

Driehaus US Micro Cap Equity Fund

Q2 2025 Commentary

Portfolio Management



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Opinions expressed whether in general or in both on the performance of individual investments and in a wider economic context represent the views of the contributor at the time of preparation.

The **Driehaus US Micro Cap Equity Fund** (the “Fund”) is a sub-fund of Heptagon Fund ICAV which is an open-ended umbrella type investment vehicle authorised pursuant to UCITS regulations. Heptagon Capital Limited (“Heptagon”) is the Investment Manager and Driehaus Capital Management LLC (“Driehaus”) is the Sub-Investment Manager meaning Driehaus exercises discretionary investment authority over the Fund. The Fund was launched on 7th December 2016 and had an AUM of USD 849m as of 30th June 2025. During the second quarter of 2025, the Fund underperformed the Russell Micro Cap Growth Index TR USD (the “Index”), returning 17.3% (C USD share class) compared to 20.9% for the Index.

Investment Objective

The investment objective of the Fund is to achieve long-term capital growth. The Fund’s Sub-Investment Manager, Driehaus Capital Management LLC, is a privately-held boutique asset management firm located in Chicago, USA. The firm was founded in 1982 and has USD 21.4 billion of assets under management.

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Market Overview

The U.S. equity market began the June quarter in a bear market as President Trump’s tariffs caused severe stress in investor sentiment and raised concern of a major economic and earnings slowdown. The equity market declined sharply from mid-February to early April. Investors were stunned by the extremely high reciprocal tariff rates and the scope of the tariffs (on nearly every country) announced by Trump on April 2nd, so-called Liberation Day. The extreme selling accelerated from April 2nd as the odds of a U.S. recession increased substantially. As the bond market reacted negatively and long-term treasury yields began to rise, Trump blinked and announced a 90-day pause of the reciprocal tariff rates on April 9th. This ignited a sharp rally for the U.S. equity market as widespread relief set in as the worst-case scenario was avoided (the expiration date for the 90-day pause has now been pushed out to August 1st). The following chart in Exhibit 1 is a brief timeline of the first half of the year’s wild ride:

Exhibit 1: Tariffs Drive Wild First Half Ride in US stocks



Source: Bloomberg

The rally that began on April 9th was historic. It was the fastest recovery following a decline of at least 15% for the S&P 500 in decades, as shown in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2: S&P 500's quickest recoveries to records following a decline of at least 15%



Source: Dow Jones Market Data

It was also significant as the widely followed contrarian index, the VIX (the CBOE Volatility Index), finished above 50 and briefly touched 60 for only the third time ever. The prior two times were historic and occurred during periods of extreme market stress: (1) the GFC (the Great Financial Crisis) and (2) near the Covid market low in the spring of 2020. In both prior instances, as the VIX peaked and importantly then declined, the market made major historic bottoms. Looking at a variety of other additional technical indicators, including sentiment, breadth, and volume indicators, they also suggest the April 9th low could be an important market low historically.

Past performance is no guide to future performance, and the value of investments and income from them can fall as well as rise

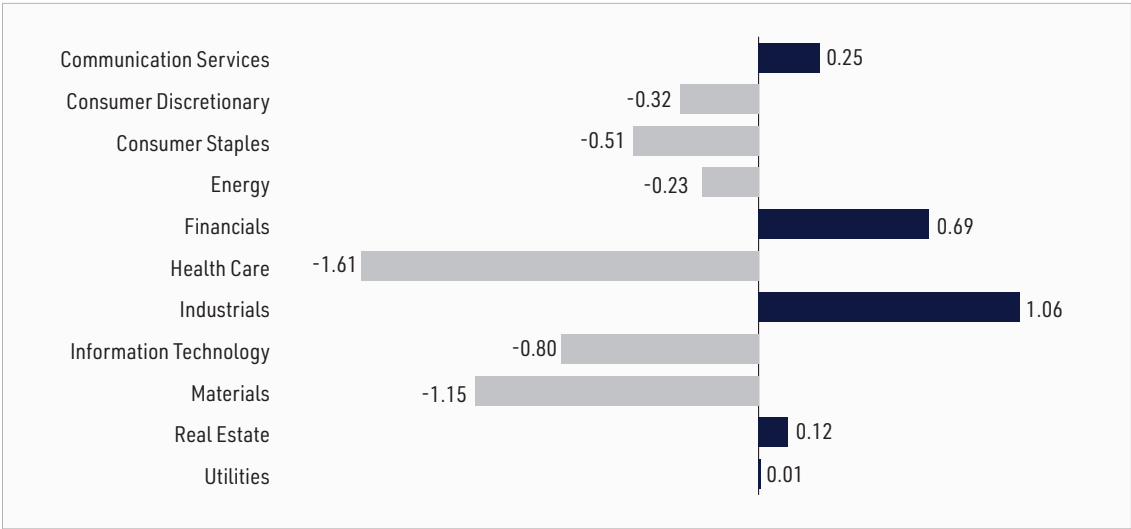
Performance Review

The Driehaus US Micro Cap Equity Fund underperformed its benchmark by 362 basis points for the June quarter. The Fund appreciated 17.3% versus a gain of 20.9% for the Russell Micro Cap Growth. The Russell Micro Index rose 15.5%, the Russell 2000 8.5%, the Russell 2000 Growth 12.0%, and the S&P 500 10.9% for the quarter.

The Russell Micro Growth Index bounced back sharply following Trump’s 90-day pushout of the reciprocal tariffs on April 9th and was the best performing U.S. benchmark since that market low gaining 37.7% through the end of the June quarter. The Russell Micro Growth Index was also the best performing Russell index for the quarter.

The performance data below represents the strategy’s composite of Micro cap growth accounts managed by Driehaus Capital Management LLC (DCM). These returns are estimated for the period, as the underlying accounts’ data has yet to be reconciled with the custodian bank. Net-of-fee returns reflect the deduction of advisory fees and, in some instances, other fees and expenses such as administrative and custodian fees, while the gross of fee returns do not. Both figures are net of brokerage commissions charged to the accounts and reflect the reinvestment of income and other earnings. The performance data shown below represents past performance and does not guarantee future results. Current performance may be lower or higher than the performance data quoted.

Exhibit 3: Sector Attribution Relative to Benchmark



Source: Driehaus. Note: The sector attribution relative to benchmark for each MSCI/GICS Sector is equal to the sum of the individual Attribution Effects for that MSCI/GICS Sector. This exhibit is ex-cash. The cash weighting at 6/30/2025 was 0.46%.

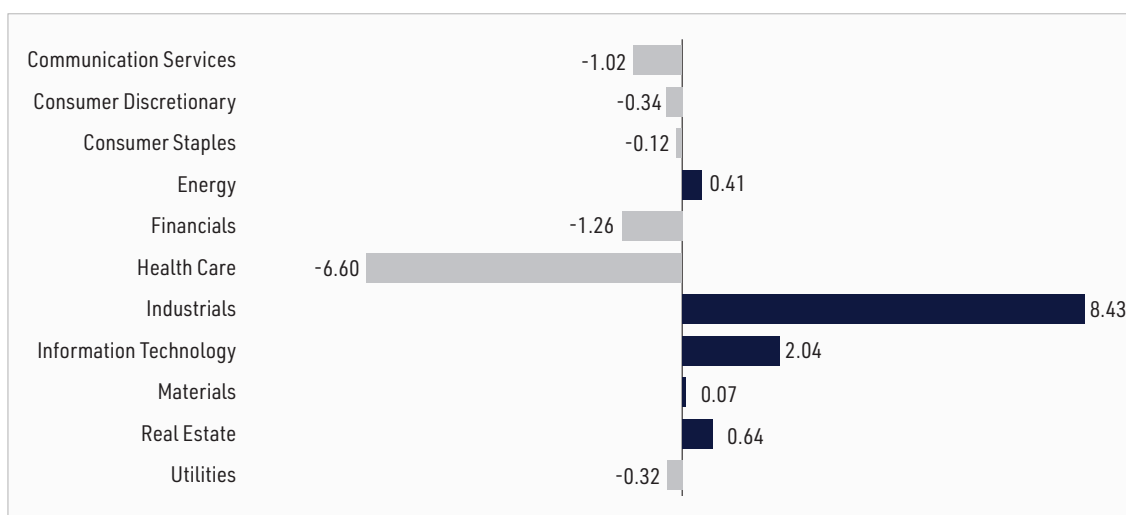
From a sector perspective, the top two contributing sectors on a relative basis for the quarter were Industrials and Financials. The bottom two performing sectors on a relative basis for the June quarter were Health Care and Materials.

Strategy Overview and Positioning

The largest overweights in the portfolio in the June quarter were to the Industrials and Energy sectors. The largest underweights during the June quarter were to Health Care and real Information Technology. The biggest shift in the portfolio during the quarter was an increase in the active weight in Industrials and a decrease in the active weight in Health Care. Detailed information about sector performance is below in Exhibit 4.

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Exhibit 4: Change in Relative Weight



Driehaus. Note: Change in relative weight is the difference between the change in ending weight from the previous quarter. This exhibit is ex-cash. The cash weighting at 6/30/2025 was 0.46%.

Sectors contributing positively to returns during the quarter (in order of relative impact):

Industrials

Industrials added 106 basis points on a relative basis and 762 basis points in absolute terms, with our holdings gaining 33.2% versus 31.9% for the index. Our exposure to the sector increased notably from 19.4% to 28.0% versus 15.8% for the index. Our holdings saw strength in several sub-industries with attractive themes, including commercial aerospace, commercial services, nuclear infrastructure, specialty batteries, traditional infrastructure, and AI data centres.

Financials

Financials contributed 69 basis points on a relative basis for the quarter and added 422 basis points in absolute terms. Our holdings gained 34.4% versus a gain of 31.0% for the index. We saw strength in specialty insurance, fintech specialty lenders, a BNPL (Buy Now Pay Later) vendor, and regional banks. We decreased our exposure from 12.9% to 11.7%, largely due to profit taking, while maintaining an overweight versus an index weight of 10.3%.

Communication Services

Communications Services contributed 25 basis points in relative terms and 39 basis points in absolute terms. Our holdings gained 11.5% versus a gain of 4.3% for the index. Our exposure to the sector went from 3.5% to 2.8% during the quarter, an underweight versus 4.4% for the index. We saw gains from an advertising-related technology company offset by a decline in a performance marketing company for the insurance industry.

Sectors detracting from relative returns during the quarter (in order of relative impact):

Health Care

Health Care detracted 161 basis points on a relative basis and 81 basis points on an absolute basis. Our holdings declined 2.5% versus a gain of 7.0% for the index. Health Care materially lagged other sectors.

We decreased our exposure to Health Care from 30.5% to 21.1% during the quarter, maintaining an underweight versus 31.9% for the index. The portfolio finished the quarter underweight biotech, pharma, and medical devices. The reduction in exposure was primarily due to weak relative strength within the sector and better bottom-up and thematic opportunities in other sectors in our view.

While the Health Care sector has begun to recover since the April 9th market low, for the quarter, the sector did experience multiple compression due to lingering concerns about the appointment of RFK Jr (Robert F Kennedy Jr) as the Secretary

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of Health and Human Services as well as new leadership at the FDA. The threat of sectorial tariffs and pricing controls via an MFN (Most Favoured Nation) policy also weighed on the sector. While we do not believe these concerns will have an impact on the drug approval timelines or commercial sales prospects for our holdings, they did depress the recent price action. As we detailed in our commentary last quarter, we have spoken with the management teams of our holdings, and they consistently continue to say they are having very normal dialogue and communications with the FDA with no suggestion of any slowdown or delays.

Biotech/pharma accounted for most of the sector underperformance as it detracted 140 basis points in relative terms and 63 basis points in absolute terms for the quarter.

Our biotech positions declined 1.0% versus a gain of 7.0% for the index, while pharma declined 6.8% versus a gain of 0.8% for the index. We did reduce our exposure to both biotech and pharma during the quarter finishing at 11.6% for biotech and 4.6% for pharma, both of which are underweight positions.

We remain encouraged fundamentally as we believe our biotech holdings have very promising and innovative clinical stage therapies demonstrating superior efficacy and safety in important disease indications, such as epilepsy, endocrinology, obesity, diabetes, neurology, autoimmune diseases, and oncology. We anticipate promising results from upcoming clinical trials and continued strength for products with recent commercial launches.

Materials

The Materials sector detracted 115 basis points on a relative basis but 33 basis points in absolute terms. While a small sector, we did increase our exposure from 1.7% to 2.2%, an underweight versus 2.8% for the index. We have exposure to companies in special chemicals, specialty metal, rare earth elements, and construction materials for infrastructure.

Information Technology

Information Technology detracted 80 basis points on a relative basis but added 403 basis points in absolute performance. Entering the quarter, concerns surrounding DeepSeek and tariffs were massive overhangs which left many smaller tech stocks in downtrends and well off their 2024 highs. However, the tech sector recovered sharply during the quarter, largely reversing the losses it experienced during the March quarter as positive news surrounding AI and data centre capex continued and Trump pushed out the reciprocal tariff for 90 days.

When DeepSeek debuted on January 27th the market was extremely concerned that tech companies benefitting from the strong AI infrastructure capex trends would be negatively impacted going forward as capex trends would decelerate and disappoint market expectations. The reaction in AI infrastructure stocks was severe. Specifically, AI infrastructure stocks held in the portfolio as DeepSeek debuted fell 66% on average from January 27th to the April 9th market low. We aggressively reduced our exposure to the AI infrastructure stocks in late January and in February. These stocks continued to steadily decline from mid-February into early April as high tariff rates became a second major concern.

As the AI stocks began to bottom and recover in April, we began to re-initiate positions in many of these same AI infrastructure stocks at prices generally lower than where we reduced and sold the positions in the first quarter. We were frequently asked by investors after DeepSeek debuted if we believed the AI infrastructure theme was over. At the time we did believe the theme was over for the time being – the group did correct by 2/3rds on average. But we also had conviction that the AI infrastructure group could recover if it became clear that the consensus earnings estimates were still conservative for the second half of 2025 and 2026 and if it were clear that AI capex trends would remain strong.

The main market concern after DeepSeek debuted was that AI capex trends would slow and disappoint. AI sceptics expected AI and data centre capital expenditures to slow, with cuts likely as LLMs become cheaper to develop. On the other hand, AI bulls believed Jevon's paradox and many new AI applications would continue to drive strong AI capex trends. We continue to believe the hyperscalers remain in a competitive AI battle against each other and view AI as an opportunity and an existential threat. From this perspective, it is critical that the hyperscalers continue to spend and increase the IQ of their AI offerings.

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During the June quarter, it became evident that the growth in AI use cases, and the productivity and efficiency gains from AI are becoming massive. These factors are driving continued strong gains in AI capex and new data centre demand. Our review of recent quarterly earnings reports and our many conversations with AI infrastructure companies in the technology and industrials sectors supports the view that AI infrastructure demand is robust and forward earnings estimates are conservative. As a result, during the quarter we increased our exposure to companies benefiting from the AI data centre buildout.

Our tech holdings gained 41.6% compared to a gain of 34.6% for the index's tech holdings. We increased our exposure to the sector from 9.0% to 13.5% during the quarter, an underweight versus the benchmark's 21.0% weighting. The strategy is slightly overweight software, equal weight in semiconductors but underweight the other sub-industries due to a lack of fundamental conviction in specific stocks in those industries.

Consumer Staples

Consumer Staples detracted 51 basis points in relative terms but added 12 basis points in absolute terms. Our holdings gained 1.6% versus a gain of 18.6% for the index. We reduced our exposure from 3.6% to 2.8% during the quarter, which is a slight underweight versus 3.0% for the index. Our holdings saw nice gains in a couple of specialty food and specialty beverage companies offset by declines in a specialty grocer and an online seller of dietary and personal care products.

Consumer Discretionary

Consumer Discretionary detracted 32 basis points on a relative basis but added 168 basis points in absolute terms. Our holdings appreciated 16.9% versus a gain of 18.4% for the index. We decreased our sector exposure from 10.5% to 10.0%, maintaining an overweight versus 6.3% for the index. Our holdings saw declines in a specialty retailer and a gaming operator partially offset by positive performance in leisure, education, and other gaming related businesses.

Energy

The Energy sector detracted 23 basis points in relative returns but added 165 basis points in absolute terms. Our Energy stocks gained 26.5% versus a gain of 39.7% for the index. We maintained our exposure at 6.6%, an overweight versus 2.6% for the index. We hold natural gas levered exploration and production companies, as well as companies exposed to oilfield infrastructure, uranium mining and processing.

I Outlook & Positioning

Looking ahead into the second half of 2025, the market outlook will still be influenced by the final outcome of Trump's tariff and trade policies. The market is assuming 10% baseline tariffs, with higher rates for countries with larger trade surpluses or links to China (such as the recent 20% rate applied to Vietnam) and then the highest rates for China. While not ideal in economic terms, the market has concluded the U.S. economy can continue to grow and avoid a recession with 10-20% tariff rates for most trade partners. In early July, Trump threatened to impose higher tariff rates on several key countries. So, uncertainty and volatility will continue though the market has learned to take his comments with a grain of salt. In simple terms, tariff rates above 10-20% will be a headwind to growth and will add to uncertainty and volatility of the market in the near term.

So, while future tariff rates are not certain, if 10-20% is the average tariff rate going forward, economic and earnings growth can continue to expand. Current economic trends are mixed but trending positively as the Atlanta Fed GDPNow indicator is currently at 2.6% and above most forecasts. The odds of a recession are low. For instance, the Coincident Economic Indicators continue to hit new highs. There are several factors that suggest positive economic growth ahead:

- The labour market remains resilient. AI, DOGE cuts, immigration policy and tariffs were all expected to be reasons the labour markets would weaken. The labour market will be the key indicator to watch for initial economic weakness. Indeed, continuing jobless claims have risen as has the unemployment rate for recent graduates. However, the June unemployment rate fell to 4.1% as new job creation and initial jobless claims continue to come in below expectations. Wage gains have been positive, and layoffs remain low. The impact of AI on employment is a risk that needs to be monitored carefully.

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- AI and data centre capex continues to be a source of economic growth as hundreds of billions are being spent on new data centres.
- AI is expected to drive productivity and efficiency gains which will be positive for earnings and economic growth.
- Reshoring and infrastructure continue to be sources of economic growth.
- Inflation data continues to trend favourably below expectations. The price of crude oil also remains relatively low. AI is generally expected to be a source of disinflation.
- The Federal Reserve continues to lean dovish. The Fed Funds Futures market is currently calling for more than two rate cuts by the Fed in the second half of 2025.
- The so-called Big Beautiful Bill has passed (the new federal budget). It should serve as a powerful fiscal stimulus for the economy. It extends the 2027 tax cuts. Importantly, for now, treasury yields have reacted favourably to the passage of the bill.
- As the above factors increase the odds of sustained economic growth, earnings growth should continue to trend positively.

Other key favourable market variables to consider:

- The dollar has seen its largest decline in over 30 years and while the implications of a weaker dollar are certainly varied and mixed, it should be a boost for U.S. exports and overall corporate earnings.
- The corporate deal market is strong. IPOs are finally back. Recent IPOs have been well received with several achieving strong price gains which should encourage additional IPOs in the coming months. M&A also appears to be picking up. Many other companies are raising capital via secondary and follow-on offerings.
- High yield spreads are favourable and historically this is a good indicator for risk and favourable for the small cap universe.
- Market breadth has widened with both the NYSE and Nasdaq advance-decline lines making new highs.
- The Citi economic surprise index and earnings revisions have turned positive recently.
- Smaller caps have outperformed since the April 9th bottom. This is historically consistent with other key market bottoms.
- Small caps continue to trade at a deep discount to large caps.
- AI should continue to be a source of economic growth and improving productivity and efficiency. AI is a powerful and transformative source of technological change.

Sources of risk and uncertainty:

- Uncertainty surrounding Trump's trade and tariff policy.
- Potential higher tariff rates impacting the economy and inflation readings.
- China-US trade negotiations and supply of rare earth elements.
- Trump threatening Fed Chair Powell.
- Geopolitical risks.
- Treasury yields are now trending lower, but higher yields and concern about fiscal deficits remain a key risk.
- Risk of job displacement and lack of hiring due to AI.

Overall, we view the outlook for the second half to be favourable for equities. The outlook depends on a stable and favourable tariff policy outlook. Assuming trade agreements are reached that yield tariff rates of 10-20%, we believe economic growth will continue and as a result earnings growth will continue to expand. Fiscal and monetary policy are powerful tailwinds for equities. Additionally, there are many strong themes and individual companies with favourable outlooks. The IPO and M&A outlooks are improving as the deal calendar has opened up. Valuations for small caps continue to sit well below that of large caps.

In terms of portfolio positioning, we have an attractive mix of growth companies. By sector, Industrials is our largest absolute weight, followed by Technology, Health Care, Consumer Discretionary, Financials, and Energy. On a relative basis, the strategy is overweight Industrials, Energy, Consumer Discretionary, Technology, and Consumer Staples. The strategy is underweight Financials, Communication Services, and Health Care.

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Quarterly Contributors

Sezzle Inc. (SEZL) is a leading provider of point-of-sale financing options and digital payment services. SEZL was a top contributor after reporting substantial upside to expectations in its 1Q25 earnings that resulted in the consensus 2025 EPS estimate rising from \$2.21 at the start of the quarter to \$3.26 currently.

Dave, Inc. Class A (DAVE) is a leading U.S. neobank using disruptive technologies to provide banking services at a fraction of the cost of incumbents. DAVE was a top contributor after reporting substantial upside to expectations in its 1Q25 earnings that resulted in the consensus 2025 EPS estimate rising from \$3.57 at the start of the quarter to \$6.31 currently.

Quarterly Detractors

Axogen, Inc. (AXGN) is a commercial-stage medical device company selling allografts for nerve injuries. In May, the company reported lower than expected gross margins driven by lower overhead absorption and higher than anticipated reserves/write-offs related to their new manufacturing process. What's more, they suggested they would be limited in terms of improvements they would be able to make until after a key regulatory event that would not occur before September, taking some near-term opportunity for outperformance off the table and increasing exposure to the regulatory event, driving the stock down. Given opportunities elsewhere in the portfolio, we opted to exit the position.

Crinetics Pharmaceuticals Inc (CRNX) is a clinical-stage drug company developing medicines to treat endocrine disorders. In early January, CRNX released updated data from their phase 2 study in congenital adrenal hyperplasia. While the data from the update continued to look excellent on an absolute basis, and relative to competitors, the data deteriorated from the initial disclosure in June 2024 and caused the stock to decline. We maintained a large position, given Crinetics' differentiated late-stage clinical assets and additional pipeline that we expect to come into view over the coming 6-18 months.

Outright Buy

Argan, Inc. (AGX) provides engineering and construction services to the power industry mostly in the construction of natural gas-powered power plants. AGX's backlog hit a record level in 1H25 and accelerating demand for electricity driven by datacentre/AI is expected to lead to more demand. To gain exposure to this theme, the strategy initiated a position in AGX during 2Q25.

Core Scientific Inc. (CORZ) operates datacentre facilities for Bitcoin mining and provides hosting and infrastructure solutions to AI cloud service companies. We initiated a position in the strategy as the company is expected to deliver an AI datacentre retrofitted from a bitcoin mining facility to its AI neo-cloud customer Coreweave in 2H25.

Outright Sell

QuinStreet, Inc. (QNST) is a leader in performance marketplaces and technologies for the financial services and home services industries. QNST was a top sell after noting a slowdown in spending by its largest insurance carrier customer.

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Sincerely,

Heptagon Capital and Driehaus Capital Management

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Annualized Total Returns

	Q2 25	1-Year	3-Year	5-Year
Driehaus US Micro Cap Equity Fund	17.3%	9.3%	15.4%	13.1%
Russell Micro Cap Growth Index TR	20.9%	20.5%	11.5%	5.2%

Source: Factset Research Systems, Inc.
Fund performance relates to the UCITS Fund (IE00BDB53K54, net of fees, in USD).

The views expressed represent the opinions of Driehaus Capital Management, as 30th June 2025, are not intended as a forecast or guarantee of future results, and are subject to change without notice.

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I Risk Warnings

The Fund is subject to special risk considerations including geographic concentration risk, portfolio concentration risk and operational risk. The investment return and principal value of an investment will fluctuate so that the investor's shares, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than their original cost. Any investor should consider the investment objectives, risks and charges and expenses of the fund carefully before investing. Where an investment is denominated in a currency other than the investor's currency, changes in rates of exchange may have an adverse effect on the value, price of, or income derived from the investment.

I SFDR

The Fund takes sustainability risks into account within the investment process, and this is disclosed in accordance with Article 6 requirements of the Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation ('SFDR') in the Fund's [Prospectus](#). However, the Fund does not have as its objective sustainable investment and does not promote environmental or social characteristics for the purposes of the SFDR. Sustainability risks may occur in a manner that is not anticipated by the Sub-Investment Manager, there may be a sudden, material negative impact on the value of an investment and hence the returns of the Fund. As a result of the assessment of the impact of sustainability risks on the returns of the Fund, the Sub-Investment Manager aims to identify that the Fund may be exposed to sustainability risks and will aim to mitigate those risks.

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For all definitions of the financial terms used within this document, please refer to the glossary on our website:
<https://www.heptagon-capital.com/glossary>

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