



# Aberforth Smaller Companies Trust plc

## Monthly Factsheet

31 December 2021

### 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
Sonya Kim	Euan Macdonald
Peter Shaw	Christopher Watt

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	337
Total market value	£156bn
Largest constituent	£1.6bn
Largest constituent if index rebalanced at Factsheet date	£1.6bn

### Key Fund information

Total investments	£1,555m
Number of investments	77
Active share	76.0%
Gearing - bank debt in use	£87m
Net gearing/(liquidity)	5.6%
Total net assets	£1,473m
Ordinary shares in issue	87,948,266
NAV	1,674.35p
Share price	1,464.00p
Discount/(premium)	12.6%
Market value	£1,288m
Launch date	10 Dec 90
Next year-end	31 Dec 22

### Fees & charges

Management fee* (12m to 31 Dec 20)	0.74%
Performance fee	None
Ongoing charges (at 31 Dec 20 & includes Management fee)	0.81%

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

### Yield & dividends

Yield	2.3%
Interim dividend (paid 27 Aug 21)	10.95p
Final dividend (paid 9 Mar 21)	22.90p

### 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

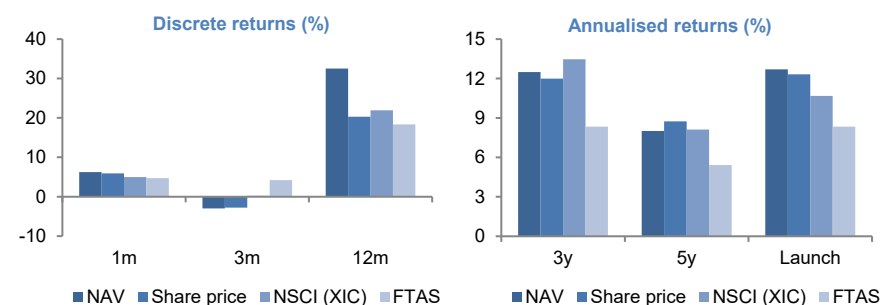
Aberforth are value investors who buy shares in companies that they calculate to be selling below their intrinsic value. This is determined through detailed financial and industrial analysis, combined with a valuation approach that focuses on both stockmarket and corporate worth.

### Investment performance (annualised total returns)

Growth (%)	1m	3m	12m	3y	5y	Launch
NAV	6.2	-3.0	32.5	12.5	8.0	12.7
Share price	5.9	-2.8	20.3	12.0	8.7	12.3
NSCI (XIC)	5.0	0.3	21.9	13.5	8.1	10.7
FTAS	4.7	4.2	18.3	8.3	5.4	8.3

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

**Errata:** the FTSE All-Share performance returns used in the table above, the bar charts below and the investment commentary text replace the incorrect figures calculated in error and initially published on 10 January 2022. Details of the corrections are available on request.



### Monthly investment commentary: December

Through December equity markets were focused on the Omicron variant and on monetary policy. Reflecting rising doubts in the US about how quickly inflation can be expected to subside, the Fed indicated that interest rates may need to rise. At home, the Bank of England raised rates to 0.25%, though monetary policy remains remarkably loose. Meanwhile, equity markets were encouraged by indications that the Omicron variant might not be as dangerous as its predecessors. Against this backdrop, the FTSE All-Share returned 4.7% and the NSCI (XIC) rose by 5.0%. The Fund produced a return of 6.2%, aided by a better month for the value investment style.

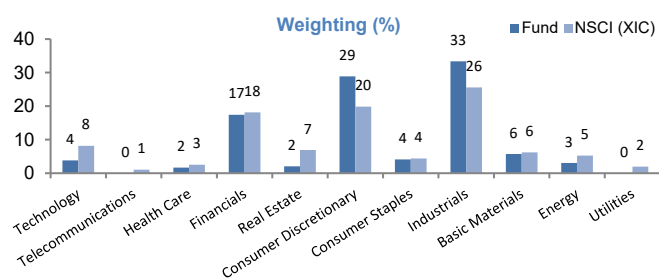
Turning to stocks, notable among the winners was **Stagecoach**, which responded positively to the terms of an all-share combination with National Express and continued the theme of resurgent M&A activity among small UK quoted companies. Elsewhere, vehicle renter **Redde Northgate** was buoyed by strong demand and a significantly increased dividend. Media company **National World** also reported strong trading and rallied in response to its update. Relative performance was also boosted by the struggles of stocks not held by the fund, with Currys and Cineworld notable.

Stocks that hurt relative performance included photographic and broadcast accessories group **Vitec**, windows and doors manufacturer **Eurocell** and building products distributor **SIG**. Each issued a trading update over the fourth quarter, which suggested better than expected progress. However, with the market focusing on comments about supply chain bottlenecks and rising prices, all three gave back some of their share price gains over previous months.

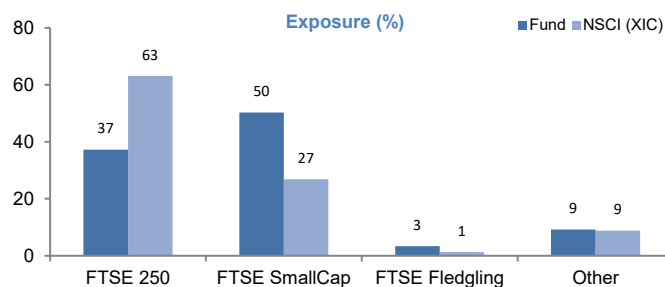
### Top 10 equity investments

Name	Activity	%
<b>Reach</b>	UK newspaper publisher	3.4
<b>Redde Northgate</b>	Van rental	3.0
<b>Provident Financial</b>	Personal credit provider	2.8
<b>FirstGroup</b>	Bus & rail operator	2.8
<b>Morgan Advanced Materials</b>	Manufacture of carbon & ceramic materials	2.7
<b>Robert Walters</b>	Recruitment	2.7
<b>Brewin Dolphin Holdings</b>	Private client fund manager	2.5
<b>Rathbones Group</b>	Private client fund manager	2.5
<b>Vitec Group</b>	Photographic & broadcast accessories	2.4
<b>Wincanton</b>	Logistics	2.3

## 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 2023.

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: GB0000066654	Next year-end: 31 Dec 22
TIDM: ASL	LEI: 213800GZ9WC73A92Q326

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