

Top Track 100 regional press release



Thursday 2 July 2020

SEVENTEEN COMPANIES IN THE SOUTHEAST 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 17 companies headquartered in the **southeast of England** have together achieved sales of £26.6bn and profits of £3bn in their latest financial year, and employ more than 172,800 people.

Examples of positive responses to the Covid-19 crisis include Hertfordshire-based civil engineer **Sir Robert McAlpine** (No 87), which helped build NHS Nightingale hospitals in Manchester and Jersey; and contract caterer BaxterStorey, owned by Reading-based **WSH** (No 81), which helped provide over 40,000 free meals a day to the NHS.

Other examples include **OCS Group** (No 77), whose maintenance services were in acute demand as it worked to keep hospitals and community health centres clean; and **McLaren Group** (No 42), which was a part of the UK consortium producing medical ventilators for the NHS.

The region's top-ranked company is **MFG** (No 8), which kept many of its 900 petrol stations open during the lockdown, despite a drop in fuel sales, to provide essential goods to local communities. The St Albans-based group sells 4.5bn litres of fuel annually and has food-to-go partnerships with Costa, Subway and Greggs.

The companies in the southeast 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 southeast 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 Southeast, by county and rank

HQ location County	Rank [2019 rank]	Company Activity	Sales £m	Profits £m ‡	Staff	Year end	Main shareholders
Luton Bedfordshire	88 [-]	Stonegate Pub Company Pub chain operator	853	128	14,419	Sep 19	TDR Capital (100%)

HQ location County	Rank [2019 rank]	Company Activity	Sales £m	Profits £m ‡	Staff	Year end	Main shareholders
Toddington Bedfordshire	98 [94]	Moto Motorway services operator	*781	*105	5,314	Dec 19	Universities Superannuation Scheme (60%), CVC (40%)
Reading Berkshire	18 [21]	Westcoast Technology distributor	*2,799	*34	1,458	Dec 19	Joe Hemani (100%)
Reading Berkshire	29 [26]	Thames Water (Kemble) Water services provider	2,085	1,058	6,068	Mar 19	OMERS (32%), USS (11%), ADIA (10%), KIA (9%), others (38%)
Reading Berkshire	81 [77]	WSH Hospitality services provider	*933	*76	17,980	Dec 19	Clayton, Dubilier & Rice, Alastair Storey and management
Central London Hampshire	73 [65]	Arqiva Communications services provider	1,000	534	2,012	Jun 19	Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (48%), Macquarie (25%), other investors (27%)
St Albans Hertfordshire	8 [9]	MFG Fuel forecourt operator	*4,442	*246	546	Dec 19	Clayton, Dubilier & Rice (>50%), management inc. Alasdair Locke (<50%)
Letchworth Garden City Hertfordshire	47 [39]	Willmott Dixon Construction contractor	1,370	29	3,154	Dec 19	Family & management (100%)
Watford Hertfordshire	51 [46]	Rontec Roadside retailer	1,292	46	117	Sep 19	Ronson Family Trusts / Charitable Foundation (100%)
Stevenage Hertfordshire	56 [52]	M Group Services Infrastructure services provider	*1,173	*65	9,100	Mar 20	PAI Partners (85%), management (15%)
Turnford Hertfordshire	58 [47]	Lamex Food Group Food importer and exporter	*1,166	*26	470	Mar 20	Phil Wallace & family trusts (24%), Steve Anderson (24%), Colin Dicker & family trusts (16%), others (36%)
Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire	68 [58]	Bourne Leisure Caravan park operator	1,058	251	14,028	Dec 18	Family of Peter Harris, families of the late John Cook and David Allen, management
Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire	87 [78]	Sir Robert McAlpine Construction contractor	871	31	2,182	Oct 18	McAlpine family (100%)
Leatherhead Surrey	40 [37]	Wates Construction contractor	1,548	34	3,824	Dec 19	Wates family (100%)
Woking Surrey	42 [45]	McLaren Group Automotive technology group	*1,486	*177	4,469	Dec 19	Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Co (57.8%), TAG Group (14.7%), Michael Latifi (7.7%), others (19.9%)
Crawley West Sussex	19 [-]	Virgin Atlantic Airline and tour operator	2,781	96	8,571	Dec 18	Virgin Group (51%), Delta Air Lines (49%)

HQ location County	Rank [2019 rank]	Company Activity	Sales £m	Profits £m ‡	Staff	Year end	Main shareholders
Crawley West Sussex	77 [67]	OCS Group Facilities services provider	961	31	79,117	Dec 18	Goodliffe family (100%)

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

* Supplied by the company

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.

ENDS

PLEASE CREDIT IN FULL: "SUNDAY TIMES HSBC TOP TRACK 100"

For further information please contact:

Richard Tyler, director of editorial, Fast Track: 01865 297 011 or richard.tyler@fasttrack.co.uk

Eva Gronbech, senior research manager, Fast Track: 01865 297 029 or eva.gronbech@fasttrack.co.uk

Follow us on

LinkedIn: [The Sunday Times Fast Track](#)

Twitter: [@ST_FastTrack](#)

Instagram: [@thesundaytimesfasttrack](#)

#HSBCTopTrack100

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.

About our sponsors

About HSBC

HSBC is the title sponsor of the **Sunday Times HSBC Top Track 100** for a seventh year.

HSBC is one of the world's largest banks. We support around 1 million UK businesses, among 39 million customers worldwide. Our international banking network covers over 60 international markets and territories and gives us access to around 90% of world trade flows.

Our regional heads work with experts in markets, liquidity and cash management to design sophisticated, cross-border solutions.

HSBC has a number of industry experts with deep market knowledge which they use to proactively support your business across Retail and Leisure, Education and Public Sector, Healthcare, Technology Media and Telecoms, Charities and Not for Profit Organisations, Infrastructure & Construction, Sustainable Finance, Professional Services, Agrifoods and Franchises. The sector team work collaboratively with our UK wide team of Relationship Managers to help support businesses through their growth life cycle.

To find out more, visit business.hsbc.uk/corporate and [@HSBCUKBusiness](https://twitter.com/HSBCUKBusiness)

About Linklaters

Linklaters is a main sponsor for a seventh year.

Linklaters LLP specialises in advising the world's leading companies and their owners, financial institutions and governments on their most challenging transactions and assignments. The firm is a recognised market leader for delivering outstanding service to clients throughout the world on takeovers, mergers and acquisitions, equity and debt capital markets transactions, joint ventures, disposals and other corporate advisory matters.

To find out more, visit linklaters.com and [@LinklatersLLP](https://twitter.com/LinklatersLLP)