

TOP 100 SMEs

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Profits up, but headcount falls

WEALTH CREATORS

Bernard Ginns

YORKSHIRE'S top 100 small and medium-sized enterprises notched up significant growth in turnover and profits last year, fuelling hopes that the private sector recovery is under way.

Research by accountancy firm Barber Harrison & Platt shows that the region's most profitable SMEs saw combined sales rise nine per cent to £1.63bn last year.

Combined pre-tax profits rose six per cent to £262m.

But the improved financial performance came at a cost – the combined headcount of the Top 100 companies fell by 13 per cent to 8,833 employees.

The *Yorkshire Post* today reveals the list in full of the region's best performing SMEs, measured by profitability. The Top 100 shines a light on the region's most important wealth creators and provides an insight into the industries and sectors driving growth and job creation.

Industrial manufacturing was the powerhouse last year, accounting for 20 companies in the Top 100. It was also the largest employer and supports around 2,000 jobs.

The same industry was the biggest single contributor

to turnover, accounting for around £350m.

Industrial manufacturing also brought in the biggest profits, earning more than £50m last year.

The research puts Lazarus Properties at the top of the pile, with a profit of £8.9m from a turnover of £20.4m.

The company is Doncaster's largest landlord and owns 275,000 sq ft of leisure and retail space in the town centre and a further 100,000 sq ft across the country.

Founded in 1997 and owned by local businessmen Mick Murray and Lloyd Nicholson, Lazarus has expanded into the office and industrial markets, acquiring around 75,000 sq ft of offices and around one million sq ft of industrial stock. Its portfolio also includes London residential property in upmarket areas like Kensington, Maida Vale and Primrose Rose

The company prides itself on managing all operations in house, including its property development activities. It employs eight people.

Glyn Smith, acquisitions and asset manager, said: "The key to it is working hard and being so diverse. We are very proactive."

BJSS, the software house and consultancy, is another high-flier with profits of £7.2m from a turnover of £29.7m, placing it at number three.

The Leeds-based company



ROOM AT THE TOP: Leading developer Lazarus Properties' proposed business class hotel in Doncaster.

develops and supplies high-performance computer systems to customers including BT, RBS and the London Stock Exchange. It has 350 staff.

BJSS developed its

reputation for expertise by creating trading platforms for financial markets and has found its products in increasing demand from other sectors including retail and government.

Mike Bates, managing director, said: "The internet has driven more and more businesses onto platforms.

"Platforms are struggling so people need to get high performance out of them."

He said the company receives regular approaches from mergers and acquisitions advisers, but it has no plans to list or sell.

Melett was the best performing manufacturer last year at fourth place with profits of £6.7m from a turnover of £15.9m. The engineering company provides repair kits and parts for the turbo reconditioning industry.

Melett has invested heavily in the latest machinery and its workforce and in 2011 moved into new facilities in Barnsley to help extend its services to its international customer base. It has 67 staff.

LPG Direct (Holdings), based in Hessle, ranked second in the list, but said it would be misleading to present it as the region's second most profitable company because last year's figures were consolidated ahead of a sale of a larger business in the group.

It is the second year that the *Yorkshire Post* has published the Top 100.


The list included 49 of the same companies as last year. West Yorkshire kept its title as the best performing area with 46 companies, up from 42 last year.

South Yorkshire was second with 33 companies, up from 24 the previous year. East came next with 12 companies, down from 18. North was last with 9, down from 16.

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