Financial Conduct Authority Markets Practitioner Panel Annual Report

2025/26

FCA

Markets Practitioner Panel

Chair’s foreword

I am pleased to present this year's annual report on behalf of the Markets Practitioner Panel.

This year marked a transition from strategy to delivery. The FCA has progressed a significant programme of reform aimed at supporting growth, enhancing competitiveness and improving market functioning. The Panel's role has been to provide industry insight, challenge and collaboration to support effective implementation.

At the start of the year, we set out our priorities for 2025–26. These focused on promoting capital formation and competitiveness, striking the right balance in the rebalancing of risk and supporting reform through practical, market-led insight. We also highlighted the opportunity for meaningful change to support the UK economy and its international capital markets.

Throughout the year, we have returned to these themes. We have encouraged the FCA to move at pace, while managing the cumulative impact of change on firms. We have also emphasised the importance of clear communication and external confidence in the UK's regulatory framework.

We have engaged closely with the FCA Board, Executive Committee and policy teams on a wide range of issues, including regulatory reform, retail participation, digitalisation, sustainability and international competitiveness. We have continued to work with other panels, in particular the Listing Authority Advisory Panel, where our priorities overlap.

I would like to thank Panel members for their time, insight and engagement over the past year. We also thank the FCA for its openness to engagement. We remain committed to acting as a critical friend as reforms continue to be delivered.

Clare Woodman
Chair, FCA Markets Practitioner Panel

1 Introduction

The Markets Practitioner Panel (MPP) is an independent statutory panel of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). It provides advice from the perspective of financial market participants, focusing on wholesale markets and broader secondary market issues.

We meet regularly and provide ad hoc input between meetings. Our discussions with FCA leadership and policy teams provide a direct link between market practice and regulatory policy. This ensures that decision making reflects real-world experience.

In mid 2025, we published our priorities for the year ahead. These priorities have shaped our engagement throughout 2025–26, providing a clear focus for our work.

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Supporting growth and international competitiveness

Supporting growth and enhancing the UK's competitiveness remained central to our work.

We welcomed the FCA's continued focus on capital markets reform and the progress made in implementing key initiatives. We encouraged the FCA to maintain momentum and continue to promote the UK as a leading global financial centre.

We highlighted the importance of coordinated messaging on the UK's regulatory reforms. While progress has been significant, this is not always fully recognised by industry, investors or the media. Clear communication of outcomes will be critical to building confidence and attracting investment.

We also emphasised the importance of international alignment. The UK operates in a competitive global environment and regulatory approaches must remain proportionate and practical to support capital flows and market activity.

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Rebalancing risk

Rebalancing risk was a key theme of our engagement with the FCA.

We supported the development of a more dynamic approach to risk. This includes recognising the need to enable appropriate risk-taking to support growth, while maintaining market integrity and investor protection.

We highlighted the need to develop clear metrics for success. This includes defining what effective rebalancing of risk looks like in practice and how it can be measured over time.

We also encouraged the FCA to draw more directly on practitioner insight. Understanding how risk is managed in practice is essential to ensuring that regulation is proportionate and effective.

More broadly, we emphasised that reform requires a whole-system approach. Outcomes depend on coordination across regulators, government and industry.

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Retail participation and consumer investment

Improving retail participation remained a priority.

We emphasised the importance of developing a stronger investment culture in the UK. This includes addressing barriers to entry and improving access to investment opportunities.

We encouraged the FCA to focus on outcomes, including participation levels and consumer engagement. Understanding both consumer and firm perspectives will be important in identifying and removing barriers.

We also discussed the practical application of the Consumer Duty. While supportive of its objectives, we highlighted the risk of unintended consequences where interpretation extends beyond intended scope.

Clarity across the value chain will be important to ensure consistent and proportionate application.

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Innovation, digitalisation and market evolution

Innovation and digitalisation continued to shape our discussions.

We welcomed the FCA’s work on emerging technologies, including digital assets and market infrastructure developments. We encouraged a continued focus on enabling innovation while maintaining appropriate safeguards.

We discussed the increasing use of artificial intelligence and supported the FCA’s approach of applying existing regulatory frameworks at this stage. Clear accountability and oversight will remain important as technology develops.

We also supported initiatives aimed at reducing barriers to entry and improving market efficiency. Proportionate regulation will be key to ensuring that innovation can develop in a way that supports growth.

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International engagement

International engagement remained an important area of focus.

We discussed developments in cross-border regulatory cooperation, including opportunities to strengthen the UK's position in global markets. We emphasised the importance of identifying areas of mutual benefit while maintaining alignment with domestic objectives.

We also highlighted the need to maintain strong relationships across a wide range of jurisdictions. Bilateral initiatives should complement, rather than replace, broader international engagement.

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Sustainability and disclosure

Sustainability remained a significant topic throughout the year.

We supported the FCA's objective of improving transparency and aligning with international standards. At the same time, we consistently emphasised the need for proportionality.

We raised concerns about the increasing burden of disclosure requirements and the potential impact on UK competitiveness. We encouraged the FCA to take a pragmatic approach, ensuring that requirements are evidence-based and aligned with international practice.

Through our consultation engagement, including joint work with the Listing Authority Advisory Panel, we advocated for approaches that balance transparency with cost and practical implementation.

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Looking Ahead

As the FCA's reform programme continues, the focus will remain on delivery and impact.

Consistent with the priorities we set at the start of the year, we expect to maintain focus on:

- promoting capital formation and market competitiveness
- continuing the rebalancing of risk
- supporting retail participation and consumer outcomes
- ensuring proportionate and effective regulation
- enabling innovation while maintaining market integrity

We see a continued opportunity to place greater emphasis on the digital and AI agenda. While progress is encouraging, the pace of global change requires further momentum.

The development and implementation of a clear, proportionate and internationally interoperable framework for digital assets and artificial intelligence will be an important priority over the next 12-18 months. Such a framework should balance resilience with support for innovation and avoid unnecessary friction for market participants.

In that context, key areas of focus may include:

- calibrating cryptoasset and stablecoin regulation to ensure the UK does not become a global outlier relative to other major jurisdictions
- accelerating work on tokenised market infrastructure
- providing greater clarity on custody and safeguarding arrangements
- ensuring retail-focused protections do not constrain wholesale market use cases
- maintaining an outcomes-based approach to AI, supported by targeted guidance on model risk, governance, data quality and third-party dependency
- We will continue to provide insight and challenge as reforms are implemented, supporting the FCA to deliver outcomes that benefit markets, firms and investors.

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Panel Diversity Statement

The FCA has agreed to adopt diversity targets for all the FCA's Independent Panels. These targets reflect those introduced by the FCA in April 2022 for the board and executive management of listed companies:

- At least 40% of each Panel are women
- At least one of the senior positions (Chair, Deputy Chair or equivalent) across the Panels is held by a woman
- At least one member of each Panel is from an ethnic minority background

To monitor our progress against these targets diversity monitoring information is collected from Panel members on a voluntary basis. Based on the data collected, against these targets, we can report that as of 31 March 2026:

- 40% of the Markets Practitioner Panel are women
- Across all the Independent Panels, the target for at least one senior position to be held by a woman is exceeded
- Three out of six Independent Panels meet the target that at least one member is from an ethnic minority background

The Panel supports the FCA in its objective of improving diversity in the appointments it makes to all the independent Panels.

Members of FCA Markets Practitioner Panel
(1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026)

Clare Woodman
Chair (from 1/08/2023; former Deputy Chair from 01/4/22 to 31/7/23)
Head of EMEA, Latin America and Canada and CEO, Morgan Stanley & Co. International Plc

Steven Fine
Deputy Chair (from 01/12/2023)
Chief Executive, Peel Hunt LLP

Mark Austin
Corporate Partner, Latham & Watkins

Sandra Boss
Chair, BlackRock U.K.

Michael Findlay
(former Chair from 01/07/2021 to 31/05/2023)
Non-Executive Chair, London Stock Exchange plc

Robyn Grew
CEO, Man Group

Richard Haas
(term ended 31/01/2026)
Member of the Boards of CapeView Azri Funds

Alasdair Haynes
(term ended 22/07/2025)
CEO, Aquis Exchange PLC

David McD Livingstone
Chief Client Officer, Citi

Hannah Meakin
(term ended 31/05/2025)
Partner, Norton Rose Fulbright LLP

Cécile Nagel
Global Head of Corporate Trust, BNY

James Taylor
Head of Investment Banking, Deutsche Numis
Member of the FCA's Listing Authority Advisory Panel

Chris Rhodes
(from 01/10/2025)
President of ICE Futures Europe

Timothy Cant
(from 01/2025)
Financial Services Regulatory Partner, Ashurst LLP

Kirstie McGillivray
(from 01/10/2025)
Aegon Asset Management UK plc CEO

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