

# Wholesale Digital Markets Champion - Terms of Reference

## Context

On 15 July 2025, as part of the Leeds Reforms, the government published the Wholesale Financial Markets Digital Strategy (WFMDs), outlining the key steps for digitalising UK wholesale financial markets.

The strategy covers the immediate steps to optimise UK markets by replacing outdated processes, as well as medium to longer term steps to transform UK markets by realising the benefits of emerging technologies, particularly the adoption of tokenisation through use of distributed ledger technology (DLT). The strategy comprises three broad pillars:

- Market Optimisation;
- Market Transformation; and,
- Market Leadership.

These pillars focus on driving efficiency and reducing frictions through progressive improvements, reimagining markets with transformative technologies, and coordinating with the sector to advance digitalisation.

We are making strong progress on the Market Optimisation pillar, with the Dematerialisation Market Action Taskforce (DEMAT) leading work on the removal of paper shares and modernisation of the UK shareholding framework, and the Accelerated Settlement Taskforce (AST) delivering a T+1 settlement cycle by 2027.

Under the Market Transformation pillar, the Digital Securities Sandbox and the issuance of the Digital Gilt Instrument (DIGIT) are supporting adoption of tokenisation at scale.

In addition to government-led action, the development of a tokenised market and the infrastructure to support it will depend on leadership and investment from the sector itself. As part of this, the government wants to work with the sector to help them identify the best use cases and provide sufficient confidence and momentum to drive adoption.

To support the delivery of this tokenisation work and strategy, the government has appointed Chris Woolard CBE as the Wholesale Digital Markets Champion.

Chris is a partner at Ernst & Young (EY) and a member of its UK Board. He is also Chair of EY's Global Regulatory Network. Prior to EY, he had a 25-year career in public service including serving on the executive committee and board of the Financial Conduct Authority and he was latterly its interim Chief Executive. He has also served on the Financial Policy Committee and the Prudential Regulation Committee at the Bank of England. Chris was appointed CBE in 2021 for services to financial regulation and fintech.

Chris is asked to convene the sector in driving forward the tokenisation of the UK's capital markets, as well as working with the DEMAT and AST leads to support its delivery. Chris will set up and lead a cross-industry taskforce to determine an approach that works for the UK. Chris and the industry taskforce will be guided by the objectives below.

Chris also will work with Andrew Douglas, Chair of the AST, and Mark Austin, Chair of DEMAT, to identify overlaps and synergies in the strategy.

## Objectives

- 1. Provide market leadership and support industry progress on the development of a tokenised wholesale financial markets ecosystem.**
- 2. Provide leadership to co-ordinate the sector's wider implementation of digital as outlined in the Wholesale Financial Markets Digital Strategy.**

## Deliverables

The Champion is asked to deliver the following:

- 1. Establish a cross-industry taskforce**, with representatives from across the market ecosystem, including financial market infrastructures, investment firms, digital assets platforms, trade bodies, regulators and other players across both buy and sell side. These representatives will provide input and support the Champion.
- 2. A report to the Chancellor, developed with the sector, covering:**
  - how UK wholesale markets can best adopt tokenisation and other related technologies.** This should identify the best initial use cases for DLT that the market could adopt, with a focus on those most capable of delivering material benefits to the sector. This includes building on the first DIGIT issuance to help further develop a secondary market, and to utilise the ecosystem built for DIGIT for private sector issuances. It should also include working with other participants in the Digital Securities Sandbox, looking at the best options for using DLT across a range of asset classes, including bonds, equities and funds.
  - recommendations on how the sector and government can ensure DLT interoperability.** The Champion is asked to consider in particular how platforms can operate together, as well as with legacy infrastructures. This could include proposing market wide standards or principles for the sector to abide by as it adopts DLT.
- 3. Promote the delivery of the Wholesale Financial Markets Digital Strategy across the sector.** The champion is asked to work with other industry leaders to help promote digitalisation and deliver on the aims set in the strategy, and ensure this is a focus for firms across the market. The sector should showcase the UK as a digital assets centre globally.

4. **Co-ordinate with the Chairs of the other workstreams** (on AST and DEMAT) as they implement their programmes to deliver T+1 and remove paper shares, identifying overlaps with wider initiatives across the sector to ensure a joined-up UK approach.

## **Timetable**

The Champion is asked to provide the following to the Chancellor:

- An initial forward look, including an outline of how they will organise a cross-industry taskforce for driving tokenisation (deliverable 1), by July 2026.
- A report on DLT adoption and interoperability (deliverable 2) by July 2027.

Promoting the strategy and working with the chairs of the other workstreams (deliverables 3 and 4) will be ongoing. The Champion will hold this role for 18 months.

## **Governance**

The Champion will work closely with the relevant policy teams in HM Treasury, as well as the relevant teams at the FCA and the Bank of England, to ensure that the approach reflects the Government's priorities for the sector as set out in the Wholesale Financial Markets Digital Strategy. HM Treasury will support the Champion and also assist in securing appropriate private sector secretariat support. The Champion will be responsible for determining the membership of any associated taskforces/working groups.