

## Group Chair's statement



# Building the conditions for growth

## Dear shareholders,

2025 was a year of strong performance and progress for our bank. Indeed, profits and returns were both up from 2024, so too our lending, deposits and the number of customers we serve.

We consistently outperformed expectations – delivering for our customers, shareholders, and the wider UK.

These achievements reflect the dedication of our colleagues and the trust placed in us by those who choose to bank with us, as well as by the communities we serve.

## Invest, innovate and succeed

Fundamentally, I'm optimistic about the future for our bank and for the UK. In the short term, our economy continues to demonstrate considerable resilience, with lower inflation and modest growth on the horizon for 2026. Yet the economic landscape remains complex: uncertainty in global markets continues to affect sentiment; energy prices remain volatile; and some sectors are still adjusting to increases in the cost of doing business.

Looking further ahead, the UK's inherent advantages – talent, infrastructure, and a spirit of enterprise – are sources of enduring strength.

And banks are the connective tissue of the UK economy. Our sector's performance over the past 12 months underscored the vital role we play as strategic assets, driving economic growth in every country and region.

Of course, a predictable, proportionate approach to regulation and policy making is essential; this is the underlying drumbeat that gives businesses and consumers the confidence to invest, innovate and succeed.

The UK Government's growth agenda has made important early progress, most notably through the Leeds Reforms and a shift towards a more proportionate, pro-growth regulatory approach. But delivery at pace now matters, and collaboration between the private sector and government remains crucial.

Together, we can build a stable, supportive environment that fosters innovation and secures the UK's position as a global financial leader.

## Succeeding with customers and the UK

My domestic and international engagements with regulators, business leaders and investors throughout the course of 2025 only served to reinforce for me the scale of opportunity in the UK.

From Singapore to Washington and from Edinburgh to Romford, Birmingham and Liverpool, it's clear that there is a genuine appetite to understand how banks in the UK can drive growth and have a positive social impact.

Our unique regional infrastructure means we have a particular role in facilitating balanced UK growth. That role is rooted in our purpose, as the bank that turns possibilities into progress. By focusing on our core activity, we help businesses start, scale and adapt, and we support individuals to manage their money and plan for the future.

I've seen the impact of this first-hand. At our Accelerator anniversary pitch event in Manchester in July, entrepreneurs shared how our hubs helped them secure funding and expand their businesses. I've also seen our Financial Foundations workshops in action, giving people the confidence to build financial resilience and plan ahead. And, in November,

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at the University of Oxford Equinox Partnership dinner, I had the opportunity to connect with academic and business leaders – bringing together diverse perspectives and expertise to unlock new opportunities for our customers and communities.

By investing in local communities and supporting the transition to a net-zero economy we are helping to deliver sustainable growth. For example, when I visited Tysley Energy Park in Birmingham, I saw how our support is helping to deliver practical low-carbon initiatives, like renewable energy and cleaner transport options, that aim to make a real difference for local businesses and the community.

In 2025, NatWest Group stepped up and stepped forward, and there is much more we can do in 2026 and beyond. Because this is what our growth plan really stands for: supporting our customers to succeed in a changing world.

### Competing and winning in a changing market

As a Board, our role is to work with the executive team to ensure we have a strategy that delivers value today and positions NatWest Group for sustainable success in the years ahead. Transformations at scale are never easy but they are necessary. Our financial performance demonstrates that the strategy set by NatWest Group's CEO Paul Thwaite and his team is delivering.

In a rapidly changing environment, its strength rests on two fundamentals: being close to customers, while ensuring the bank remains agile and adaptable. The depth of our relationships in the communities that we serve, combined with the scale of our data, is a source of competitive advantage. It helps us to understand, anticipate and respond to our customers' changing needs – from the demand for seamless, personalised experiences to the opportunities created by emerging technologies. These insights allow us to innovate with purpose and deliver solutions that make banking simpler, safer and more accessible.

One of the clearly emerging customer needs is the growing requirement for financial planning, savings and investment advice. As a Board, we fully supported the £2.7 billion acquisition of Evelyn Partners – creating the UK's leading private bank and wealth management business. We are confident it meets the high bars Paul has set for acquisitions; it is strategically and financially compelling, operationally deliverable and Evelyn Partners is a strong cultural fit, with a shared customer-first focus.

The companies that will win in today's landscape are those that start with the customer in everything they do. This means more than using data and insight effectively. It's about empowering the front line, trusting those closest to our customers to make the decisions on how best to serve them and ensuring our central teams and functions work seamlessly in service of them.

Because one thing is certain – customer expectations and how they choose to bank will look very different in the years ahead. In an environment where competition is coming from every corner, we need a bank that is agile, adaptable and able to innovate at pace – while shaping the future responsibly. That means setting the benchmark for trust and innovation in financial services, ensuring progress is sustainable, and leading the industry in a way that benefits customers, communities and the wider economy.

### A strengthened and engaged Board

Since taking up the role of Chair, my priority has been to build a Board that is highly engaged and constructively challenging – a group of trusted colleagues to complement our executive team.

Through our 'Board on the Road' programme, directors have spent more time with customers and colleagues across the UK, gaining first-hand insight into the challenges and opportunities they face. These experiences inform our thinking and ensure that strategy is grounded in reality.

In November 2025, we welcomed Josh Critchley as an independent non-executive director and on 23 February 2026, Albert Hitchcock will join the Board. With decades of experience across banking and other sectors, their deep expertise will be an asset to the Board, particularly as we continue to pursue our growth ambitions and navigate an evolving market landscape.

We also announced that Yasmin Jetha will retire from the Board on 31 March 2026. I'd like to thank Yasmin for her outstanding contribution to the Board and its committees since her appointment in 2017. She has been a highly valued director and colleague, and she leaves with our very best wishes for the future.

I would like to thank all of the Board, and all of our colleagues, for their hard work and the support they have given to our customers throughout 2025. Having a team that is committed to steering NatWest Group through a period of rapid change with clarity and confidence ensures we remain focused on delivering growth and securing NatWest Group's long-term success.

I must also recognise the great sadness all of us felt at the passing of Frank Dangeard, Chair of NatWest Markets, in August 2025. Frank's wisdom, integrity, and commitment left an indelible mark on all who had the privilege to work alongside him, both at NatWest Group and across the course of his career. On behalf of the Board, I extend our deepest condolences to Frank's family and all who knew him.

### Return to private ownership – a forward-looking chapter

Of course, 2025 also marked a key milestone for NatWest Group – our return to full private ownership. In May 2025, the UK Government sold its very last shares in the bank – a testament to our consistently strong performance, the considerable progress that has been made under successive management teams and a marker of the long-term transformation that has made NatWest Group simpler, stronger, and more customer-focused.

We saw a continued strong share price performance throughout 2025 – up 62% – reflecting greater certainty at a macro level, heightened positivity around UK banks, and, above all, the consistency of our delivery, as well as the confidence investors have in our future ambitions.

We have also delivered for shareholders. Having increased our ordinary dividend payout ratio to around 50% of attributable profit, we have declared total dividends of 32.5p per share for 2025 (up 51.2% year on year), and announced £750 million of on-market buybacks for the year – all underpinned by strong capital generation and a CET1 ratio of 14.0%.

We are deeply grateful to the UK public and Government for their support over the years. As we move forward, we do so as a partner in growth, committed to building value for our shareholders and the UK. This milestone marks the beginning of a new chapter. We begin 2026 with confidence, conviction and positive momentum on which we can build.

I am proud of what NatWest Group accomplished in 2025. Our progress is the result of collective effort, disciplined execution, and a steadfast commitment to our purpose. As we look ahead, I firmly believe that NatWest Group is well positioned to lead, to innovate, and to deliver for all of our stakeholders.

**Rick Haythornthwaite**  
Chair