



HERBERT
SMITH
FREEHILLS




ALAN WATTS

PARTNER, GLOBAL CO-HEAD OF CLASS
ACTIONS AND CO-HEAD OF PARTNERSHIPS

[London](#)

Alan is a disputes partner and global co-head of class actions based in our London office.

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KEY SERVICES

Commercial Litigation
Defamation

KEY SECTORS

Leisure and Sport
Professional Support and Business Services

EXPERIENCE

Alan works with clients on all forms of dispute resolution including High Court litigation, arbitration and mediation proceedings. He is also the firm's Head of Global Class Actions, Head of Commercial Litigation UK and Co-Head of Partnerships.

Alan has nearly 30 years dispute resolution experience and is an extremely versatile dispute resolution lawyer.

Alan has significant expertise encompassing commercial disputes, partnerships, media and entertainment law and defamation and privacy. He is sought out for difficult and complex cases often involving proceedings and the use of injunctions in numerous jurisdictions. He is a go-to specialist for companies and individuals whose reputation or privacy may be under threat and is regularly called upon to prevent the unauthorised use of confidential information.

He is recognised as "one of the best litigation lawyers in the City" by *Legal 500 UK 2021* and as a "very well-respected litigator" who "handles a number of complex and highly sensitive matters across a range of sectors" by *Chambers UK 2020*.

In *Legal 500 UK 2021* he is ranked in their "Hall of Fame" category for Commercial Litigation, Reputation Management and Partnerships.

Alan's experience includes advising:

COMMERCIAL LITIGATION

- Jon Hillary in respect of a claim brought against him and his co-defendants by Ocado Plc alleging misuse of confidential information and breach of duty
- Ron Dennis in a fraudulent misrepresentation claim relating to a design and build contract entered into with the Defendants
- a Chinese owned company on potential fraudulent misrepresentation claims in relation to the acquisition of 65% of a media rights company which almost immediately entered administration
- Certain of the former directors of Carillion in relation to all aspects of the insolvency of the Carillion Group including the subsequent Insolvency Service and other investigations and inquiries. The liquidation of Carillion is likely to be the largest insolvency in the UK since that of Lehman Brothers
- an aircraft leasing company to successfully secure the consent to the transfer of existing leases to a third party as required under a long term contract including preparing an application for injunctive relief

CLASS ACTIONS

- Post Office Ltd in connection with a current high profile class action brought in the English courts by more than 500 of its sub-postmasters

- a confidential client with global operations in connection with a threatened high profile class action to be brought in the English courts, involving in excess of 4,000 prospective claimants
- RBS in relation to claims brought by thousands of shareholders arising from a rights issue, including advising on settlement and reputational issues

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

- Lord Alan Sugar on various reputational matters
- an entrepreneur in the international energy sector in relation to the publication of a false and highly defamatory article by a weekly Persian language online publication
- Associated British Foods on various reputational matters
- a large corporate and retail bank in relation to reputational issues arising from an issue that occurred in 2018. This involved advising the bank regarding its appearance before a parliamentary select committee and also in relation to an independent report produced regarding an issue
- a European supermarket chain in respect of allegations made in the press regarding their solvency and the solvency of their corporate group
- a charitable training provider on a pro-bono basis regarding certain false and misleading statements made on various online blogs regarding the conditions faced by individuals training as part of their programme. This involved advising both pre and post publication
- certain directors of the Stobart Group in relation to defamation and malicious falsehood claims made against them by one of Stobart Group's former directors
- an international technology and financial services provider on potential claims arising from the publication of a number of online news articles
- Primark on its successful complaint against the BBC over broadcast of the Panorama programme which included faked footage of Primark's supply chain and Associated British Foods generally

PARTNERSHIPS

- an international patent and trademark attorney practice in relation to a dispute between certain members of the board. We also advised in relation to the resolution of this issue and consequential matters
- an international law firm in respect of an arbitration with one of its former partners who sought to resign from the firm and commence work for a direct competitor in alleged breach of their restrictive covenants
- a 'big four' accountancy firm in relation to a dispute surrounding an alleged breach of the Limited Liability Partnership Agreement in connection with the retirement of a former partner
- a 'big four' accountancy firm in relation to the move of their firm in Denmark to a rival
- a 'big four' accountancy firm in proceedings in the Privy Council in relation to the rights of administrators to seek documents and information from PwC in relation to companies that they audited and which are now in administration
- an international law firm in defending multiple claims of discrimination and victimisation