



Aberforth Smaller Companies Trust plc

Monthly Factsheet

31 December 2019

Fund structure

The Fund is an investment trust – a type of investment company/collective investment fund – with a Premium share listing on the Main Market of the London Stock Exchange.

Manager: Aberforth Partners

The Fund is managed by Aberforth's investment team of seven fund managers:

Sam Ford	Jeremy Hall
Euan Macdonald	Keith Muir
Peter Shaw	Christopher Watt
Alistair Whyte	

Further information on the investment team is available at www.aberforth.co.uk.

Benchmark: NSCI (XIC)

The Fund's benchmark and primary investment universe is the Numis Smaller Companies Index (excluding Investment Companies). This index is rebalanced every January and its profile at the date of this Factsheet was:

Number of companies	346
Total market value	£153bn
Largest constituent	£1.6bn
Largest constituent if index rebalanced at Factsheet date	£1.6bn

Key Fund information

Total investments	£1,417m
Number of investments	80
Active share	77.8%
Gearing - bank debt in use	£14m
Net gearing/(liquidity)	0.8%
Total net assets	£1,406m
Ordinary shares in issue	89,533,066
NAV	1,570.15p
Share price	1,540.00p
Discount/(premium)	1.9%
Market value	£1,379m
Launch date	10 Dec 90
Next year-end	31 Dec 20

Fees & charges

Management fee* (12m to 31 Dec 19)	0.71%
Performance fee	None
Ongoing charges (at 31 Dec 19 & includes Management fee)	0.77%

* Further details of the Management fee are available at www.aberforth.co.uk.

Yield & dividends

Yield	2.0%
Interim dividend (paid 30 Aug 19)	10.00p
Final dividend (paid 7 Mar 19)	20.75p
Special dividend (paid 7 Mar 19)	7.75p

Objective

The Fund's objective is to achieve a total return greater than that of the NSCI (XIC) over the long term by investing in a diversified portfolio of small UK quoted companies.

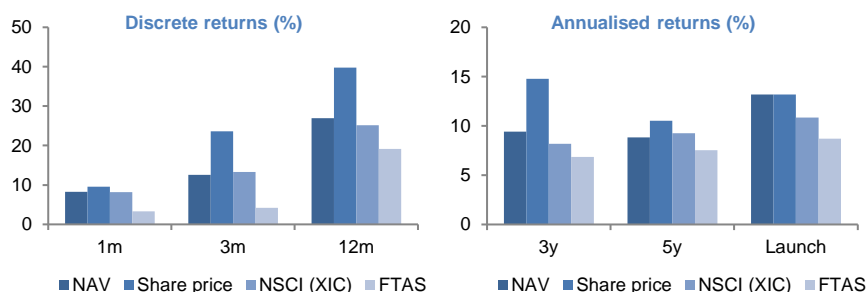
Investment style: Value

Aberforth are value investors who buy shares in companies that they calculate to be selling below their intrinsic value. This is determined through detailed financial and industrial analysis, combined with a valuation approach that focuses on both stockmarket and corporate worth.

Investment performance (annualised total returns)

Growth (%)	1m	3m	12m	3y	5y	Launch
NAV	8.2	12.6	26.9	9.4	8.8	13.2
Share price	9.5	23.6	39.8	14.8	10.5	13.2
NSCI (XIC)	8.1	13.3	25.2	8.2	9.2	10.9
FTAS	3.3	4.2	19.2	6.9	7.5	8.7

Notes: 1m & 3m returns not annualised; Launch date = 10 Dec 90; FTAS = FTSE All-Share Index.



Investment commentary

The year ended in an encouraging fashion, with apparent progress towards a trade deal between China and the US. In the UK, one of the extreme political outcomes was avoided, but, with a hard Brexit still on the table, sterling and UK equities have been given pause for thought. Nevertheless, the decisive general election result allowed markets to rally strongly. The NSCI (XIC) returned 8.1%, which out-performed the FTSE All-Share's 3.3%: domestic exposure was sought-after and is greater among smaller companies. Encouragingly, the "smaller smalls" participated in the 'Boris bounce' but style mattered little over the month. The Fund's return was 8.2%.

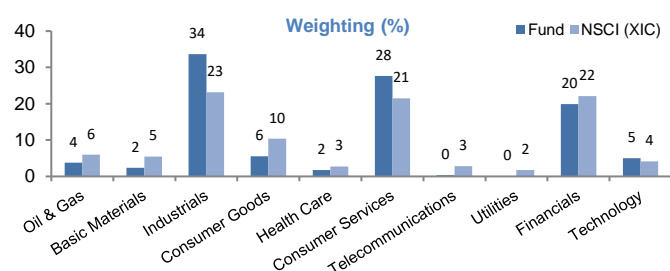
Turning to stocks, UK news publisher Reach stood out: a trading update reported good progress with a number of digital initiatives. Elsewhere, specialist contractor Keller responded well to its update and logistics company Wincanton to a contract renewal. More broadly, post-election optimism buoyed companies sensitive to the economic cycle. Among the holdings, brick manufacturer Forterra, Speedy Hire, DFS Furniture and clothing retailer N Brown all performed strongly.

Conversely, amid the market's enthusiasm for domestic companies, not owning Dunelm and Frasers detracted from the relative return. Meanwhile, PR company Huntsworth was affected by a lacklustre trading update, though consistent with the extreme portfolio valuations noted in previous commentaries, the share price fell by less than the reduced profit expectations.

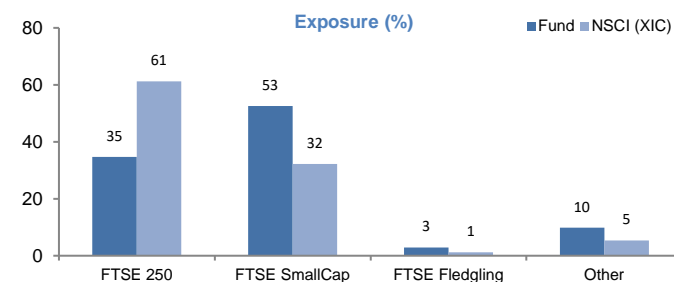
Top 10 equity investments

Name	Activity	%
Urban&Civic	Property - investment & development	3.6
FirstGroup	Bus & rail operator	3.1
Brewin Dolphin Holdings	Private client fund manager	3.0
Mitchells & Butlers	Operator of restaurants, pubs & bars	2.7
Future	Special interest consumer publisher	2.6
Keller Group	Ground engineering services	2.4
Rank Group	Multi-channel gaming operator	2.4
Reach	UK newspaper publisher	2.4
Morgan Advanced Materials	Manufacture of carbon & ceramic materials	2.4
Wincanton	Logistics	2.4

Sector exposure



Size exposure



Gearing

The Fund has a bank debt facility of £125m available for use as gearing by the Manager at any time. The net gearing/(liquidity) figure shown in the Key Fund information section indicates the percentage by which the total value of investments exceeds the total net assets.

Continuation vote & share buy-backs

The continuation of the Fund is voted on by shareholders at every 3rd AGM. The next vote will occur at the AGM in March 2020.

The Fund operates a share buy-back policy. A list of the buy-back transactions during the last 5 years is available at www.aberforth.co.uk.

Data sources & calculations

All data supplied by Aberforth, except NSCI (XIC) data (from Numis/Paul Marsh and Elroy Dimson – London Business School) and FTSE data (from FTSE International Limited).

Performance returns are total returns after all expenses and assume reinvestment of dividends. Yield is based on the Fund's trailing 12 months' dividends (excluding Specials). Active share is a measure of how the Fund's portfolio differs from the NSCI (XIC). Small companies are represented by the NSCI (XIC). Large companies are represented by the FTAS.

Risk warnings

Capital may be at risk as the value of investments may go down as well as up and is not guaranteed; therefore investors may not get back the amount originally invested. Past performance is not a guide to future performance, nor a reliable indicator of future results or performance.

Investments in shares of smaller companies are generally considered to carry a higher degree of risk as the market for their shares may be less liquid than that for shares of larger companies, making shares of smaller companies more difficult to buy and sell.

The performance of shares of smaller companies may be more volatile than the shares of larger companies over short time periods; therefore investors should regard such investments as long term.

There can be no guarantee that the investment objective of the Fund will be achieved or provide the returns sought by the Fund.

An investment in the Fund is only suitable for investors who are capable of evaluating the merits and risks of such an investment and who have sufficient resources to be able to bear any losses which may arise from such an investment (which may be equal to the whole amount invested). Such an investment should be regarded as long term in nature and complementary to existing investments in a range of other financial assets and should not form a major part of an investment portfolio.

An investment trust is a public limited company, the shares of which are traded on the main market of the London Stock Exchange. Accordingly, the ability of shareholders to sell their shares will be dependent on the market price of the shares. The shares may trade at a discount or premium to their net asset value.

Investment trusts may borrow money in order to make further investments. This is known as gearing. The effect of gearing can enhance returns to shareholders in rising markets but will have the opposite effect on returns in falling markets.

Aberforth Partners LLP does not provide retail investors with investment advice.

This document has been issued for information purposes only. It does not contain any investment recommendations or an invitation to invest in the Fund. Investors should seek advice from an authorised financial adviser prior to making investment decisions.

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Security codes & other information

Ordinary shares of 1p	Other information
SEDOL: 0006655	Launched: 10 Dec 90
ISIN: GB0000066554	Next year-end: 31 Dec 20
TIDM: ASL	LEI: 213800GZ9WC73A92Q326

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