Mercer

THE ABRDN REPUBLIC OF IRELAND DEFINED CONTRIBUTION SCHEME (FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE STANDARD LIFE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND DEFINED CONTRIBUTION SCHEME)

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

Pensions Authority Number: 245581

Contents

Trustees, Principal Employer and Advisers

Trustees

Liam Stack

Brian Denyer

BESTrustees Limited (representative Christopher Wheeler)

Principal Employer

Aberdeen Corporate Services Limited
1 George Street
Edinburgh
EH2 2LL

Independent Auditors

PricewaterhouseCoopers
Chartered Accountants & Statutory Audit Firm
One Albert Quay
Cork

Registered Administrator

Mercer (Ireland) Limited
Charlotte House
Charlemont Street
Dublin 2

Consultant

Mercer (Ireland) Limited
Charlotte House
Charlemont Street
Dublin 2

Investment Managers

Abrdn Investments Limited
2 - 4 Merrion Row
Dublin 2

Irish Life Investment Managers Limited
Beresford Court
Beresford Place
Dublin 1

Risk Manager

Aon Solutions Ireland Limited
Block D Iveagh Court
Harcourt Road Dublin
Dublin
Ireland

Internal Auditor

Grant Thorton
13-18 City Quay
Dublin
Ireland

Contact for further information and complaints about the Scheme

Mercer (Ireland) Limited
Charlotte House
Charlemont Street
Dublin 2

Introduction

The Trustees of the abrdn Republic of Ireland Defined Contribution Scheme are pleased to present our report for 2023.

The Trustees' core responsibility is to look after the money held in trust on members' behalf. The total amount held in trust for members is €8 million at the end of 2023. As many of these members have defined contribution pension pots with their new employer, we continue to encourage members to consolidate their funds to ensure they have a combined view of their pension assets.

The Trustees have reviewed the investment options offered to members. The Trustees reviewed the investment options offered to members and new investment options were made available to members in January 2023.

Compliance

The content of this report conforms to the Occupational Pension Schemes (Disclosure of Information) Regulations 2006 (as amended) prescribed by the Minister for Social Protection under the Pensions Act 1990. The report outlines the constitution and structure of the Scheme together with details of financial developments for the year, investment matters and membership movements.

Queries in relation to Scheme benefits or related matters should be addressed, in the first instance to Sheena Cowan, Interim Head of Pension Benefits, Aberdeen PLC, 1 George Street, Edinburgh.

The Scheme

The Scheme, which operates on a defined contribution basis, was established to provide retirement and life assurance benefits for its members and is a distinct legal entity, separate in every respect from the Principal Employer, Aberdeen Corporate Services Limited, 1 George Street, Edinburgh, EH2 2LL.

Membership is open to eligible employees of the Principal Employer.

In compliance with Article 5 of the Financial Services & Pensions Ombudsman Act, 2017, a procedure has been put in place to facilitate Internal Dispute Resolution. Details of this procedure have been set out in the explanatory booklet which has been made available and distributed to members.

The Scheme is governed by the Trust Deed and Rules; members are entitled to inspect these documents or, on payment of a small charge, receive a copy of them. Details of members' benefits are also provided in the explanatory booklet which has been distributed to all members and individual details appear on each member's benefit statement.

During the year a Deed of Removal, Appointment and Amendment dated 2 May 2023 whereby the name of the Scheme was amended to 'The abrdn Republic of Ireland Defined Contribution Scheme' with effect from 20 May 2022 and Mark Foster was removed as a trustee with effect from 12 December 2022 and Brian Denyer was appointed as a trustee with effect from 1 May 2022 was executed. There have been no other changes during the year to the Scheme information specified in Schedule C of the Occupational Pension Schemes (Disclosure of Information) Regulations 2006 (as amended).

The Scheme has been approved by the Revenue Commissioners as an "exempt approved scheme" under Section 774 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 and as such its assets are generally allowed to accumulate free of income and capital gains taxes. In addition, tax relief is given on employer and member contributions to the Scheme and certain lump sum payments to members can be paid free of tax.

The Scheme has also been registered with The Pensions Authority and its registration number is PB 245581.

The Scheme is financed by contributions from the employer and members. Details of contributions and other financial developments during the year are set out herein.

The Trustees

Stewardship of Scheme assets is in the hands of its Trustees. The right of members to select, or approve the selection of, trustees is set out in the Occupational Pension Schemes (Member Participation in the Selection of Persons for Appointment as Trustees) (No. 3) Regulations 1996.

The Trustees and the Scheme administrator have access at all times to the Guidelines, Guidance Notes and Codes of Practice issued by The Pensions Authority in accordance with Section 10 of the Pensions Act 1990.

Section 59AA of the Pensions Act 1990, which requires trustees of pension schemes to undergo training, was brought into force on 1 February 2010 by virtue of the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2008 (Section 28) (Commencement) Order 2009.

The Trustees have adhered to their training obligations as required by the Pensions Act within the time limits set out therein.

The Trustees have access to appropriate training on their duties and responsibilities, however, no costs or expenses were incurred by the Scheme in respect of Trustees training during the year.

The cost of trustees training was borne by the employer.

Management of the Scheme

The Trustees of the Scheme are detailed on page 1.

Unless otherwise indicated the Trustees served for the entire year and is still serving at the date of approval of the Annual Report.

Additional advisers to the Scheme are also outlined on pages 1 to 2.

Condition of the Scheme

The financial condition of the Scheme is dealt with in the Financial Developments and Investment Management sections of this report.

Statement of risks

Under the Occupational Pension Schemes (Disclosure of Information) Regulations 2006 to 2022, the Trustees are required to describe the condition of the Scheme and the risks associated with the Scheme and disclose these to members.

As it is a “defined contribution” Scheme, where contribution levels are set down but the ultimate proceeds of those contributions cannot be forecast with certainty, it is not possible to provide a guarantee in relation to the level of benefits that will be received on retirement. The value of each member's pension is dependent on the amount of contributions paid, investment returns earned, charges deducted and the cost of buying annuities. The very nature of the Scheme means that there are financial and operational risks borne by the member. In brief, the following risks have been identified, amongst others:

- Investment returns may be poorer than expected, or the cost of purchasing an annuity when each member retires may be higher than expected. In such circumstances, the benefits payable from each members' retirement account may be less than the member was expecting. It is particularly important for each member to monitor this risk in the period close to retirement.
- The administration of the Scheme may fail to meet acceptable standards. The Scheme could fall out of statutory compliance, the Scheme could fall victim to fraud or negligence or the projected benefits communicated to members could differ from what will actually be payable.
- The investment managers made available for a members' retirement account may underperform relative to other investment managers, or the funds in which a members contributions are invested may underperform relative to other funds available.
- There may be regulatory or legislative changes that will restrict the level or type of benefits a member may receive and how they are taxed.

Apart from the last item, which is outside the control of the Trustees, the Trustees are satisfied that they are taking all reasonable steps to protect the members from the effects of these risks. For example, a range of funds are made available so that members can take control of their own investment risk. Experienced professional advisers, administrators and accountants are employed to minimise compliance and administrative risks. However, it is not possible to guard against every eventuality and, in particular, it may be appropriate for each member to take some investment risk with their retirement account with the aim of maximising their benefits.

Financial developments

The value of the Scheme's net assets increased from €7,238,705 at 31 December 2022 to €8,088,552 at 31 December 2023. This increase was accounted for by the net returns on investments of €785,092 together with the net additions from dealings with members of €64,755.

Benefits and payments to leavers amounted to €363,731 and premiums in respect of insured benefits amounted to €19,881.

Contributions

Contributions for the year amounted to €448,194**.** Contributions were paid in accordance with the rules of the Scheme and were received in full within 30 days of the year end.

The Trustees are satisfied that appropriate procedures have been put in place to ensure that contributions payable are received in accordance with the Trust Deed and Rules and the legislative requirements as set out under Section 58A of the Pensions Act 1990. This legislation sets out the following requirements:

- Member contributions must be received within 21 days from the end of the month in which they were deducted from pay.
- Employer contributions must be received in accordance with the timings noted by the Actuary or stated in the Trust Deed and Rules or otherwise within 30 days of the end of the Scheme year.
- The Trustees must invest the contributions within a further 10 days from the end of the 21 day period.

All contributions were received and invested in accordance with the legislative requirements with the exception of those instances disclosed in note 18 to the financial statements.

Appropriate procedures are in place by the Administrator to ensure that contributions payable are received in accordance with the legislative requirements.

The above details have been extracted from the financial statements of the Scheme which form part of this report.

Membership

The membership movements of the Scheme for the year are given below:

	Active Members	Deferred Pensioners	Total
At 1 January 2023	15	411	426
Adjustments	-	(1)	(1)
New entrants	4	1	5
Leavers during the year	(1)	(12)	(13)
At 31 December 2023	18	399	417

The active members as at 31 December 2023 include 2 AVC only members (2022: 2 AVC only members).

Pensions

Annuities are bought from insurance companies at the time pensions come into payment. The member can choose the type of annuity to purchase from an appropriate selection made available to them. As a defined contribution Scheme, retiring members have the option to secure whatever level of pension increases they require when purchasing an annuity on retirement with the realised value of their retirement account. The levels of increases are subject to the limits imposed by the Revenue Commissioners and the approval of the Trustees. Members also have the option of investing in an Approved Retirement Fund at retirement.

Investment management

It is the policy of the Trustees to delegate the management of the Scheme assets to professional investment managers. The investment managers are detailed in the list of Scheme advisers on page 1.

The investment strategy is set out in its Statement of Investment Policy Principles as are the investment objectives, investment risk measurement methods and risk management processes to be used. A Statement of Investment Policy Principles adopted by the Trustees is included as one of the Appendices to this report.

The investment managers have, within specified mandates, total discretion in the investment of Scheme assets and the investment managers provide detailed reports to the Trustees on the strategy adopted and on the performance of the monies invested. A commentary by each of the investment managers on the performance achieved during the year is included in the Appendices to this report.

Financial Reporting Standard 102 ("FRS 102") requires the disclosure of the nature and extent of credit and market risks the investments are subject to and the risk management practices in place to manage these risks. These details are included in the investment risks note to the financial statements included with this report.

The investment managers are remunerated on a fee basis calculated as a percentage of the assets under management and these fees are reflected in unit prices and borne by the Scheme.

Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulations ("SFDR")

Under SFDR, the Trustees are viewed as financial market participants, whilst the Scheme is considered to be the financial product offered by the Trustees. Products under SFDR can be classified as those that have sustainable investment as its investment objective (Article 9) or those products that promote social or environmental characteristics, among other characteristics (Article 8). As the Scheme has not been classified under Article 8 or Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2019/2088 (SFDR), the Trustees must therefore make the following disclosure:

- The investments underlying this financial product do not take into account the EU criteria for environmentally sustainable economic activities.

The Trustees continue to review the Scheme’s approach to sustainability considerations and their current approach is documented in the Statement of Investment Policy Principles.

Climate change

The Trustees do not consider that there is a current material climate change risk to the Plan. The Trustees have a long-term time horizon over which it considers the financial materiality of ESG factors (including climate change). The Trustees continue to review the Plan’s approach to climate risk considerations and their current approach is documented in the Statement of Investment Policy Principles.

IORP II Directive

An EU Directive on the stewardship of institutions for occupational retirement provision (the IORP II Directive), was adopted in 2016 and signed into Irish Law on 22 April 2021. The Regulations introduced new requirements and changes regarding governance procedures and activities of trustees of occupational pension schemes.

The Trustees are pleased to confirm certification of full compliance with the Regulations and guidance issued by the Pensions Authority, including the appointment of Risk Manager and Internal Auditor key function holders.

Employer related investments

There were no employer related investments at any time during the year, with the exception of those instances disclosed in note 18 to the financial statements.

Subsequent events

Since the year end, there have been no significant events that would require amendment to or disclosure in the Annual Report.

In conclusion

We trust that members find this report informative and we are pleased to acknowledge the assistance received from the Principal Employer and its staff during the year as well as from our various professional advisers.

Signed for and on behalf of the Trustees:

Trustee: Signed by: Liam Stack A8367F9161ED4DC...

Trustee: DocuSigned by: Christopher Wheeler. E22D35E2227E43D...

Date: 17-09-2024

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The financial statements are the responsibility of the Trustees. Irish pension legislation requires the Trustees to make available for each Scheme year the annual report of the Scheme, including audited financial statements and the report of the auditor. The financial statements are required to show a true and fair view, in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard 102 - the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland, of the financial transactions for the Scheme year and the amount and disposition of the assets and liabilities (other than liabilities to pay benefits in the future) at the end of the Scheme year and contain the information specified in the Occupational Pension Schemes (Disclosure of Information) Regulations 2006 (as amended). They also include a statement as to whether the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Statement of Recommended Practice - Financial Reports of Pension Schemes (Revised June 2018), ("the SORP"), subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.

Accordingly, the Trustees must ensure that it has supervised the preparation of the Scheme financial statements and ensure that:

- suitable accounting policies are selected and then applied consistently;
- reasonable and prudent judgements and estimates are made;
- the financial statements are prepared on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Scheme will not be wound up; and
- the SORP is followed, or particulars of any material departures are disclosed and explained.

The Trustees are required by law to have appropriate procedures in place throughout the Scheme year under review, to ensure that:

- contributions payable during the Scheme year are received by the Trustees in accordance with the timetable set out in Section 58A of the Pensions Act 1990 where applicable to the contributions and otherwise within 30 days of the end of the Scheme year; and
- contributions payable are paid in accordance with the rules of the Scheme.

The Trustees are responsible for making available certain other information about the Scheme in the form of an Annual Report. The Trustees are also responsible for ensuring that proper membership and financial records are kept on a timely basis sufficient to enable an Annual Report to be prepared for the Scheme containing the information specified in Regulation 7 of the Occupational Pension Schemes (Disclosure of Information) Regulations 2006 to 2022, including financial statements which show a true and fair view of the financial transactions of the Scheme in the year under review and of the assets and liabilities at the year end, other than liabilities for pensions and other benefits payable after the year end. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Scheme and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities, including the maintenance of an appropriate system of internal controls.

Signed for and on behalf of the Trustees:

Trustee: Signed by: Liam Stack A8307F9161ED4DC...

Trustee: DocuSigned by: Christopher Wheeler E22D35E2227E43D...

Date: 17-09-2024

Independent auditors' report to the trustees of The abrdn Republic of Ireland Defined Contribution Scheme

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion

In our opinion, The abrdn Republic of Ireland Defined Contribution Scheme's financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial transactions of the scheme during the year ended 31 December 2023 and of the amount and disposition of the assets and liabilities (other than liabilities to pay pensions and other benefits in the future) at that date; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland (accounting standards issued by the Financial Reporting Council of the UK, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and Irish law).

We have audited the financial statements, included within the Annual Report, which comprise:

- the statement of net assets (available for benefits) as at 31 December 2023;
- the fund account for the year then ended;
- the notes to the financial statements, which include a description of the significant accounting policies.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (Ireland) ("ISAs (Ireland)") and applicable law.

Our responsibilities under ISAs (Ireland) are further described in the Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Independence

We remained independent of the scheme in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Ireland, which includes IAASA's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

Conclusions relating to going concern

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the scheme's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from the date on which the financial statements are authorised for issue.

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

However, because not all future events or conditions can be predicted, this conclusion is not a guarantee as to the scheme's ability to continue as a going concern.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Reporting on other information

The other information comprises all of the information in the Annual Report other than the financial statements and our auditors' report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, accordingly, we do not express an audit opinion or, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in this report, any form of assurance thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify an apparent material inconsistency or material misstatement, we are required to perform procedures to conclude whether there is a material misstatement of the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report based on these responsibilities.

Responsibilities for the financial statements and the audit

Responsibilities of the trustees for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the statement of trustees' responsibilities set out on page 9, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable framework and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view.

The trustees are also responsible for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. The trustees are also responsible for ensuring that contributions are made to the scheme in accordance with the scheme's rules.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the scheme's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to wind up the scheme or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditors' report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (Ireland) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Our audit testing might include testing complete populations of certain transactions and balances, possibly using data auditing techniques. However, it typically involves selecting a limited number of items for testing, rather than testing complete populations. We will often seek to target particular items for testing based on their size or risk characteristics. In other cases, we will use audit sampling to enable us to draw a conclusion about the population from which the sample is selected.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority website at: https://www.iaasa.ie/getmedia/b2389013-1cf6-458b-9b8f-a98202dc9c3a/Description_of_auditors_responsibilities_for_audit.pdf.

This description forms part of our auditors' report.

Use of this report

This report, including the opinions, has been prepared for and only for the trustees as a body in accordance with section 56 of the Pensions Act 1990, as amended and for no other purpose. We do not, in giving these opinions, accept or assume responsibility for any other purpose or to any other person to whom this report is shown or into whose hands it may come save where expressly agreed by our prior consent in writing.

Other required reporting

Occupational Pension Schemes (Disclosure of Information) Regulations, 2006

In our opinion the financial statements include the information specified in Schedule A to the Occupational Pension Schemes (Disclosure of Information) Regulations, 2006 which is applicable and material to the scheme.

Qualified Opinion on contributions payable to the scheme

In our opinion contributions amounting to €5,994 in relation to the year ended 31 December 2023 were not received by the trustees within 30 days of the year end of the scheme and remain outstanding. Except for this matter, in our opinion, the contributions payable to the scheme during the year ended 31 December 2023 have been received by the trustees within 30 days of the end of the scheme year and in our opinion, such contributions have been paid in accordance with the scheme rules.

PricewaterhouseCoopers

PricewaterhouseCoopers
Chartered Accountants and Statutory Audit Firm
Cork
18 September 2024

Fund Account

	Note	2023 €	2022 €
Employer contributions		**273,800**	237,078
Employee contributions		**174,394**	157,893
Total contributions	6	**448,194**	394,971
Other income	7	**173**	-
		448,367	394,971
Benefits paid or payable	8	**(200,919)**	(27,136)
Payments to and on account of leavers	9	**(162,812)**	(96,692)
Other payments	10	**(19,881)**	(17,579)
		(383,612)	(141,407)
Net additions from dealings with members		**64,755**	253,564
Returns on investments			
Change in market value of investments	11	**785,092**	(1,639,943)
Net returns on investments		**785,092**	(1,639,943)
Net increase/ (decrease) in the fund during the year		**849,847**	(1,386,379)
Net assets at 1 January		**7,238,705**	8,625,084
Net assets at 31 December		**8,088,552**	7,238,705

The notes on pages 14 to 23 form part of these financial statements.

Signed for and on behalf of the Trustees:

Trustee: Signed by: Liam Stack A8367F9161ED4DC...

Trustee: DocuSigned by: Christopher Wheeler E22D35E2227E43D...

Date: 17-09-2024

Statement of Net Assets (available for benefits)

	Note	2023 €	2022 €
Investment assets	11		
Pooled investment vehicles	13	**8,050,930**	7,190,144
Current assets	16	**146,278**	154,915
Current liabilities	17	**(108,656)**	(106,354)
Net assets at 31 December		**8,088,552**	7,238,705

The notes on pages 14 to 23 form part of these financial statements.

The financial statements summarise the transactions of the Scheme and deal with the net assets at the disposal of the Trustees. They do not take account of obligations to pay pensions and other benefits which fall due after the end of the Scheme year.

Signed for and on behalf of the Trustees:

Trustee: Signed by: Liam Stack A8367F9161ED4DC...

Trustee: DocuSigned by: Christopher Wheeler E22D35E2227E43D...

Date: 17-09-2024

Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Occupational Pension Schemes (Disclosure of Information) Regulations 2006 to 2022, Financial Reporting Standard 102 - The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland ("FRS 102"), and the guidance set out in the Statement of Recommended Practice - Financial Reports of Pension Schemes (Revised 2018) ("SORP").

The financial statements have been prepared on the going concern basis. In making this assessment, the Trustees have assessed the ability of the Scheme to meet its future obligations to pay member benefits as they fall due and the ability of the Principal Employer to continue to meet their obligations to the Scheme. The Trustees believe that the Scheme remains well positioned to manage its risks successfully and expects that the Scheme will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.

1. Accounting policies

The significant accounting policies adopted by the Trustees which have been applied consistently in dealing with items which are considered material in relation to the Scheme's financial statements are as follows.

a. Valuation of investments

Investments are included at fair value.

The fair value of unitised investments and pooled investments vehicles is taken as the closing bid price if both bid and offer prices are published, or if single priced, at the closing single price, quoted by the investment manager as at the date of the net assets statement. The fair value of the Scheme's investments is determined on the basis of the single price valuation as provided by the investment manager.

b. Investment income

Income from equities and any pooled investment vehicles which distribute income, is accounted for on an accruals basis on the date stocks are quoted ex dividend or in the case of unquoted instruments, when the dividend is declared. The change in market value during the year comprises all increases and decreases in the market value of investments held at any time during the year, including profits and losses realised on sale of investments and unrealised changes in market value. In the case of pooled investment vehicles which are accumulation funds, where income if reinvested within the fund without further issue of units, change in market value also includes such income.

c. Investment management fees

Investment management fees are calculated as a percentage of the assets under management and these fees are borne by the Scheme.

Fees relating to unit funds are not levied directly but are reflected in unit prices and also borne by the Scheme.

d. Contributions

Normal contributions, both from the members and from the employer, are accounted for on an accruals basis in the month member contributions are deducted from payroll.

Additional voluntary contributions from members are accounted for, on an accruals basis, in the month deducted from the payroll.

Employer additional, other and augmentation contributions are accounted for in accordance with the agreement under which they are payable or, in the absence of an agreement, on a receipts basis.

e. Transfers

Transfer values represent the capital sums either receivable in respect of members from other pension schemes of previous employers or payable to the pension plans of new employers for members who have left the Scheme. They are accounted for on an accruals basis on the date the Trustees of the receiving scheme accept the liability. In the case of individual transfers, this is normally when the payment of the transfer value is made.

f. Payments in respect of benefits and on account of leavers

Benefits are accounted for in the period in which they fall due. Where there is a choice, benefits are accounted for in the period in which the member notifies the Trustees of their decision on the type or amount of benefit to be taken or if there is no member choice, they are accounted for on the date of retirement or leaving.

Where Trustees are required to settle tax liabilities on behalf of a member (such as when lifetime or annual allowances are exceeded) with a consequent reduction in that member's benefits receivable from the Scheme, this is shown separately within benefits.

g. Expenses

Expenses are accounted for on an accruals basis.

h. Transaction Costs

Transaction costs include costs charged directly to the Scheme such as fees, commissions, stamp duty and other fees. Indirect transaction costs are incurred through the unit price on unitised funds.

2. Taxation

The Scheme has been approved as an "exempt approved scheme" for the purposes of Section 774 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 and thus Scheme income and gains are generally exempt from taxation.

3. Constitution of the Scheme

The Scheme was established as a defined contribution with effect from 1 January 2010 under a Definitive Trust Deed dated 12 October 2010.

The Scheme is established as a trust under Irish law and has been registered with the Pensions Authority. The address for enquiries to the Scheme is included in the Trustees Report.

4. Benefits

Pension benefits under the Scheme are provided by direct investment. The death in service benefits are secured by policies underwritten by the insurer to the Scheme.

5. Fees and expenses

With the exception of the investment management fees which are borne by the Scheme, all other fees and expenses are borne by the principle employer.

6. Contributions

	2023 **€**	2022 €
Employer contributions:		
Normal	**253,919**	216,932
Other- Risk	**19,881**	17,579
Special Contribution	**-**	2,567
	273,800	237,078
Employee contributions:		
Additional voluntary contributions	**174,394**	157,893
	448,194	394,971

7. Other income

	2023 €	2022 €
Miscellaneous income	**173**	-

8. Benefits paid or payable

	2023 €	2022 €
Commutation of pensions and lump sum retirement benefits	**200,919**	15,998
Purchase of annuities	**-**	11,138
	200,919	27,136

9. Payments to and on account of leavers

	2023 €	2022 €
Individual transfers to other schemes	**162,812**	96,692

10. Other payments

	2023 €	2022 €
Premiums on term insurance policies	**19,881**	17,579

11. Reconciliation of investments

	Market value at 1 January 2023 €	Cost of investments purchased €	Proceeds of sales of investments €	Change in market value €	**Market value at 31 December 2023 €**
Pooled investment vehicles	7,190,144	1,497,172	(1,421,478)	785,092	**8,050,930**

Transaction costs are included in the cost of purchases and sale proceeds. Transaction costs include costs charged directly to the Scheme such as fees, commissions, stamp duty and other fees. In addition to the transaction costs, indirect costs are incurred through unit price on investments within pooled investment vehicles. The amounts of indirect transaction costs are not separately provided to the scheme.

12. Concentration of investments

Investments as a percentage of net assets at the year end are detailed below:

	2023 €	2023 %	2022 €	2022 %
Standard Life abrdn Sustainable Index World	**3,012,563**	**37.2**	2,755,051	38.1
Standard Life Diversified Growth Series 2	**2,296,470**	**28.4**	2,160,339	29.8
European Small Companies	**1,546,512**	**19.1**	1,316,424	18.2
Other Investment less than 5%	**870,661**	**10.8**	385,976	5.3
Standard Life Diversified Growth Fund	**324,724**	**4.0**	572,354	7.9
Total	**8,050,930**	**99.5**	7,190,144	99.3

13. Pooled investment vehicles

Details of investments held at year end

	2023	2022
	€	€
Equity	**2,244,671**	1,598,925
Fixed Interest	**3,138,733**	2,858,525
Diversified Growth	**2,667,526**	2,732,694
	8,050,930	7,190,144

14. Fair value determination

In line with the guidelines set out in the SORP and FRS 102, for all financial instruments held at fair value, a retirement benefit Scheme is required to disclose, for each class of assets, an analysis of the level of fair value hierarchy. A fair value measurement is categorised in its entirety on the basis of the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement in its entirety.

The fair value of financial instruments has been determined using the following fair value hierarchy:

Level 1	Unadjusted quoted prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities that the reporting entity can access at the measurement date.
Level 2	Inputs other than quoted prices included within Level 1 that are observable for the asset or liability, either directly or indirectly. Observable inputs are inputs that reflect the assumptions market participants would use in pricing the asset or liability developed based on market data obtained from sources independent of the reporting entity.
Level 3	Unobservable inputs for the asset or liability. Unobservable inputs are inputs that reflect the reporting entity's own assumptions about the assumptions market participants would use in pricing the asset or liability developed based on the best information available.

The Scheme's investment assets have been included at fair value using the above hierarchy levels as follows:

	2023 Level 1	**2023 Level 2**	**2023 Level 3**	**2023 Total**
	€	**€**	**€**	**€**
Pooled investment vehicles	**-**	**8,050,930**	**-**	**8,050,930**
	-	**8,050,930**	**-**	**8,050,930**

Analysis for the prior year end is as follows:

	2022 Level 1	2022 Level 2	2022 Level 3	2022 Total
	€	€	€	€
Pooled investment vehicles	-	7,190,144	-	7,190,144
	-	7,190,144	-	7,190,144

14.1 Defined contribution assets

Investments purchased by the Scheme are allocated to provide benefits to the individuals on whose behalf corresponding contributions were paid. The investment provider designates the investment records by member. The Trustees may hold investment units representing the value of employer contributions that have been retained by the Scheme that relate to members leaving the Scheme prior to vesting.

	2023	2022
	€	€
Designated to members	**8,049,114**	7,188,520
Not designated to members	**1,816**	1,624
	8,050,930	7,190,144

Note: The Not designated to members account is made up of units which arise as follows; members on leaving service can opt (if they are within the time limits prescribed by legislation) to take a refund of the value of their own contributions less tax at 20% and they therefore waive this right to the value of the employer contributions paid on their behalf. These employer units therefore no longer belong to the member who has taken a refund and become part of the Trustees' unallocated account.

15. Investment risks

Risk Disclosures for Pension Schemes

Introduction
FRS 102 requires the disclosure of information in relation to certain investment risks. These are set out under FRS 102 as follows:

- **Credit risk**: the risk that one party to a financial instrument will cause a financial loss for the other party by failing to discharge an obligation.
- **Market risk**: comprises currency risk, interest rate risk and other price risk.
  - **Currency risk**: the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of a financial asset will fluctuate because of changes in foreign exchange rates.
  - **Interest rate risk**: the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of a financial asset will fluctuate because of changes in market interest rates.
  - **Other price risk**: the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of a financial asset will fluctuate because of changes in market prices, whether those changes are caused by factors specific to the individual financial instrument or its issuer, or factors affecting all similar financial instruments traded in the market.

Investment Objectives
The investment objectives of the Trustees of the Scheme are:
(a) To make available a range of investment vehicles which serve to adequately meet the varying investment needs and risk tolerances of Scheme members.
(b) To provide appropriate information on these funds such that members are assisted in understanding and making their choice of fund.

Important Note for Scheme Members
Members must understand that the Trustees do not accept responsibility for the success or otherwise of the investment choices that members make. Members have a responsibility to read and understand the documentation available to them so that the choices made by them adequately reflect their objectives and their own attitude to risk.

Investment Policy
The Scheme's investment strategy and implementation arrangements are outlined in the Statement of Investment Policy Principles (SIPP) which forms part of the Scheme's Trustee Annual report. Implementation of the investment strategy ~~h~~as been delegated to professional investment managers. The investment strategy and implementation arrangements of the Scheme are reviewed regularly by the Trustees.

Implementation arrangements

The arrangements through which the investments of the Scheme are managed are described below.

The investment strategy of the Scheme is implemented using a (range of) regulated pooled investment vehicle(s), including some which are written as life assurance policies. An element of counterparty credit risk (described as direct credit risk under FRS102) is therefore inherent in the fund structure employed. However, the investment managers are obliged to comply with regulatory requirements

15. Investment risks

applicable to the asset management sector. In addition, the life assurance companies are required to comply with regulatory requirements applicable to the insurance sector.

A summary of pooled investment vehicles by type of arrangement, as provided by the investment manager(s), is as follows:

	2023	2022
	€	€
Unit linked insurance contracts	8,050,930	7,190,144

It should be noted that the risks above are not independent; no asset class is risk free and combinations of the above risks (and others) can influence any asset as market conditions vary.

Risk disclosure under FRS 102
The investment strategy of the Scheme is implemented using authorised pooled investment vehicles which are managed by Standard Life Investments Limited and Irish Life Investment Managers Limited (ILIM) and are therefore written as life assurance policies with Standard Life Assurance Company and Irish Life Assurance plc. The Scheme thus has a counterparty credit risk to the investment manager of these vehicles.

The risk is managed by the Trustees by investing with managers which are appropriately regulated and audited. This risk is monitored by the Trustees, on an ongoing basis by way of regular review of the investment manager performance reports and the regulatory environment in which the investment manager operates. Both Standard Life Investments and Standard Life Assurance Company are regulated by the appropriate authorities in the UK and Ireland. Standard Life Assurance Company is required to comply with the solvency requirements of a life insurance company. Irish Life Assurance plc is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland and is required to comply with the solvency requirements of a life insurance company.

The current investment arrangements of the Scheme and the risk profile of the asset classes as required under FRS 102 is tabulated below.

Key:

● Significant impact

● Partial impact

● Low/Occasional impact

○ No impact

15. Investment risks

Asset Class	Investment Manager	Fund Name	Credit Risk	Market Risk		
				Currency	Interest rate	Other
Equity	abrdn	Global Equity Impact Fund	◌	●	○	●
Equity	abrdn	Pan European Small Cap Equities	◌	●	○	●
Equity	abrdn	Vanguard Passive Emerging Market Equity	◌	●	○	●
Equity	abrdn	Sustainable Index World Equity	◌	●	○	●
Mixed Assets	abrdn	Diversified Growth Fund	●	●	◍	●
Mixed Assets	abrdn	Cautious Managed Fund	●	●	●	●
Bond	Irish Life Investment Managers	Annuity Objective Fund	●	○	●	◍
Bond	abrdn	Corporate Bond Fund	●	◌	●	●
Cash	abrdn	Global Liquidity	◌	○	●	●

Investment risk can be considered in a number of different ways and so there must be an element of subjectivity involved in the interpretation of the risks listed under FRS102 and in the assessment of their impact above.

It should be noted that the risks above are not independent; no asset class is risk free and combinations of the above risks (and others) can influence any asset as market conditions vary.

The value of assets held in each asset class/fund above is outlined in the Trustee Annual Report.

Effective Date: December 2023

16. Current assets

	2023 €	2022 €
Contributions due from the employer in respect of:		
- Employer	**23,610**	20,253
- AVCs	**14,012**	8,904
- Term insurance policy	**5,994**	3,692
Bank account	**102,662**	122,066
	146,278	154,915

Included in the bank account shown above is €NIL (2022: €NIL) which is not designated to members.

17. Current liabilities

	2023 €	2022 €
Death benefits payable	**102,662**	102,662
Term insurance premiums payable	**5,994**	3,692
	108,656	106,354

18. Employer related investments

There were no employer related investments at any time during the year, except for Employer Risk Contributions of €5,994 relating to the year ended 31 December 2023 which was due on 30 January 2024 and remains outstanding at date of signing.

19. Contingent liabilities

As stated on page 13 of these financial statements, liabilities to pay pensions and other benefits in the future have not been taken into account. On that basis, in the opinion of the Trustees, the Scheme had no contingent liabilities at the year end.

20. Related party transactions

(a) The Trustees

The Trustees of the Scheme are detailed on page 1 of the report.

During the year, one of the Trustees were members of the Scheme and as such held benefits under the Scheme.

Contributions Note 6 includes amounts in respect of these Trustees.

(b) Remuneration of the Trustees

One of the Trustees received remuneration in relation to his role as Scheme Trustee. This cost was met by the employer and in 2023 was €16,500 (2022: €16,500), including his role as Chairman of The abrdn Republic of Ireland Staff Pension Scheme. The other Trustees did not receive and is not due any remuneration

(c) Principal Employer

Aberdeen Corporate Services Limited is the Principal Employer.

The employer contributions to the Scheme are made in accordance with the Trust Deed and Rules.

(d) The Registered Administrator

Mercer (Ireland) Limited is the registered administrator and consultant to the Scheme. Mercer (Ireland) Limited did not receive any and is not due any remuneration from the Scheme, in connection with the administration and consultancy services to the Scheme. All such costs are borne directly by the principal employer.

The cash held by Mercer (Ireland) Limited at the year end on behalf of the Scheme was €102,662 (2022: €122,066).

(e) The Investment Manager

The investment managers are set out on page 1 of the Annual Report.

The investment managers were appointed by the Trustees to manage the Scheme's assets. The investment managers are remunerated on a fee basis calculated as a percentage of the assets under management. These fees are reflected in unit prices and borne by the Scheme.

Abrdn Investments Limited is part of the same group of companies as the principal employer Aberdeen Corporate Services Limited.

21. Liabilities statement

The valuation of the Scheme net assets at 31 December 2023 is €8,088,552 (2022:€7,238,705) which equals the value of the Scheme liabilities at 31 December 2023.

22. Subsequent events

Since the year end, there have been no significant events that would require amendment to or disclosure in the financial statements.

23. Approval of financial statements

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 17-09-2024 .

The abrdn Republic of Ireland Defined Contribution Scheme ("the Scheme")

Statement of Investment Policy Principles

Introduction

The purpose of this Statement of Investment Policy Principles ("SIPP") is to document the policies and guidelines that govern the management of the Scheme's assets. It has been reviewed and adopted by the Trustees and outlines their objectives, how they measure risk, their processes for managing risk and their current investment policy.

The Statement takes into account the Pensions Authority 2016 DC Code: Investing Scheme Assets[1] and the IAPF Guidelines for Trustees[2].

The Trustees fulfil the requirements of the Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment) Regulations 2006 (as amended) which stipulate that such a Statement is put in place.

This Statement will be reviewed at least every three years, and also following any change in investment policy which affects the content of the Statement.

Investment Objectives

The investment objectives are:

- To provide a range of efficiently managed fund options that meets the broad needs of the members of the Scheme;
- To provide appropriate information about those fund options so that members can make an informed choice.

Notwithstanding the above, members must understand that the Trustees do not accept responsibility for the consequences of members' investment decisions. Members have responsibility to read and understand the documentation available to them so that the choices made by them adequately reflect their objectives and their own attitude to risk.

Risk Measurement Methods

Given the defined contribution nature of the Scheme, the Trustees will determine the range of fund options to be offered to members, taking into account the circumstances of broad categories of members. Individual funds are chosen to address the key investment risks for members, as identified by the Trustees.

The main risks considered by the Trustees on behalf of members include are as follows (although this is not an exhaustive list of all risks):

Investment Risks

– That investment returns are too low to keep up with inflation (inflation risk);

[1] http://www.pensionsauthority.ie/en/Trustees_Registered_Administrators/Codes_of_governance_for_DC_schemes/DC_Code_5_-_Investing_scheme_assets.pdf

[2] http://www.iapf.ie/publications/trusteesupport/default.aspx?iid=656

- That sufficient investment return in excess of inflation is not achieved over the long term;
- That the value of a member's account moves significantly out of line with movements in annuity prices so that the member cannot afford to buy the same level of retirement income as previously (annuity risk);
- That members' accounts drop sharply in value because of market volatility (market volatility risk).

The range of investment options chosen by the Trustees has been selected to help members address the above risks (should members wish to do so). The table in the Current Investment Policy section below identifies the risk which each investment option aims to address. In monitoring the overall investment arrangements, the Trustees consider whether each investment option continues to address the risk it was chosen to address.

Member Decision-making Risks

- That the member is overwhelmed by the number or complexity of investment choices (complexity risk);
- That the member does not get enough clear information to make a good choice (inadequate information risk).

Risk Management Processes

The Trustees will aim to ensure that within the fund choices that are available to each member:

- The risks outlined in the previous section can (if the member so chooses) be kept to a level that is appropriate for that individual member;
- Investments are, for the most part, limited to equities and bonds that are traded on recognised/regulated markets;
- Investment in derivative instruments is made only in so far as it either contributes to a reduction of investment risks or facilitates efficient portfolio management. Any such derivative investment must avoid excessive risk exposure to a single counterparty and to other derivative operations; and
- The funds are properly diversified in such a way as to avoid accumulations of risk. Investments in assets issued by the same issuer or by issuers belonging to the same group should not expose the member to excessive risk concentration.

Furthermore, the Trustees recognise the importance of providing appropriate information to members on the range of funds offered to them, so that each member is in a position to make an informed decision on their choice of fund(s).

All investment managers are appointed by the Trustees and are subject to termination at any time.

[1] http://www.pensionsauthority.ie/en/Trustees_Registered_Administrators/Codes_of_governance_for_DC_schemes/DC_Code_5_-_Investing_scheme_assets.pdf

[2] http://www.iapf.ie/publications/trusteesupport/default.aspx?iid=656

ESG, Stewardship and Climate Change

The Trustees believe that environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) factors have a material impact on investment risk and return outcomes, and that good stewardship can create and preserve value for companies and markets as a whole. The Trustees also recognise that long-term sustainability issues, particularly climate change, present risks and opportunities that require explicit consideration.

By using pooled investment vehicles for the Scheme's equity investments, day-to-day application of voting rights will be carried out by the investment managers in accordance with their own corporate governance policy and current best practice.

The Trustees consider Mercer's ESG ratings (where available) and SFDR fund categorisations for each of their strategies. Rating reviews are undertaken on a regular basis and documented at least annually. The Trustees, in conjunction with their advisers, will actively monitor and engage with the investment manager on ESG integration, consistent with this Policy statement. The Trustees have not set any investment restrictions on the appointed investment managers in relation to particular products or activities, but may consider this in future.

The Trustees have given the appointed investment managers full discretion in evaluating ESG factors, including climate change considerations, and exercising voting rights and stewardship obligations attached to the investments. In accordance with their own corporate governance policies and current best practice. The Trustees have requested that the managers provide information on ESG (e.g: the application of voting rights) to trustee advisors and as part of their normal reporting to the Trustees.

Rating reviews are undertaken on a regular basis and documented at least annually.

Over time, the Trustees aim to reflect sustainable asset classes where possible and appropriate in the investment strategy/investment fund range of the Scheme, will be decided upon, cognisant of the benefit combinations members may elect at retirement. Going forward, the Trustees will, take account of each manager's approach to ESG when considering new investment options for the Scheme to employ.

Shareholders' Rights Regulations 2020

With respect to the European Union (Shareholders' Rights) Regulations 2020, the Trustees have not developed a standalone engagement policy. The Scheme invests in units in various pooled funds that may from time to time invest in equities of companies which are listed on EU regulated markets. However, in each case, the Scheme is one investor among others and so has no direct voting rights or other means of engagement with any companies in which the pooled fund may have invested.

The Trustees have engaged with the investment managers and they have provided a copy of their Engagement Policy and confirmed that it is in compliance with the Regulations.

The investment horizon of the Scheme's equity investments is medium to long term in nature, and the Trustees expect the manager to use its engagement activity to drive improved performance over those periods.

The Trustees also expect investment manager appointments to be long-term in nature, and assess the performance over longer-term periods. Short term performance issues would not be expected to result in a manager termination, although other factors may necessitate a changeover relatively short timeframes.

[1] http://www.pensionsauthority.ie/en/Trustees_Registered_Administrators/Codes_of_governance_for_DC_schemes/DC_Code_5_-_Investing_scheme_assets.pdf

[2] http://www.iapf.ie/publications/trusteesupport/default.aspx?iid=656

Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulations

The Trustees acknowledge that under Article 4 of the Disclosure Regulations there is a requirement to publish and maintain on a website whether principal adverse impacts of investment decisions on sustainability factors are considered. The Trustees are awaiting the clarity of the Level II regulations prior to making such a statement.

This policy may be made publicly available in the future but is currently included within the SIPP of the Scheme as this is available to members each year through the Trustee Annual Report.

Current Investment Policy

To manage the risks set out earlier in this Statement, the following broad categories of fund options are made available to members:

- Equity
- Balanced / Mixed Assets
- Bond
- Cash

To provide prudent and efficient management of the funds available under the above broad categories, the Trustees have considered under each category:

- What type of management to adopt (active, passive or both);
- How many options to provide;
- What managers to appoint; and
- What performance objectives to set for the appointed managers.

As a result of these considerations, the Trustees have selected the following range of fund categories to offer to members.

A description of the investment manager arrangements adopted and the performance objectives of the selected funds are also provided.

Performance is evaluated against these objectives on at least an annual basis, with a critical review every three years.

[1] http://www.pensionsauthority.ie/en/Trustees_Registered_Administrators/Codes_of_governance_for_DC_schemes/DC_Code_5_-_Investing_scheme_assets.pdf

[2] http://www.iapf.ie/publications/trusteesupport/default.aspx?iid=656

Funds offered to members:

Category/ Asset Class	Type of Management	Manager	Fund Name	Benchmark	Objective
Funds aimed at long term growth					
Equity	Active	abrdn	Sustainable Index World Equity Fund	MSCI World Select ESG Climate Solutions Target	To perform in line with the benchmark
Equity	Passive	Vanguard	Passive Emerging Markets Equity Fund	Global emerging market equity index	To perform in line with the benchmark
Equity	Active	abrdn	European Small Companies Fund	FTSE Developed Europe Small Cap	To outperform the benchmark
Equity	Active	abrdn	Global Equity Impact Fund	MSCI AC (All country) World Index	To outperform the benchmark before charges
Mixed Assets	Active	abrdn	Diversified Growth Fund*	1 Month Libor	Cash + 4.5% over rolling 3 Year periods (gross of fees)
Mixed Assets	Active	abrdn	Cautious Managed Fund	Provide long term growth by investing in a diversified portfolio of assets	Provide long term growth by investing in a diversified portfolio of assets
Bond	Active	abrdn	Corporate Bond Fund	IBOXX Euro Corporate All Stocks Index	To outperform the benchmark
Funds aimed at addressing annuity risk					
Bond	Passive	Irish Life Investment Managers (ILIM)	Annuity Matching Fund	60% ICE BofA ML AAA EMU Government Bond > 15 Year Index / 40% ICE BofA ML > 10 Year Euro Large Corporate Bond	To perform in line with the benchmark
Funds aimed at addressing market volatility					
Cash	Active	abrdn	Euro Global Liquidity Fund	7 Day Euribid	To outperform the benchmark

** abrdn advised that the abrdn Global Absolute Return Strategies (GARS) strategy ceased from November 2023, GARS units are now invested in the abrdn Diversified Growth Fund.*

Performance is evaluated against these objectives on at least an annual basis, with a critical review every three years.

In addition, a lifestyle strategy is available as an additional choice for members.

[1] http://www.pensionsauthority.ie/en/Trustees_Registered_Administrators/Codes_of_governance_for_DC_schemes/DC_Code_5_-_Investing_scheme_assets.pdf

[2] http://www.iapf.ie/publications/trusteesupport/default.aspx?iid=656

Lifestyle Strategies

The lifestyle strategies are designed to address the most important investment risks for members over time. Specifically, the lifestyle strategy aims to manage the risk of achieving insufficient growth over earlier time periods, while automatically reducing investment risk as a member approaches retirement.

This is achieved by automatically moving from long-term growth orientated assets to more conservative growth assets in the approach to retirement. Assets are gradually switched to lower risk portfolios over the last c. seven years before retirement.

Lifestyle Strategies

There are three lifestyle strategy options available to members.

- The Lifestyle Strategy (Annuity); and
- The Lifestyle Strategy (ARF)
- The Lifestyle Strategy (Cash).

All lifestyle strategies aim to manage the risk of achieving insufficient growth over earlier time periods, while automatically reducing investment risk as a member approaches normal retirement.

In the growth phase all three lifestyle strategies invest 100% in the Moderate Growth Strategy (which is 50% abrdn Diversified Growth Fund (DGF), 45% Vanguard Passive Sustainable Global Equity Fund and 5% Passive Emerging Market Equity Fund).

In the approach to retirement:

- The Lifestyle Strategy (Annuity) is designed to address the most important investment risks for members who intend to use some of their retirement savings to purchase an income for life (annuity) and take the balance of their retirement savings as a cash lump sum.
  - By normal retirement date, 50% of the member's Retirement Account will be invested in bonds (ILIM Annuity Matching Fund) and 50% in cash (abrdn Global Liquidity Fund).
- The Lifestyle Strategy (ARF) is designed to address the most important investment risks for members who intend to continue to invest most of their retirement savings (via an approved retirement fund) and take the balance of their retirement savings as a cash lump sum.
  - By normal retirement date, 75% of the member's Retirement Account will be invested in mixed assets (abrdn Cautious Managed Fund) and 25% in cash (abrdn Global Liquidity Fund).
- The Lifestyle Strategy (Cash) is designed to address the most important investment risks for members who intend to take their retirement savings as a cash lump sum.
  - By normal retirement date, 100% of the member's Retirement Account will be invested in cash (abrdn Euro Global Liquidity Fund).

Default Lifestyle Strategy

The Trustees have identified the Lifestyle Strategy (ARF) as the default option to apply for new members joining the Plan who do not explicitly select an investment option for the investment of their contributions.

This applies to members to select or for those members who do not explicitly select an investment option.

[1] http://www.pensionsauthority.ie/en/Trustees_Registered_Administrators/Codes_of_governance_for_DC_schemes/DC_Code_5_-_Investing_scheme_assets.pdf

[2] http://www.iapf.ie/publications/trusteesupport/default.aspx?iid=656

Communication (aiming to address inadequate information risk)

Information is provided in a number of ways:

- Member booklets
- Fund factsheets
- Mercer JustASK Helpline 1890 275 275 (JustASK@mercer.com)
- Online information available on www.merceroneview.ie

Regular opportunities to switch between fund options are also offered.

Effective Date of this Statement: November 2023

1 http://www.pensionsauthority.ie/en/Trustees_Registered_Administrators/Codes_of_governance_for_DC_schemes/DC_Code_5_-_Investing_scheme_assets.pdf

2 http://www.iapf.ie/publications/trusteesupport/default.aspx?iid=656

For the year ended 31 December 2023

Annual Disclosure Report

STANDARD LIFE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND DEFINED CONTRIBUTION SCHEME
(Policy No: IRLI103443)

Investment managers

Your investment holds units in the following Standard Life Funds in accordance with the provisions of a Standard Life Trustee Investment Plan policy. Standard Life Assurance Limited has delegated its investment management function to abrdn Investment Management Limited.

Statement of assets

Fund	Number of units	Value (EUR)	Holding (%)
Standard Life abrdn Sustainable Index World Equity	2,696,461	3,012,563	37.6
Standard Life Diversified Growth	2,031,466	2,296,470	28.7
Pan European Small Caps Fund	391,576	1,546,512	19.3
Standard Life Diversified Growth Fund	234,529	324,724	4.1
Euro Global Liquidity	253,420	250,933	3.1
SL Vanguard Emerging Market Stock Index	243,700	236,970	3.0
Standard Life Global Equity Impact	211,289	210,257	2.6
Euro Corporate Bond	41,684	81,308	1.0
Ireland Pension Cautious	48,700	46,331	0.6
TOTAL		**8,006,068**	

Performance

Fund Benchmark	12 months to 31/12/2023 (%)	3 years to 31/12/2023 p.a. (%)	5 years to 31/12/2023 p.a. (%)
Standard Life abrdn Sustainable Index World Equity	17.8	-	-
No Benchmark	-	-	-
Standard Life Diversified Growth	8.0	3.0	3.5
No Benchmark	-	-	-
Pan European Small Caps Fund	11.8	-0.9	9.6
FTSE Developed Europe Small Cap Total Return Index	11.4	3.6	8.0
Standard Life Diversified Growth Fund	-7.1	-6.8	-1.7
Euro Short Term Rate	3.2	0.9	0.4
Euro Global Liquidity	3.1	0.7	0.1
Euro Short Term Rate	3.2	0.9	0.4
SL Vanguard Emerging Market Stock Index	4.6	-2.2	-
No Benchmark	-	-	-
Standard Life Global Equity Impact	3.4	-	-
No Benchmark	-	-	-
Euro Corporate Bond	9.1	-2.6	0.3
iBoxx Euro Corporates Index	8.2	-2.8	0.1

Performance (continued)

Fund Benchmark	12 months to 31/12/2023 (%)	3 years to 31/12/2023 p.a. (%)	5 years to 31/12/2023 p.a. (%)
Ireland Pension Cautious	8.3	-	-
No Benchmark	-	-	-

Fund performance figures are calculated net of annual management charge (excluding any rebates) over the stated periods, with net income reinvested.
Where any fund or benchmark return is shown as '-' this indicates no data is available for that period.

Global Overview

Global stock markets rose strongly in euro terms and even more notably in local-currency terms over the 12 months. The prospect of monetary tightening coming to an end, with potential rate cuts ahead in 2024, supported global bond markets, after a torrid year for performance in 2022. Meanwhile, corporate bonds generated solid returns as investor risk appetite improved.

After central banks in Western economies had raised interest rates faster and much further than previously anticipated to counter multi-decade-high inflation, inflationary pressures lessened in many countries over the course of 2023. Meanwhile, global economic growth held up better than many investors expected, defying fears of a recession triggered by higher rates.

As US and eurozone inflation continued to trend down, investor hopes rose that an end to interest-rate rises could be in sight. Therefore, 2023 started with strong stock market gains. However, the collapse of two regional US banks and the forced sale of Credit Suisse to rival UBS in March then evoked fears of a banking crisis. Despite an initial sell-off, stock markets recovered, while bond markets benefited from a flight to safety and expectations of lower peak interest rates. After more market volatility in April and May, equities performed strongly over June and July due to news of a compromise agreement on the US debt ceiling and further encouraging inflation data. Nevertheless, still-hawkish rhetoric from central banks continued to weigh on bonds. Both equities and bonds generated negative returns in August, September and October on concerns that interest rates would stay higher for longer. However, equities and bonds then notably recovered in November and December as reassuring inflation trends led to investors looking ahead to the prospect of rate cuts in 2024.

Europe

Continental Europe's stock markets, as measured by the FTSE World Europe ex UK Index, rose strongly over the 12-month period in euro terms.

The region's equity markets had faced various challenges for much of 2022, including surging inflation, higher interest rates and the shock of the Russia-Ukraine war. However, investor sentiment improved at the start of 2023. This was due to declining annual inflation – driven by falling energy prices as supply issues improved – and an unexpectedly resilient European economy, with continued low unemployment.

As a result, European equities performed well until the summer of 2023. They then weakened over August, September and October on concerns about further monetary tightening and slowing economic growth. However, those fears then eased, leading to a notable rebound in equities in November and December.

The European Central Bank (ECB) continued to raise rates over the period as it strove to bring the annual inflation rate down to its 2% target. The ECB's 25 bps increase in its key interest rates in September 2023, the sixth hike of the year, took the base rate to 4.50%. Against this backdrop, annual inflation rose from 2.4% in November to a lower-than-expected 2.9% in December, a preliminary estimate showed. Meanwhile, according to a third estimate, the eurozone economy shrank by 0.1% in the third quarter of 2023. This was the first contraction in the region's GDP since the final quarter of 2022.

UK

The UK stock market, as represented by the FTSE All-Share Index, recorded a gain in both euro and sterling terms over the period. The FTSE 100 Index, home of multinational companies, and the FTSE 250 Index, which contains smaller companies typically more focused on the domestic UK economy, both rose by a similar amount.

The performance of the FTSE 100 Index lagged those of many overseas markets given it is home to many so-called defensive shares. It also contains several energy and mining companies; commodity prices, while still historically high, ended the year below the levels reached after the outbreak of the war in Eastern Europe in early 2022. Meanwhile, smaller UK companies were held back for much of 2023 by heightened economic uncertainty. However, they performed strongly towards the end of the year due to improved investor risk appetite given an improving outlook for the domestic economy.

The Bank of England (BoE) announced a further five interest-rate increases in 2023, taking its base rate from 3.50% at the start of the year to 5.25% by the end of it. In 2023, the BoE increased its base rate by 50 basis points (bps) in February, by 25 bps in both March and May, by 50 bps in June and then by 25 bps in August. As a result, UK annual consumer inflation has continued to trend downwards over 2023. However, it has still remained above the BoE's 2% target and the rates recorded in both the US and eurozone, in part due to elevated food prices. Annual core inflation in the UK declined from 5.7% in October to a lower-than-expected 5.1% in November.

US

US share prices, as measured by the broad S&P 500 Index, rose strongly in euro terms and by even more in US dollar terms over the 12-month period.

Growth-focused stocks, such as technology companies, performed particularly well. These stocks are more sensitive to the prospect of monetary tightening coming to an end, and then reversing, because of the favourable effect on their future discounted earnings.

Faced with a relatively robust economy, the US Federal Reserve (Fed) continued to tighten policy in 2023. However, a sustained fall in annual inflation meant that the Fed reduced the size of its rate hikes to 25 bps at its February, March and May meetings. Nonetheless, the latest 25 bps increase in July took the target range for the fed funds rate to 5.25-5.50%, the highest level since

2001.

US stock markets rose steadily over most of the period, even shaking off turmoil in the banking sector in March, when two regional banks, Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank, collapsed. In particular, investor sentiment was helped by the long-awaited news in late May of an agreement over raising the US debt ceiling. A strong performance by the technology sector, especially artificial intelligence-related stocks, such as NVIDIA, Microsoft and Alphabet, was also supportive. Investor concern that interest rates would stay higher for longer led to stocks notably weakening in August, September and October. However, equities rebounded notably in November and December as these fears eased due to encouraging inflation trends.

Asia Pacific

Stock markets in the Asia Pacific (excluding Japan) region gained modestly over the 12-month period in euro terms but rose by more in local-currency terms.

Markets in the region were supported by signs that high annual inflation globally was beginning to subside, with fears diminishing that the world economy could be tipped into a recession by interest-rate hikes. However, uncertainty caused by both Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas conflict capped stock-market returns.

Share prices continued to rise sharply in China over January, driven by the reopening of the Chinese economy and indications that the latest wave of Covid-19 infections had peaked. These positive developments in the region's largest economy helped other Asian stock markets enjoy a strong first quarter of 2023.

However, from April to the end of the year, Chinese share prices more than relinquished their post-reopening gains. This reversal was due to renewed investor concerns about the country's highly indebted property sector, geopolitical tensions with the US and an ongoing regulatory crackdown (which focused on data privacy and national security). Chinese equities continued to weaken, despite authorities announcing various stimulus measures aimed at boosting investor sentiment. In contrast, the Taiwanese and South Korean stock markets both recorded impressive gains over the course of 2023, helped by their relatively high weightings to the technology sector.

Japan

The Japanese stock market, as measured by the TOPIX Index, recorded a strong double-digit gain in yen terms over the 12-month period; it increased more modestly in euro terms due to the depreciation of the yen.

The Bank of Japan (BoJ) still faced milder inflationary pressures than the world's other major central banks, so it left its key interest rate unchanged at -0.1% and the target for the 10-year government bond yield at around 0% over the period. After new BoJ Governor Ueda, who succeeded Governor Kuroda in April 2023, stressed his commitment to an ultra-loose monetary policy, the Japanese yen steadily weakened (leading to speculation of currency-market intervention). With annual core inflation of 3.3% in June – still above the BoJ's 2% target – the central bank decided to make its yield-curve control policy more flexible at its July meeting.

Annual core inflation then declined from 3.1% in August to a still-higher-than-expected 2.8% in September. As a result, the BoJ further tweaked its yield-curve control policy at its October meeting. Annual core inflation fell from 2.9% in October to 2.5% in November, as expected, but remained higher than the central bank would like.

Solid company results and an increased focus by Japanese companies on shareholder returns helped share prices climb higher over the year. However, the Japanese economy shrank by a worse-than-expected 0.7% in the third quarter of 2023, translating into a contraction of 2.9% on an annualised basis, given weak domestic consumption and an uncertain global economic backdrop.

Corporate Bonds

Corporate bond prices had a solid performance over the 12-month period, although investment-grade bonds underperformed riskier high-yield bonds. A backdrop of sharply rising interest rates, stubbornly high annual inflation and a worsening economic outlook had created challenging market conditions and reduced investor risk appetite for much of 2022. However, from the start of 2023 onwards, credit spreads — the yield premium received by investors in return for the typically greater risk of lending to companies rather than governments — tightened on growing expectations that global inflation pressures may be peaking. This fuelled investors' hopes that the current cycle of interest-rate rises could be nearing its end and helped corporate bonds to perform better as investors' appetite for riskier assets started to return.

Turbulence in the global banking sector in March then caused credit spreads to widen to levels last seen in the autumn of 2022. However, the negative effect of wider credit spreads was offset by lower government bond yields amid a flight to safety. Calm then returned to bond markets over the next few months, with spreads tightening to end the period lower than where they were before March's volatility. Corporate bond markets had strong months in November and December. Over the last month of the year, in local-currency terms, US investment-grade bonds performed well due to the increased likelihood of interest-rate cuts in 2024, while sterling corporate bonds and European high-yield bonds also generated positive returns.

Government Bonds

Global government bonds recorded gains in local-currency terms, but performance was more mixed in euro terms. After years of record-low interest rates, many central banks have now significantly raised rates in an effort to contain inflation. Following a major sell-off in 2022, though, government bond markets recovered notably in 2023. This was driven by expectations of an end to interest-rate hikes and anticipations of potential rate cuts in 2024.

Faced with falling, but still-high, annual inflation, the Fed continued to raise rates in 2023. It hiked them by 25 bps in each of February, March and May. However, with increasing signs that its policy was having an impact on reducing the rate of price increases, the Fed then paused its tightening campaign in June before announcing another 25 bp hike in July.

The BoE increased its base rate a further five times over the course of 2023. It raised it by 50 bps in February, 25 bp in both March and May, another 50 bp in June and then 25 bp in August. As a result, annual inflation in the UK has continued to fall in recent months. However, the UK's central bank has not yet ruled out further rate hikes.

While inflationary pressures in the eurozone eased somewhat as 2023 progressed, they remained elevated. As a result, the ECB continued to raise rates, with further 50-bp increases in February and March being followed by 25-bp hikes in May, June, July and September.

In contrast, the Japanese central bank maintained its ultra-loose monetary policy, marked by a negative base rate, arguing that underlying demand in the Japanese economy remained weak. However, the BoJ tweaked its yield-curve control policy at its July and October meetings by effectively raising the cap for the allowance band from 0.5% to 1.0% while saying that the upper bound was merely a reference point, rather than a strict limit.

UK Commercial Real Estate

Total returns in sterling terms for UK commercial real estate were -0.1% over the 12 months to the end of December (the latest data available). The office sector was the weakest, returning -11.9%, while residential was the strongest, with a return of 8.2%.

UK real estate pricing has been stabilising during 2023, after the significant correction in the sector in late-2022. However, performance has been varied across sectors, with those that are benefiting from structural and thematic tailwinds proving more resilient in the face of a weaker macroeconomic environment. For example, the logistics and living sectors both outperformed the wider market over the past year. While UK real estate capital values fell over the course of 2023, the pace of declines moderated. There were tentative signs of stabilisation for some sectors but not all. There is a risk that further pricing discovery in the first half of 2024 will result in more market softening, particularly for out-of-favour sectors. UK real estate investment volumes for the calendar year 2023 reached £34.3 billion, representing a year-on-year fall of 47%. While we expect greater liquidity to return to the market in 2024, this will, in part, be driven by buyer and seller expectations becoming more closely aligned. With the increased prospect of interest-rate cuts in 2024, we expect an improvement in UK real estate performance, driven primarily by improved investor confidence and greater liquidity in the market. Although the macroeconomic environment will continue to dominate, polarisation in performance from both a sector and asset quality perspective will remain a key differentiator. The downside risk to our forecasts remains elevated given weaker UK economic growth prospects and the potential uncertainty created by the upcoming general election. Real estate refinancing also poses a risk, but the office sector is most exposed given the amount of outstanding debt and lack of appetite for lending in this sector.

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Irish Life

Investment Manager's Report

THE ABRDN REPUBLIC OF IRELAND DC SCHEME 25682-01

Investment Report for Year Ended 31 December 2023

Investment Policy

The long term investment objectives of your pension fund are to achieve a return on fund assets which is sufficient, over the long-term, to meet your funding objectives and to earn a rate of return on assets that will exceed inflation and the risk free rate (cash).

In general, this will require a long-term investment return of at least price inflation plus 4% per annum. Examination of the long term return characteristics of asset types indicates that these objectives are most likely to be achieved by allocating a higher proportion of the fund to risk assets, such as equities and property with lower allocations to monetary assets such as bonds and cash. Each scheme however is unique and as such will have its own unique characteristics that determine the appropriate asset allocations between risk & monetary assets. Risk assets as outlined above whilst providing superior longer term returns, tend to be more volatile when compared with monetary assets which historically have provided lower returns but with less volatility.

Investment Performance

Global equities (MSCI All Country World Index) have rallied strongly over the past 12 months, rising by 22.2% (18.7% in € terms). Equities were buoyed in 2023 as hopes grew for a soft landing whereby while growth slows, a recession is avoided, and inflation continues to fall enabling central banks to begin cutting interest rates in 2024. The MSCI USA rallied by 27.1% (22.8% in € terms) over the past year. European ex-UK equities rose by 17.3% (18.5% in €) over the period, aided by a reversal of some severe headwinds following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, including the collapse in natural gas prices, which eased inflation and growth pressures in the Eurozone. Meanwhile, emerging markets equities rose by 10.3% (6.5% in € terms) over the period. The asset class was weighed by concerns over a fading of the Q1 2023 reopening led rebound in China through the middle of the year although improving economic data and stimulus measures have been supportive more recently.

Developed-market bonds were particularly impacted by aggressive rate rises from the Fed, the European Central Bank (ECB) and other central banks for most of the past 12 months. The ECB has raised its deposit rate from the low point in 2022 by 450bps to 4.0% currently. Recently bond yields have fallen as inflation has begun to surprise to the downside. As a result, bond markets have rallied sharply in the past two months. This was reflected in the ICE BofA 5+ Year Euro Government bond index, which rose by 8.5% over the past 12 months.

Real estate performance has been hampered by rising interest rates over the past 12 months. Falls in the Irish property market have resulted in more attractive property yields of around 5.2%. Amid the drag from tighter financial conditions, there has been an increase in demand for properties with strong environmental qualities and operational efficiency, as well as properties with inflation-aligned rents which are more common in Europe.

Commodities fell by 4.3% (-7.5% in €) over the past 12 months. The Brent crude oil price fell by 10.3% as uncertainty over continued OPEC+ output restrictions weighed on the price recently and outweighed an improving demand backdrop.

SCHEME SUMMARY INFORMATION

Fund Code	Fund Name	Opening Value	Contributions / Withdrawals	Gain / Loss	Closing Value
SLL	Annuity Matching fund	€41,036.51	-	€3,825.43	€44,861.94
Total		**€41,036.51**			**€44,861.94**

Fund Code	Fund Name	Opening Units	Price	Opening Value	Closing Units	Price	Closing Value
SLL	Annuity Matching fund	49,681	€0.826	€41,036.51	49,681	€0.903	€44,861.94
Total				**€41,036.51**			**€44,861.94**

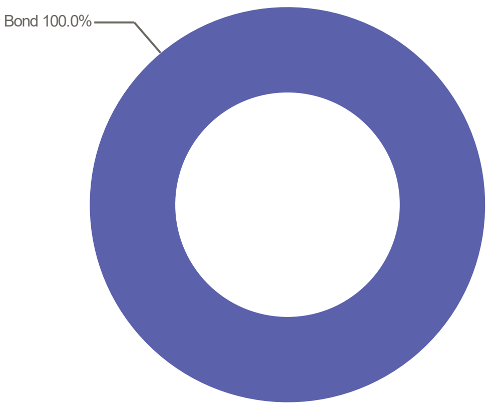
PERFORMANCE AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

Fund Name	QTD	YTD	1 Year	3 Years p.a.	5 Years p.a.	10 Years p.a.	Since Launch p.a.
Annuity Matching fund	14.4%	9.3%	9.3%	-11.2%	-2.9%	-	-1.4%

ANNUITY MATCHING FUND

This fund invests in a blend of indexed bonds, including government and corporates, trying to match the movement in annuity prices. The bond mix is reviewed periodically and can be updated if a mix that better matches annuity prices can be achieved. This fund aims to broadly follow the long-term changes in annuity prices due to interest rates which are just one of the main factors that determine annuity prices. However, there could be times when the fund will not track annuity prices closely and the fund is not guaranteed to track annuities prices.

ASSET ALLOCATION



ASSET ALLOCATION

BOND	100.0%
Government Bonds	60.4%
Corporate Bonds	39.6%

PERFORMANCE AS AT 31/12/2023

	1 Month	3 Month	1 Year	3 Year p.a.	5 Year p.a.	Since Launch p.a.
Fund	7.50%	14.45%	9.32%	-11.23%	-2.91%	-1.45%
Benchmark	7.49%	13.96%	9.38%	-11.22%	-3.01%	-1.43%

APPENDICES

INVESTMENT TRANSACTIONS

Unit Transaction Statement

No unit transactions in the period.

ANALYSIS OF INVESTMENT TRANSACTIONS

Receipt Statement

No Receipt transactions in the period.

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