



ABERFORTH PARTNERS

Aberforth Stewardship Policy 2026

This document describes Aberforth's approach to stewardship and its compliance with the UK Stewardship Code 2026, which came into effect on 1 January 2026. The Code separates the disclosure of organisational context and stewardship policies from the reporting of activities and outcomes. Signatories are required to submit a Policy and Context Disclosure every four years and an Activities and Outcomes Report annually.

The 2026 Code permits signatories to submit the Policy and Context Disclosure and the Activities and Outcomes Report either as separate documents or as a single combined submission. Aberforth has elected to combine both in one document, so that the reader can move between the firm's standing policies and its annual evidence without recourse to a second file. Part One sets out the Policy and Context Disclosure, covering Disclosures A to E applicable to asset managers. Part Two is the Activities and Outcomes Report, covering stewardship activities conducted during the calendar year 2025. As a firm that manages all client assets directly, Aberforth reports on Principles 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6. Principle 5 (selection and oversight of external managers) does not apply.

Those looking for more information may contact Sam Ford – the investment partner responsible for co-ordinating stewardship matters – by email at stewardship@aberforth.co.uk or by phone on 0131 220 0733.



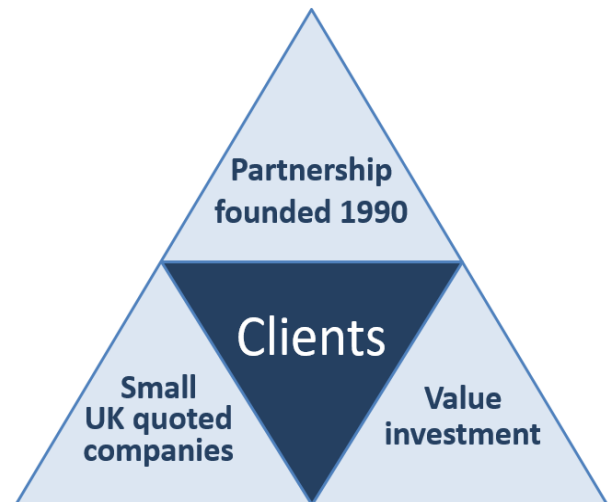
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PART ONE | POLICY AND CONTEXT DISCLOSURE

Disclosure A | Organisation, Investment Beliefs and Stewardship Approach

Aberforth was established in 1990 and remains wholly owned by partners working at the firm. Since then, its purpose is unchanged and is encapsulated by the accompanying diagram. Specifically, the purpose is to deliver superior long-term investment returns for its clients and, by extension, for the ultimate beneficiaries of its clients' portfolios.

Three central aspects of the firm – partnership, a focus on small UK quoted companies and a value investment philosophy – support the pursuit of this purpose. The features set out below are described in more detail in Aberforth's investment philosophy document, which can be found [HERE](#).



Investment beliefs and stewardship approach

- Aberforth was designed by its founders to be a simple business in the belief that this would improve the investment outcomes for its clients. The firm has remained focused on one asset class and, aided by a self-imposed cap on its assets under management, avoids the complexity and proliferation of strategies that are associated with the asset-gathering model pursued by much of the fund management industry. Aberforth believes that its chosen asset class – small UK quoted companies – is relatively inefficient and, through fundamental analysis, lends itself to the active management of a diversified portfolio of stocks.
- All Aberforth's portfolios are managed in accordance with a value investment philosophy. Encouraged by historical evidence, Aberforth believes that this philosophy plays a central role in the achievement of superior long-term returns. Given this unwavering adherence to value investment, Aberforth's primary consideration in any investment decision is, unsurprisingly, valuation. Any matters that affect the valuation of an investee company are relevant to Aberforth's investment process. These matters include environmental, social and governance (ESG) risks and opportunities. The firm believes that discreet engagement with the boards of investee companies – on matters such as governance, capital allocation, environmental impact, and social policies – can improve investment returns, to the benefit of clients.
- It is appropriate to acknowledge that the value philosophy does not reward its adherents uniformly. The investment universe of small UK quoted companies has been persistently out of favour for extended stretches. Aberforth does not regard these periods as grounds to revise the philosophy, but they demand transparency with clients about the nature of the strategy and the patience it requires.



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- The firm's ownership structure is fundamental to its investment focus and its capacity to practise stewardship consistently over time. Aberforth is a limited liability partnership, wholly owned by six partners, each of whom works full-time at the firm. The partners each invest a significant portion of their personal savings in the collective funds managed by the firm, aligning their interests directly with those of clients. The partners' intention is to ensure the perpetuation of the partnership through transition to the next generation, extending a client-centred culture beyond the tenure of any individual.

Successful stewardship of clients' capital can be of broader benefit. While small companies have a less significant impact than do their larger peers on the economy, the environment and society, that is not a reason for such issues to be de-emphasised. Aberforth expects investee companies and their boards to consider ESG risks and opportunities in their operational and strategic decision-making.

Except when requested by clients, Aberforth does not exclude investments from portfolios on the basis of ESG considerations alone. There is evidence that investment returns can be enhanced by investment in and engagement with companies that face ESG challenges and are already seeking to address them or can be encouraged to do so.

Investment universe

Aberforth's investment universe is the Deutsche Numis Smaller Companies Index (excluding Investment Companies) [DNSCI (XIC)], which constitutes the bottom 10% of the main UK equity market by market capitalisation. All clients' assets are managed actively and invested directly on a long-only basis. Aberforth manages no indexed products and employs no external investment managers.

Clients and beneficiaries

At 31 December 2025, the firm managed four funds with aggregate assets under management of approximately £2,057m.

Client	Assets	Inception	Type
Aberforth Smaller Companies Trust plc	£1,462m	1990	Investment trust
Aberforth Geared Value & Income Trust plc	£145m	2024	Split capital investment trust
Aberforth UK Small Companies Fund	£166m	1991	Authorised unit trust
UK Charity A	£284m	2002	Segregated fund



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- **Standard value – Aberforth Smaller Companies Trust plc (ASCoT):** an investment trust listed on the London Stock Exchange, a client since inception in 1990. Underlying investors are overwhelmingly institutional, primarily private wealth managers. Retail investors represent approximately 15%* of the fund; non-UK investors approximately 12%*.
- **Standard value – Aberforth UK Small Companies Fund (AFund):** an authorised unit trust, a client since inception in 1991. Underlying investors are predominantly institutional. Retail investors represent approximately 13%* of the fund; non-UK investors approximately 10%*.
- **Value and income – Aberforth Geared Value & Income Trust plc (AGVIT):** a split capital investment trust listed on the London Stock Exchange, a client since 2024. Retail investors represent approximately 14%* of the fund; non-UK investors approximately 3%*. AGVIT has a planned winding-up date of 30 June 2031.
- **Standard value with client restrictions – Charity A:** a segregated mandate managed for one of the UK's largest charities, a client since 2002.

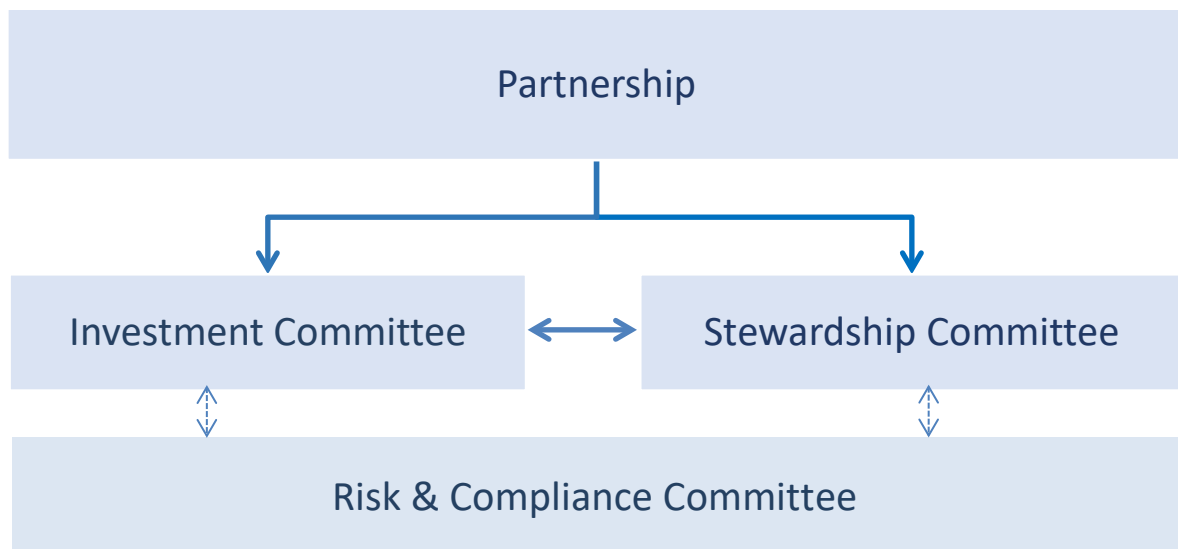
* Sources: Aberforth Partners LLP; Richard Davies Investor Relations.

Across all mandates, the aggregate client base is overwhelmingly institutional or wholesale. The proportion of retail investors is modest and principally arises through execution-only platforms and non-discretionary stockbrokers invested in the collective funds. Aberforth considers a minimum investment time horizon of five years to be appropriate for all mandates. The value investment philosophy can produce extended periods of relative under-performance within that horizon, and a longer perspective reduces the risk that clients draw premature conclusions from short-term results. Several companies have been held for over a decade; the average holding period is shorter, reflecting the cyclical opportunities to realise value and reinvest proceeds in more attractively priced situations – a process Aberforth refers to as the "value roll".



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Disclosure B | Governance and Resources



The governance structure supporting stewardship within Aberforth is straightforward, reflecting the firm's size and its commitment to clear lines of accountability. The partnership is the ultimate governing body. The Stewardship Committee sets the framework within which the investment managers exercise day-to-day stewardship judgements. It reports to the partnership annually and operates in parallel with the Investment Committee. The Risk and Compliance Committee provides an additional layer of oversight.

The Stewardship Committee is chaired by Sam Ford, the partner with dedicated responsibility for all stewardship activities. It comprises four members: the chair, another investment partner, the operations partner and the Head of Sustainability and Investor Relations (S&IR), contributing specialist knowledge of ESG matters, regulatory developments and investor relations that complements the perspectives of the other members. Having the operations partner as a member provides a perspective independent of the investment function.

Day-to-day stewardship decisions are taken by the investment managers at the weekly investment committee. The informal oversight provided by a small team working together in the same building is a practical advantage of Aberforth's compact structure. When issues surface, they are addressed promptly through collegiate discussion and challenge. Coverage of sectors and individual companies is assigned on a primary basis to individual managers, who lead on engagement and propose voting decisions. Investment decisions, including engagement strategies for significant positions, are taken collectively.



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The investment team is well-resourced relative to the size of the universe it covers and, at 22 years' average industry experience, brings a depth of knowledge that is rare among firms of comparable scale. The investment managers are encouraged to pursue training and professional development as they judge appropriate. Beyond formal training, the firm places particular value on the knowledge that comes from direct exposure to investee companies - their operations, their suppliers and their customers. Site visits and meetings beyond the boardroom deepen the investment managers' understanding of a business.

Investment and stewardship activities are supported by a proprietary SQL database, developed internally and tailored to the firm's needs. It provides a common framework through which each investment manager can view company fundamentals, valuation metrics, engagement priorities and ESG evaluations in a single integrated environment.

Third-party providers provide selected data and analysis to Aberforth. This includes a relationship with a proxy voting adviser. Where third-party data relationships exist, they are subject to an annual effectiveness review.

The structure and ethos of the partnership mean that separate reward structures to incentivise stewardship are not necessary. Aberforth's model is for all its investment managers, and therefore all those with responsibility for enacting stewardship policy, to become partners in the firm. Investment managers are rewarded on the basis of the firm's overall performance, rather than being tied to the investment results of individual sectors or funds. This aligns Aberforth's activities with clients' interests. All operational staff have a specific ESG contribution objective as part of their remuneration assessment.



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Disclosure C | Policies, Processes and Review

Aberforth's stewardship policies are set out in a suite of documents, each serving a distinct purpose and subject to regular review. The principal documents, all publicly available in the Literature Library on Aberforth's website and [HERE](#), are:

- **Stewardship Policy:** Aberforth's formal response to the UK Stewardship Code.
- **ESG Integration Framework:** the methodology underpinning the assessment and integration of ESG factors into the investment process.
- **Engagement and Voting Framework:** the firm's approach to engagement and voting and the standards expected of investee companies.
- **Examples of Engagement and Voting:** illustrative case studies from the most recent reporting year.
- **About Aberforth and Investment Philosophy:** contextual documents covering the firm's background and investment beliefs.

The Stewardship Policy and Examples of Engagement and Voting are reviewed and updated annually by the Stewardship Committee before being approved by the partnership. Other documents, including the Engagement and Voting Framework and ESG Integration Framework are reviewed internally at least annually.

Aberforth's primary approach to assurance is internal. The partners own the firm outright and are directly responsible for the implementation of stewardship policy. This alignment of ownership and accountability lends credibility to internal review. The Stewardship Committee provides a formal layer of review and challenge. External assurance is provided indirectly through the boards of the three collective funds, who receive and scrutinise the Stewardship Policy and voting records annually. Summarised disclosures in the funds' annual reports are reviewed by external auditors.

Aberforth periodically considers whether formal third-party assurance would be warranted, including under the AAF 01/20 framework of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. No such assessment has to date identified a service adding value commensurate with its cost, given existing arrangements. This position is reviewed as obligations and the external assurance market evolve.



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Disclosure D | Conflicts of Interest

As an independent limited liability partnership, whose sole specialisation is investment in small UK quoted companies, many of the traditional conflict of interest scenarios faced by larger, more diverse investment management entities do not apply or are less relevant to Aberforth.

The firm has a policy, refreshed annually, for the identification and management of conflicts of interest, with the objective of ensuring that clients are not adversely affected. Any conflict of interest that arises is duly considered by senior management, including the compliance team. The conflict is recorded and managed in a way that ensures that all clients are treated fairly. Where it is impractical to manage such a conflict it will be disclosed to the relevant clients. Aberforth's conflicts of interest policy is shared directly with clients and can be found [HERE](#).

The policy describes situations in which conflicts of interest may arise. From the stewardship perspective, the most relevant are conflicts that can arise (a) between Aberforth's interests and those of its clients, (b) among its clients or (c) between the interests of the firm's partners or employees and its clients.

The points below explain how Aberforth has identified and managed conflicts of interest relevant to stewardship.

- In buying and selling shares, the firm only ever deals as agent on behalf of its clients and never as principal on its own account.
- The firm's bespoke order management system is designed to deliver fair allocation of aggregated orders between multiple clients. This is subjected to regular compliance monitoring.
- The firm has controls in place to ensure that mandate restrictions directed by clients are known by investment managers and are reflected in systems.
- The firm's policy on gifts and hospitality prohibits the giving or accepting of gifts that may give rise to a conflict of duties owed to clients or the firm and may otherwise only be accepted where the gift or hospitality is modest and infrequent.
- Aberforth encourages long-term savings and investment by partners and employees. Personal dealings in investments are generally permitted, subject to compliance with the personal dealing policy. That policy requires all personal dealing to be approved by a partner and generally prohibits investment in any company that is a constituent of the investment universe.
- Private wealth managers, on behalf of their clients, are significant investors in the collective funds managed by Aberforth. Some of these wealth management companies are constituents of the investment universe and the firm can invest its clients' funds in them. On such occasions, the investment decisions are taken transparently in a manner consistent with clients' mandates and Aberforth's purpose and investment philosophy, as described in Disclosure A.



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- Clients' interests are represented directly with the investment managers through the independent boards of the investment trusts, the independent non-executive directors of the unit trust management company (on behalf of the unit trust) and directly by client representatives on behalf of the segregated charity clients.
- Aberforth's partners are not permitted to take board positions at investee companies or to sit on the boards of the two investment trusts that the firm manages.
- A conflict may arise should a director of an investment trust managed by Aberforth be invited to join, or already be a member of, the board of a company in which the firm's clients invest. How this situation is addressed is described in one of the examples below as an outcome.

Example: **Investment trust non-executive director conflict**

In one instance, an investment trust director was invited to join the board of a company in which Aberforth's clients held a significant interest. The conflict could not be mitigated to an acceptable level and the director withdrew. In a separate instance in 2025, a potential conflict of the same type was assessed and judged manageable, with transparent disclosures and appropriate information barriers put in place.



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Disclosure E | Dialogue with Clients and/or Beneficiaries

Aberforth's approach to maintaining dialogue with clients and beneficiaries rests on a structure of formal reporting, direct engagement and routine feedback gathering, each operating in a manner proportionate to the nature of the relationship. The firm's four client mandates divide between three collective funds and one segregated charity mandate, and the mechanisms employed reflect the governance characteristics of each.

The three collective funds - Aberforth Smaller Companies Trust plc (ASCoT), Aberforth Geared Value & Income Trust plc (AGVIT) and Aberforth UK Small Companies Fund (AFund) - are overseen by boards of independent directors. Each board receives detailed quarterly reports and meets regularly with representatives of Aberforth throughout the year. These meetings address performance against investment objectives, the firm's stewardship activities (including a record of significant votes and case studies on specific company engagements), the outlook for the portfolio and adherence to the relevant stewardship code. At least one member of the Stewardship Committee is in attendance at fund board meetings. Summarised stewardship disclosures are included in the annual reports of each collective fund, approved by the respective boards and reviewed by external auditors.

Shareholders in the collective funds receive information through annual and interim reports and monthly factsheets. Research covering the investment trust funds is produced independently by Kepler Partners and made available to investors on a regular basis. Additional coverage is produced by the sales and research teams of investment banks, though access to such material depends upon individual clients' relationships and agreements with those firms. Furthermore, ASCoT's Annual General Meeting includes an ordinary continuation resolution every three years, providing shareholders with a formal mechanism to express a view on the fund's continuation.

The charity holding the segregated mandate receives quarterly reports and meets representatives of Aberforth regularly throughout the year. In addition, Aberforth compiles an annual ESG report for this client, providing a stock-by-stock assessment of Environmental, Social and Governance factors across the portfolio, complemented by examples of engagement activity undertaken during the year.

All relevant reports and disclosures made to clients are reviewed by the Stewardship Committee before distribution.



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Feedback

Feedback from the collective fund clients is gathered through several routes. Fund board meetings provide a regular and structured forum in which directors may question and challenge the investment managers on any aspect of stewardship or investment policy. Separately, Aberforth's investment managers meet the funds' largest investors twice each year, in May and November, to explain performance and strategy and to hear directly from shareholders. These meetings afford investors the opportunity to raise matters, request clarification on stewardship activity and convey views on the firm's approach. In May and November 2025, this amounted to 372 meetings around the UK. As at November 2025, these meetings represented 59% of ASCoT's register; 49% of AGVIT's combined register (Ordinary and ZDP shares); and 60% of AFund's combined register (Accumulation and Income units). For the November series, the timing of the budget and the uncertainty surrounding it were a distraction, but the broad conclusion was that UK smaller companies remain of interest, though there is exasperation with politics. Engagement activity with investee companies is also discussed at these meetings to the extent that confidentiality permits. Following publication of the funds' annual reports and financial statements, further consultation with investors is undertaken and feedback gathered is shared routinely with the boards.

The chair of each investment trust board writes annually to the top thirty shareholders offering a meeting and requesting feedback. This practice supplements the investment managers' own programme of investor engagement and ensures that the boards have a direct line of communication with the funds' principal shareholders, independent of Aberforth.

For the segregated charity mandate, feedback is gathered through the regular meeting schedule with client representatives and through review of the annual ESG report, which gives the client an informed basis on which to raise stewardship-related matters. The relationship is governed by an investment management agreement and includes client-specific investment restrictions which inform how Aberforth manages the mandate.

Where feedback is received from clients and beneficiaries that is relevant to the firm's stewardship activities and philosophy, it is considered by the Stewardship Committee, and by the partnership more broadly where appropriate. The Committee meets quarterly and considers, among other matters, themes emerging from investor meetings and board discussions. Given the diverse underlying ownership of the collective funds, there is inevitably a range of views on investment strategy and stewardship. Where common concerns arise, the committee assesses whether they call for a change to the firm's approach or warrant a more detailed response to clients. The independent boards of the collective funds provide a further check: their scrutiny of Aberforth's stewardship policy and their observations - whether raised in formal meetings or through the annual shareholder correspondence programme - are considered alongside direct investor feedback. Both channels therefore inform the committee's deliberations.



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The segregated charity mandate operates differently. Regular consultation with the client's investment committee has directly influenced investment decisions: potential investments have been declined where dialogue confirmed their incompatibility with the mandate's restrictions or with the client's longer-term commitment to reduce fossil fuel exposure and progress towards a carbon-neutral portfolio.

Aberforth's stewardship policy is published on the firm's website and is accessible to all investors and other interested parties. The firm keeps the policy under annual review and welcomes engagement from clients, investee companies and other stakeholders on its content.



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Aberforth Stewardship Policy 2026

PART TWO | ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES REPORT

Principle 1 | Integrating Stewardship and Investment

Signatories integrate stewardship and investment to deliver long-term sustainable value for their clients and beneficiaries.

Aberforth's stewardship activities play a vital role in the investment process, with the overarching aim of delivering superior long-term returns for clients. The primary influence on portfolio composition is the prioritisation of companies offering the greatest upside between their prevailing stockmarket price and Aberforth's assessment of intrinsic value. Any matter bearing on that gap is an investment matter and, by extension, a stewardship matter.

Governance is the primary lens through which those matters are assessed. A company's system of governance determines how its board identifies and manages all risks and opportunities - environmental and social ones included - and it is therefore the foundation on which Aberforth's assessment of long-term value rests. In recent years, growing awareness of environmental and social issues has accentuated their effects on stockmarket valuations. Aberforth contends that the perception of ESG deficiencies can create valuation opportunities, as the stockmarket frequently underestimates the capacity of small companies to take effective remedial action. Valuation discounts attributable to ESG concerns can therefore be narrowed through direct engagement with boards, encouraging issues to be addressed and helping to close the gap between price and value.

Investment beliefs and stewardship philosophy

Several convictions, each supported by long-run empirical evidence, form the foundation of the investment philosophy. The value premium has been observable within the DNSCI (XIC) since the index's inception in June 1955, with value stocks out-performing growth stocks by 3.2% per annum to December 2025. Small companies have also outperformed larger peers by 1.4% per annum over the same period. Fundamental analysis, applied with rigour and consistency, can identify specific valuation opportunities that arise from the relative inefficiency with which the small cap market is priced.

Stewardship, for Aberforth, is not a discrete activity conducted alongside the investment process: it is an integral component of it. Engagement with investee companies on governance, capital allocation, and environmental and social matters generates qualitative insight that informs the investment judgements made by the team. Good governance, in Aberforth's experience, is typically a prerequisite for the effective management of environmental and social risks. Discreet, direct engagement is the firm's preferred method, reflecting the conviction that engagement conducted in private is more likely to effect change than confrontation conducted in public.



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It is appropriate to acknowledge that the value philosophy does not reward its adherents uniformly. The investment universe of small UK quoted companies has been persistently out of favour for extended stretches, including recently. Aberforth does not regard these periods as grounds to revise the philosophy, but they demand transparency with clients about the nature of the strategy and the patience it requires.

ESG integration framework activities

The methodology underpinning the firm's ESG analysis is set out in Aberforth's ESG Integration Framework, available [HERE](#). The framework assesses twelve subfactors across three categories - Environmental, Social and Governance - for every Aberforth portfolio holding, using a combination of sector-level risk scores set by the Stewardship Committee and company-level evaluation scores set by the lead investment manager. The dataset now spans five completed annual cycles, making year-on-year comparisons an increasingly useful guide to deterioration, improvement and engagement priorities.

During 2025, the Stewardship Committee conducted its annual review of sector-level risk scores, building on the Committee's industry engagement over the year and on updates from the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board on material financial risks by sector.

Separately, the Stewardship Committee met individually with each investment manager during the year to review company-level evaluation scores, identify outliers and ensure consistency of approach across the team. The ESG framework allows engagement objectives to be set at subfactor level, so each investment manager can record and track engagement activity against the specific environmental, social or governance issue to which it relates.

During the 2025 annual ESG risk score review, a comparative assessment of SASB's materiality map confirmed no year-on-year changes. Following deliberations between the Stewardship Committee and investment managers, the Committee determined that two risk score adjustments were warranted under the Employee Culture subfactor within the Social factor. The risk score for Banks, Finance and Credit Services was reduced from 5 to 4, reflecting industry-wide improvements to employment practices accumulated through lessons learned over successive economic cycles, reinforced by a more demanding regulatory environment that has raised conduct and governance standards across the sector. The risk score for Consumer Services was also reduced from 5 to 4, recognising that the sector encompasses a wide variety of business models, not all of which are principally dependent on human capital; some are delivered through equipment and fixed capital, where employee culture risk is commensurately lower.

Aberforth also enhanced the ESG module within its proprietary database. This included the initial capture of avoided emissions data (Scope 4), of which only one investee company, Dialight, currently discloses. Alongside this, refinements were made to guidance across all ESG data points to improve consistency and data quality. Both developments keep the module fit for the future as disclosure practice evolves.



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Stewardship priorities and examples

Aberforth's approach to setting stewardship priorities is bottom-up. As previously described, the issues that determine how the firm exercises its stewardship responsibilities are those the investment managers identify as material to valuations, not those prescribed by external frameworks. In 2025, the great majority of those priorities were governance-related, reflecting the conditions prevailing in the small UK quoted market during the year. Four themes that shaped engagement activity - M&A; Self-help; AIM to main market migration; Consultation standards and the revised Listing Rules - are described in under Principle 3.

The two examples below demonstrate how stewardship activities are integrated in the investment process. They are drawn from engagements with investee companies where social matters were judged to be directly relevant to the value of the investment.

Foxtons (Social – Employee Culture subfactor)

In February 2025 Bloomberg carried a story that questioned Foxtons' corporate culture, describing two incidents of sexual harassment and racism in the workforce. We engaged with the chair and the chief executive to examine the allegations. They argued that there was not a systemic issue within the company and that the allegations were specific and isolated. Nevertheless, a firm-wide training programme was put in place and reporting lines to the ESG committee were strengthened. The measures adopted are unlikely to eliminate undesirable behaviour in a company of 1,400 employees, but we were reassured that the board was taking the issues raised seriously. Our view was supported by changes to the implementation of the remuneration policy for 2026, which introduced a People and Culture component to the annual bonus plan with a 15% weighting.

Macfarlane Group (Social – Health and Safety subfactor)

Following a fatal accident at a recently acquired subsidiary, Aberforth held several meetings with the chief executive, the chair and the senior independent director. We were satisfied that the board understood the gravity of the situation and was responding to it appropriately. Our engagement emphasised the need for clear accountability, the embedding of lessons learned across the group, and a strengthening of oversight in respect of operational risk, integration and health and safety. The accident coincided with a cyclical slowdown in demand, which prompted further engagement on strategic discipline. The board confirmed that acquisition activity had been paused, recognising the need to address priorities within the existing business. European expansion remains a medium-term ambition for Macfarlane and, should that require further M&A, we encouraged the chair to ensure explicit linkage between executive tenure and the execution of any transformational transaction. This draws on lessons from Macfarlane's earlier overseas acquisitions.



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Stewardship training and development

- The Head of Sustainability and Investor Relations holds periodic ESG review sessions with the investment managers, supporting a consistent and current understanding of evolving ESG matters across the team.
- The annual ESG evaluations of investee companies are reviewed at the investment committee alongside a discussion of interim results, which requires each investment manager to have considered and completed the evaluation for the prior financial year, drawing on the company's annual report, stewardship documentation and direct engagement. This creates a structured forum for agreeing on the issues that matter and how they are to be addressed, while allowing learnings to be shared transparently across the investment team.
- The Stewardship Committee was particularly focused during 2025 on adapting the firm's disclosures to the requirements of the UK Stewardship Code 2026, work that built directly on Aberforth's participation in the FRC's consultation on the revised Code the previous year.



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Principle 2 | Promoting well-functioning markets

Signatories identify and respond to market-wide and systemic risks to promote well-functioning financial markets.

Market-wide risks

Fundamental research is the foundation of Aberforth's approach, and market-wide risks are directly relevant to the valuation of investee companies. Two investment managers carry specific responsibility for monitoring macroeconomic and financial market conditions, bringing assessments to the weekly investment committee where implications for individual company valuations and portfolio positioning are discussed. Where those discussions alter the firm's view of a company's intrinsic value, target valuations may be adjusted and holdings changed accordingly. Where a market-wide issue bears on Aberforth's own operations or obligations, it is discussed by the partners and acted upon as appropriate.

The following market-wide risks were identified and considered by Aberforth's investment committee in 2025.

- The imposition of US trade tariffs and broader geopolitical instability created near-term uncertainty for several portfolio companies with international revenues or supply chains. Exposures were assessed on a company-by-company basis, considering the degree of pass-through pricing available to each business and the extent to which revenue and cost structures could be adapted.
- Domestic companies faced market-wide headwinds from the tax rises announced in the prior year's Budget. The increase in the National Living Wage and the compounding effect of the employer National Insurance increase that had taken effect from April added meaningfully to cost structures, particularly for businesses in labour-intensive sectors. Where the impact was judged material, valuation assessments for investee companies were revised accordingly.
- Depressed investor interest in UK equities has left many small quoted companies vulnerable to acquisition at prices that do not reflect their intrinsic value, with the consequent upside passing to trade or private acquirers rather than to long-term shareholders. Aberforth's engagement with investee company boards is directed in part at protecting against this outcome, ensuring that any transaction is assessed against a realistic appraisal of value rather than a distressed market price. Examples of Aberforth's engagement on such matters are provided under Principle 3.
- Changes introduced in 2024 reduced the category of transactions requiring prior shareholder approval under the UK Listing Rules. This was intended to reduce regulatory burden and cost for UK Main Market public companies. However, it also created the risk that companies might proceed with significant transactions without adequate consultation. In its routine meetings with investee company chairs, Aberforth reminds boards of the firm's expectation of consultation on matters that can affect shareholder value.



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Systemic risks

Aberforth regards climate change as a systemic risk with long-term consequences for economic activity and for the valuations of investee companies. Its effects are incorporated in company assessments where energy transition exposure is material, informed by the climate change subfactor within the ESG framework. Aberforth has not engaged in public advocacy on climate change: the scope of the judgements involved is broad, and prioritisation is a matter for government and broader society. This stance does not diminish the firm's responsibility to consider the impact of potential policy action on investee companies' prospects and valuations.

The proliferation of climate change regulation and guidance from official bodies may itself constitute a market-wide risk. Any resulting complexity may slow or complicate implementation, particularly for smaller companies with more limited resource. This can be a source of individual investment opportunities among companies that are slower to adapt but willing to do so, and Aberforth's regular engagement with boards is well suited to identifying and supporting such situations.

Aberforth's own operations are subject to a carbon reduction plan aligned with the firm's commitment to net zero emissions by 2050. The firm reports voluntarily under the Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting framework, covering Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions from its own operations; this does not include financed emissions from the investment portfolio. Further detail is available in the Governance and Corporate Responsibility section, available [HERE](#). Rather than purchasing a carbon offset in 2025, the firm chose to invest an equivalent contribution in Sowing Our Horizons, an Edinburgh-based organisation that promotes a local, circular food economy in recognition of the carbon emissions arising from the global food system.

Engagement with policy makers, regulators and standard setters

Aberforth's partners and employees may participate in industry forums, to help identify risks and, where relevant, to influence how they are addressed. Such participation is undertaken with the aim of improving how financial markets - and in particular the market in small UK quoted companies - function. The objectives of engagement with these forums are: (i) identification of industry issues, including stewardship regulation and regulatory change; (ii) engagement on stewardship and ESG matters, with particular attention to their application to smaller listed businesses; and (iii) assessing and understanding economic and market conditions, including regulatory responses.

In 2025, Aberforth participated in forums with the Investment Association, the Association of Investment Companies, the Financial Conduct Authority and the Bank of England. There were no specific escalations raised regarding market-wide or systemic risks beyond contributing to these forums.



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Principle 3 | Engagement

Signatories engage to maintain or enhance the value of assets

Aberforth's policy on engagement is governed by the principles outlined in its Engagement and Voting framework available [HERE](#).

Engagement is an essential element of Aberforth's investment philosophy and process. The investment managers regularly engage with executives and boards of investee companies in a discreet and constructive manner. Aberforth believes that its clients and investee companies benefit from a policy of direct engagement that practises discretion when engagements are live. The firm's experience is that ill-timed disclosure and public confrontation hinder the chances of successfully effecting change.

A flexible approach to engagement is important. This reflects the diversity of business models and differing specific circumstances facing individual businesses, particularly within the universe of small UK quoted companies. Moreover, Aberforth is conscious that the broader economy benefits from a thriving smaller companies sector and that this may be stifled by a one-size-fits-all engagement policy.

While determined to encourage high standards of stewardship and corporate behaviour, Aberforth does not wish to burden small company boards unnecessarily with engagement guidelines that can appear to have been designed for larger companies. This, for example, might mean taking a pragmatic view on compensation in acknowledgment of the considerable competition for executive talent.

In 2025, Aberforth conducted 388 formal meetings with executives, a number that excludes ad hoc interactions by telephone or email. In addition, Aberforth conducted 179 engagements with the chairs or non-executives of 81 investee companies. Some of these engagements concerned relatively complicated issues that required multiple meetings. In several cases, they are on-going. These figures are disclosed as an indication of the extent of engagement, not as targets to be exceeded year on year.

Selecting and prioritising engagements

Aberforth's engagement priorities are determined through the investment process. The investment manager with primary sector responsibility identifies the issues most material to a company's stockmarket valuation and, if appropriate, proposes an engagement strategy to the investment committee. This considers the holding size, the scale of the concern and the likely ability to influence. Engagements are distinguished by purpose and intensity: routine due diligence differs from targeted engagement with a specific objective, which in turn differs from escalated situations requiring a sustained and intensive approach.

The purpose of engagement varies. In many instances it is to gather information – to understand a board's strategic thinking or approach to a particular risk – which informs the investment manager's assessment of value. In other instances, the purpose is to encourage a specific change: in board composition, capital allocation policy, governance practice, or management of an ESG risk affecting the company's valuation.



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Methods of engagement

The preference is for face-to-face meetings – at Aberforth's Edinburgh office or at the investee company's premises – particularly on sensitive matters. Virtual meetings, telephone and written correspondence are used as circumstances require. Site visits are undertaken where a physical understanding of operations, or the chance to meet company employees and managers below the level of executive management, can add further insights to the assessment.

Collaborative engagement can be pursued where the collective holdings of Aberforth's clients are insufficient in isolation to effect change, or where another significant shareholder has reached a compatible view independently and a combined approach carries greater weight.

Escalation

Engagement agendas are escalated when a board has not responded adequately to Aberforth's concerns. Other triggers can be specific events that require a more intensive approach. For example, a transaction, a governance failure or a deterioration in financial health. The decision to escalate is taken by investment committee, where the investment manager responsible for the company leads a review of progress and proposes the appropriate next step.

The first move is ordinarily to engage directly and discreetly with the chair. Where the chair is considered part of the problem, attention turns to the senior independent director. Escalation may also take the form of formal correspondence to the board, contact with the company's advisers, or, as a final measure, using the vote. The exercise of voting rights as a deliberate escalation tool is addressed under Principle 4.

Collaborative engagement is an important complement to escalation where the firm's individual holdings are insufficient to move a board independently. In 2025, Aberforth worked alongside another substantial shareholder through a complex balance sheet restructuring at an investee company. The specifics of this engagement are described in the examples that follow.

Engagement themes in 2025

M&A activity

Elevated levels of corporate activity across the small UK quoted sector were a significant feature of 2025. Takeovers of eleven companies in the DNSCI (XIC) completed in 2025, on top of which there were recommended offers outstanding for ten companies at the year end. Aberforth's clients had investments in eleven of the 21 companies. Aberforth's engagement in this context served two purposes: testing the board's strategic rationale for transactions and, where bids were received, assessing whether the terms adequately reflected intrinsic value. In several cases, direct engagement with a board supported a negotiated improvement to offer terms.



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Capital allocation priorities

Despite a backdrop of US tariff uncertainty and renewed domestic cost pressures following the UK Budget, the balance sheets of small UK quoted companies remained robust in aggregate. A common theme of Aberforth's engagement is how capital is deployed. The priority is the maintenance of existing assets and organic investment to generate future growth, provided that projects promise an appropriate return on capital. If, after these, there is surplus capital, the discussion turns to how its deployment. Options include acquisitions and returns to shareholders, through share buy-backs or special dividends. During 2025, 29 holdings within Aberforth's standard value portfolio announced or executed share buy-back programmes.

AIM to Main Market migration

The 2024 Budget's changes to inheritance tax relief on AIM shares, combined with broader modifications to the UK Listing Rules, prompted several larger AIM-quoted companies to investigate a move to the Main Market. In total, twelve companies completed migrations or announced intentions to move from AIM to the Main Market in 2025. Aberforth does not invest in AIM in the normal course of events, but a Main Market listing makes companies eligible for inclusion in the DNSCI (XIC) and therefore brings them into scope. The firm engaged with several of these companies ahead of or during their migration, assessing whether the investment case met the criteria applied across the rest of the portfolio. Investments were made in four. The mechanics of a migration frequently create a technical overhang on the register – index funds and AIM-focused vehicles obliged to sell can represent up to 25% of shares in issue – which can depress the share price in the short term and create an attractive entry point for value investors.

Consultation standards and the revised Listing Rules

A recurring element of Aberforth's engagement with investee company boards is the expectation that chairs will consult shareholders in a timely fashion on matters that affect the value of their investment. The changes to the UK Listing Rules in 2024 gave this expectation renewed urgency. The removal of the requirement for shareholder approval of certain significant transactions has reduced the formal mechanisms through which shareholders can influence major corporate decisions. Aberforth's view is that this makes voluntary consultation by boards more important, not less. Where a transaction is of a scale or nature that would materially affect the value or character of a company, directors should consult their significant shareholders before proceeding, regardless of whether the Listing Rules require them to do so. This principle was communicated directly to boards on several occasions during 2025 and informed several of the voting decisions described under Principle 4.



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Engagement examples

The following examples illustrate the breadth of the firm's engagement activity during 2025. Further examples from the year are available in Aberforth's Examples of Engagement and Voting document, published on the firm's website [HERE](#).

Ricardo

In January 2025, Ricardo warned on the outlook for profits. The stockmarket's concern was compounded by the recent completion of a significant acquisition, and the severity of the share price reaction gave Aberforth the opportunity to add to its clients' position. In March, we agreed to become an insider following a wall-crossing request from Ricardo's advisers regarding a possible offer for the company. The initial proposal, at 400p, represented a substantial premium to the depressed share price, yet it remained below Aberforth's assessment of fair value. A board presented with a hefty premium, and without the support of a significant shareholder prepared to reject it, can find itself under considerable pressure to recommend an approach. Aberforth's role was to provide that support, focusing on value rather than premium, and in doing so obliging the acquiror either to pay more or to walk away. We lent our name to a board letter rejecting the initial proposal. A revised offer of 425p followed and was similarly rebuffed, before a final proposal of 430p was received. At this price, Aberforth signed an irrevocable undertaking to vote in favour of the transaction. The engagement secured an 8% uplift from the terms of the initial approach.

Domino's Pizza Group

Aberforth's engagement started before our clients invested. It focused initially on an increase in management turnover and concern that operational focus had drifted from the core business of delivering pizza to UK consumers. We met the chair, the senior independent director and interim executives on several occasions, and visited the company's supply chain operations to glean insights on employee culture. In our non-executive engagements, we emphasised the need to focus on the company's core strengths as a scaled pizza delivery operation with a leading brand. This engagement centred on capital allocation risks following speculation that Domino's was considering entering a master franchise agreement with a non-pizza brand seeking UK expansion. We felt the returns of such an arrangement were skewed to the downside given valuation and integration risks, and advocated prioritising investment in the Domino's franchise alongside measured shareholder returns. Although it is too early to confirm the outcome of this engagement, the appointment of a new chair and the introduction of a special adviser, with whom Aberforth has worked previously, have so far been encouraging signals. On executive succession, we emphasised the importance of appointing an experienced operator capable of restoring confidence among franchisees and investors alike. The board has since clarified priorities, adopted a cautious stance on acquisitions and reaffirmed balance sheet discipline. With growing confidence in the direction of travel, we added to our clients' investments in the company during the year.



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Videndum

Videndum suffered badly from the Hollywood writers' strike in 2023. The impact on profits exposed the balance sheet and required an equity issue. We supported this after helping to install a new chair. The subsequent recovery has been weaker than expected, again leaving the company with too much debt. Our clients are the second largest shareholders and so Aberforth was taken inside by the company in the second half of 2025 to discuss refinancing plans. We were involved in discussions with the board, its advisers, another large shareholder and the lenders. We found the initial proposals, led by the lenders, unacceptable and rejected them. Together with the other shareholder, we worked on a revised set of proposals that would involve the issue of equity and a debt haircut for the lenders, crucially leaving the company with a manageable level of debt after the financing. The revised proposals were described in a regulatory news release in late December.



ABERFORTH PARTNERS

Principle 4 | Exercising rights and responsibilities

Signatories actively exercise their rights and responsibilities

There are three main methods by which Aberforth exercises its rights and responsibilities.

- The investment managers **engage** with the boards of investee companies in order to understand strategy and governance and, if necessary, to effect change. The ability to engage is improved by Aberforth's willingness to take meaningful stakes in investee companies on behalf of its clients. On most occasions, issues of board structure, dividend policy, remuneration and share issuance permissions will have been discussed, and potentially changed, before these issues are put to shareholders for approval at a General Meeting.
- **Voting** is a fundamental right for shareholders and is an important means by which Aberforth exercises stewardship on behalf of its clients. The firm's policy is to vote on every resolution put to shareholders at a General Meeting. Aberforth voted on all items at all general meetings over the past year, in line with its policy. Because of the depth and frequency of engagement with the boards of investee companies, Aberforth will have had the opportunity to influence important issues before they are put to shareholders at a general meeting. This results in fewer votes against the board or abstentions than might otherwise be expected.
- The third method is to **sell** a holding – a basic concept but one that sets listed equities apart from some other asset classes. When an investee company encounters operational difficulties, Aberforth typically engages to understand if a change of strategy or of personnel on the board might plausibly contribute towards an improvement in the company's prospects. If that does not appear forthcoming, Aberforth will typically exercise its right to sell the holding.

Aberforth manages four client funds, as described under Disclosure A. Three of the funds follow the firm's voting policy, with the firm exercising the voting rights. The segregated charity account retains its own voting rights and, while it receives voting advice from Aberforth, may choose to override Aberforth's policy. Aberforth's three collective funds do not engage in stock lending. The segregated charity fund may do so.

Research from Aberforth's proxy adviser, ISS, is considered, but the firm does not automatically follow ISS's recommendations. Aberforth takes a pragmatic, rather than a prescriptive one-size-fits-all approach, which has proven beneficial over time. This acknowledges the heterogeneous nature of the universe of small UK quoted companies and the proportionately greater governance burden on the typical small company.

Further information on Aberforth's Engagement and Voting Framework can be found [HERE](#).



ABERFORTH PARTNERS

Voting activity

Votes were cast on all resolutions in respect of all shares held under Aberforth's voting control. No voting decisions were taken by another entity on behalf of these shares. Shareholdings and voting rights are monitored through in-house fund accounting systems and ISS, which are reconciled with custodians' records.

	For	Against	Abstain
Aberforth Partners	1,501	25	10
ISS Voting Guidance	1,513	18	5
Aberforth Partners	97.7%	1.6%	0.7%
ISS Voting Guidance	98.5%	1.2%	0.3%

The above table summarises Aberforth's voting statistics during 2025 and compares them with ISS voting guidance. Of the 1,536 resolutions voted, Aberforth was for 1,501, against 25 and abstained on 10. These statistics do not fully capture the extent of Aberforth's influence: where the firm has concerns about a forthcoming resolution, it will typically engage with the company ahead of the vote, and changes made as a result may convert a potential vote against into a vote for. In 2025, votes were cast at 106 meetings across 90 portfolio companies, of which 86 were general, 12 were special and 8 were court meetings associated with M&A approvals.

Voting records are published on Aberforth's website [HERE](#).

Voting examples

Votes withheld or against board recommendations

Votes cast against or withheld are purposeful and planned. Aberforth views voting against as an important escalation tool when engagement is unable to facilitate change, while abstain votes can be a useful signal in on-going engagements. Intentions to vote either against or abstain are usually communicated to the boards ahead of time.

M&A activity targeting small UK quoted companies remained elevated in 2025. Takeovers can be a good means of closing valuation gaps and Aberforth's clients have benefited in this way over the years. However, since the stockmarket's valuations of the asset class are currently at a low ebb, there remains the risk that some M&A transactions are attempted at unattractive valuations. The firm's engagement ethos and agenda has reduced the risk with many demonstrable successes, but some transactions have proceeded on terms that we did not support. In these circumstances, we voted against the deal when it is brought to shareholders under a scheme of arrangement. In 2025, there were three such occasions, two of which are detailed below.



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TI Fluid Systems – voted AGAINST acquisition by ABC Technologies

As an automotive supplier, the company operates in a cyclical industry with powerful customers. It was, however, making good progress under a new chair and executive management team, helped by products that were relevant to both electric vehicles and internal combustion engines. It was therefore disappointing when the board recommended a bid from ABC Technologies, owned by the private equity firm Apollo, towards the end of 2024. The deal was struck at an opportunistic point by the acquiror, taking advantage of lacklustre recent trading and giving little credit for the company's underlying strengths. The vote to approve the deal took place in 2025 and passed, despite Aberforth's clients voting against.

The resolution passed with 96.5% of votes FOR.

Dowlais – voted AGAINST director re-elections at the 2025 AGM; AGAINST acquisition by American Axle

Like TI Fluid Systems, Dowlais is an automotive supplier and it faces similar challenges. The share price also struggled in the aftermath of the company's de-merger from Melrose in 2023. These near term issues gave Aberforth's clients the opportunity to invest, but it was disappointing that the board's response to its challenges was to recommend a cash and shares merger with a smaller peer, American Axle. The transaction effectively handed control to the US company at an unattractive premium. The combination is to be run by the Americans and the stockmarket listing is to move to the US. The deal offers significant synergy benefits, but these are only available to those able to own companies listed in the US. Aberforth therefore voted against the re-election of directors at the 2025 AGM as a deliberate escalation step, preceding and reinforcing the vote against the scheme itself, despite which the deal was approved.

The resolution related to the acquisition passed with 94.7% of votes FOR.

Each resolution related to director re-election passed with a minimum of 84.8% of votes FOR.



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Anonymised examples – voted AGAINST the re-election of certain non-executive directors

In 2025, Aberforth voted against the election of a non-executive director standing for appointment to the board of an investee company. We had prior experience of the individual as chair of another investee company. There he had set out a strategy for growth before announcing an unscheduled retirement well in advance of the end of his anticipated tenure. In our view, the manner of his departure undermined the strategy he had championed and raised doubts over his commitment to seeing through its implementation.

At the time of his departure, we contacted him directly to make clear that he should not count on Aberforth's support in future appointments. When he subsequently stood for election to the board of another investee company, we informed the chair of our intentions and voted against the resolution.

The resolutions passed.

Votes different from proxy adviser recommendations

During 2025 there were 75 resolutions on which Aberforth voted differently from ISS's recommendations. Examples are set out below.

Centaur Media – voted FOR the remuneration policy

The proxy adviser was AGAINST the resolution, citing concerns related to absolute total shareholder return criteria.

Amid a strategic review of the business and its constituent parts, Aberforth engaged with the board of Centaur Media to introduce an incentive framework aligned with shareholder outcomes. Given the circumstances and the appointment of a new executive chair, we considered a Value Creation Plan to be the most appropriate mechanism. We engaged with the head of the Remuneration Committee to share our views on its construction, including hurdle design and quantum, to ensure incentives were aligned with long-term value creation.

The resolution passed with 98.6% of votes FOR.



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Paypoint – voted AGAINST authorisation to conduct market purchases of own shares

The proxy adviser was FOR the resolution because the proposed amount and duration of the authority were within recommended limits.

Aberforth's concern was that the proposed buy-back programme would result in a significant minority shareholder being pushed through, and beyond, the 30% ownership threshold without purchasing additional shares or paying a premium. This creeping control could, in certain circumstances, be detrimental to our clients' interests. Despite raising these concerns during consultation, the company proceeded with its buy-back plan. Aberforth therefore voted against the renewal of the market purchase authority at the AGM to signal our view.

The resolution passed with 94.1% of votes FOR.

Mobico – voted AGAINST the re-election of non-executive directors

The proxy adviser was FOR their re-election.

Aberforth's engagement with Mobico was conducted against a backdrop of elevated leverage and a disposal programme that was proving more difficult than expected. We met the chair, the senior independent director, executive management and advisers on multiple occasions, and were explicit that effective engagement required genuine consultation rather than post hoc explanation. A particular point of contention was the disposal of the US School Bus division, which was presented to shareholders as a *fait accompli*. Reforms to the UK Listing Rules in 2024 have reduced the category of transactions requiring prior shareholder approval, but compliance with minimum regulatory requirements does not absolve directors of their stewardship responsibilities, particularly where trust has already been eroded. Given the strategic importance of the asset, the valuation achieved and the balance sheet context, we regarded the approach taken as unacceptable and communicated this directly to the board.

Each resolution related to director re-election passed with a minimum of 75.0% of votes FOR.

Further voting examples from 2025 are available in Aberforth's Examples of Engagement and Voting document, published on the firm's website [HERE](#).



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Principle 6 | Monitoring Service Providers

Signatories monitor and hold to account stewardship service providers.

Aberforth has few third-party service providers in the area of stewardship and has instead chosen to conduct most of these activities internally and directly. The firm has a long-standing relationship with a proxy voting adviser. Other third-party services such as custodianship, audit, IT and cyber risk management are covered by wider operational company policies and risk management documentation.

Relationships with external data providers are subject to formal annual review but in practice are assessed continually throughout the year based on the timeliness and quality of their individual reports.

To date, the proxy voting service has been satisfactory. Further information on Aberforth's voting policy can be found in Aberforth's Engagement and Voting Framework [HERE](#).

Other third-party providers of ESG information and data are kept under periodic review and may prove useful in the future to improve the firm's sustainability analysis and disclosures.

Proxy voting adviser

ISS's governance analysis serves as one reference point in forming voting decisions on General Meeting resolutions, alongside the investment managers' own assessments rooted in direct engagement with investee companies and review of annual reports and relevant regulatory disclosures. Final voting decisions rest with the investment managers.

The quality of the proxy adviser service is assessed continuously throughout the year, with particular attention paid to the timeliness, accuracy and relevance of its coverage of small UK quoted companies. This segment of the market represents a coverage challenge for proxy advisers and Aberforth is alert to the risk of factual error or contextual omission. Where inaccuracies or material omissions in ISS research are identified, they are communicated to the proxy adviser directly. The firm monitors the speed and adequacy of any correction. A service review was held with ISS in December 2025. No issues were noted during the year and service levels were considered optimal.

Two aspects of the working dynamic are worth noting. First, Aberforth's own engagement with investee companies will often inform a voting decision independently of, or contrary to, ISS research. For this reason, during 2025 there were 75 resolutions on which Aberforth voted differently from ISS's recommendations. The Mobicco example set out under Principle 3 illustrates this through the repeated bilateral engagement with the chair, the senior independent director and executive management, resulting in Aberforth's decision to vote against all non-executive directors except the new chair. That decision was rooted in the firm's assessment of the board, not in any proxy adviser recommendation. Second, and in the opposite direction, proxy adviser research occasionally surfaces a governance concern not already addressed through direct engagement, prompting the investment managers to revisit an initial voting intention. Both directions of influence reflect how the service is intended to be used.



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ESG data

Aberforth retains the view that the measurement and evaluation of ESG factors cannot reliably be outsourced to a third-party. This is because of the lack of consistent methodology and inadequate coverage of the small UK quoted companies amongst data providers. Population of Aberforth's proprietary ESG module is informed by engagement with companies and by investee companies' annual reports and sustainability reports.

One external reference does, however, play a defined role within the framework. The sector-level risk scores that form the starting point of Aberforth's ESG analysis are influenced by the materiality research of the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB). SASB standards identify the sustainability matters that are financially material for companies in a given sector and help calibrate which of Aberforth's twelve ESG subfactors carry the highest inherent risk for sector constituents. This provides an input into the Stewardship Committee's annual risk score review, which can help identify where sector sustainability risks are evolving.

Other third-party providers of ESG information and data are kept under periodic review and may prove useful in the future to improve the firm's sustainability analysis and disclosures.