



AlphaScreens: finding dividend diamonds

24 January 2022

UK dividends jump

Dividends are an important source of returns and also a useful valuation measure that can be used to identify shares with the potential for capital growth. But it's important to screen out potential value traps when using yield as a guide

Comment by Alpha editor:

UK dividends were £94.1bn in 2021, up 46.1 per cent on the first year of the pandemic, according to Link Group's latest UK Dividend Monitor publication. Of these payouts, underlying dividends (excluding specials) were £77.2 bn - the highest since 2015.

For 2022, Link Group expects growth of around 5 per cent in underlying dividends, but they anticipate fewer special payments this year, leading to lower total payouts.

That distinction is important, as special dividends from windfall profits are not the basis for deciding a share should be held long-term for income. When it comes to sustained trends in underlying dividend growth, understandably the pandemic has taken a real toll on some of the reliable large cap income stocks investors used to set store by.

For this reason, the Alpha Dividend Yield screen that we run using FTSE All Share companies is dominated by investment trusts. Many trusts went to great lengths to protect and even grow their dividends in the coronavirus downturn, which has helped them rank highly.

There is a delicate balance to be had as slashing a dividend on an income trust might reasonably be expected to see investors running for the door. However, not overly diminishing capital reserves (thus sacrificing future compounding power) is important, too. Still, as our screen results demonstrate, investment trusts were very much the income investor's friend in the worst depths of the pandemic.

Going forward, investors will be glad of rising dividends in a time of inflation, but keeping an eye on the growth in net asset value (NAV) is always important, too.



Dividends are crucial for UK investors

Investors neglect dividends at their peril. Over the 25 years to the end of 2019, the average annual return from the FTSE All-Share based on share price alone stood at 4.15 per cent, compared with a 7.4 per cent total return once dividends are factored in. And the benefit of reinvesting dividends over the long term makes the difference even more pronounced, with the 25-year cumulative total return from the FTSE All-Share standing at 497 per cent, compared with 176 per cent ignoring dividends. As well as providing income, a good yield can suggest a company has attractive qualities that could support share price performance, and a robust dividend record can indicate a company in good financial health with a strong and stable business.

Large-cap dividend diamonds criteria

Our large-cap screen is tilted towards companies that show signs of having stable prospects associated with dividend staying power. To help assess this, we use a measure of historic share price volatility against the wider market, called beta. Betas of below one indicate that a stock has been less sensitive to market movements and suggest it could boast some defensive qualities. The large-cap Alpha dividend yield screen is conducted on all FTSE All-Share stocks using the following criteria:

- A dividend yield higher than the median (mid-rank) average of all dividend-paying shares screened.
- Dividend covered at least twice by earnings.
- Earnings growth forecast in each of the next two financial years (i.e. dividend cover is not expected to dramatically fall).
- Operating cash conversion of 100 per cent or more (i.e. earnings are being turned into cash with which to pay dividends).
- Interest payments covered at least five times by operating profits (i.e. interest payments on borrowings are not likely to be a significant threat to maintaining dividend cover).
- Return on equity of 12.5 per cent or more (i.e. an indicator that the business may be of decent quality [if the interest cover test is also met, it suggests high returns on equity are not overly dependent on high debt levels]).
- A beta of 0.75 or lower.
- A three-year compound annual dividend growth rate of 5 per cent or more.

Not many stocks pass such a stringent list of criteria. The ones that pass all the tests are listed at the top of the table, followed by those failing one test, then those failing two tests as detailed in the 'Tests passed' column. All stocks must pass the dividend yield test to





feature in the table that follows. Special dividends are included in the yield calculation used by the screen, and where a special dividend has been paid, it is highlighted in the table's 'Special dividend' column. While the primary ranking of the stocks is based on the number of tests they pass, inside each of these groupings, stocks are ordered according to their attractiveness based on a combination of dividend yield and dividend cover.

Small-cap dividend diamonds criteria

The small-cap Alpha dividend yield screen is more growth-focused than our large-cap screen. It is conducted separately on the FTSE All-Small and FTSE Aim All-Share indices, with the results presented in two separate tables. While the screen's dividend yield test is more aggressive than the one used by our large-cap screen, the lower average yields from small-caps mean little difference in the absolute level of yield both screens require. The screen uses the following criteria:

- A dividend yield among the top third of all dividend-paying shares screened.
- Dividend covered at least one-and-a-half times by earnings.
- Earnings growth forecast in each of the next two financial years and average growth of 5 per cent or more (i.e. rising earnings to support dividend growth and maintain or improve dividend cover).
- Positive free cash flow (i.e. a weak test that earnings are turned into cash with which to pay dividends).
- Interest payments covered at least five times by operating profits (i.e. interest payments on borrowings are not likely to be a significant threat to maintaining dividend cover).
- A three-year compound annual dividend growth rate of 5 per cent or more.
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- A market capitalisation of more than £10m (i.e. not severely illiquid).

Not many stocks pass such a stringent list of criteria. The ones that pass all the tests are listed at the top of the table that follows, followed by those failing one test, then those failing two tests as detailed in the 'Tests passed' column. All stocks must pass the dividend yield test to feature in the table. Special dividends are included in the yield calculation used by the screen, and where a special dividend has been paid this is highlighted in the table's 'Special dividend' column. While the primary ranking of the stocks is based on the number of tests they pass, inside each of these groupings, stocks are ordered according to their attractiveness based on a combination of dividend yield and dividend cover.



FTSE All-Share dividend diamonds (passing at least 6 out of 8 tests)

Name	TIDM	Mkt cap	Price	Fwd NTM PE	DY	EPS grth FY+1	EPS grth FY+2	3-mth mom.	Net cash/ debt(-) in £	Test failed	Special div	Tests passed (out of 8)
Bankers Investment Trust	BNKR	£1,534m	117p	-	10.6%	-	-	3.9%	-	/FwdEPSGrth/	NO	7
Henderson Int'l Income Trust	HINT	£330m	169p	-	3.7%	-	-	0.6%	-	/FwdEPSGrth/	NO	7
Royal Mail	RMG	£4,592m	462p	7	3.6%	20.0%	2.1%	11.3%	-1,150m	/DivGrth/	NO	7
JPMorgan Asia Growth & Income	JAGI	£426m	436p	-	4.4%	-	-	-0.2%	-	/FwdEPSGrth/	NO	7
LXIREIT	LXI	£1,209m	147p	17	4.0%	3.3%	12.9%	-0.1%	-	/EPSGrth/	NO	7
Norcros	NXR	£256m	316p	9	3.6%	13.1%	4.2%	-1.9%	-76m	/DivGrth/	NO	7
Intermediate Capital	ICP	£5,545m	1,908p	15	3.0%	-11.4%	-9.8%	-11.3%	-	/FwdEPSGrth/	NO	7
B&M European Value Retail SA	BME	£5,437m	543p	14	3.3%	-7.0%	-3.1%	-10.9%	-513m	/FwdEPSGrth/	NO	7
Dunelm	DNLM	£2,619m	1,292p	17	7.7%	21.8%	3.4%	0.4%	-107m	/DivCov/	NO	7
Liontrust Asset Management	LIO	£1,011m	1,650p	13	3.5%	41.8%	15.0%	-21.8%	-	/DivCov/	NO	-
Invesco Asia Trust	IAT	£241m	361p	-	4.2%	-	-	-2.7%		/FwdEPSGrth/FCF/	NO	(
Lowland Investment Co	LWI	£369m	1,365p	-	4.4%		-	3.4%	-	/FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/	NO	(
Aberforth Split Level Income Trust	ASIT	£151m	79p	-	3.8%	-	-	-2.0%	-	/FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/	NO	
AEWUKREIT	AEWU	£183m	116p	-	6.9%	-	-	5.5%	-	/FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/	NO	6
Montanaro UK Smaller Cos IT	MTU	£246m	147p	_	4.3%	-	-	-12.5%		/FwdEPSGrth/FCF/	NO	
Majedie Investments	MAJE	£118m	222p	-		-	_	0.2%	-	/FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/	NO	6
JPMorgan European IT-Income-Class		£137m	160p	-	3.6%	-	-	2.2%		/FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/	NO	
Utilico Emerging Markets Trust	UEM	£458m	209p	-	3.8%		-	-2.3%		/FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/	NO	
Imperial Brands	IMB		1,731p	7	8.0%	0.7%	6.0%	10.1%	-9,521m	/FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/	NO	
Diverse Income Trust	DIVI	£405m	112p		3.3%	0.770	0.070	-4.3%		/FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/	NO	
BMO Capital and Income IT	BCI	£356m	333p	-	3.5%	-		2.0%		/FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/	NO	
Custodian REIT	CREI	£465m	105p	16	5.2%	10.7%	6.5%	7.3%	-	/DivGrth/EPSGrth/	NO	
North American Inc. Trust Ord.Shs	NAIT	£394m	280p	-	3.6%	10.776	0.570	-1.4%		/FwdEPSGrth/EPSGrth/	NO	
Invesco Select Trust UK Equity	IVPU	£146m	192p	-	3.5%		-	1.6%		/FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/	NO	
	MUT	£1,039m	890p	-	3.9%	-	-	0.6%	-		NO	
Murray Income Trust												
JPMorgan Global EM Income Trust	JEMI	£431m	145p	-	3.5%	44.00/	40.00/	2.5%		/FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/	NO	
Tritax EuroBox	EBOX	£865m	107p	23	5.0%	11.3%	18.0%	-4.5%	-	/EPSGrth/IntCov/	NO	
Ashmore	ASHM	£1,977m	277p	13	6.1%	-37.6%		-14.8%		/FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/	NO	
IG Group	IGG	£3,578m	829p	10	5.2%	-26.9%	12.8%	1.1%	-	/FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/	NO	(
JPMorgan Global Growth & Income	JGGI	£717m	452p	-	2.9%	-	-	2.0%	-	/	NO	(
3i Group		£13,333m	1,370p	5	2.9%	66.3%	-21.1%	3.6%		/FwdEPSGrth/FCF/	NO	(
TwentyFour Income Fund	TFIF	£646m	114p	-	5.6%	-	-	2.7%		/FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/	NO	
TR Property IT Ord Shares Class GBP	TRY	£1,549m	488p	-	2.9%	-	-	3.3%	-	/FwdEPSGrth/FCF/	NO	(
International Biotechnology Trust	IBT	£268m	650p	-	4.4%	-		-10.6%		/FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/	NO	(
Kingfisher	KGF	£6,746m	326p	11	3.7%	26.1%	-15.9%	-4.3%		/FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/	NO	(
Paragon Banking	PAG	£1,494m	600p	10	4.4%	1.8%	7.2%	13.0%	-	/FwdEPSGrth/IntCov/	NO	6
Redrow	RDW	£2,243m	637p	7	3.8%	23.2%	0.7%	0.2%	-607m	/DivGrth/EPSGrth/	NO	(
Bellway.	BWY	£3,681m		8	3.9%	9.7%	5.7%	-7.3%	-612m	/DivGrth/EPSGrth/	NO	(
CMC Markets	CMCX	£688m	236p	10	10.6%	-68.2%	26.7%	-13.1%	-	/FwdEPSGrth/DivCov/	NO	(
Impact Healthcare REIT	IHR	£412m	117p	15	5.4%	10.7%	18.8%	-1.3%	-	/DivGrth/EPSGrth/	NO	(
Taylor Wimpey	TW	£5,716m	157p	8	5.3%	168.8%	7.6%	2.9%	-188m	/DivGrth/EPSGrth/	NO	(
Target Healthcare REIT PLC	THRL	£702m	113p	17	5.9%	15.6%	12.7%	-4.6%	17.	/EPSGrth/DivCov/	NO	(
Vistry	VTY	£2,399m	1,079p	8	3.7%	137.9%	12.7%	-10.2%	-625m	/DivGrth/EPSGrth/	NO	(
Wincanton	WIN	£483m	388p	10	3.0%	13.0%	9.5%	4.3%	-330m	/DivGrth/FCF/	NO	(
Severfield	SFR	£213m	69p	9	4.4%	14.8%	11.9%	-1.7%	-60m	/DivGrth/EPSGrth/	NO	(
PRS REIT	PRSR	£577m	105p	26	3.8%	199.6%	23.2%	5.6%	-	/DivGrth/IntCov/	NO	(
BHP	BHP	£51,186m	2,424p	11	9.2%	6.1%	-27.0%	25.7%	-835m	/FwdEPSGrth/DivCov/	NO	(
Bloomsbury Publishing	BMY	£284m	348p	17	5.4%	-0.1%	11.9%	-0.6%	-23m	/FwdEPSGrth/DivCov/	NO	(
Devro	DVO	£360m	216p	12	4.2%	6.5%	4.2%	1.7%	-33m	/DivGrth/EPSGrth/	NO	(
Fresnillo	FRES	£6,119m	830p	14	2.9%	68.4%	14.8%	-7.6%	534m	/DivGrth/EPSGrth/	NO	(
XPS Pensions	XPS	£286m	140p	13	4.9%	4.4%	6.8%	-0.4%	-	/DivGrth/DivCov/	NO	
Hargreaves Lansdown	HL			23	3.9%	-13.7%		-16.8%	-	/FwdEPSGrth/DivCov/	NO	
Tesco		£22,091m	289p	13	3.2%	183.3%	3.1%	6.7%	-12,022m	/EPSGrth/IntCov/	NO	
Mondi	MNDI	£9,053m	and the second second	13	2.8%	5.9%	17.5%	5.5%	-893m	/DivGrth/EPSGrth/	NO	
Smurfit Kappa	SKG	£9,988m		14	3.3%	8.5%	24.6%	6.2%	-1,190m	/DivGrth/EPSGrth/	NO	
HomeServe	HSV			15	3.3%	14.2%	12.6%	-3.9%	-365m	/EPSGrth/DivCov/	NO	
	1104		3,100p	13	0.070	_ T.Z/0	12.070	-13.5%	505111	/L1 55111/D14C04/	140	,





FTSE All-Small dividend diamonds (passing at least 6 out of 8 tests) Mkt Fwd Price NTM PE EPS grth EPS grth 3-mth Net cash/ Tests passed DY TIDM Name cap FY+2 mom. debt(-)in £ failed div (out of 8) Chelverton UK Dividend Trust SDV £43m 207p 5.1% 1.0% /FwdEPSGrth/ NO JPMorgan Asia Growth & Inc. JAGI £426m 436p 4.4% -0.2% /FwdEPSGrth/ NO /FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/ 4.4% Lowland Investment Co LWI £369m 1.365p 3.4% NO 6 712.9% Premier Miton Global Ren. Trust **PMGR** £33m 183p 4.8% 42.4% -2.7% /DivGrth/EPSGrth/ NO 6 **AEW UK REIT** AEWU £183m 6.9% 5.5% /FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/ NO MTU 4.3% Montanaro UK Smaller Cos IT £246m 147p -12.5% /FwdEPSGrth/FCF/ NO 6 271p 5.0% 3.0% /FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/ Shires Income SHRS £84m NO 6 Majedie Investments MAJE £118m 222p 5.1% 0.2% /FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/ NO 6 Custodian REIT CREI £465m 105p 5.2% 10.7% 6.5% 7.3% /DivGrth/EPSGrth/ NO 6 TwentyFour Income Fund TFIF £646m 114p 5.6% 2.7% /FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/ NO 6 THRL 17 5.9% 15.6% 12.7% Target Healthcare REIT £702m 113p -4.6% /EPSGrth/DivCov/ NO 6 Impact Healthcare REIT IHR £412m 117p 15 5.4% 10.7% 18.8% -1.3% /DivGrth/FPSGrth/ NO 6 International Biotech. Trust IBT £268m 650p 4.4% - -10.6% /FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/ NO 6 £284m Bloomsbury Publishing BMY 348p 5.4% -0.6% -23m /FwdEPSGrth/DivCov/ NO Severfield SFR £213m 4.4% -1.7% /DivGrth/EPSGrth/ 69p 14.8% 11.9% -60m NO 6 Devro DVO £360m 216p 12 4.2% 6.5% 4.2% 1.7% -33m /DivGrth/EPSGrth/ NO 6 XPS Pensions XPS £286m 140p 13 4.9% 4.4% 6.8% -0.4% /DivGrth/DivCov/ NO 6 Source: FactSet, 24 January 2022

Name	TIDM	Mkt cap	Price	Fwd NTM PE	DY	EPS grth FY+1	EPS grth FY+2	3-mth mom.	Net cash/ debt(-)in £	Test failed	Special div	Tests passe (out of 8
Springfield Properties	SPR	£184m	156p	9	3.7%	13.5%	20.7%	7.6%	-71m	na	NO	(842.07.0
Sylvania Platinum	SLP	£278m	102p	4	3.9%	-11.2%	14.6%	-3.0%	67m	/FwdEPSGrth/	NO	7
Warehouse REIT	WHR	£697m	164p	24	3.8%	18.6%	11.9%	1.0%	-	/IntCov/	NO	7
Caledonia Mining Corp	CMCL	£111m	935p	4	3.6%	6.2%	47.7%	-4.6%	7m	/EPSGrth/	NO	7
Polar Capital	POLR	£679m	677p	10	6.6%	-6.4%	16.2%	-18.2%	-	/FwdEPSGrth/	NO	7
Alumasc	ALU	£77m	213p	9	4.5%	1.3%	6.7%	-4.5%	-19m	/FwdEPSGrth/	NO	7
Duke Royalty	DUKE	£144m	40p	13	5.4%	4.1%	21.6%	-6.4%	-	/DivGrth/EPSGrth/	NO	6
Numis Corporation	NUM	£372m	326p	11	4.1%	-38.5%	-	-9.2%	-	/FwdEPSGrth/DivGrth/	NO	6
Pan African Resources	PAF	£425m	19p	6	4.5%	15.5%	8.5%	15.7%	-51m	/DivGrth/EPSGrth/	NO	6
Hargreaves Services	HSP	£129m	400p	10	4.8%	-36.3%	-9.5%	-11.7%	-33m	/FwdEPSGrth/IntCov/	NO	6
RBG Holdings	RBGP	£110m	116p	11	4.3%	5.1%	38.4%	-14.4%	8m	/DivGrth/EPSGrth/	NO	6
iEnergizer	IBPO	£626m	329p	11	5.0%	32.9%	22.8%	18.8%	11m	/DivGrth/DivCov/	NO	6
Argentex	AGFX	£98m	87p	8	3.2%	33.9%	36.7%	-4.5%	-	/DivGrth/EPSGrth/	NO	6
Jarvis Securities	JIM	£121m	270p	17	4.9%	18.0%	5.3%	-4.4%	-	/EPSGrth/DivCov/	NO	6



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