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## Individual sentenced for role in operating unauthorised collective investment scheme

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Having been convicted on 29 May 2015 following a trial at Southwark Crown Court, Adam Hawkins was today sentenced to 6 years and 9 months imprisonment for his involvement in operating an unauthorised collective investment scheme through three land banking companies as a result of which over 110 investors lost at least £4.3 million.

Mr Hawkins primarily worked as a salesman and was involved in the management of the three land banking companies Plott UK, European Property Investments (UK) Ltd and Stirling Alexander Limited.

This sentence follows sentences of up to 8 years imprisonment handed down in earlier hearings against seven other defendants: Scott Crawley, Dale Walker, Daniel Forsyth, Brendan Daley, Aaron Petrou, Ross Peters, and Ricky Mitchie. All of the convictions are part of Operation Cotton, one of the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) largest investigations and prosecutions.

Commenting on the case, Georgina Philippou, acting director of enforcement and market oversight at the FCA, said:

"This investigation and prosecution by the FCA has led to immediate custodial sentences totalling for eight people totalling 32 years and 9 months, showing how seriously the courts view this kind of offending. This prosecution demonstrates that we will not shy away from taking firm and decisive action to protect consumers and the integrity of the financial services industry, as well as holding individuals and companies to account for illegal investment activities."

Confiscation proceedings are being pursued against all defendants.

In sentencing Mr Hawkins, His Honour Judge Leonard QC again emphasised that this was a "very substantial and deliberate fraud on the public" and one which was "subtle and cruel" in its operation.

In respect of Mr Hawkins, Judge Leonard QC said:

"Two days before you started at Plott you were arrested for a very similar matter. You came to Plott with your eyes wide open. Rather than running a mile from the activities of Plott, you endorsed their fraudulent activities and worked hard to achieve their fraudulent aims."

### Notes to editors

1. Read a more detailed press release about the [Operation Cotton prosecution](#)
2. The total sentence for eight individuals of 32 years' and 9 months immediate imprisonment is the longest total sentence imposed as a result of any FSA or FCA prosecution.

3. Hawkins was convicted by jury in trial 2 of one count of conspiracy to defraud (count 1) and one count of operating a regulated activity, namely a CIS without authorisation (count 2). He was sentenced today to 6 years and 9 months' imprisonment on count 1 and 18 months' imprisonment (with the sentences to run concurrently).
4. On the 1 April 2013 the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) became responsible for the conduct supervision of all regulated financial firms and the prudential supervision of those not supervised by the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA).
5. The FCA has an overarching strategic objective of ensuring the relevant markets function well. To support this it has three operational objectives: to secure an appropriate degree of protection for consumers; to protect and enhance the integrity of the UK financial system; and to promote effective competition in the interests of consumers.
6. Find out [more information about the FCA](#).