

International Track 200 Northern Ireland

press release

Thursday 18 February 2021



TWO COMPANIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND WIN PLACES ON SPECIAL COVID-19 EDITION OF LEAGUE TABLE OF FASTEST-GROWING INTERNATIONAL SALES STARS

Published this weekend, the 12th annual **Sunday Times HSBC International Track 200** league table ranks the UK's mid-market private companies with the fastest-growing international sales.

Two companies headquartered in **Northern Ireland** (compared to four last year) have won places on the league table. These stars have grown their international sales by an average of 40% a year over the last two years to a total of £28m, both are profitable and together they employ more than 1,500 people. The figures largely relate to financial periods before Covid-19 struck.

Northern Ireland's top-ranked company is blind manufacturer **Decora** (No 74), which achieved record sales in August and September last year as demand for home improvement surged during the pandemic. It manufactures 30,000 blinds a week, which it sells to retailers across Europe. Exports grew an average of 51% per year over its last two years, to hit £14.7m in 2019, on total sales of £87.8m.

County Antrim is home to kitchen door supplier **Uform** – which features for a second consecutive year and hired staff to meet increased demand during the pandemic. Its international sales grew 28% a year, reaching £13.6m in 2020, on total sales of £36.6m.

The companies in Northern Ireland appear alongside well-known UK brands including **Sweaty Betty**, the women's activewear brand sold in 195 countries; **BrewDog**, which was valued at £1bn in 2017 and now has 100 bars worldwide; and **Brompton**, the bicycle manufacturer, which ships to 47 markets.

International Track 200 star alumni include **Skyscanner**, **Fever-Tree** and **Dr Martens** – which featured on the league table in 2013 with exports of £100m, and floated last month valued at £3.7bn.

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

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

“After a challenging start to 2021, all eyes are on the companies that will drive a return to growth in 2021. We are confident that the innovation and entrepreneurial spirit of businesses such as those in Northern Ireland listed on International Track 200 will carry them forward. These companies show the strength, ambition and resilience of businesses across the UK and are the sort of businesses we are proud to support every day”

Private companies in Northern Ireland with the fastest-growing international sales – ordered by rank

Rank [2020 rank]	Company Activity	HQ location	Average annual int'l sales growth over 2 yrs	Int'l sales (£m)	Total sales (£m)	Staff	Year end	Comment
74	Decora Blind manufacturer	Lisburn	51%	14.6	87.8	1,170	Dec 19	Acquired Dutch firm Coolblinds for an undisclosed sum in August last year

Rank [2020 rank]	Company Activity	HQ location	Average annual int'l sales growth over 2 yrs	Int'l sales (£m)	Total sales (£m)	Staff	Year end	Comment
144 [180]	Uform <i>Kitchen door supplier</i>	Toomebridge	28%	*13.6	*36.6	328	Apr 20	Hired staff to meet demand for home improvements during the pandemic

*Supplied by company

The UK picture

The average international sales growth for the 200 companies was 55% a year, to a total of £8.7bn on combined total sales of £19.2bn. Together they employ 107,000 staff, having added 32,000 employees to their workforce over the period, some as a result of acquisitions.

London is the most popular location for company headquarters with 62, followed by the southeast (39). There are 27 companies in the Midlands and 21 in the northwest. Of the remainder, 20 are based in the northeast of England (including Yorkshire), 10 in Scotland, seven in the east, seven in the southwest, five in Wales and two in Northern Ireland.

The full league table is published as an eight-page supplement with the business section of The Sunday Times on 21 February, both in print and in the tablet edition, and on 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 24 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 had to be registered in the UK and be independent, unquoted and ultimate holding companies. They are ranked according to the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of their international sales over their latest two financial years.

Total sales had to be between £25m and £1bn, and international sales at least £1m in the latest financial year.

The research was carried out by Fast Track principally between August and December 2020. Data on international sales can be limited. Companies filing abridged accounts are not required to disclose any geographical breakdown of sales, while firms that file full accounts can choose to not disclose a geographical breakdown of sales if it is prejudicial to their interests.

See website for full qualification criteria: www.fasttrack.co.uk

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