

At Baillie Gifford we are now fully adjusted to the ‘new normal’ of working within the restrictions of Covid-19. Almost all of our staff are working from home, and our operations are carrying on very largely as normal. The health and wellbeing of our staff and others remains paramount and we are focused not only on maintaining business as usual but on keeping morale high in an environment of much less social interaction. We have welcomed new hires who were already scheduled to join us and are pushing ahead with further planned recruitment including Client Service Trainee and Modern Apprenticeship positions. We recognise the challenges of juggling home and work life at the moment, and are proud and touched by the positive attitude and versatility with which our staff have responded. The technology of Zoom and Teams has become routine for daily interactions both inside and outside the firm, and we have been communicating with clients as usual. The many investors in our pooled funds can find our up to date thinking via material on our website, blog and social media posts. Specific Fund information can as ever also be found here in our website.

Clients’ investments are being managed as normal by our investment team. We continue to research stocks and have been transacting normally to facilitate client flows and investment decisions. Business travel remains completely at a halt, and most overseas offices in Europe and the Americas are also closed with staff working from home. On a brighter note, our Shanghai office is open and colleagues there are reassuringly reporting a slow return to something resembling life as normal.

It is important during times of extreme market volatility to remember that investing is a long-term activity. History indicates that acting hastily in the midst of a crisis is typically unhelpful, and we would encourage all investors to step back and maintain perspective. When we invest on behalf of clients, it is with a five-year view of the opportunities that a company has to grow. Though markets have been very volatile for weeks, the types of companies we generally favour – those with growing opportunities, competitive advantages and strong balance sheets – are not only well placed to survive short-term pressures, but to thrive when the current crisis is over. We have therefore made few changes to client portfolios. Most of our thinking now has turned to the likely acceleration of trends that were already in place pre-crisis, and the associated long-term investment opportunities. Many of the companies in which we invest for clients have shown their focus on social responsibility by becoming involved in efforts to find treatments for Covid-19, producing much-needed medical supplies, and supporting their own staff rather than focusing relentlessly on short-term profitability. We have encouraged them to do so in the belief that those which act responsibly now will see the benefit in happier times.

Baillie Gifford itself has no short-term pressures. We have no outside shareholders, and the Partners in the firm are committed to seeing through the current challenges without making any material changes to our own firm. No employees have been furloughed, and valuable support staff who are quieter than usual – owing to lack of travel planning and catering requirements – have been redeployed to assist in our charitable efforts. We are fortunate to work in a business which is capable of carrying on essentially as normal, and have put in place various local initiatives to help those who are not so lucky. If you would like to know more about that, or have any specific concerns around business as usual, please get in touch with your usual contacts here at Baillie Gifford or with your financial adviser.

Baillie Gifford & Co
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