

International Track 200 regional press release

Thursday 7 February 2019



21 COMPANIES IN THE NORTHWEST OF ENGLAND WIN PLACES ON LEAGUE TABLE OF BRITAIN'S FASTEST-GROWING INTERNATIONAL SALES STARS

Published this weekend, the 10th annual **Sunday Times HSBC International Track 200** league table ranks Britain's mid-market private companies with the fastest-growing international sales.

The 21 companies headquartered in the **northwest of England** include **six new entrants to the league table**. These regional stars have grown their international sales by an average of 64% a year over the last two years to a total of £1.05bn. Together they employ more than 10,000 people.

The region's top-ranked company is Manchester's **Carrs Foods** (No.8), which features in the top 10 nationwide for the third successive year. It supplies European-style brioche, crêpes and croissants to more than 10,000 stores worldwide, helping grow overseas sales by 159% pa to £19m, on total sales of £49.4m, in 2017.

Achieving a place on the league table for the first time is Manchester's **Arlington Industries**, which designs and builds parts for manufacturers in the automotive industry. Customers include Ford, Nissan and Jaguar Land Rover, and the company has factories in the UK, France and Slovakia, helping exports hit £58.7m, on total sales of £170.6m, in 2018.

Featuring for the sixth consecutive year is **The Hut Group**, which has overseas sales of £512.6m, on total sales of £735.7m, in 2017, and is valued at more than £3.25bn. Each year, more than 500m people visit the 165 ecommerce websites operated by THG.

The companies in the northwest of England appear alongside well-known British brands, including **BrewDog**, now valued at over £1bn; and **Charlotte Tilbury Beauty**, founded by the Hollywood make-up artist. Others are connected to star names, such as **Bulk Powders**, which counts boxing champion Anthony Joshua among its athlete ambassadors. This year is the 10th anniversary of International Track. Alumni stars include **Aston Martin**, **Specsavers**, **Fever-Tree**, and **Lush** – which featured on the first league table in 2010 with exports of £151m, and which have now hit £300m.

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

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

"We at HSBC UK are delighted to back The Sunday Times International Track 200 again this year. All the businesses it showcases have truly inspiring stories to tell about creativity, resilience and ambition to succeed. The 21 companies in the northwest of England are putting the region firmly on the map. They are the kinds of enterprises we are thrilled to support and that provide the backbone of our economy, today and tomorrow."

Private companies in the northwest of England with the fastest-growing int'l sales – ordered by county then rank

HQ location and county	Rank [2018 rank]	Company Activity	Annual int'l sales growth over 2 yrs	Int'l sales (£m)	Total sales (£m)	Staff	Year end	Comment
Holmes Chapel, Cheshire	24	Project One Business consultancy	106%	3.0	30.3	111	Dec 17	Some of its consultants spend up to three years abroad on client projects

HQ location and county	Rank [2018 rank]	Company Activity	Annual int'l sales growth over 2 yrs	Int'l sales (£m)	Total sales (£m)	Staff	Year end	Comment
Crewe, Cheshire	65	Phoenix Cellular <i>Mobile phone distributor</i>	74%	*18.2	*33.2	64	Oct 18	Sells about 40,000 used Samsung and Apple phones a month to European buyers
Knutsford, Cheshire	105	Amelia Knight <i>Cosmetic designer and manufacturer</i>	56%	16.2	29.1	301	Dec 17	Manufactures in China and supplies retailers on five continents
Wilmslow, Cheshire	128	County Milk Products <i>Dairy products supplier</i>	50%	56.8	235.7	73	Dec 17	Exports dairy ingredients to Europe and further afield
Adlington, Cheshire	148 [159]	Proseal <i>Tray-sealing equipment maker</i>	45%	33.7	60.4	368	Jan 18	Its machinery is in operation in more than 50 countries worldwide
Wardle, Cheshire	154	TIMco <i>Tool accessories supplier</i>	44%	1.8	35.1	160	Dec 17	Has sold 16bn items worldwide, including 4.5bn classic screws
Stockport, Cheshire	199	musicMagpie <i>Online entertainment trader</i>	31%	*46.6	*115.7	700	May 18	Has customers in more than 150 countries, including the Vatican City
Manchester, Greater Manchester	8 [9]	Carrs Foods <i>Bakery products provider</i>	159%	19.0	49.4	23	Dec 17	Supplies European bakery products to more than 10,000 stores around the world
Manchester, Greater Manchester	27	Arlington Industries Group <i>Components supplier</i>	103%	*58.7	*170.6	1,078	Mar 18	Has factories in Britain, France and Slovakia, and joint ventures in China, India and Turkey
Denton, Greater Manchester	41 [93]	Qualtex <i>Spare parts distributor</i>	86%	12.3	36.7	187	Dec 17	Exports spare parts to more than 40 countries, including the US
Manchester, Greater Manchester	45 [44]	Oliver James Associates <i>Recruitment consultancy</i>	83%	42.8	91.7	285	Dec 17	Moved into Milan's S32 skyscraper in 2017, in the heart of the city's fintech district
Manchester, Greater Manchester	63 [45]	The Hut Group <i>Online retailer</i>	75%	512.6	735.7	3,222	Dec 17	Opened an 800,000 sq ft production and logistics centre in Poland in October 2018
Manchester, Greater Manchester	123 [68]	Peninsula <i>Employment law consultancy</i>	52%	83.1	223.6	2,250	Mar 18	Employs more than 750 people across its operations in Australia, New Zealand and Canada
Manchester, Greater Manchester	177 [141]	Amoria Bond <i>Recruitment consultancy</i>	36%	33.6	51.2	129	Nov 17	Trades in more than 40 countries from bases in the UK, Netherlands, Germany and Singapore
Manchester, Greater Manchester	200 [171]	MPM Products <i>Pet food producer</i>	31%	36.2	56.9	68	Dec 17	Exports to more than 50 markets, including the US and Australia, where it has offices
Preston, Lancashire	59	Barron Wood Distribution <i>Transport broker</i>	76%	6.9	64.9	139	Oct 17	Has been providing freight logistics to continental Europe for six years
Carnforth, Lancashire	112	Havwoods <i>Hardwood flooring specialist</i>	55%	3.6	44.6	119	Dec 17	Its flooring projects include Sony's head office in Sydney and the Ritz Carlton in Budapest
Preston, Lancashire	125 [98]	Recycling Lives <i>Waste management provider</i>	51%	31.0	75.1	324	Sep 18	Sales of recycled metals to Asia and the Middle East support the firm's associated charity

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Bolton, Lancashire	136	Scan Computers International <i>IT hardware supplier</i>	48%	15.1	131.0	228	Jun 18	Bitcoin mining has pushed up its sales of graphics cards to Eastern Europe, Russia and China
Clitheroe, Lancashire	160 [32]	Trutex <i>School uniform supplier</i>	41%	2.3	31.0	241	Dec 17	Its British-style school uniforms are popular in the Middle East
Liverpool, Merseyside	188	Meade-King Robinson & Co <i>Chemicals supplier</i>	34%	13.2	52.2	33	Mar 18	Has a distribution facility in Holland

* Supplied by the company

† Annualised figure

The national picture

The average international sales growth for the 200 companies was 69% a year, to a total of £14.1bn on combined total sales of £30.9bn. Together they employ 140,000 staff, having added 38,000 employees to their combined workforce over the period.

London is the most popular location for company headquarters with 68, followed by the southeast (42), the Midlands (16), and northwest (21). There are 20 companies in the northeast, including Yorkshire. Of the remainder, 13 companies are based in the southwest, six in the East, six in Scotland, five in Wales and three in Northern Ireland.

The full league table is published as a ten-page supplement with the business section of **The Sunday Times** on 10 February, 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 22 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 (CAGR) in their international sales over the latest two financial years.

Total sales had to be at least £25m and international sales at least £1m in the latest financial year. Companies with sales of less than £25m are covered by our sister SME Export Track 100 league table.

The research was carried out by Fast Track principally between August and December 2018. Data on international sales can be limited. Companies filing abbreviated 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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