



ABERFORTH PARTNERS

Aberforth Partners LLP (Aberforth) – Governance and Corporate Responsibility

INTRODUCTION

This document provides details of Aberforth Partners' approach to governance and corporate responsibility. Parties interested in engaging on these matters should contact the partner responsible, Scott Wallace, on 0131 220 0733.

Aberforth's approach to the stewardship of its investments – including Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) – on behalf of clients is set out in our response to the UK Stewardship Code, available [HERE](#).

BACKGROUND TO ABERFORTH PARTNERS

The history and background to Aberforth Partners LLP is set out [HERE](#). The firm was founded in 1990 and is based in Edinburgh. Aberforth's aim is to deliver superior long-term investment returns for clients. The firm is simple by design with a focus on one asset class – small UK quoted companies, which are those comprising the lowest 10% by value of the UK stockmarket. Aberforth's investment strategy is defined by a value investment philosophy, which historical evidence suggests can support favourable long-term investment returns. The target client base is institutional and wholesale investors. The firm manages a small number of funds and the investment managers regularly update the numerous underlying investors in those funds.

GOVERNANCE

Aberforth Partners is a Limited Liability Partnership. It is wholly owned by six partners working at the firm and employs 12 staff. The partnership structure is fundamental to aligning the firm's interests with those of its clients. The partners are significant investors in funds that are managed by the firm.

Aberforth's governance is the preserve of the partnership: the partners collectively determine the firm's strategy and policies and are responsible for their implementation. There is no hierarchy within the partnership. Committees, comprising partners and staff, help to manage the workload and are listed below. The Operations Partner takes responsibility for monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of the firm's governance on behalf of all partners.

- The Operations Committee oversees matters of business administration.
- The Risk and Compliance Committee oversees legal, risk and compliance matters. It is chaired by the head of Risk and Compliance. Its members include all partners and specified staff.
- The Technology Strategy Committee is responsible for the firm's technology strategy and operations.
- The Stewardship Committee manages matters relating to the stewardship of clients' capital and of the firm, which includes the adoption of relevant external codes. Its consideration of sustainability issues is applied both to investee companies and to the firm itself.



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Risk control and compliance

Risk control and compliance are embedded in the firm's internal policies and practices. Adherence is the responsibility of all partners and staff. Guidance and day-to-day support are provided by the risk and compliance team. Internal controls are subject to independent annual examination by accountants, PwC, as part of the AAF 01/20 reporting framework. This report is shared with clients and prospective clients.

Aberforth's compliance policies and practices support the integrity of the firm. The framework is reviewed annually and is contained within our internal compliance manual. Established procedures cover whistleblowing, anti-bribery and corruption, anti-money laundering and other relevant 'Know Your Customer' and Consumer Duty practices aligned to FCA regulations. Other elements of the compliance programme support partners and staff in identifying and reporting suspicious transactions, including malpractices such as tax evasion and market abuse. Annual training takes place to identify, understand and manage these risks. This is complemented by the adoption of an industry recognised code of conduct from the Chartered Institute for Securities & Investment, as well as adherence to the FCA's Conduct Rules. Staff provide annual attestation of compliance and understanding of ethics. In addition, industry relevant training and guidance is provided regularly.

Cyber security resilience

Cyber security resilience is supported by Eze Castle Integration (ECI), the firm's cyber security managed service provider. ECI have implemented a Governance and Risk Program (GRP) which provides support in areas such as Risk Assessment and Risk Management, Governance (including Business Impact Analysis), Training and Advanced Cyber Security Protection.

Additional cyber security controls include a Security Operations Centre that monitors the network on a 24/7 basis, an annual Security Assessment review, regular penetration testing exercises, and vulnerability management scanning. Compliance with the "Cyber Essentials Plus" certification is independently assessed annually. Partners and staff participate in regular cyber security testing and training.

Finance and regulatory capital

The company publishes its Disclosure of Risk and Regulatory Capital Management statement annually. A copy is available [HERE](#). This is produced in conjunction with our internal capital adequacy and risk assessment (ICARA), which determines our risk appetite and corresponding need for regulatory capital and liquidity.

Audit

A review of the provision of external audit services to the firm is undertaken periodically to ensure continued independence and quality of service. The firm's external auditors are PwC who conduct corporate audits of our statutory legal entities and undertake client money audits of the regulated entities.



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SOCIAL

Our culture

Aberforth's purpose is to deliver superior long-term investment returns for our clients. We believe that our investment philosophy and process have been and will continue to be crucial to achieving this aim. It is also essential that our clients are kept informed about investment returns in a timely, accurate and relevant fashion. In both respects, we believe that our clients' interests are best served by simplicity and focus. In practical terms, this means reducing distractions and allowing our people to maximise the time spent on their core roles.

An important means to achieving this is the ceiling that we place on Aberforth's size. Assets under management are limited to 1.5% of the total market capitalisation of the Deutsche Numis Smaller Companies Index (excluding investment companies). We also seek to sustain a flat organisational structure, which reduces the time required to manage people and to keep operational support functions within the firm, which affords greater control over the quality of client reporting.

Partners and staff are motivated by how well we do business rather than by how much business is done. This aspect of our culture is demonstrated by our values of Excellence, Accountability and Team. This is an important consideration when recruiting and retaining people. Experience and proven expertise are particularly valued in specific roles, along with a flexibility to provide cover for other roles in what, by design, is a small business.

The more formal elements of the firm's culture are embedded in a Staff Handbook, a copy of which is provided to all employees on joining the firm. This sets out the firm's policies covering matters such as holidays, working hours, training & development, diversity & inclusion, prohibitions on harassment, and promotion of equal opportunities. The handbook is updated annually.

Reward

The ethos of the partnership means that separate reward structures to incentivise good governance, corporate responsibility, stewardship and environmental results are not necessary. Aberforth's model is for all its people to be rewarded based on the firm's overall performance, rather than being tied to the investment results of individual stockmarket sectors or funds. The firm's approach to remuneration is founded in its aim to attract high quality people and maintain simplicity of operating processes. To achieve this, remuneration is intended to be in the top quartile of a relevant industry peer group. The firm has an annual performance management cycle to agree objectives, support performance of work and provide feedback to each member of staff. To align individuals' objectives, we consider a qualitative assessment of each person's contribution to the firm's corporate responsibility and stewardship activities as part of the review cycle. The firm's approach to remuneration is outlined in our remuneration disclosure, which can be found [HERE](#).

Health, Safety & Wellbeing

Whilst Aberforth's personnel work in an office environment that has a low physical risk, health and safety risk assessments are conducted annually. All accidents and incidents are investigated. The firm recognises the importance of flexibility in the workplace as well as the benefits of in person collaboration and coaching on colleague wellbeing and what these interactions can deliver for the client. Support for the wellbeing of our staff is provided through the provision of high-quality employee benefits, which includes dedicated free access to mental health and well-being services. Staff representatives are trained in First Aid and Mental Health First Aid. The firm also has a registered defibrillator which is available to the public.



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Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Staff Handbook details Aberforth's equal opportunities and diversity policy. The policy underlines the firm's commitment to the principles of fairness and mutual respect and recognises that discrimination in the workplace is unacceptable. The policy seeks to ensure that job applicants and employees are treated fairly and without favour or prejudice.

Aberforth's operations team of 12 is diverse by gender, with an equal representation of female (50%) and male (50%). The investment team is made up of six people, with one female (17%) member and five males (83%). The Operations Partner is responsible for leading diversity matters across the firm. The firm has embedded diversity and inclusion activities to support a productive and healthy work culture. During the year, Aberforth's staff completed online training. In addition, an independent external survey and assessment were completed. The results of this work help direct the firm's future activities.

Learning and development

Aberforth recognises the benefits of learning and development for its people and the firm. All personnel are required to complete a minimum of 35 hours each year, which is augmented by the continual professional development requirements of any professional qualifications. Aberforth facilitates additional learning by encouraging its staff to attend courses, seminars, and events relevant to their roles and career progression.

Suppliers

Several suppliers support the firm's operational activities and are recorded in a supplier register. A risk assessment is conducted to identify those suppliers providing critical services to the firm and its clients. Such suppliers are subject to enhanced annual due diligence and oversight as part of the firm's control framework. Where relevant, the firm supports suppliers' best practice social policies, including paying the national living wage and preventing modern slavery.

Industry participation

Aberforth's staff are active participants in relevant committees of trade associations, including the Investment Association (IA) and Association of Investment Companies (AIC), as well as local Scottish forums for compliance, operational and corporate matters. More recently the firm has expanded its focus to participate in forums with ESG objectives. These include UN PRI and the Financial Reporting Council.

Charity, political donations & volunteering

The firm has a policy of leaving decisions about charitable and political donations to individuals. The firm supports staff wishing to undertake dedicated volunteering or contributing to wider community projects.



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ENVIRONMENTAL

As a small investment management firm of around 20 people working from a single office, Aberforth's direct environmental impact is not significant. Similarly, the potential impact on our business from climate change is low. The firm is well capitalised, and our capital planning scenario analysis includes climate change among potential risks. Nonetheless, Aberforth recognises the challenge of climate change and has adopted a series of policies and initiatives, which are listed below, along with relevant disclosures. These policies will continue to develop, in response to scientific progress, the evolution of regulation, industry recommended practices and our own thinking.

Environmental issues are more influential on companies in which Aberforth invests its clients' capital. On behalf of its clients, the firm takes meaningful stakes in businesses that may have a substantial environmental impact or may be at risk from climate change. Consideration of such risks is integrated into the investment process, which acknowledges their potential effect on company valuations. The firm's policies and approach to engagement, along with investee company examples, are set out in our response to the UK Stewardship Code, which is available [HERE](#).

Aberforth continues to work with a local environmental consulting firm, ECO3 Partnership, on a 'Sustainability as a Service' arrangement. Work in the last year has focused on continuing to develop Aberforth's approach as a firm to sustainability matters. In addition, there has been considerable focus on the investment approach, outlined in the Aberforth Stewardship policy [HERE](#) and the ESG Integration Framework [HERE](#).

Carbon emissions and net zero

Notwithstanding the firm's small size, measuring and understanding its environmental impact is important. Aberforth's emissions are set out below in Table 1. The Scope 1 and 2 intensity ratio has fallen compared to the base year of 2022, driven by reduced gas consumption. Scope 1 air conditioning fugitive emissions were recorded within the year. These related to an early identified leak with the refrigerant charge being removed and disposed of in line with current Environmental Regulations. Scope 3 emissions are reported for the third year. Compared to the base year of 2022, there is a notable reduction (54%) in purchased goods and services. This is mainly driven by a methodological change, as explained below. Like last year, engaging with suppliers via a survey has been a proactive approach to tackle the known data quality and availability issues. Compared to last year, the response rate improved, with suppliers responding and increasing their efforts to capture emissions data.

The firm has committed to net zero by 2050 for its operations. To achieve this the firm has formulated a plan that will focus on Scope 1 reductions for facilities and will continue to enhance and influence the quality of purchased goods and services emissions data. The policies and practices relating to business travel have been reviewed and travel behaviours and practices are being assessed. Credible carbon offsets may also be used during the transition periods.



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Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD)

Whilst there is no mandatory requirement for Aberforth to implement TCFD at present, the firm recognises the importance of the disclosures for the environment, society and the economy. Consequently, we have embarked on a pathway to develop and implement them. Scope 3 category 15 investments, or financed emissions, are calculated along with related TCFD metrics such as the WACI (weighted average carbon intensity). These calculations are aligned to the PCAF (Partnership for Carbon Accounting Financials) methodology.

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting emissions

Table 1

Reporting period: 1st May 2023 to 30th April 2024
 Reporting entity: Aberforth Partners LLP (Company Registration no. OC313353)

Scope	Emissions Type	Scope 3 category	Indicator name	Unit	2024	2023	2022
Total direct GHG emissions - Scope 1							
Scope 1 - Total				t CO ₂ eq.	13.13	12.67	15.33
Scope 1	Direct	n/a	Company facilities - Stationary Combustion (gas)	t CO ₂ eq.	12.02	12.67	15.30
Scope 1	Direct	n/a	Company vehicles	t CO ₂ eq.	0.00	0.00	0.00
Scope 1	Direct	n/a	Fugitive Emissions	t CO ₂ eq.	1.11	0.00	0.03
Indirect energy related emissions - Scope 2							
Scope 2 - Market based Total				t CO ₂ eq.	0.00	0.00	0.00
Scope 2	Indirect	n/a	Purchased electricity for own use - location based	t CO ₂ eq.	5.12	5.56	3.28
Scope 2	Indirect	n/a	Purchased electricity for own use - market based	t CO ₂ eq.	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other indirect GHG emissions - Scope 3							
Scope 3 - Total				t CO ₂ eq.	50.99	46.75	66.91
Scope 3	Upstream	1	Purchased goods and services *	t CO ₂ eq.	18.31	17.02	40.07
Scope 3	Upstream	3	Fuel & energy related activities (not included in scope 1 and scope 2)	t CO ₂ eq.	2.43	3.89	1.05
Scope 3	Upstream	5	Water & waste generated in operations	t CO ₂ eq.	0.44	0.34	0.16
Scope 3	Upstream	6	Business travel *	t CO ₂ eq.	22.01	16.72	13.19
Scope 3	Upstream	7	Employee commuting & homeworking *	t CO ₂ eq.	7.80	8.78	12.45

* denotes estimate - see below for explanation on methodology

Scope 1 and 2 Intensity ratio				2024	2023	2022
Total Scope 1 and 2				13.13	12.67	15.33
FTE				20	20	22
t CO ₂ e/FTE				0.66	0.63	0.70
Scope 1, 2 and 3 Intensity ratio				2023	2022	
Total Scope 1, 2 and 3				64.12	59.42	82.24
FTE				20	20	22
t CO ₂ e/FTE				3.21	2.97	3.74

*The methodologies used are the Greenhouse Gas Protocol and the UK Government conversion factors produced by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). Data sources such as the firm's annual operational costs, UK standard industry classification (SIC) codes, ONS data, BEIS emission factors and Aberforth personnel data are used in relevant calculations.

Scope 3 category 1, purchased goods and services, is an estimate determined through analysing the firm's spend on goods and services and categorising them into SIC codes. Supplier specific emissions data was sourced where practicable and available and scenario analysis was undertaken to determine a range of values to attempt to address data quality and availability issues. 95% of the operational spend was assessed, of which, c43% of emissions data was sourced for the supply chain (company scope 1 and 2). A median value from three scenarios was used this year resulting in a methodology change that is less conservative than the baseline 2022 approach.

FTEs recorded for the reporting years are annual averages.

Aberforth Partners LLP

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