

# Top Track 100 regional press release



Thursday 2 July 2020

## TWELVE COMPANIES IN THE NORTHWEST OF ENGLAND WIN PLACES ON SPECIAL COVID-19 EDITION OF LEAGUE TABLE OF BRITAIN'S BIGGEST PRIVATE COMPANIES

Published this weekend, the **19th annual Sunday Times HSBC Top Track 100** league table ranks Britain's 100 private companies with the biggest sales, and before Covid-19 struck. Although some are planning to make substantial job cuts as a result of coronavirus, it highlights their continuing contribution to the economy at this difficult time. It also gives examples of how they have stepped up to support their communities and the NHS.

The 12 companies headquartered in the **northwest of England** have together achieved sales of £34.5bn and profits of £2bn in their last financial year, and collectively employed more than 95,000 people.

Examples of positive responses to the Covid-19 crisis include the region's top-ranked company, **EG Group** (in the top 3 nationally), which donated £350,000 to the East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust in April. Blackburn-born brothers Zuber and Mohsin Issa have grown it from a single petrol station into one of the world's largest fuel and forecourt operators with 5,500 sites and 33,000 staff. Its 2019 sales rose 66% – £7bn – to £17.6bn, following acquisitions in Europe, the US and Australia.

Other examples include relative newcomer online retailer **THG** (No 59), which has broken through the billion-pound revenue barrier and has profits of £110m. It deployed a £10m aid package to support vulnerable communities impacted by Covid-19, donated PPE worth a further £2m and reserved its two luxury hotels in Manchester for police and NHS staff; and Liverpool's **Home Bargains** (No 26) – owned by brothers Tom and Joe Morris – which stayed open as an essential retailer during the lockdown and launched a £30m fund to support self-isolating staff.

The companies in the northwest of England appear alongside well-known British names, including **Bet365, Dyson, Iceland, JCB, John Lewis Partnership, Nando's** and **Specsavers**.

This year, the 100 companies reached a record £237bn in total sales, up 8% on the prior year, with total profits of £28bn, up by 7%. Three in four companies (74) increased sales in their latest financial year.

The league table programme is sponsored by **HSBC** and **Linklaters**, and compiled by **Fast Track**, the Oxford-based research and networking events firm.

Amanda Murphy, Head of Commercial Banking, HSBC UK, commented:

*“Uncertainty and volatility remain watchwords in the current climate but we at HSBC UK are confident that Britain's business leaders, such as those at the helm of the companies in the northwest of England on this year's Top Track 100, will rise to the challenge. The country has found new reserves of energy in the face of adversity and the businesses that can harness that energy and pace of change will thrive in the 'new normal'.”*

### Biggest private companies in the northwest, by county and rank

| HQ location<br>County  | Rank<br>[2019<br>rank] | Company<br>Activity  | Sales £m | Profits<br>£m ‡ | Staff | Year end | Main shareholders  |
|------------------------|------------------------|--|----------|-----------------|-------|----------|--|
| Warrington<br>Cheshire | 16<br>[10]             | <b>EMR</b><br>Metal recycler                                   | *2,915   | *70             | 3,449 | Dec 19   | Sheppard family (100%)   |
| Crewe<br>Cheshire      | 24<br>[19]             | <b>Radius Payment<br/>Solutions</b><br>Fleet services provider | *2,609   | *87             | 1,559 | Mar 20   | Bill Holmes (44%), Inflexion Private Equity (24%), Roy Sciortino (11%), other management (21%) |

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| Altrincham, Cheshire<br><b>Cheshire</b>   | <b>50</b><br>[84]      | <b>NES Global Talent</b><br>Engineering<br>recruitment<br>consultancy | *1,321   | *71             | 956    | Oct 19   | AEA Investors (>40%), management (<50%), Akastor (>10%)                                  |
| Warrington<br><b>Cheshire</b>             | <b>95</b><br>[-]       | <b>Fircroft</b><br>Technical recruitment<br>consultancy               | 804      | 10              | 735    | Aug 18   | Johnson family and management (66%), Equistone Partners (34%)                            |
| Manchester<br><b>Greater Manchester</b>   | <b>59</b><br>[72]      | <b>THG</b><br>Online retailer   | *1,140   | *111            | 4,926  | Dec 19   | Matt & Jodie Moulding (20%), management (6%), institutional investors (67%), others (7%) |
| Manchester<br><b>Greater Manchester</b>   | <b>79</b><br>[80]      | <b>Morson</b><br>Engineering<br>recruitment<br>consultancy            | *950     | *31             | 2,100  | Dec 19   | Ged Mason and family (80%), Paul Gilmour (7%), Kevin Gorton (7%), others (6%)            |
| Blackburn<br><b>Lancashire</b>            | <b>Top 3</b><br>[3]    | <b>EG Group</b><br>Fuel forecourt<br>operator                         | *17,604  | *792            | 34,680 | Dec 19   | Issa family (50%), TDR Capital (50%)   |
| Liverpool<br><b>Merseyside</b>            | <b>26</b><br>[25]      | <b>Home Bargains</b><br>Value retailer                                | 2,471    | 275             | 22,816 | Jun 19   | Tom Morris and family settlement (100%)  |
| Speke, nr. Liverpool<br><b>Merseyside</b> | <b>32</b><br>[28]      | <b>The Very Group</b><br>Online retailer                              | *1,993   | *271            | 3,688  | Jun 19   | Sir David Barclay and Sir Frederick Barclay family settlements (100%)                    |
| Knowsley<br><b>Merseyside</b>             | <b>62</b><br>[55]      | <b>Matalan</b><br>Value retailer                                      | * †1,108 | * †180          | 12,853 | Feb 20   | Hargreaves family (100%)   |
| Liverpool<br><b>Merseyside</b>            | <b>91</b><br>[62]      | <b>Bibby Line Group</b><br>Conglomerate                               | 822      | 9               | 4,295  | Dec 18   | Sir Michael Bibby and family (89%), management and others (11%)                          |
| Liverpool<br><b>Merseyside</b>            | <b>100</b><br>[-]      | <b>Peel Ports Group</b><br>Port services provider                     | 760      | 256             | 2,957  | Mar 19   | John Whittaker and family (50.1%), DWS Group (49.9%)                                     |

‡ Profits = EBITDA (Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation)

\* Supplied by the company

† Annualised figure

### The national picture

This year's Top Track 100 achieved combined sales growth of 8% to a record total of £237bn compared with last year's 14% growth and total sales of £220bn. Profits grew 7% to a total of £28bn, also a record for the table. The companies employed 980,000 staff, having added 35,000 employees to their combined work force in their latest year. However, some, like **Arcadia, Clarks, Harrods, Heathrow, JCB, McLaren** and **Wates**, have recently announced significant job cuts as a result of the Covid-19 crisis.

The dominant region for company HQs is London (32), followed by the southeast (17) and the Midlands (13). Of the remainder, 12 companies are based in the northwest, nine in Scotland, eight in the southwest, three in Northern Ireland, three in Yorkshire and the northeast, two in the East of England, and one in Wales.

The full league table is published as a 6-page supplement with the business section of **The Sunday Times** on 5 July, both in print and in the digital edition, and on [www.fasttrack.co.uk](http://www.fasttrack.co.uk).

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## **Notes for editors**

**Fast Track** has published league tables of the UK's top-performing private companies with **The Sunday Times** for the past 23 years. The company was founded and is run by Dr Hamish Stevenson, who also holds an associate fellowship at Green Templeton College, Oxford University.

### **League table criteria**

Companies have to be registered in the UK, unquoted, and not subsidiaries. Companies may have their ultimate holding company offshore.

Companies are ranked by sales as reported in their latest available accounts, or by more up-to-date figures as reported directly to Fast Track by the companies.

Companies with fewer than 100 employees are excluded, as are not-for-profit companies, cooperative societies, member-owned buying groups, mutual societies, provident associations, and partnerships such as lawyers and accountants. The research was carried out by Fast Track between 1 April and 1 July 2020; more than one third (35) of the companies provided up-to-date figures not yet publically available.

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