

Top Track 250 regional press release

Thursday 4 October 2018



14 COMPANIES IN THE EAST FEATURE IN 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 14 companies headquartered in the **east** (compared to 15 in 2017) have made a strong contribution to the regional economy. The companies increased combined sales 16% to £3.9bn and operating profits 16% to £357m, and they employ more than 20,000 people.

The biggest mid-market growth company to feature in the region is Peterborough-based **BGL Group**. The group provides insurance and household financial services to 9.5m customers through brands including price comparison site comparethemarket.com and life insurance provider Beagle Street. In November last year, Canada Pension Plan Investment Board acquired a 30% stake in a deal worth £675m.

There are 4 entrants in the east that were not on the league table last year, including construction services provider **Mick George** in St Ives; commercial printer **Walstead Group** in Colchester; and world food wholesaler **Flying Trade Group**, which increased sales 16% to £132m.

The companies in the east 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.

Hazel Platt, Partner and Practice Leader at Grant Thornton UK LLP, the title sponsor of the league table, praised the companies for their performance:

"Advances in robotics and artificial intelligence, the pervasive challenge of cybercrime, and the uncertain impacts of Brexit are among the significant issues facing Britain today. If we are to continue turning innovative ideas into businesses with international scale, we all need to play our part in shaping a vibrant economy that thrives. In this, the role of the mid-market is crucial. Resilient despite the headwinds, the Top Track 250 are innovating, winning business and adapting to generate value. There is much to learn from them."

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

HQ location County	Rank [2017 rank]	Company Activity	Sales £m	Profit £m [^]	Staff	Year end	Main shareholders
Peterborough Cambridgeshire	5 [12]	BGL Group Insurance/price comparison provider	*661	*153	2,764	Jun 18	Family trusts (65.25%), CPPIB (30%), management & others (4.75%)
Cambourne Cambridgeshire	92 [93]	ProCam Europe Crop protection specialist	271	9	570	Dec 17	Tony White (67%), Ian Beswick (18%), Chris Butt (11%), White discretionary trust (4%)
Cambridge Cambridgeshire	162 [164]	Ridgeons Timber and builders' merchant	176	7	851	Dec 17	Ridgeon family (99%), other (1%)
Huntingdon Cambridgeshire	242	Mick George Construction services provider	131	9	921	May 17	Mick George (75%), other family and management (25%)

HQ location County	Rank [2017 rank]	Company Activity	Sales £m	Profit £m^	Staff	Year end	Main shareholders
Colchester Essex	35	Walstead Group Commercial printer	422	21	2,291	Dec 17	Rutland Partners (>50%), management (<50%)
Takeley Essex	135 [173]	Weston Group Housebuilder	199	24	385	Jul 17	Bob Weston (40%), management and other (60%)
Harwich Essex	241	Flying Trade Group World food wholesaler	132	12	798	Dec 17	Suki Dulai (42.5%), Chandan Dulai (32.4%), Kewal Dulai (25.1%)
Lincoln Lincolnshire	221 [233]	Branston Potato packer	143	7	671	Jul 17	James Dean (24%), Chris Howard (23%), John Ward (12%), others (31%)
Lincoln Lincolnshire	208 [224]	Lindum Group Construction services provider	150	7	629	Nov 17	Chambers family (54%), management & employees (46%)
Barton-upon- Humber North Lincolnshire	12 [23]	West Retail Group Kitchens/electronics retailer	607	18	4,188	Dec 17	VIDA Capital Partners (100%)
Newmarket Suffolk	41 [59]	Turners (Soham) Distribution and warehousing	396	31	3,402	Dec 17	Paul Day (60%), Winifred Day (40%)
Felixstowe Suffolk	100 [101]	Maritime Group Container transport and logistics	255	11	2,205	Dec 17	John Williams (100%)
Woodbridge Suffolk	167 [223]	Hopkins Homes Housebuilder	172	42	149	Apr 17	James Hopkins (93%), Selina Hopkins (7%)
Ipswich Suffolk	185	One Group Construction Civil engineering contractor	163	6	542	Dec 17	Richard Neall (100%)

^ Profit = operating profit * Supplied by the company

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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