



Association of Corporate Treasurers UK General Election Manifesto 2024

Enhance the UK as an attractive place to do business

The ACT requests that the next UK Government take all necessary steps to enhance the UK as an attractive place to do business.

As representatives of the real economy and specifically financial risk managers based in non-financial corporates (“corporates”), the ACT focuses on those aspects of public policy that will enable corporates to have greater **clarity, predictability and therefore confidence** to contribute to the future growth of UK plc.

“Regulators want and need engagement from corporate treasurers - who are a bellwether for what is really going on in the economy and the direct impact of regulation”

Nikhil Rathi, CEO, FCA at the ACT Annual Conference, May 2024

1. FUNDING AVAILABILITY

Facilitate access to capital for corporates, irrespective of current scale

Only the very largest organisations have straightforward access to capital (driven in part by their ability to access international markets). For the UK to thrive, access to capital must be readily available to all.

We ask that the next government:

- Actively support market initiatives to enable the market to access diverse sources of capital (e.g. through simplification of the disclosure requirements to encourage low denomination bonds to be offered more widely)
- Expand the role of a government-backed bank or development fund to catalyse support for areas such as SME access to finance, scale-up capital and blended finance
- Ensure that the UK listings rules attract and retain businesses, as well as their associated corporate treasury activities which help provide liquidity to UK financial markets
- Facilitate responsible use of working capital by mandating payment to agreed contract terms by all organisations
- Resolve market impediments such as customer redress and commerciality to enable the turbocharging of the next stage of Open Banking that will encourage markets to innovate and provide more cost-effective financing, especially for SMEs

2. INVESTMENT CONFIDENCE

Create an environment that provides confidence to invest in the UK

Lack of certainty results in a lack of confidence and a reluctance to invest. Without investment, UK plc will fall behind its peers. Fundamentally, a thriving economy is built upon confidence and a willingness by new and existing businesses to invest.

To achieve this, corporates require:

- Stability: certainty and longer-term predictability of the fiscal and regulatory environment
- Tax rules that do not put the UK at a competitive disadvantage
- Proportionality and consistency at the heart of regulatory developments
- Simplify key regulations and governance rules to reduce the burden - especially for SMEs
- Global alignment in regulations unless there is a clear case for difference

3. RESOURCES: TALENT & SKILLS

Provide businesses with the talent needed for growth in the 21st century

Corporates require access to a deep pool of talent; workforces need upskilling to address particular skills gaps that have been identified by our members - these gaps

include financial literacy, financial risk management and technology skills. Furthermore, this access to talent needs to be disseminated across the whole ecosystem to future-proof the UK economy, especially addressing skills gaps in smaller organisations (who typically form the supply chains of larger businesses).

We ask that the next government:

- Support access to professional qualifications to upskill current and future business leaders in financial risk management, by offering compelling subsidies for training
- Provide educational opportunities to enable SMEs to engage with technological developments
- Redesign the immigration visa system to enable suitably skilled workers in areas such as green finance and treasury risk management to join the UK workforce more easily

4. SUSTAINABLE FINANCE

Enhance the UK's global position in sustainability

Transition towards a 'net zero' world is generally accepted as desirable. However, there is considerable confusion over how to achieve this and current efforts are proving counterproductive as reputational risk (e.g. perceptions of 'greenwashing') is hindering action. The Government must take a leading role to ensure the provision of clear, uncomplicated pathways to achieving the objective.

To do so, we ask that the next government:

- Create the conditions to make lending for sustainable projects and transitional financing materially cheaper than alternative (non-ESG) funding solutions
- Accelerate creation of a UK taxonomy to support business planning and transition
- Lead work to improve the use of natural capital by large and smaller businesses as that will encourage investment in biodiversity and better stewardship of the UK's natural resources
- Encourage global efforts to standardise reporting in areas such as KYC and greenhouse gas emissions reporting

5. TECHNOLOGY

Facilitate effective use of technology

Technology is advancing at a rate that is difficult for many corporates to keep pace with. However, effective innovation and deployment of technology offers a competitive advantage and as such must be a priority.

We ask that the government:

- Support the market's developments in the use of technology, through proportionate regulation and provision of resources such as sandboxes where appropriate
- Promote the use of digital trade legislation to enable businesses to reduce the costs of trade
- Facilitate access to technology for SMEs in areas such as AI and cybersecurity
- Encourage the digitalisation of financial markets where it is appropriate and beneficial (e.g. share registers)
- Encourage the development of a single reporting access point to reduce the burden on businesses (especially SMEs) on a wide range of government and regulatory reporting (much of which is duplicated)

About the ACT

The Association of Corporate Treasurers is the professional body for treasurers and associated roles in the UK and beyond. Our purpose is to set standards and qualifications in treasury, support and develop treasurers throughout their careers, and ensure the voice of the real economy is heard by regulators, policymakers and employers. We were one of the first professional bodies in treasury, established in the 1970s, and we are the only treasury association to hold a Royal Charter.

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