

HERBERT SMITH FREEHILLS PARTNER ALAN WATTS TAKES THE LEAD AS UK CLASS ACTIONS HEAD

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Firm news

Herbert Smith Freehills Partner Alan Watts will lead the firm's Class Actions team in the UK, as it is anticipated that the number of class actions brought in the UK will continue to grow.

Alan takes over from Herbert Smith Freehills partner Harry Edwards who moved to the firm's Melbourne office in January 2020 to embark on a three-year secondment to the class actions team in Australia.

Lauded in the market as a *'heavy-hitting litigation partner'*, Alan has carved out a successful career at the firm and works with clients on all forms of dispute resolution including High Court litigation, arbitration and mediation proceedings. Alan advises clients on company and commercial disputes, professional negligence claims sports law, media and entertainment law, and defamation matters.

He was recently brought in to assist on the Post Office litigation, a high profile class action by more than 550 claimants - sub-postmasters - under a Group Litigation Order (GLO) where there had already been two trials and where he helped reach a settlement agreement late last year. He is also currently involved in 2 other ongoing class actions.

The firm has also acted in a significant number of the largest and most complex class actions in recent years including: acting for Lloyds Banking Group and five of its former directors against a claim brought by 6,000 shareholders for losses alleged to have arisen as result of its acquisition of Halifax Bank of Scotland (HBOS); and for RBS in the landmark shareholder rights issue litigation, which saw nearly 40,000 shareholders issue proceedings against the bank seeking damages of around £4 billion.

The news follows London Partner Gregg Rowan being seconded to the Melbourne class actions practice in January 2019. Both Harry and Gregg's secondments will help further strengthen and globalise the firm's leading class actions practice as well as broaden their experience in Australian class actions.

Commenting on his new role, Alan said: *"It's widely anticipated that the number of class actions brought in the UK will continue to grow and we have a long history of acting for companies faced with class actions. I'm looking forward to leading and continuing to mobilise the unique depth of expertise that we have right across our London teams and across our global network, so we continue to help clients predict, prevent and defend the growing risk of a class action."*

MEDIA CONTACT

For further information on this news article, please contact:

**CORINNE MCPARTLAND,
COMMUNICATIONS LEAD**

LONDON

Tel: +44 20 7466 2057

Mob: +44 7912 394 304

Email: corinne.mcpartland@hsf.com