

# Sonya Van de Graaff

## Partner

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## OVERVIEW

Sonya Van de Graaff is a partner in the firm's Finance practice. Prior to joining the firm, Sonya served as a partner at an international firm in London. Sonya has extensive experience counseling stakeholders across the capital structure on complex restructuring, distressed and insolvency situations. She guides trustees as well as creditors, sponsors, and debtors through a wide range of matters in English and cross-border laws. Equipped with experience spanning several sectors and industries, Sonya offers a broad perspective that helps address the objectives of her clients.

## PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

Sonya's previous experience on the restructuring side included directing creditors and successor trustees through a range of statutory and privately negotiated restructuring tools and general contingency planning. Her extensive experience has also included counseling debtors and shareholders, as well as boards.

Having been involved in several market-leading transactions, Sonya appreciates the value of leadership as well as balancing different interests among various stakeholder groups. Those transactions have included restructurings of leveraged finance transactions, structured credits, and credit institutions. She is also experienced in pre-pack administrations and European aspects of Chapter 11 filings.

On the insolvency side, Sonya has advised creditors and trustees and has also assisted boards through the "twilight zone" of insolvency.

Sonya brings experience in the aviation industry, which has included representing the foreign administrators of an island nation's airline in securing the English courts' recognition of the airline's insolvency proceeding. She also advised the business rescue practitioners of a foreign airline company on the effectiveness of the foreign law compromise of English law claims as well as the options available for recognition and enforcement.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- Recognised by *The Legal 500 United Kingdom* as a Recommended Lawyer for Corporate Restructuring & Insolvency in London, 2026-2027

## PROFESSIONAL / CIVIC ACTIVITIES

- INSOL Fellow, INSOL International, 2017-2025
- Insolvency Lawyers' Association (UK), President, 2022-2023
- Techincal Committee of the Insolvency Lawyers Association (UK), Member
- IWIRC (First Co-Chair International Women's Insolvency & Restructuring Confederation (London Chapter)

## SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- Guest speaker, Radcliffe Chambers' Annual Conference, “Sequana” and “UK's proposed implementation of UNCITRAL model law on enforcement of foreign-insolvency related judgments,” 2022 and 2023
- Panellist, ILA conference, "Transatlantic comparative analysis of restructuring options", 2022
- Panellist, INSOL International, “Focus Webinar – Pre-insolvency Remedies”, 2021
- Moderator, III Conference NYC, “Recently amended laws”, 2021
- Panellist, ILA Webinar, “Successor Trustees in Restructurings”
- Speaker, INSOL International Singapore, “Fellows Forum (UNCITRAL Model Law on Enforcement of Foreign Insolvency Related Judgments - 'MLJ')”, 2019
- Panellist, INSOL International Singapore, “Main Forum (Bank Resolutions)”, 2019
- Insolvency Lawyers Association Academic Conference (on MLJ), 2019
- Organiser and Moderator, privately held conference on Lehman's 10th anniversary
- Part of IWIRC delegate for Working Group V negotiating MLJ at UNCITRAL in Vienna, 2017

## EDUCATION

- LL.M., King's College, University of London, 1998 *Commonwealth Scholar*
- LL.B., Queensland University of Technology, 1994 *1st Honors and University Medalist*
- Diploma in Music, Queensland Conservatorium of Music, Griffith University, 1995
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## • ADMISSIONS

- Solicitor of the Senior Courts of England and Wales

## • THOUGHT LEADERSHIP *POWERED BY HUB*

- 2 February 2026, Has the Texas Two-Step Become the Thames Two-Step?
- 28 January 2026, 2026 Outlook: Are UK Liquidators Able to Limit Their Liability?
- 15 October 2025, What Is the Future Allure of the English Part 26A Restructuring Plan for European Debtors?
- 16 July 2025, Back to the Drawing Board for Restructuring Plans—Part 26A of the UK Companies Act 2006
- 26 March 2025, Corporate Debtors and Transactions at an Undervalue–Lessons From the UK Supreme Court: *El-Husseini and Another v Invest Bank PSC*

## • OTHER PUBLICATIONS

- Co-Author, "What is the future allure of the English Part 26A restructuring plan for European debtors?," INSOL Restructuring Alert, December 2025
- Co-Editor and Contributor, 'The Art of the Ad Hoc' GRR, 2017 (1st ed) and 2020 (2nd ed)
- UK Contributor, “Covid map,” INSOL, 2020 and 2021

## • NEWS & EVENTS

- 21 October 2025, Out of Court Restructuring in Europe
- 18 September 2025, Is There a Playbook for Restructuring Across Germany, Luxembourg, and the United Kingdom?
- 1 July 2025, Buying Assets Out of Distress: The European Experience
- 13 May 2025, Is There a Playbook for Restructuring Across Luxembourg, Germany and United Kingdom?
- 20 March 2025, INSOL Hong Kong 2025: Multijurisdictional Insolvency Insights: A Global Discussion
- 6 December 2024, K&L Gates Adds Restructuring and Insolvency Partner in London

## • OTHER MEDIA MENTIONS

- Quoted, “Judges put brake on costly new money in UK restructuring plans,” *Pitchbook*, 6 August 2025
- Quoted, “Thames Water ruling shows delivery of alternative plan is key,” *PitchBook*, 20 February 2025

## • AREAS OF FOCUS

- Restructuring and Insolvency
- Energy Disputes

## INDUSTRIES

- Automotive
- Aviation
- Betting and Gaming
- Consumer Goods and Services
- Energy
- Financial Services
- Manufacturing
- Transportation and Logistics

## REPRESENTATIVE EXPERIENCE

- Represented the security trustee in connection with the cross border financial restructuring of Codere.
- Represented the security trustee in its various capacities in the second restructuring of Vue cinema chain.
- Advised an 'OEM' in connection with its exposure to a financially distressed UK Tier 1 Supplier and contingency planning for a sale out of administration; ongoing advice in connection with funding the Tier 1 Supplier through administration.
- Advised the buyer in connection with its pre-pack purchase of certain assets in Hunter Boots (in administration) (including assets in The Netherlands, US, and Canadian subsidiaries).
- Represented the security agent in the cross-border restructuring (ultimately by way of distressed disposal under an intercreditor agreement) of the Merced-sponsored Telford oil & gas platforms; and subsequent liquidation of the Cayman 'target' entity.
- Advised the equity sponsor in connection with the contingency planning of a distressed luxury clothing brand and in its ultimate liquidation.
- Advised a creditor in connection with a potential share buy-back of shares owned by a financially distressed English company in a department store.
- Advised the security trustee in connection with private debt financing by way of bond issue, to raise finance for social housing (Brent Council).
- Advised a major creditor in connection with the 'ECAPS' Lehman/Deutsche court of appeal litigation.
- Advised a Latin aviation company in negotiating terms with, and the contingency planning in respect of, a distressed aircraft purchaser and service provider (in respect of claims governed by English law).

- Advised a boutique investment bank in connection with negotiating the purchase of the prime brokerage platform from SovaCapital (in administration).
- Advised a US private equity sponsor in connection with their equity and debt investment in a distressed automotive supplier.
- Represented the business restructuring professionals in connection with the ongoing insolvency proceedings of Comair, as regards the English recognition and related matters of the South African plan of compromise.
- Represented a major creditor in connection with its investment in Naviera Armas, in homologacion.
- Advised a creditor in connection with their investment in Wizink/Mulhacen undergoing a liability management exercise.
- Represented the sponsor in connection with its equity and debt investment in a UK addiction services business.
- Advised a creditor in connection with its investment in a German real estate conglomerate.
- Advised the security trustee in connection with enforcement and ultimately appointment of administrators for a software company.
- Advised a creditor in connection with Intralot liability management exercise.
- Advised the successor trustee in the Scheme of Arrangement of New Look.
- Advised the successor trustee in the Scheme of Arrangement for Hema (together with the related Dutch enforcement).
- Represented a significant creditor in the 'Waterfall' litigation of the £7 billion surplus funds in Lehman Brothers International (Europe) (in administration) and associated Scheme of Arrangement.
- Represented a creditor in its capacity as a member of the ad hoc group member in Steinhoff convertible bonds.
- Provided contingency planning advice to a principal shareholder in and creditor of OneWeb (a global satellite business).
- Advised European subsidiaries and directors of Sungevity and Ciber, whose parent entities were undergoing Chapter 11 plans.
- Advised a creditor in connection with its acquisition of distressed CMBS 'ELOC' notes.
- Provided 'insolvency-proofing' advice to a US cinema group in connection with outsourcing its back-office capabilities cross Atlantic (with a view to protecting its IP assets).
- Advised a major creditor in connection with its expropriated asset in the Banco Popular resolution under BRRD.
- Advised the secured creditor of a luxury car portfolio in connection with the appointment of receivers, the ongoing receivership, and foreclosure.

- Advised a credit institution in connection with cross border insolvency matters involving its proposed sale and purchase of oil with a German oil refinery with dispersed assets.
- Advised a fund in connection with its bids to acquire all the debt and equity in PHS (UK) and Slater & Gordon (including analysis of shareholder rights and rights of first refusal), and title and settlement matters.
- Contingency planning advice for a creditor of one of the world's leading financial services providers (prime brokerage and cross border analysis).
- Represented the principal creditor in the restructuring of Mortgage Funding 2008-1 PLC (a Lehman originated RMBS transaction).
- Represented the sponsor in restructuring a Dutch education company going into Dutch pre-pack sale.
- Advised cross border enforcement strategies in connection with creditor’s investment in English law bonds issued by a Ukrainian utility company.
- Advised a US fund in connection with its investment in assets owned by Banco Espirito Santo.
- Represented an ad hoc bondholder group in the £660 million Eurosail UK-2007 3-BL PLC RMBS transaction (the seminal Supreme Court decision on balance sheet insolvency test).