



**Kate Jones, CEO, Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum**

**techUK pro-growth regulation report launch - 21 May**

Thank you Sue for the introduction and the opportunity to speak. We have worked closely with techUK and appreciate all they do to facilitate dialogue between regulators and industry, as they are doing today.

Let me start by congratulating techUK for this report on pro-growth regulation. We all want a flourishing, top-flight tech sector in the UK, and clear, smart regulation has its role to play in enabling that. Effective regulation is an important piece of the growth jigsaw, particularly in the tech space where we are witnessing and anticipating so much change – whether in AI or quantum or smart data. We need a clear and proportionate regulatory environment to maximise these opportunities – so businesses feel assured about investing and innovating, and consumers feel comfortable about trying new technologies.

This is where the Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum, the organisation I lead, comes into its own. DRCF is a voluntary non-statutory body that was set up by four of the UK's key digital regulators – CMA, FCA, ICO and Ofcom, I'm sure these are familiar to you – to help them better collaborate on issues of common interest within digital regulation, and enable greater regulatory coherence. I'd like to speak briefly today about how we do this – first our focus on enabling innovation and growth, and then about facilitating discussion between industry and regulators.

## **I. Growth & innovation**

Enabling growth is a key area of focus for all four DRCF members.

Ofcom's annual plan underlines its belief that 'good regulation supports investment and economic growth by creating stability and certainty for investors'.



The Information Commissioner recently published an article that emphasised growth is a ‘strategic priority for the ICO’, highlighting a set of commitments to encourage businesses to invest, innovate and grow through data.

The CMA’s annual plan affirms that ‘competition acts as an engine for productivity, innovation and growth’ while laying out its programme of work to support these priorities.

And FCA’s annual plan confirms that supporting growth is one of its strategic priorities which it will deliver through a focus on technology and data – accelerating digital innovation to improve productivity.

So it’s no surprise that DRCF’s three-year vision, reflecting the shared priorities of our members, is to protect people online while supporting UK innovation and growth.

And these aren’t just soundbites. Some of my regulator colleagues will talk about their work in the panels shortly. Meanwhile I’d like to flag two DRCF projects: our innovation-focussed services and our horizon scanning work.

**First, our unique AI and Digital Hub pilot** provided a necessary bridge for innovators looking for advice on how regulation could impact their ideas. A free, one-stop source covering four remits, it saved them time and boosted their confidence in developing their products. We’ve published anonymised summaries of this advice to help a greater number of innovators – you can find it on the DRCF website. The pilot has now completed and a key focus for us this year will be building on what we’ve learned is most useful for industry, and how our members can best work together on the next phase.

And all our members are clear there should be a next phase! We’re currently establishing the evidence base for the most valuable next steps, while being as efficient as possible; and considering how best to fund it. Just as we’ve brought regulators together on digital matters,



this feels like an exciting moment for next steps on cross-regulatory innovation services, in line with the Government's AI Opportunities Action Plan.

In parallel, our member regulators have a range of innovation initiatives. For example, two of our members – FCA and ICO – are coming together on innovation services in the fintech space, particularly to make it easier for firms to understand data protection requirements while developing new services. Ten days ago, the CEOs of the FCA, ICO and I sat with heads of trade bodies, including techUK, to understand the areas of regulatory uncertainty and challenges businesses face, in respect of AI adoption and wider innovation.

**Second, our horizon scanning** work which anticipates tech developments and trends. We work with experts in industry, civil society and regulation, to highlight early regulatory considerations for industry and innovators, and provide insights on cross-regulatory implications to regulators and policy makers. This year we will focus on agentic AI systems, cybersecurity and smart data.

By way of example, all our regulators see that smart data has huge potential for promoting cross-sector competition, unlocking innovations in new products and services and stimulating growth. We will this year conduct a review the future of a data-led economy and the role of regulators in ensuring coherence in its delivery, partnering with a wider group of regulators where relevant.

## II. Engaging with industry

Finally, a few words on dialogue between regulators and industry. Innovation services are one element of that dialogue. But there is a larger piece here: I know it's important for industry to see clarity of regulatory expectations. DRCF members aim to be open in their engagement with industry and as clear as possible about their regulatory approach. And they are keen to continue strengthening this dialogue – being particularly conscious of reaching smaller firms.



Let me give a few examples. Ofcom published a roadmap – and subsequent updates - to implementing the Online Safety Act. CMA has explained how it will embed 4Ps (pace, predictability, proportionality and process) in the digital markets competition regime. FCA has run AI sprint events to facilitate discussion with a wide range of stakeholders and published an update on how it would use that feedback. ICO and FCA recently hosted the roundtable on areas of regulatory uncertainty I mentioned earlier. And of course, they all participate in events that techUK and other industry bodies host to engender more discussion and information sharing.

DRCF's approach to industry engagement has similarly been open – seeking input on our workplan, publishing much of our work on our website, and discussing our outputs through meetings and events. We've learnt that the tech community values the DRCF convening conversations that span several regulators' remits. We are keen to build on the success of our recent Generative AI Forum in London and Digital Horizon event in Manchester. We have worked with partners, including techUK, on events in the past and are keen to do more.

I am eager for the upcoming discussions on the report's recommendations and how they could be taken forward, as I'm sure you all are, so on that note I will hand you back to Sue.