



# Aberforth Smaller Companies Trust plc

## Monthly Factsheet

31 December 2023

### 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	Rob Scott Moncrieff
Peter Shaw	Christopher Watt
Rowan Marron	

Further information on the investment team is available at [www.aberforth.co.uk](http://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	353
Total market value	£143bn
Largest constituent	£1.7bn
Largest constituent if index rebalanced at Factsheet date	£1.7bn

### Key Fund information

Total investments	£1,364m
Number of investments	78
Active share	75.4%
Gearing - bank debt in use	£72m
Net gearing/(liquidity)	5.1%
Total net assets	£1,297m
Ordinary shares in issue	84,414,605
NAV	1,536.73p
Share price	1,378.00p
Discount/(premium)	10.3%
Market value	£1,163m
Launch date	10 Dec 90
Next year-end	31 Dec 24

### Fees & charges

Management fee* (12m to 31 Dec 22)	0.73%
Performance fee	None
Ongoing charges (at 31 Dec 22 & includes Management fee)	0.80%

\* Further details of the Management fee are available at [www.aberforth.co.uk](http://www.aberforth.co.uk).

### Yield & dividends

Yield	2.9%
Interim dividend (paid 25 Aug 23)	12.95p
Final dividend (paid 8 Mar 23)	26.95p
Special dividend (paid 8 Mar 23)	8.30p

### 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.

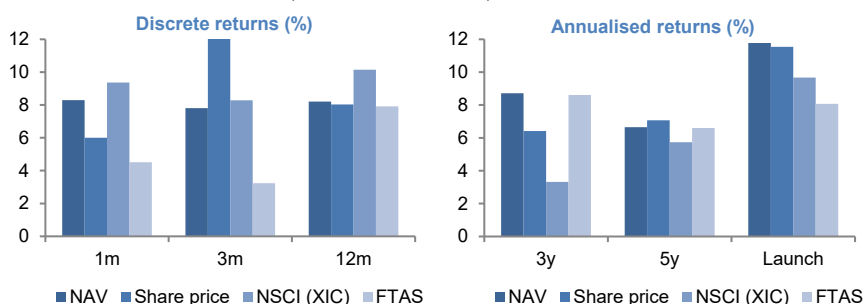
### Investment style: Value

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	8.3	7.8	8.2	8.7	6.7	11.8
Share price	6.0	12.0	8.0	6.4	7.1	11.5
NSCI (XIC)	9.4	8.3	10.1	3.3	5.7	9.7
FTAS	4.5	3.2	7.9	8.6	6.6	8.1

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



### Monthly investment commentary: December

December was another strong month for markets, which continued to rise after accommodative commentary from the US Federal Reserve about the likely path for its interest rate policy. Inflation data provided further support for their stance and helped the FTSE All-Share rise by 4.5% in the month. The Fund was up by 8.3%, while its benchmark NSCI (XIC) rose by 9.4%. The under-performance was primarily driven by size, as the mid cap component of the benchmark, to which the Fund has a relatively low exposure, delivered the strongest returns.

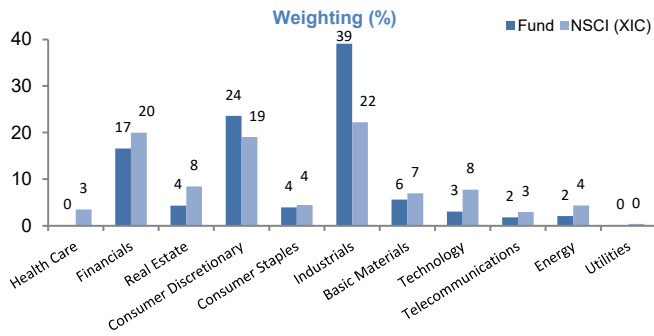
Relative performance was held back by larger non holdings such as Paragon and Carnival, which saw significant share price gains. It was also affected by holdings whose share prices were flat or slightly down in the strong market. **Wilmington**, the business publishing and training provider, was one of these. It announced no news in December but is relatively insensitive to the economy and is therefore a less likely participant in upward or downward market moves. **Bakkavor**, the food producer, was modestly down on the month. The company faces headwinds from recently announced increases in the National Living Wage, which come as it navigates a difficult inflationary backdrop across the food categories.

The two largest positive contributors to relative performance were **De La Rue**, the currency printer and authentication solutions provider, and **Videndum**, the photographic and broadcast accessories manufacturer. **De La Rue** released interim results during the month, which were received positively. These revealed an improved operating performance, as well as an extension to its banking facilities and a revised payment schedule with its pension trustees. Meanwhile, **Videndum** completed its equity raise, in which the Fund participated. This addressed the weak balance sheet and allowed the share price to end the month well above the price at which the equity was issued.

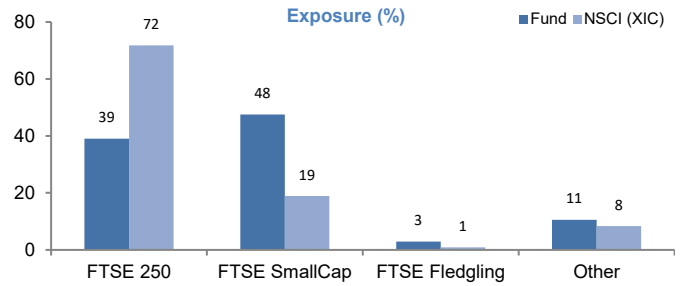
### Top 10 equity investments

Name	Activity	%
<b>Wilmington</b>	Business publishing & training	2.8
<b>Wincanton</b>	Logistics	2.7
<b>Morgan Advanced Materials</b>	Manufacture of carbon & ceramic materials	2.6
<b>FirstGroup</b>	Bus & rail operator	2.5
<b>Vesuvius</b>	Metal flow engineering	2.5
<b>Redde Northgate</b>	Van rental	2.4
<b>Just Group</b>	Individually underwritten annuities	2.2
<b>TI Fluid Systems</b>	Automotive parts manufacturer	2.2
<b>International Personal Finance</b>	Home credit provider	2.2
<b>Centamin</b>	Gold miner	2.1

## Sector exposure



## Size exposure



## Gearing

The Fund has a bank debt facility of £130m 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 3<sup>rd</sup> AGM. The next vote will occur at the AGM in March 2026.

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](http://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 24
TIDM: ASL	LEI: 213800GZ9WC73A92Q326

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