For professional clients only
November 2020
Monthly Perspectives
Framlington Equities

Not for Retail distribution: this document is intended exclusively for Professional, Institutional, Qualified or Wholesale Investors / Clients, as defined by applicable local laws and regulation. Circulation must be restricted accordingly

UK Mid Cap strategy
Equity markets rose strongly in November

- Investors immediately more optimistic about a global economic recovery
- M&A activity has been significantly increasing in the UK
- Protracted Brexit negotiations should conclude shortly

Chris St John
Portfolio Manager, UK Mid Cap Strategy

What's happening?

Equity markets rose strongly in November following the release of positive late stage trial data from three Coronavirus vaccine candidates. The initial announcement, from Pfizer, catalysed a dramatic 'style rotation' as investors became immediately more optimistic about a global economic recovery.

Companies that have shown earnings resilience, supported by strong balance sheets and positive long term growth drivers, dramatically underperformed those companies deemed 'Covid losers'. Many stocks exposed to cyclical end markets (For example Banks and Oil and Gas companies) and those reliant on the congregation of individuals (travel and leisure) performed exceptionally well, in some cases reversing much of the capital losses incurred year to date. The extent and speed of this reversal has been described as a '6 Sigma' event, similar in quantum to the market moves seen in April 2009.

Clarity on the US Presidential election was welcome by markets. US President Donald Trump permitted the transition to a new administration under Democrat Joe Biden. The move alleviated any lingering worries that the result would face a drawn-out legal battle.

M&A activity has been significantly increasing in the UK. While many investors may still be wary on the UK, some are taking advantage of the discount UK businesses are trading at by buying these undervalued businesses.

Portfolio positioning and performance

The strategy performed strongly over the month. However, the positive performance lagged that of its comparative benchmark, the FTSE 250 ex IT index. The market favoured value stocks in November, while the strategy is managed to a growth with a reasonable price (GARP) investment style. The 'style rotation' created significant divergence in stock performance.

The overweight position in pharmaceuticals and underweight position in travel and leisure detracted from relative performance. Positive stock performances of note included holdings in On The Beach, an online retailer of beach vacations, and Rank Group, an international leisure and entertainment company. Detractors on a relative basis included Future, Spirent and Dunelm (we remain supportive of the investment case for all three).

New positions were taken in Rank Group as part of a fund raising and First Derivatives, a leading provider of products and consulting services to some of the world's largest finance, technology and energy institutions. Positions in Avast and James Fisher and Sons were exited.

Outlook

The path to economic improvement and equity returns will be determined, at least in part, by the speed and medical success of the Covid19 vaccines roll out. Although the announcement of vaccine trial success and imminent roll out has been met very positively by equity markets, it is worth bearing in mind that many economies remain restricted via lockdown and many companies are being forced to survive by dramatically increasing their debt burden. The long term effects on business investment, inflation and the cost of capital will clarify over time, as will the impact on productive capacity, and secular/cyclical changes brought about by the devastating economic effect of the virus.

Further, from a UK perspective, the protracted Brexit negotiations should conclude shortly and provide improving clarity on the longer term trading arrangements between the UK and the EU.

In these times of volatile news and capital flow, we continue to focus on those companies that we believe can compound their earnings, where balance sheet strength is supportive of that growth.

No assurance can be given that the UK Mid Cap Strategy will be successful. Investors can lose some or all of their capital invested. The UK Mid Cap strategy is subject to risks including; Equity; Smaller companies risk; Liquidity risk.

Not for Retail distribution: This document is intended exclusively for Professional, Institutional, Qualified or Wholesale Clients / Investors only, as defined by applicable local laws and regulation. Circulation must be restricted accordingly.

Past performance is not a guide to current or future performance, and any performance or return data displayed does not take into account commissions and costs incurred when issuing or redeeming units. The value of investments, and the income from them, can fall as well as rise and investors may not get back the amount originally invested. Exchange-rate fluctuations may also affect the value of their investment. Due to this and the initial charge that is usually made, an investment is not usually suitable as a short term holding.

This document is for informational purposes only and does not constitute investment research or financial analysis relating to transactions in financial instruments as per MIF Directive (2014/65/EU), nor does it constitute on the part of AXA Investment Managers or its affiliated companies an offer to buy or sell any investments, products or services, and should not be considered as solicitation or investment, legal or tax advice, a recommendation for an investment strategy or a personalized recommendation to buy or sell securities. The strategies discussed in this document may not be available in your jurisdiction.

Due to its simplification, this document is partial and opinions, estimates and forecasts herein are subjective and subject to change without notice. There is no guarantee forecasts made will come to pass. Data, figures, declarations, analysis, predictions and other information in this document is provided based on our state of knowledge at the time of creation of this document. Whilst every care is taken, no representation or warranty (including liability towards third parties), express or implied, is made as to the accuracy, reliability or completeness of the information contained herein. Reliance upon information in this material is at the sole discretion of the recipient. This material does not contain sufficient information to support an investment decision.

Issued in the UK by AXA Investment Managers UK Limited, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority in the UK. Registered in England and Wales No: 01431068. Registered Office: 7 Newgate Street, London EC1A 7NX. In other jurisdictions, this document is issued by AXA Investment Managers SA's affiliates in those countries.

In Hong Kong, this document is issued by AXA Investment Managers Asia Limited (SFC License No. AAP809), which is authorized and regulated by Securities and Futures Commission. This document is to be used only by persons defined as "professional investor" under Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Securities and Futures Ordinance (SFO) and other regulations, rules, guidelines or circulars which reference "professional investor" as defined under Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the SFO. This document must not be relied upon by retail investors. Circulation must be restricted accordingly.

In Singapore, this document is issued by AXA Investment Managers Asia (Singapore) Ltd. (Registration No. 199001714W) and is intended for the use of Institutional Investors only as defined in Section 4A of the Securities and Futures Act (Cap. 289) and must not be relied upon by retail investors. Circulation must be restricted accordingly

For Japanese clients: AXA Investment Managers Japan Ltd., whose registered office and principal place of business is at NBF Platinum Tower 14F 1-17-3 Shirokane, Minato-ku, Tokyo 108-0072, Japan, which is registered with the Financial Services Agency of Japan under the number KANTOZAIMUKYOKUCHO (KINSHO) 16, and is a member of Japan Securities Dealers Association, Type II Financial Instrument Firms Association, Investment Trust Association of Japan and Japan Investment Advisors Association to carry out the regulated activity of Financial Instrument Business under the Financial Instrument Exchange Law of Japan. In Japan, none of the funds mentioned in this document are registered under the Financial Instrument Exchange Law of Japan or Act on Investment Trusts and Investment Corporations. This document is purely for the information purpose for use by Qualified Institutional Investors defined by the Financial Instrument Exchange Law of Japan.

In Taiwan, this document is issued by AXA Investment Managers Asia Limited (SFC License No. AAP809), which is authorized and regulated by Securities and Futures Commission. This document and the information contained herein are intended for the use of professional or institutional investors and should not be relied upon by retail investors. They have been prepared and issued for private informational and educational purposes only at the sole request of the specified recipients, and not intended for general circulation. They are strictly confidential, and must not be reproduced, circulated, distributed, redistributed or otherwise used, in whole or in part, in any way without the prior written consent of AXA IM Asia. They are not intended for distribution to any persons or in any jurisdictions for which it is prohibited.

If any fund is highlighted in this communication (the "Fund"), its offering document or prospectus contains important information on selling restrictions and risk factors, you should read them carefully before entering into any transaction. It is your responsibility to be aware of and to observe all applicable laws and regulations of any relevant jurisdiction. AXA IM Asia does not intend to offer any Fund in any country where such offering is prohibited.

The offer, distribution, sale or re-sale of fund units/shares in Taiwan requires approval from and/or registration with Taiwanese regulatory authorities. To the extent that any units/shares of the Funds are not so licensed or registered, such units/shares are made available in Taiwan on a private placement basis only to banks, bills houses, trust enterprises, financial holding companies and other qualified entities or institutions (collectively, "Qualified Institutions") and other entities and individuals meeting specific criteria ("Other Qualified Investors") pursuant to the private placement provisions of the Rules Governing Offshore Funds. No other offer or sale of such units/shares in Taiwan is permitted. Taiwanese purchasers of such units/shares may not sell or otherwise dispose of their holdings except by redemption, transfer to a Qualified Institution or Other Qualified Investor, transfer by operation of law or other means approved by the Taiwan Financial Supervisory Commission.

For Malaysian investors: As the recognition by the Malaysian Securities Commission pursuant to Section 212 of the Malaysian Capital Markets and Services Act 2007 has not been / will not be obtained nor will this document be lodged or registered with the Malaysian Securities Commission, the shares referred to hereunder (if any) are not being and will not be deemed to be issued, made available, offered for subscription or purchase in Malaysia and neither this document nor any other document or other material in connection therewith should be distributed, caused to be distributed or circulated in Malaysia.

For Thailand investors: Nothing in this document shall constitute in any manner whatsoever a proposal to make available, offer for subscription or purchase or to issue an invitation to purchase or subscribe for any securities in Thailand or a proposal to implement any of the foregoing in Thailand nor has this document been approved by or registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Thailand ("SEC"). No person receiving a copy of this document may treat the same as constituting an invitation or offer to him in Thailand and such person shall not distribute or make available this document in Thailand. The issuer of this document shall not be liable in any manner whatsoever in the event this document is distributed or made available to any person in Thailand receiving a copy of this document. Since no application for approval has been or will be made to the SEC for the offering of the securities, or for the registration of this document, the securities shall not be offered for subscription or purchased or made available, whether directly or indirectly, in Thailand. It is the sole responsibility of recipients wishing to take any action upon this document to satisfy themselves as to the full observance of the laws of Thailand, to comply with all relevant government and regulatory approvals, and to comply with all applicable laws, including but not limited to exchange control laws.