



COLE ASSOCIATES CO-HOST PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE STATE OF THE M&A FUNDING MARKET

Jeremy Cole, Partner at Manchester corporate finance boutique Cole Associates and Paul Ellaby, Partner at Trowers & Hamlin's co-hosted a panel discussion on 9th September 2026 for Pro.Manchester at Trower's offices in Manchester.



The subject of the event was the state of the funding market for mergers & acquisitions (M&A) in the north west. This is the 11th year that Jeremy and Paul have hosted this event for Pro.Manchester.

The panel comprised experienced funders covering all aspects of the M&A funding market in the north west:

Sophie Clough, Senior Investment Manager, Foresight Private Equity

Michelle Sung, Director, Large Corporate Lending, Barclays Bank plc

Simon Dixon, Managing Director, North and Midlands, Shawbrook/ThinCats

Matt Greenhalgh, Sales Director, North and Scotland, Praetura Commercial Finance

Each panel member gave their views on the state of the M&A funding market in the North West. The panel's views included a feeling that there is plenty of funding available in the north west for good quality transactions, with no need for business owners and buyers to head to London for funding. There was recognition that there is a 'flight to quality' such that transactions with significant risks (such as excessive vendor dependency) will struggle to attract funding.

The panel gave their views on the reasons for deals taking longer than planned and what can be done about it. The impact of AI was discussed, with the expectation that AI will have an increasing impact on improving the efficiency of due diligence.

The liveliest part of the debate involved predictions for the next 12 months. The general feeling of the panel was one of cautious optimism, with the expectation that good quality deals in the lower mid-market will continue to attract funding and will not be affected by the current geopolitical events that affect global deals.



If your business has any funding needs, contact Jeremy Cole on 07711 435814 or jeremyc@cole-group.co.uk