



# Aberforth Smaller Companies Trust plc

## Monthly Factsheet

29 February 2024

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

Further information on the investment team is available at [www.aberforth.co.uk](http://www.aberforth.co.uk).

### Benchmark: DNSCI (XIC)

The Fund's benchmark and primary investment universe is the Deutsche 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	348
Total market value	£136bn
Largest constituent	£2.3bn
Largest constituent if index rebalanced at Factsheet date	£1.7bn

### Key Fund information

Total investments	£1,353m
Number of investments	78
Active share	75.2%
Gearing - bank debt in use	£113m
Net gearing/(liquidity)	9.0%
Total net assets	£1,241m
Ordinary shares in issue	84,234,605
NAV	1,473.48p
Share price	1,292.00p
Discount/(premium)	12.3%
Market value	£1,088m
Launch date	10 Dec 90
Next year-end	31 Dec 24

### Fees & charges

Management fee* (12m to 31 Dec 23)	0.73%
Performance fee	None
Ongoing charges (at 31 Dec 23 & includes Management fee)	0.79%

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

### Yield & dividends

Yield	3.2%
Interim dividend (paid 25 Aug 23)	12.95p
Final dividend (payable 8 Mar 24)	28.55p
Special dividend (payable 8 Mar 24)	9.00p

### Objective

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

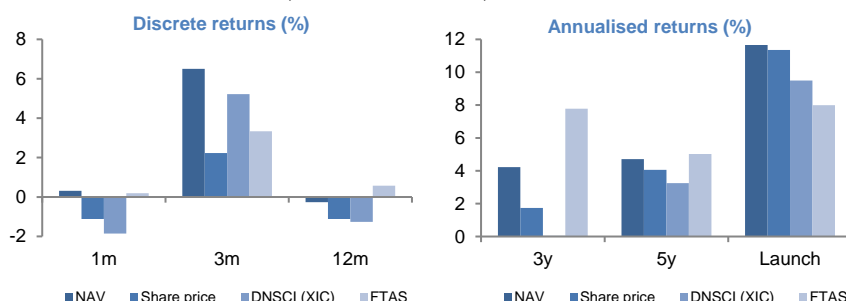
### Investment style: Value

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	0.3	6.5	-0.3	4.2	4.7	11.7
Share price	-1.1	2.2	-1.1	1.7	4.1	11.4
DNSCI (XIC)	-1.9	5.2	-1.3	0.0	3.2	9.5
FTAS	0.2	3.3	0.6	7.8	5.0	8.0

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



### Monthly investment commentary: February

February was a positive month for global equities. The FTSE All-World Index delivered a return of 5.1% in sterling terms, but UK equities performance lagged, with the FTSE All-Share rising by 0.2%. The DNSCI (XIC) fell by 1.9%. The Fund out-performed this benchmark, rising by 0.3%. Style factors were not influential and it was the contribution from M&A that drove a significant proportion of the performance differential.

**Wincanton**, the UK-focused logistics provider, was the most significant positive contributor to performance. In January, the company announced a recommended offer from a French bidder. Aberforth did not believe that the bid reflected the true worth of the business and engaged to improve the terms. Near the end of February, the bidder announced a higher price, which was followed by an approach from another party, the US-listed GXO, on much improved price terms of 605p per share. While the process is yet to reach a conclusion, it serves as a useful reminder that (a) the best M&A experiences are often those in which boards of directors consult shareholders well in advance and (b) when approached, boards must focus their attention on the fair value of the business, not the premium paid to the prevailing share price. Further M&A activity seems likely as UK equity valuations remain extremely attractive.

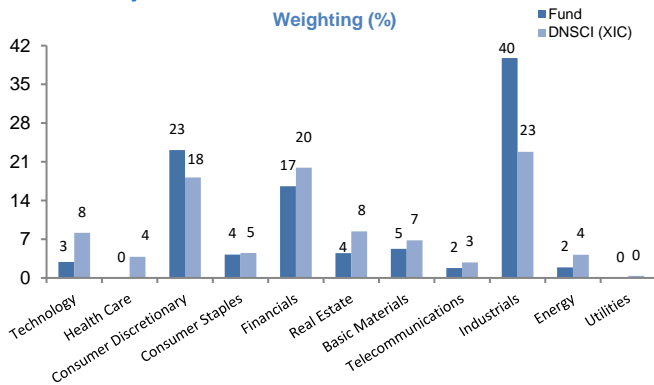
Other winners in the month were **CMC Markets**, which announced a cost reduction and efficiency plan, and **Wilmington**, which reported half year results and the intention to divest its Healthcare Intelligence business.

The weakest holding in the month was **Close Brothers**, which faces a potential regulatory liability in its Motor and Premium finance businesses and elected to pause dividend payments.

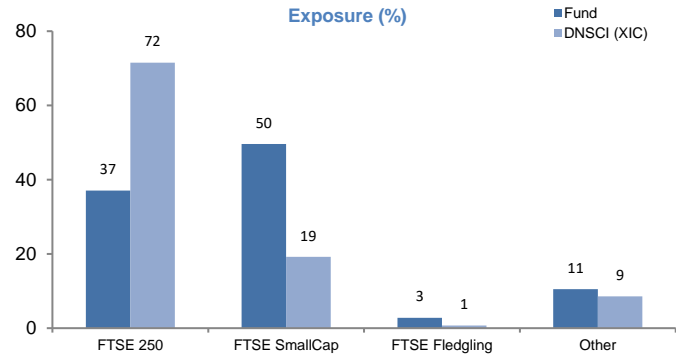
### Top 10 equity investments

Name	Activity	%
<b>Wincanton</b>	Logistics	5.5
<b>Wilmington</b>	Business publishing & training	2.9
<b>Vesuvius</b>	Metal flow engineering	2.6
<b>Morgan Advanced Materials</b>	Manufacture of carbon & ceramic materials	2.4
<b>Redde Northgate</b>	Van rental	2.3
<b>Just Group</b>	Individually underwritten annuities	2.2
<b>TI Fluid Systems</b>	Automotive parts manufacturer	2.2
<b>FirstGroup</b>	Bus & rail operator	2.1
<b>International Personal Finance</b>	Home credit provider	2.1
<b>Avon Protection</b>	Military protection products	2.0

## 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 DNSCI (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 DNSCI (XIC). Small companies are represented by the DNSCI (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.**

FTSE® is a trade mark of the London Stock Exchange Group companies and is used by FTSE International Limited under licence. All rights in the FTSE indices and/or FTSE ratings vest in FTSE and/or its licensors. Neither FTSE nor its licensors accept any liability for any errors or omissions in the FTSE indices and/or FTSE ratings or underlying data and no party may rely on any FTSE indices, ratings and/or underlying data contained in this communication. No further distribution of FTSE data is permitted without FTSE's express written consent. FTSE does not promote, sponsor or endorse the content of this communication.

## 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

## Subscribe & contact

If you wish to subscribe to this Factsheet, or have any queries regarding its content, please contact Aberforth's Investor Support team:

(T) 0131 220 0733

(E) [investors@aberforth.co.uk](mailto:investors@aberforth.co.uk)