# Key Developments in UK Economy and Stock Market Garner Attention in 2024



In 2024, several key developments in the UK economy and stock market have garnered attention.

The FTSE 100 index, representing the largest companies in the UK's stock market, has risen by 8% this year. This increase is buoyed by modest economic growth predictions, including a 0.7% growth forecast by the International Monetary Fund, and a dip in inflation to 2.3%, nearing the Bank of England's 2% target.

Financial institutions like HSBC suggest that UK equities present a lucrative investment opportunity. For investors, potential ways to capitalize include buying funds tracking the FTSE 100 or FTSE All-Share Index, or investing directly in specific UK companies, which have been highlighted by financial experts.

Here are seven UK companies noted for their potential:

**Marks & Spencer (M&S)**: Reported a 58% profit increase to £716 million for the year ending March, with strong financial health bolstered by operational improvements and a renewed dividend.

**Greggs**: Known for its robust financials and growth strategy, Greggs' shares have risen by 8% to £28.72, with dividends reaching £1.02 in the last financial year.

**Rolls-Royce Holdings**: The aerospace and defense giant's shares have surged by 187% over the past year, driven by a substantial order book and global defense spending.

**Shell**: Despite ESG concerns and potential relocation to the US, Shell remains attractive due to its dividend yield of 3.7% and shares priced at £27.72.

**NatWest**: Despite the halting of the government's stake sale due to the election, the bank’s shares are considered undervalued with a significant annual dividend yield of 5.5%.

**AstraZeneca**: With anticipated annual revenues of £63 billion by 2030 driven by new medications and market expansions, the company's shares are trading at £122.96.

**Britvic**: This soft drinks company has seen a 20% rise in shares to £10.05 this year, supported by improved revenue and profit figures, and a robust dividend of 30.8p per share.

These economic and market highlights follow the announcement by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak of a July 4 general election, amid ongoing discussions about the UK's economic conditions, including inflation, interest rates, and public finances.