

March 2021

Monthly roundup | Investment companies

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Winners and losers in February

Several commodity funds have started the year very strongly, with the sector leading total price returns over 2021 to date (see Appendix 1). A weaker dollar and Chinese demand for raw materials have been catalysts for this.

Rising long-term interest rates coupled with fears of inflation have dented the valuations of high-growth stocks. February saw technology-focused companies sell-off, for example. Gold, which ought to be an inflation hedge, seems to have been hit by rising rates (gold is hampered by not generating an income). UK assets (and the pound) continued to benefit from the positive sentiment effect of the strong vaccine rollout.

On balance, it was a good month for investment companies, February's median total share price return was 0.7% (the average was 1.1%) which compares with a fall of 0.2% in January.

Please refer to the 'appendix' section for a comprehensive list of sector-specific performance. Readers interested in the most recent briefings from the industry can click here to access our economic and political roundup.

Best performing sectors in February 2021 by total price return

	Median share price total return (%)	Median NAV total return (%)	Median discount 28/02/21 (%)	Median sector market cap 28/02/21 (£m)	Number of companies in the sector
Commodities & Natural Resources	4.6	0.0	0.8	89.0	9
UK Smaller Companies	3.5	2.8	(11.3)	118.0	24
UK All Companies	3.1	4.3	(6.1)	209.0	11
North American Smaller Companies	3.1	5.1	(5.3)	204.5	2
UK Equity & Bond Income	2.9	0.4	(10.6)	120.5	2

Source: Morningstar, Marten & Co. Note: inclusive of sectors with at least two companies. Note: many alternative asset sector funds release NAV performance on a quarterly basis

Worst performing sectors in February 2021 by total price return

	Median share price total return (%)	Median NAV total return (%)	Median discount 28/02/21 (%)	Median sector market cap 28/02/21 (£m)	Number of companies in the sector
Infrastructure Securities	(10.4)	(6.9)	(3.4)	99.0	2
Technology & Media	(4.2)	0.0	(6.5)	1177.0	3
Latin America	(3.8)	(4.9)	(8.4)	84.5	2
Japanese Smaller Companies	(3.7)	(2.6)	(5.5)	139.0	5
Japan	(3.7)	(0.6)	(9.0)	260.0	6

Source: Morningstar, Marten & Co. Note: inclusive of sectors with at least two companies. Note: many alternative asset sector funds release NAV performance on a quarterly basis



Winners and losers continued...

Best performing funds in total NAV (LHS) and price (RHS) terms over February 2021

Fund	Sector	(%)	Fund	Sector	(%)
Geiger Counter	Commodities	31.5	FastForward Innovations	Private Equity	41.0
Aberforth Smaller Companies	UK Smaller	10.7	KKV Secured Loan	Leasing	38.2
Miton UK Microcap	UK Smaller	10.3	Geiger Counter	Commodities	29.2
Vietnam Enterprise	Asia Pacific ex Japan	10.0	UIL	Flexible Investment	23.2
Chelverton UK Dividend	UK Equity Income	9.9	BlackRock Energy & Resour. Inc.	Commodities	19.4
UIL	Flexible Investment	9.8	CQS Natural Resources G&I	Commodities	18.9
CQS Natural Resources G&I	Commodities	9.5	Miton UK Microcap	UK Smaller	15.8
VietNam Holding	Asia Pacific ex Japan	9.2	Aberforth Smaller Companies	UK Smaller	15.7
Polar Capital Glb Financials	Financials	8.4	Riverstone Credit Opps. Inc.	Direct Lending	15.0
Temple Bar	UK Equity Income	8.0	Livermore	Flexible Investment	14.2

Source: Morningstar, Marten & Co. Note: excludes trusts with market caps below £15m at 28/02/21

Worst performing funds in total NAV (LHS) and price (RHS) terms over February 2021

Fund	Sector	(%)	Fund	Sector	(%)
Golden Prospect Precious Metal	Commodities	(9.5)	Amedeo Air Four Plus	Leasing	(15.6)
Atlantis Japan Growth	Japanese Smaller Companies	(8.2)	Golden Prospect Precious Metal	Commodities	(15.4)
Keystone Positive Change	Global	(8.0)	Atlantis Japan Growth	Japanese Smaller	(14.2)
Ecofin Global Utilities & Infra.	Infrastructure Securities	(7.2)	Premier Miton Glb Renew	Infrastructure Securities	(11.2)
Premier Miton Glb Renewables	Infrastructure Securities	(6.5)	Aberdeen Japan	Global	(9.6)
JPMorgan Japan Small Cap G&I	Japanese Smaller Companies	(6.2)	Scottish Mortgage	Japan	(9.6)
Aberdeen Latin American Inc.	Latin America	(5.7)	Ecofin Global Utilities & Infra.	Infrastructure Securities	(9.5)
Jupiter Green	Environmental	(5.5)	BMO Commercial Property	Property - UK Commercial	(8.5)
JPMorgan China G&I	Asia Pacific ex Japan	(5.3)	Jupiter Green	Environmental	(8.3)
JPMorgan Japanese	Japan	(5.1)	JPMorgan China Growth & Income	Asia Pacific ex Japan	(7.9)

Source: Morningstar, Marten & Co. Note: excludes trusts with market caps below £15m at 28/02/21

Golden Prospect was hit by the fall in the gold price. Scottish Mortgage was caught up in the technology sell-off. This affected some of the Japanese trusts too but the main problem seems to have been the strength of the pound. The yen tends to move in the opposite direction to long-dated US bond yields, which have been rising. A strong oil price meant that energy-focused resource strategies, headed by BlackRock Energy and Resources Income and CQS Natural Resources Growth and Income, continued their strong start to the year. There has been talk of a new commodity super-cycle taking shape, with a weaker



dollar and rampant Chinese demand driving prices over February. Geiger Counter is a play on the uranium price. UK-focused companies are expected to benefit as a successful vaccine rollout quickens the pace of the economy re-opening. Aberforth Smaller Companies and Miton UK Microcap were among the main beneficiaries of flows into the sector over February. Polar Capital Global Financials has been a major beneficiary from much-improved sentiment towards banking stocks, helped by rising long-term interest rates. Credit performance has held up much better than expected and it is now expected that banks across Western Europe and the US will move to re-instate dividend distributions over the coming weeks and months. Unlike in other sectors, the suspension of dividends was regulatory driven. KKV Secured Loan's shares jumped following a major repayment by one of its borrowers of a loan that the fund had written off, paving the way for a capital return to its shareholders.

Moves in discounts and premiums

More expensive (LHS) and cheaper (RHS) relative to NAV

Fund	Sector	28 Feb (%)	31 Jan (%)	Fund	Sector	28 Feb (%)	31 Jan (%)
FastForward Innovations	Private Equity	28.6	(8.8)	VinaCapital Vietnam Opport.	Asia Pacific ex Japan	(14.1)	(5.0)
KKV Secured Loan	Leasing	(36.7)	(54.2)	Aurora	UK All Companies	(4.2)	4.1
Riverstone Credit Opportunities Income	Direct Lending	(19.6)	(31.0)	Mobius	Global Emerging Markets	(7.7)	(1.0)
BlackRock Energy and Resources Income	Commodities	0.8	(9.8)	CIP Merchant Capital	Flexible Investment	(30.6)	(24.1)
Electra Private Equity	Private Equity	(10.2)	(19.6)	Atlantis Japan Growth	Japanese Smaller	(12.4)	(6.3)

Source: Morningstar, Marten & Co. Note: excludes trusts with market caps below £15m at 28/02/21

FastForward Innovations's shares surged following an announcement by one of its portfolio companies, Little Green Pharma, a supplier of medical cannabis oil. The catalysts behind the moves in BlackRock Energy and Resources Income and KKV Secured Loan were discussed in the 'winners and losers' section above, while Riverstone Credit Opportunities Income has also benefited from much improved sentiment within energy markets. It makes loans to the energy sector.

Elsewhere, while Vietnam had a good month, VinaCapital Vietnam Opportunity's discount widened as its shares did not match its NAV rise. Aurora's discount is quite volatile. Mobius's performance has improved recently but it is not too liquid and so relatively small trades can make its discount swing around. CIP Merchant Capital had been the subject of bid talk but this was withdrawn in February. The fund's board had rejected an approach.



Money raised and returned over February

Money raised (LHS) and returned (RHS) over February in £m

Fund	Sector	£m raised	Fund	Sector	£m returned
Cordiant Digital Infrastructure	Infrastructure	370.0	CVC Credit Partners Euro Opps GBP	Debt - Loans & Bonds	(23.8)
VH Global Sustainable Energy Opportunities	Renewables	246.6	Scottish Mortgage	Global	(18.8)
Greencoat UK Wind	Renewables	198.0	Alliance Trust	Global	(16.9)
SDCL Energy Efficiency Income	Renewables	160.0	Scottish Investment Trust	Global	(16.6)
Hipgnosis Songs	Royalties	75.0	Witan	Global	(13.9)

Source: Morningstar, Marten & Co. Note: excludes trusts with market caps below £15m at 28/02/21. *Note: based on the approximate value of shares at 28/02/21

There were two major IPOs over February, with Cordiant Digital Infrastructure and VH Global Sustainable Energy Opportunities raising over £600m between them. Cordiant Digital Infrastructure will make investments in digital infrastructure assets, with a predominant focus on data centres, mobile telecommunications/broadcast towers and fibre-optic network assets while VH Global Sustainable Energy Opportunities's focus will be on energy infrastructure assets predominantly in countries that are members of the EU and part of the OECD.

Greencoat UK Wind's £198m raise was used to reduce its gearing, but within days it had spent almost £100m on investments in two wind farms. SDCL Energy Efficiency Income has a number of projects in mind – its placing was scaled up from £100m to £160m. Hipgnosis Songs raised another £75m, though dollar weakness is weighing on its NAV and this may curtail its further fundraising ambitions for a while.

Returns of capital were led by CVC Credit Partners European Opportunities, Scottish Mortgage, Alliance Trust, Scottish Investment Trust, and Witan.

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Major news stories and QuotedData views over February

Portfolio developments

- There were strong returns for Mobius in its second year of operations
- Polar Capital Global Financials matched its benchmark in a transformational year
- JLEN Environmental expanded its remit
- Gresham House Energy Storage's latest acquisition took its operational portfolio to 395MW
- Round Hill Music proceeded with its pipeline purchase
- BlackRock Throgmorton had an excellent year
- Syncona backed Quell financing
- TRIG's diversity in technology and geography was a source of strength over 2020
- Riverstone Credit bucked the poor energy market over 2020
- Aberdeen Emerging Markets benefitted from strong fund selection

Corporate news

- Cordiant Digital raised £370m
- NextEnergy Renewables published its prospectus
- Greencoat UK Wind launched a £198m institutional placing
- KKV Secured Loan secured an exit and an NAV uplift
- Jupiter UK Growth published its reconstruction and wind up proposals
- Blackrock Frontiers is set to shrink

Property news

- RDI REIT was the subject of a £467.9m takeover approach
- West End landlord Shaftesbury reported grim rent collection rates
- Civitas Social Housing agreed a new debt facility
- Urban Logistics REIT announced six logistics acquisitions for £28m
- Tritax EuroBox looked to raise €200m

Managers and fees

- Troy's Francis Brooke secured a promotion
- Shareholders were set to vote on BH Global's fees

QuotedData views

- More REIT M&A to come? 26 February
- The rewards of truly patient capital 26 February
- EuroBox raise hits the sweet spot 19 February
- Resurgent emergence 19 February

- From infectious enthusiasm to IPO fever? 12 February
- Cheers to the property dividend hikes 12 February
- Property tinkermen worth their weight in gold 5 February
- Something new to get your digits on 5 February

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Upcoming events

Here is a selection of what is coming up. Please refer to the Events section of our website for updates between now and when they are scheduled:

- Ecofin Global Utilities and Infrastructure AGM 2021, 9 March
- Standard Life Private Equity AGM 2021, 23 March
- Strategic Equity Capital EGM 2021, 30 March
- Brunner AGM 2021, 30 March
- Herald AGM 2021, 20 April

- Greencoat UK Wind AGM 2021, 28 April
- Apax Global Alpha AGM 2021, 4 May
- The London Investor Show, 23 April
- Sustainable & Social Investing Conference, 21 May

Interviews

Have you been listening to our weekly news round-up shows? Every Friday at 11 am, we run through the more interesting bits of the week's news and we usually have a special guest or two answering questions about a particular investment company.

Friday	The news show	Special Guest	Topic
6 November	RSE, LBOW, SONG, VIN	Michael Bonte-Friedheim	NextEnergy Solar
13 November	RHM, VGEO, SHED, RDI	Roger Clarke	IPSX Group
20 November	THRG, MTE, UKML	Fran Radano	North American Income Trust
27 November	SBO, NAVF, CCJI	Nicholas Weindling	JPMorgan Japanese
4 December	PCFT, IVI, GPM	Denis Jackson & James Henderson	Law Debenture
11 December	KIT, JUS, RTW	Steve Cook	Sequoia Economic Infrastructure
8 January	Review of 2020	Andrew McHattie	Review of 2020
15 January	GVP, SUPP, SBO	James Robson	RM Secured Lending
22 January	SONG, JGC, RMMC	Adam Khanbhai	Strategic Equity Capital
29 January	SLPE, FSFL, RSE	Philip Kent	GCP Infrastructure
5 February	RHM, IPOs	Dean Orrico	Middlefield Canadian Income
12 February	RTW, UKW, SEC, GVP	Alan Gauld	Standard Life Private Equity Trust
19 February	JLEN, KKV, BH Global, EBOX/BOXE	Matthew Tillett	The Brunner Investment Trust
26 February	LWDB, TIGT, BRFI, RDI	Nalaka De Silva	Aberdeen Diversified Inc. & Growth



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Standardised past performance to 31 December**;

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Scottish Mortgage	21.4%	13.3%	16.5%	41.196	4.6%
AIC Global Sector Average	8.8%	10.9%	22.6%	24.1%	-4.9%

Past performance is not a guide to future returns. Please remember that changing stock market conditions and ourrency exchange rates will affect the value of the investment in the fund and any income from it. Investors may not get back the amount invested. The Trust's risk could be increased by its investment in unlisted investments. These assets may be more difficult to buy or sell, so changes in their prices may be greater.

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Research notes published recently





Having played a supporting role in the initial phase of the stock market recovery – breaking historical precedent in the process – the share prices of financial stocks, and banks in particular, have come back sharply since November. Demand for its shares meant that Polar Capital Global Financials Trust's (PCFT's) premium rating was recently at its highest level in more than five years, paving the way for share issuances. Banks were well-capitalised going into the pandemic, so the much-milder-than-expected impact on loan defaults to date, coupled with the prospect of economies gradually reopening, is shifting the discussion forward to the potential impact of pandemic stimulus on inflation, and ultimately increases in interest rates.



JLEN Environmental Assets (JLEN) holds the most diversified portfolio within its peer group. Today, it is asking shareholders to approve a broader definition of environmental assets as well as increased exposure to construction-stage investments. We think that JLEN's premium, which is one of the highest within its group of competing funds, reflects the breadth of its asset mix and the accompanying high proportions of income from government-backed subsidies, which makes its income more predictable.







Swiss-listed BB Biotech is the oldest-established, the largest and, over the longer term, one of the best-performing of the small group of closed-end funds that specialise in the biotech sector. It offers investors a vehicle to gain exposure to a focused portfolio of predominantly-US small-to-mid-cap biotech companies developing therapeutic products, with a strong bias towards cell, gene and particularly RNA-based technologies.



Despite significant headwinds caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Grit Real Estate Income Group (Grit)'s diverse portfolio has proved resilient, with rent collection rates of 91.4% and a slight recovery in property valuations. Buoyed by the performance of its offices (the group's largest sector exposure), corporate accommodation and industrial portfolios, plus its consistently strong rent receipts, the group has reinstated its dividend (after suspending it at the height of the pandemic), albeit at a lower level.





Guide

Our independent guide to quoted investment companies is an invaluable tool for anyone who wants to brush up on their knowledge of the investment companies' sector. Please register on www.quoteddata.com if you would like it emailed to you directly.





Appendix 1 – median performance by sector

	Share price TR YTD	NAV TR YTD	Share price TR Feb.	NAV TR Feb.	Discount 28/02/21	Discount 28/01/21	Change in discount	Market cap 28/02/21	Number of companies in the
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(£m)	sector
Commodities & Natural Resources	13.5	0.0	4.6	0.0	0.8	(7.6)	8.4	89.0	9
Growth Capital	9.1	0.0	1.5	0.0	(1.7)	(0.5)	(1.2)	326.0	5
Debt - Structured Finance	6.2	2.6	1.7	0.5	(11.8)	(16.0)	4.2	168.0	7
Property - UK Commercial	4.6	0.7	2.0	0.4	(19.5)	(19.0)	(0.5)	222.5	16
Asia Pacific	3.4	4.7	(1.3)	1.0	(7.6)	(6.1)	(1.5)	518.0	7
North American Smaller Companies	3.3	5.3	3.1	5.1	(5.3)	(3.6)	(1.7)	204.5	2
Private Equity	3.0	0.0	2.6	0.0	(19.7)	(20.8)	1.1	217.0	21
Asia Pacific Income	2.2	3.4	2.1	0.5	(0.5)	(1.7)	1.2	471.5	4
UK Smaller Companies	2.1	3.3	3.5	2.8	(11.3)	(9.7)	(1.6)	118.0	24
Property - Debt	1.7	0.0	(0.1)	0.0	(9.2)	(10.5)	1.3	216.5	4
Country Specialist: Asia Pacific ex Japan	1.5	2.8	1.2	3.0	(11.7)	(5.0)	(6.7)	299.0	13
Asia Pacific Smaller Companies	1.1	4.6	0.4	4.3	(13.9)	(10.7)	(3.2)	308.0	3
Flexible Investment	1.0	0.0	1.8	0.0	(4.7)	(6.6)	1.9	84.0	22
Leasing	0.9	1.0	(3.7)	0.0	(40.8)	(50.8)	10.0	91.0	7
Property - Europe	0.9	0.0	(0.9)	0.0	(8.3)	(11.4)	3.1	281.0	7
North America	0.8	3.9	1.8	2.9	(6.4)	(5.1)	(1.3)	240.0	6
Environmental	0.8	(0.2)	(0.7)	0.1	2.0	3.6	(1.6)	66.5	4
Debt - Direct Lending	0.7	0.0	(0.1)	0.0	(7.2)	(9.7)	2.5	177.0	10
Property - UK Healthcare	0.5	1.5	(2.8)	1.5	3.0	5.7	(2.8)	420.0	2
Global Emerging Markets	0.4	1.7	(1.6)	(0.2)	(8.0)	(6.6)	(1.4)	302.0	14
Debt - Loans & Bonds	0.2	1.0	0.9	0.0	(4.5)	(5.9)	1.4	125.0	15
Property - Rest of World	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	(45.8)	(46.6)	0.8	44.0	4
MEDIAN	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	(6.9)	(6.0)	(0.9)	231.3	7
Financials	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	209.0	3
Property - UK Residential	0.0	0.1	0.9	0.1	0.0	(0.3)	0.3	259.0	9
UK Equity Income	0.0	0.4	1.5	1.6	(3.0)	(3.6)	0.6	195.0	27
Insurance & Reinsurance Strategies	(0.1)	(2.2)	(1.8)	(1.8)	(12.0)	(12.0)	0.0	5.0	5



	Share price total return YTD	NAV total return YTD	Share price TR Feb.	NAV total return YTD	Discount 28/02/21	Discount 31/01/21	Change in discount	Market cap 28/02/21	Number of companies in the sector
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(£m)	
Renewable Energy Infrastructure	(0.5)	0.0	(0.3)	0.0	9.8	10.1	(0.3)	545.0	15
Hedge Funds	(0.6)	2.1	0.7	0.3	(18.7)	(17.3)	(1.4)	57.0	11
Global Equity Income	(1.0)	(0.2)	0.0	0.8	(1.4)	(0.1)	(1.3)	292.0	7
Biotechnology & Healthcare	(1.0)	0.3	0.2	(8.0)	1.3	2.2	(0.9)	784.0	6
European Smaller Companies	(1.3)	1.2	1.3	2.0	(11.3)	(10.8)	(0.5)	528.0	4
Country Specialist: Europe ex UK	(1.3)	0.8	0.6	3.1	(11.6)	(10.6)	(1.0)	267.0	1
UK Equity & Bond Income	(1.4)	(1.4)	2.9	0.4	(10.6)	(12.0)	1.5	120.5	2
UK All Companies	(1.4)	1.8	3.1	4.3	(6.1)	(5.7)	(0.4)	209.0	11
Global	(2.2)	0.0	0.0	0.1	(6.6)	(3.4)	(3.2)	405.0	17
Europe	(3.0)	(1.3)	(0.8)	1.5	(9.9)	(8.0)	(1.9)	373.0	8
Royalties	(3.2)	(3.4)	(3.1)	(0.9)	2.4	4.6	(2.3)	735.5	2
Infrastructure Securities	(4.0)	(4.9)	(10.4)	(6.9)	(3.4)	0.6	(3.9)	99.0	2
Japan	(4.0)	(1.9)	(3.7)	(0.6)	(9.0)	(5.5)	(3.5)	260.0	6
Infrastructure	(4.4)	0.0	(2.5)	0.0	9.5	15.0	(5.5)	1750.0	7
Global Smaller Companies	(5.3)	2.7	(3.2)	0.0	(10.1)	(7.4)	(2.7)	1368.0	5
Technology & Media	(5.6)	0.8	(4.2)	0.0	(6.5)	(0.7)	(5.8)	1177.0	3
Latin America	(12.0)	(10.1)	(3.8)	(4.9)	(8.4)	(9.4)	1.0	84.5	2
Japanese Smaller Companies	(12.0)	(7.0)	(3.7)	(2.6)	(5.5)	(1.3)	(4.2)	139.0	5

Source: Morningstar, Marten & Co





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