theshare centre:

press release

8 March 2011

Nick Raynor, investment adviser at The Share Centre, selects three stocks that offer investors broad exposure to a variety of sectors

Northumbrian Water, 328p yield: 3.9% PE: 13.3
Utilities sector

Northumbrian Water is a steady water company with the added attraction of a potential takeover situation. The water company has previously rejected two takeover approaches and we wouldn't rule out it happening a third time. Any dividend produced by a water company can help protect against inflation, as the revenue from charges to customers is indexed to the retail price index, as is the regulated asset value. If inflation is set to remain high in the UK, Northumbrian Water's pledge to grow its dividend above inflation will provide an inflation hedge.

Shire Pharmaceuticals, 1725p yield: 0.4% PE: 17.6
Pharmaceutical sector

Shire Pharmaceuticals was formed in 1996 and is a relatively late arrival to the pharmaceutical sector; however it has demonstrated an impressive record of earnings growth. The US is Shire Pharmaceutical's most significant market, accounting for around 69% of sales, however independent distributors give it a global reach and it is now the UK's third largest drug maker. There is little yield to interest investors, but we believe the potential for growth within the company is worth a closer look. Shire has an impressive drug pipeline that could be attractive to a competitor, so we wouldn't rule out takeover speculation in the coming year.

Standard Chartered, 1725p yield: 1.4 PE: 12.9
Banking sector

The company's exposure to Taiwan, Korea, China, Pakistan, India and Thailand along with other emerging markets makes it a geared play on any upturn in the economic situation. Asia remains one of the main areas of growth.

Results issued in early March were pleasing. After the recent weakness the share price, now looks like an attractive time to gain entry into a quality bank with exposure to emerging markets – something every portfolio could do with at the moment.

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The Share Centre was established in 1990 to provide value-for-money share services for private investors. Its range of services includes buying and selling shares (by Internet, telephone and post)

and a comprehensive share administration and safe custody service. Tax-efficient investment 'wrappers' including ISAs, CTFs and SIPPs are also available.

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