



Digital Assets Summit Report

London, 7th December 2023 – Last week, GDF and Hogan Lovells hosted their 5th Digital Assets Summit. This conference brings together industry leaders, global regulators and policymakers, and financial institutions. This year, the event convened with the aim of sharing insights on the importance of fostering trust in the context of institutional digital asset adoption.

The conference opened with a keynote from Lord Hammond, ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer, and co-chair of the APPG on Digital Finance, who discussed the clear opportunities presented by tokenization for the UK financial services industry and the importance of creating an appropriate jurisdictional home for digital assets. He was adamant that there was still a window of opportunity for the UK to be this home in the current global geopolitical and economic landscape.

This opening set the tone for an afternoon of panel sessions exploring the theme of trust. Trust was discussed across different components of the digital finance industry including infrastructural components of digital assets, like digital asset custody and payments, as well as the importance of trust in policy and regulatory frameworks to foster digital asset adoption.

The speakers who joined the conference demonstrated not only the diversity of firms and individuals within the digital asset space, but also highlighted the different roles market participants may take on to build trust in digital assets. For example, established institutions like BNY Mellon, whose legacy is close to 240 years, rely on the trust they have built over centuries to continue to serve their customers – one of their roles in the new world of digital finance is to underscore the importance of trust and integrity in this evolving landscape and to convey this to incumbents.

Despite operating in a highly regulated environment, these financial institutions have a pivotal role to play in innovation in financial services as well as the growth and scaling of digital assets. They signal this growing demand to technology service providers, like Archax and Ownera, who can partner with larger institutions in mutually beneficial partnerships. In this, they then set the tone and pace for incumbents to create and drive solutions that mirror best practices and standards we see in traditional financial services. Yet, the intricate dance between institutions and new technological service providers can only unfold harmoniously within the orchestrated melody of appropriate, robust, and clear regulatory frameworks.

The significance of policy and regulation in fostering the adoption of digital assets cannot be overstated. As highlighted in the conference's global round-up panel, the rapid evolution of regulation in the context of digital assets has both contributed to the development of this sector of digital finance and supported the possibility for the broader integration of distributed ledger technology (DLT) across the financial sector. Emerging global frameworks have sought to strike a delicate balance that fosters innovation while simultaneously establishing the regulatory and legal frameworks needed for sustaining a digital future.



Representatives from the UK, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, the US, Singapore, and Hong Kong offered a comprehensive global perspective on the adoption of digital assets within financial services. The prevailing theme was that robust and clear regulation, coupled with collaborative efforts between regulators and industry stakeholders, is crucial for building trust in the sector, promoting global harmony and enabling the scaling of digital assets and tokenization of the real economy.

We have come a long way in the past five years, as echoed by Hogan Lovells Partner and Head of Digital Assets and Blockchain John Salmon: “The world is very different from when we first did this conference five years ago. Then, regulation of digital assets seemed very far away. But the conversation has moved on quickly and lots of jurisdictions are now considering regulatory frameworks around digital assets. This sector has the power to change the face of financial services but trust has been an inhibitor of adoption and this is absolutely crucial to the industry moving forward. Regulators need to trust businesses, businesses need to trust that they are being fairly treated by the regulators and customers need to trust that the sector has robust safeguards in place.”

Fostering trust is a critical component of to the adoption and scale of digital assets, and all market participants have a role to play in this process as we build together towards a digital future.

Find Hogan Lovells’ key takeaways and recordings from the summit [here](#).

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