

Top Track 250 Northern Ireland press release

Thursday 4 October 2018



FOUR COMPANIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND FEATURE IN NATIONAL LEAGUE TABLE OF BRITAIN'S LEADING PRIVATE MID-MARKET GROWTH COMPANIES

Published this weekend, the 14th annual **Sunday Times Grant Thornton Top Track 250** league table ranks Britain's private mid-market growth companies with the biggest sales.

The four companies headquartered in **Northern Ireland** (compared to seven last year) have made a strong contribution to the economy. The companies increased combined sales 14% to £1.1bn and operating profits 26% to £101m, and they employ 8,000 people.

There are two pharmaceuticals manufacturers featuring on the league table: **Almac Group** in Craigavon, which provides research, development and commercialisation services to more than 600 international biopharma companies, and reported a 19% rise in sales to £531m in 2017; and **Norbrook Laboratories** in Newry, which researches, develops and produces a wide range of veterinary drugs sold in 120 countries and reported a 14% increase in sales to £272m in 2017.

There are two companies making their debut this year: plastic sheet manufacturer **Brett Martin**, based in Newtownabbey; and gardening products manufacturer **Westland Horticulture** in Dungannon, which owns garden brands including Gro-Sure compost, Peckish bird food and Aftercut lawn fertiliser, and reported sales of £131m in 2017, and profits of £8m.

The companies in Northern Ireland appear with businesses from around the UK, including **Dr Martens**, **Trainline**, **PureGym** and **The White Company**.

The Top Track 250 is sponsored by **Grant Thornton** and **Lloyds Banking Group**, and compiled by **Fast Track**, the Oxford-based research and networking events firm.

Ordered by county and rank: Mid-market private growth companies in the Northern Ireland

HQ location County	Rank [2017 rank]	Company Activity	Sales £m	Profit £m [^]	Staff	Year end	Main shareholders
Newtownabbey County Antrim	201	Brett Martin Plastic sheet manufacturer	152	9	935	Dec 16	Brian Martin (45%), Laurence Martin (45%), family trusts (10%)
Craigavon County Armagh	23 [34]	Almac Group Pharmaceuticals manufacturer	531	34	4,407	Sep 17	McClay Foundation (100%)
Newry County Down	90 [91]	Norbrook Laboratories Pharmaceuticals manufacturer	272	50	2,068	Jul 17	The Lord Ballyedmond family trust (100%)
Dungannon County Tyrone	243	Westland Horticulture Gardening products manufacturer	131	8	588	Aug 17	Edward Conroy (47.5%), Robert Lavery (47.5%), John McVeigh (5%)

[^] Profit = operating profit

The national picture

The Sunday Times Grant Thornton Top Track 250 complements the Top Track 100, published in July, which features Britain's private companies with the biggest sales. It ranks the next 250-biggest companies by sales, provided they meet our growth and profitability criteria (see below). The 250 companies grew combined sales by 18% to £66.7bn, operating profits by 27% to a record £6.4bn and employees by 10% to 435,000.

The 250 companies are headquartered across the country. London is home to 75 companies and the southeast 38. The northwest has 25, Yorkshire 23, West Midlands 21, Scotland 20, East 14, East Midlands 11, southwest 9, northeast 7, Northern Ireland 4, and Wales has 3.

The full league table is published on Sunday as a 10-page supplement within the business section of **The Sunday Times** on 7 October, both in print and in the digital 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 21 years. The company was founded and is run by Dr Hamish Stevenson, who also holds an associate fellowship at Green Templeton College, Oxford University.

Previous **Top Track 250** success stories include appliance maker **Dyson**, which first featured in 2005 with sales of just £277m, and this year featured on our Top Track 100 with sales of £3.5bn and profits of £801m. **Virgin Money** also debuted in 2005 when its sales were £241m; it floated in November 2014 and in June this year CYBG, the owner of Clydesdale Bank and Yorkshire Bank, agreed to buy the group for £1.7bn; and **B&M**, the value retailer, first featured in 2009 with sales of £256m and its market capitalisation is now £4.1bn, having floated in June 2014. Consumer data analyst **Callcredit** first appeared in 2015 with sales of £149.9m and was acquired by American group TransUnion for £1bn in April; in the same month, **Sky Betting and Gaming**, which first featured in 2016 with sales of £247m, was acquired by Canada's firm The Stars Group for £2.6bn.

League table criteria:

Companies are ranked by sales in their latest available accounts. The league table complements the Top Track 100 league table of Britain's biggest private companies by listing the next 250 growth firms.

Companies are required to have operating margins that exceed 2%. Sales in the latest year must have grown by 5% or more for companies with the highest sales, graduated to 10% or more for those with lower sales; or profit growth must have been more 5% or more.

Companies have to be limited and registered in the UK, unquoted, and not subsidiaries. Companies may have their ultimate holding company offshore. Companies where the majority of turnover is generated by a quoted subsidiary are excluded, as are not-for-profit companies, cooperative societies, member-owned buying groups, mutual societies, provident associations, betting exchanges, and partnerships such as lawyers and accountants.

The research was carried out by Fast Track and accounts filed later than 27 July 2018 may not have been considered in compiling the league table.

The sponsors do not endorse, guarantee or recommend investment in any of the companies and some exceptions were made to the qualification criteria.

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