for incumbent Prime Minister Modi, he was sworn in for a third consecutive term with a much smaller majority.

Central bankers acted in line with economist expectations. The European Central Bank took the first step in cutting interest rates, shaving 0.25% off its main deposit rate. The Bank of England (BoE) and Federal Reserve held rates at current levels, with policymakers calling for a clearer picture from incoming economic data before taking action. On a positive note, May's UK inflation figures were encouraging, with Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation slowing to the Bank's 2% target. However, wage growth remained hot at 5.9% and will need to cool before the BoE considers bringing rates down.

China showed signs of a pickup in activity, driven by the services sector and an increase in stimulus measures to offset the property market slump. In May, the services sector Purchasing Managers' Index survey for sentiment within services sectors was the highest reading since July 2023. Technology momentum continued to drive markets, particularly India, but also the US, with many companies still benefitting from artificial intelligence momentum.

## Performance

3 months	<b>-0.29%</b>
6 months	<b>0.92%</b>
12 months	<b>5.98%</b>
Since Inception*	<b>4.81%</b>

*Past performance is no guarantee of future performance.*

\*Date of inception: 1st May 2020.

All Blackfinch unitised fund performance figures are quoted net of AMC and fund OCFs. The above performance is that of the F Accumulation Share Class.

## Portfolio Holdings (as at 30/06/2024)

Vanguard - Global Bond Index	9.06%
CanLife - Sterling Liquidity	7.10%
BNY Mellon - Global Dynamic Bond	6.74%
Ninety One - Diversified Income	6.57%
Vanguard - UK Government Bond Index	6.55%
Vanguard - US Government Bond Index	6.05%
PIMCO - Income	5.82%
TM Tellworth - UK Select	5.07%
Man GLG - Sterling Corporate Bond	5.05%
Liontrust - Sustainable Future Monthly Income Bond	5.04%
Vanguard - FTSE 100 Index	4.99%
JPM - Global Macro Opportunities	4.55%
HSBC - European Index	4.43%
iShares - ESG Overseas Corporate Bond Index (UK)	4.07%
iShares - Corporate Bond Index (UK)	4.04%
Rathbone - Ethical Bond	2.53%
Brown Advisory - US Sustainable Growth	2.53%
JPM - US Equity Income	2.49%
Jupiter - Japan Income	2.25%
Blackfinch - NextGen Infrastructure	1.49%
Comgest - Growth Japan	1.36%
Cash	2.21%

### All data as at 30 June 2024, unless specified otherwise.

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## This Month's Activity

Equity market performance was mixed in June, with Emerging Markets and the US posting strong gains, whereas European markets struggled, in part due to unexpected political uncertainty in France. Our fixed income holdings posted gains across the board, as investors sought to lock-in fixed income investments while yields remained high.

We made changes to our portfolio solutions to prepare for impending interest rate cuts in the UK and US. We increased our exposure to small and medium-sized UK companies, as well as global infrastructure and property assets, all of which should benefit as lending rates start to fall. We also reduced our holdings of short-term cash deposit funds in favour of marginally longer-dated corporate bonds, as the yields available on cash are expected to fall.

**Please note:** EValue risk tolerance scores are based on a 10-year time horizon. The mappings are only for use by financial advisers licensed to use EValue's risk profiling system and does not constitute financial advice.



## Portfolio Information

Class S Accumulation Share ISIN	Class S Management Fee	Class S Underlying fund charges
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<b>GB00BLF82B02</b>	<b>0.55%</b>	<b>0.40%</b>
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Class F Accumulation Share ISIN	Class F Management Fee	Class F Underlying fund charges
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<b>GB00BKP3DS21</b>	<b>0.45%</b>	<b>0.40%</b>
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Estimated Annual Income Yield

**3.30%**

Number of holdings

**21**



## Investment Directors

Gareth Deacon and Alex Sumner co-manage the Blackfinch Asset Management multi-asset portfolio range. Combined they have over 25 years' experience in investment management. They bring expertise in the construction of mainstream investment products, managing private client portfolios and working closely with financial advisers. Each is a chartered fellow of the Chartered Institute for Securities & Investment.

# Responsible Investing from Blackfinch Asset Management

## *Creating long-term value across investee companies*

We believe acting responsibly is core to businesses' future success. Investing in firms who can demonstrate this value can offer an investor superior returns over the longer-term. There's a positive correlation between firms which improve on factors, such as higher operational efficiency and enhanced risk management, and share-price performance. We prioritise investments where there's enhanced engagement on these factors and responsible values. By doing this, we can help support fund managers who exercise their power to help drive these factors to positively shape the way such businesses are run.

### We invest with a **core focus** on the UN Global Compact Principles

Extensive due diligence across multiple factors to identify sound business fundamentals, accounting for the 10 UNGC principles, where possible

We take a forward-looking approach to investment selection using positive screening

We encourage 'engagement' with both 'leaders' and 'improvers' for positive outcomes

We're committed to transparency on our multi-factor screening process and reflect this in our investment approach

## Positive Screening Approach

We have a duty of care to all our stakeholders, whether its tech startup founders, financial advisers, retail investors, borrowers, brokers, developers, operators, industry bodies, our own employees or institutional investors. Our actions need to ensure that we all thrive, both now and in the long-term. We assess multiple factors in investments, including risks to society, the environment, financial sustainability and more. We look for firms with well thought-out responsible business practices and policies in place, and continue to seek out fund managers who invest in firms that can deliver improved long-term future prospects. It's not just about recognising what's being done by businesses today. We're focused on encouraging firms to keep the future impact at the forefront of their work.

## Responsible investing in action

### **HOW GIVING SHAREHOLDERS A 'SAY ON PAY' IS IN COMPANIES BEST INTEREST**

'Say on Pay' refers to the right of shareholders in a company to vote on executive compensation packages. It has been a key part of shareholder protests for several years, and typically dominates discussions on executive remuneration. Before the introduction of Say on Pay legislation, investors were largely powerless to act on company executives being overpaid, irrespective of their performance, or to prevent remuneration being misaligned to the company's best interests. One of the passive equity fund managers we invest in, which manages considerable capital, leads the Say on Pay charge for its investors.

The fund manager recently raised concerns over certain remuneration practices in one of the largest car rental companies based in the US, including easily achievable price targets for its new CEO, and the structure of performance awards. The investment team participated in the company's Annual General Meeting (AGM) in May 2023, where the agenda included a Say on Pay proposal. Using its significant capital and contacts through the industry, the fund manager did not support the proposal and received 85.5% support from investors, clearly reflecting shareholder concern about the company's approach. This kind of activity makes executives more accountable for underperformance and, more importantly, ensures shareholders receive fair long-term returns through more prudent capital management.