



# Aberforth Smaller Companies Trust plc

## Monthly Factsheet

31 March 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 six fund managers:

Sam Ford	Jeremy Hall
Euan Macdonald	Rowan Marron
Rob Scott Moncrieff	Peter Shaw

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	345
Total market value	£142bn
Largest constituent	£2.3bn
Largest constituent if index rebalanced at Factsheet date	£1.8bn

### Key Fund information

Total investments	£1,414m
Number of investments	80
Active share	74.1%
Gearing - bank debt in use	£117m
Net gearing/(liquidity)	8.8%
Total net assets	£1,300m
Ordinary shares in issue	84,234,605
NAV	1,543.28p
Share price	1,348.00p
Discount/(premium)	12.7%
Market value	£1,135m
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	3.1%
Interim dividend (paid 25 Aug 23)	12.95p
Final dividend (paid 8 Mar 24)	28.55p
Special dividend (paid 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.

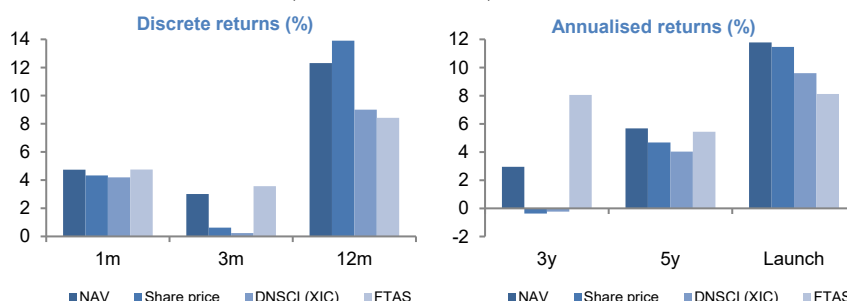
### Investment style: Value

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	4.7	3.0	12.3	3.0	5.7	11.8
Share price	4.3	0.6	13.9	-0.4	4.7	11.5
DNSCI (XIC)	4.2	0.2	9.0	-0.2	4.0	9.6
FTAS	4.8	3.6	8.4	8.0	5.4	8.1

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



### Monthly investment commentary: March

March was a better month for UK equities, which out-performed the US and technology-dominated global equity market index. Better-than-expected inflation data for the UK contributed to falling bond yields and increased expectations of interest rate cuts. The FTSE All-Share was up 4.8%, with broad-based performance across large, mid and small caps. The benchmark DNSCI (XIC) was up 4.2%, against which the Fund delivered a 4.8% return. The value style was a modest tailwind to relative performance.

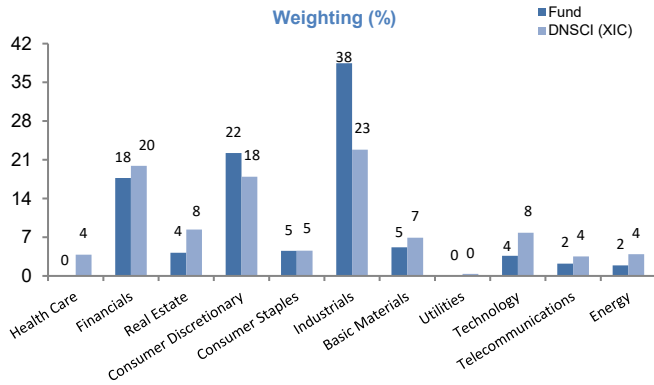
The Fund's best performer in the month was **CMC Markets**, the financial derivatives dealer. After recent investments in expanding its business lines, the company endured a challenging 2023. Three updates to the market in 2024 so far have brought more positive news on profitability. Elsewhere, the annuities writer **Just Group** reported strong results for 2023, which was a record year thanks to further new business wins. **Reach**, the publisher, saw its shares rise after reporting results that revealed the first signs of stability in advertising yields. **Centamin**, the gold miner, reported results in the month and benefited from sentiment surrounding the rising gold price.

Among the biggest relative losers was **Wincanton**, which is subject to a takeover from the US-listed GXO and is currently the Fund's largest holding. Its shares drifted slightly after it became clear that the bidding war was over. Under our negotiated terms with the acquirer, Aberforth is bound to hold the shares until the shareholder vote to approve the deal. **Videndum**, the manufacturer and distributor of broadcast and photography equipment, fell following a delay to the announcement of its full year results. **Foxtons**, the estate agent, was another to endure relative share price weakness, having had a strong run since October.

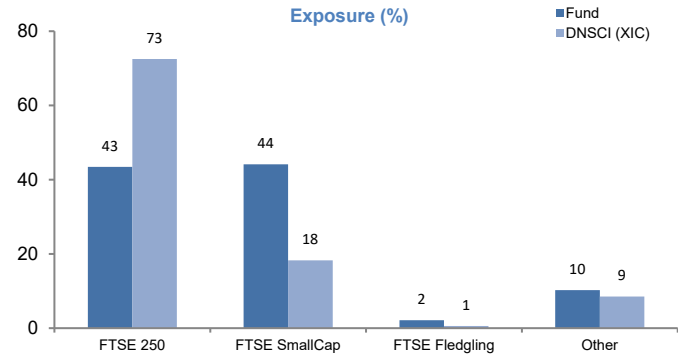
### Top 10 equity investments

Name	Activity	%
<b>Wincanton</b>	Logistics	5.0
<b>Wilmington</b>	Business publishing & training	2.8
<b>Just Group</b>	Individually underwritten annuities	2.6
<b>Morgan Advanced Materials</b>	Manufacture of carbon & ceramic materials	2.5
<b>Vesuvius</b>	Metal flow engineering	2.5
<b>Redde Northgate</b>	Van rental	2.4
<b>CMC Markets</b>	Financial derivatives dealer	2.3
<b>Centamin</b>	Gold miner	2.3
<b>FirstGroup</b>	Bus & rail operator	2.2
<b>Avon Protection</b>	Military protection products	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 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.**

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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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