



# Gaining momentum

A family-owned contracting firm in Leyburn with more than four decades of history has shifted up a gear by building on core themes of quality of investment. Meet Biker Group

Sitting at 45 on *Insider's* Growth 100 list is a fair feat, but it's not one the ambitious managing director of contracting firm Biker Group, Ben Biker, is content with. Already smashing targets, the company has further growth in its sights. "I'm sure if we speak next year, we'll be even further up the Growth 100 table," he tells *Insider*.

Established nearly 50 years ago, Biker Group is privately owned and managed by members of the Biker family. Originally set up by the family patriarch, Tony Biker, as a speculative residential developer in rural areas before adjusting to allow other contractors to use their equipment and expertise, allowing the company to transition into its construction services offering. The mantle has now been passed to the next generation Tony Biker's sons Matthew, Ben and Sam.

The company works across a number of different areas, but the key ones for its sustained growth are groundworks, bespoke joinery, haulage, high-end residential construction, and concrete.

In the last ten years, Ben Biker has seen the company move through the gears to get to an enviable position. Inspired by his younger years on the cricket pitch, the company has, like a good batsman, moved from periods of acclimatisation, accumulation and now acceleration.

Biker explains: "I think when my brothers and I took the reins from our father, we identified areas that could be modernised and made more efficient. We've invested in people to make sure that we can move through that process.

"The whole has to be greater than the sum of its parts. We are in a period of



Ben Biker

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acceleration now after having put in the firm foundations for what we're seeing now. Each sector of our company is primed for growth and now is the time to push for further gains."

Biker Group now employs close to 200 people, the majority of whom work on site. The company also uses self-employed sub-contractors, meaning that at any one time up to 300 people could be working for the group.

Over the course of the year, the groundworks team, which largely works

for a national housebuilder, will finish 200 plots allowing construction to commence. The company has invested in its own batch concrete production facility at Dalton Industrial Estate, near Thirsk, to capitalise on the product's success with the construction market and the site's links to the A1 and the A19.

While a lot of the business is occupied by contracts in the North, the company's joinery business undertakes a lot of work in the South East, the higher-end product catering to a higher-priced market.

Finding the right skills can be a challenge for the company. Competition in the construction sector is fierce and skills are at a premium.

Biker says: "We are constantly recruiting, we have roles open that we will always need and will never fill. There is a shortage of good labour, and part of our business is based in a rural area where there's not too many chimney pots, which is why we've opened offices in wider catchment areas.

"The quality we strive for is not a weakness, but it is what we have to work hardest on. It can be what restricts us, when we need more people to join us, we can find people but it's finding the people that can deliver the highest quality product. Quality is our unique selling point, if you can get that right then it's half the battle."

In 2015, Biker created a five-year plan for the business, one that was fulfilled by the third year. Turnover in 2018 was £18.3m and the company looks set to hit a turnover of £25m in 2019, smashing targets with years in hand.

Biker says: "It's very rewarding and great to see, but we're by no means satisfied."

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