



# Aberforth Smaller Companies Trust plc

## Monthly Factsheet

**30 November 2020**

### Fund structure

The Fund is an investment trust – a type of investment company/collective investment fund – with a Premium share listing on the Main Market of the London Stock Exchange.

### Manager: Aberforth Partners

The Fund is managed by Aberforth's investment team of seven fund managers:

Sam Ford	Jeremy Hall
Euan Macdonald	Keith Muir
Peter Shaw	Christopher Watt
Alistair Whyte	

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	321
Total market value	£132bn
Largest constituent	£2.8bn
Largest constituent if index rebalanced at Factsheet date	£1.4bn

### Key Fund information

Total investments	£1,137m
Number of investments	79
Active share	79.9%
Gearing - bank debt in use	£51m
Net gearing/(liquidity)	4.7%
Total net assets	£1,086m
Ordinary shares in issue	88,823,066
NAV	1,222.41p
Share price	1,176.00p
Discount/(premium)	3.8%
Market value	£1,045m
Launch date	10 Dec 90
Next year-end	31 Dec 20

### Fees & charges

Management fee* (12m to 31 Dec 19)	0.71%
Performance fee	None
Ongoing charges (at 31 Dec 19 & includes Management fee)	0.77%

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

### Yield & dividends

Yield	2.8%
Interim dividend (paid 28 Aug 20)	10.40p
Final dividend (paid 6 Mar 20)	22.00p
Special dividend (paid 6 Mar 20)	4.00p

### 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.

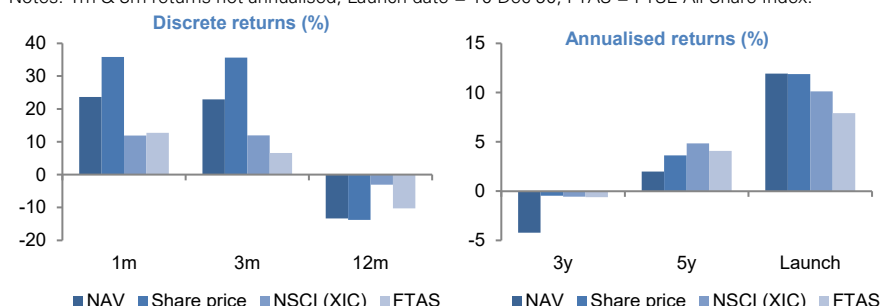
### Investment style: Value

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	23.6	22.9	-13.4	-4.2	2.0	11.9
Share price	35.8	35.6	-13.8	-0.5	3.6	11.9
NSCI (XIC)	11.9	11.9	-3.1	-0.6	4.8	10.1
FTAS	12.7	6.6	-10.3	-0.6	4.1	7.9

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



### Monthly investment commentary: November

The successive Covid-19 vaccine announcements of November led to strong performances across global stockmarkets. Seeing light at the end of the pandemic's tunnel, the FTSE All-Share rose by 12.7% and the NSCI (XIC) by 11.9%. After a particularly challenging period for the value style, new-found optimism about recovery saw a decisive rotation towards both value and "smaller smalls". The accommodating backdrop helped the Fund return 23.6%, its largest ever monthly gain.

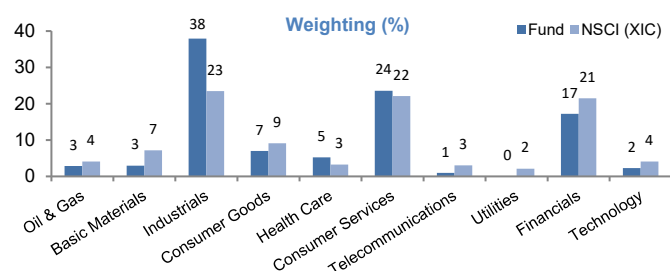
At the stock level, the theme was one of emerging interest in the 'coronavirus victims'. As economic prospects were reconsidered, holdings in the Travel & Leisure sector responded particularly encouragingly. The Fund participated in an equity raise by gaming and entertainment operator Rank Group that went on to contribute strongly. Specialist lender International Personal Finance refinanced and demonstrated continued improvement in collection trends as competitors retreated from the market. Conversely, those holdings which proved defensive through the early stages of the crisis detracted from returns during the month. Language specialist RWS – the product of the RWS/SDL merger – and software provider Alfa Financial failed to keep pace with the index despite strong current trading.

Elsewhere, the holding in Urban&Civic, a developer of land for housing, was subject to an agreed bid and provided more evidence that the backdrop of historically low UK valuations is attracting the attention of corporate and private equity acquirers. The month also saw non-holding Elementis subject to a possible offer by a US listed competitor. As at the end of November, 17 acquisitions for companies within the NSCI (XIC) had been completed during 2020 and a further 10 offers or approaches were outstanding. This is the highest level of interest observed since 2015, the year before the EU referendum.

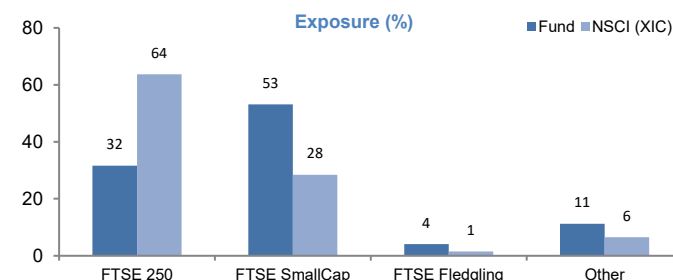
### Top 10 equity investments

Name	Activity	%
Reach	UK newspaper publisher	3.4
Provident Financial	Personal credit provider	2.9
RWS Holdings	Software - translation & content management	2.9
Morgan Advanced Materials	Manufacture of carbon & ceramic materials	2.7
Vesuvius	Metal flow engineering	2.4
Wincanton	Logistics	2.4
Brewin Dolphin Holdings	Private client fund manager	2.4
TI Fluid Systems	Automotive parts manufacturer	2.2
Vectura Group	Inhaled pharmaceuticals - respiratory specialism	2.2
Eurocell	Manufacture of UPVC building products	2.2

## 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

COVID-19 virus – in the context of market price risk, please note the exceptional circumstances arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and the responses to it. These have profoundly affected macro-economic activity, the operations of companies around the world and their stockmarket valuations. The universe of UK small quoted companies market invested in by the Fund, has seen a significant fall in its aggregate valuation due to the uncertainties arising from the spread of this virus. Aberforth Partners LLP and the Directors of Aberforth Smaller Companies Trust plc are closely monitoring market developments as the impact of the pandemic progresses.

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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