



# Access to Finance

*Early-Stage Investment for SMEs*

20 February

15:00-19:30

Guildhall

# AGENDA





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- 15:00**      **Registration and refreshments**
- 15:30**      **Introduction by host Oli Barrett**
- 15:35**      **Welcome speech**  
Katie Stewart, Executive Director of Environment  
City of London Corporation
- 15:40**      **Going for growth**  
*How the British Business Bank is supporting SMEs  
to start, grow and scale*  
Louis Taylor, CEO  
British Business Bank
- 15:45**      **Panel 1: Funding Foundations**  
*Exploring routes to business growth*  
More information on [page 4](#)
- 16:15**      **Getting investment ready**  
Nick David, Principal  
Alator Capital
- 16:25**      **Panel 2: Beyond the Bank**  
*Exploring investment options*  
More information on [page 5](#)
- 17:00**      **Networking in the Business Showcase**
- 18:00**      **Pitching competition**  
with Indie Gordon  
More information on [page 8](#)
- 19:30**      **Event close**



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# YOUR HOSTS



## Oli Barrett MBE

*Connector, Presenter, Founder*

Oli Barrett loves connecting people and ideas. He has co-founded numerous organisations including Tenner, Volunteer It Yourself, The Rainmakers, Cospa, StartUp Britain, and Clean and Cool. From working at Walt Disney World, he became a Butlin Redcoat, starting his first business at Leeds University. Today, he works across a range of new ventures and is a regular host of live events, podcasts and virtual gatherings. He is a shareholder in numerous companies including Calm.com and Troubadour Theatres and recently released an audio course, Build a Better Network - you can read more about it [here](#).



## City of London Corporation

The City of London Corporation is committed to empowering small businesses through comprehensive support initiatives. As part of its SME Strategy, it offers access to critical resources such as finance, business data, workspace, and expert mentoring. With a focus on fostering growth, diversity, and innovation, the City Corporation helps businesses navigate the complexities of entrepreneurship. By providing targeted support in key sectors, including technology and the creative industries, it ensures that the City remains a vibrant, inclusive hub for startups and growing enterprises. [Learn more about the City of London Corporation's SME Strategy.](#)



## British Business Bank

British Business Bank is the UK's economic development bank and they are here to help your business find a way, with free financial tools and expert information. They're experts in small business finance and work with a broad range of partners to help businesses like yours, whether you're a start-up, an established business or you're looking to grow. [Learn more about the support offered by British Business Bank.](#)

# PANEL 1: FUNDING FOUNDATIONS

## *Exploring routes to business growth*

The panellists will provide an overview of different funding opportunities for early-stage businesses, including loans, grants, R&D tax incentives/reliefs, debt financing, and invoice factoring. Please submit any questions you have for the panel via [SMEevents@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:SMEevents@cityoflondon.gov.uk) before the event.

### Panellists:



**Leon Ifayemi**  
Centre for Finance,  
Innovation and  
Technology (CFIT)



**Nick Howe**  
NatWest



**Justine Dignam**  
Markel UK



**Alderman Vincent Keaveney**  
Samuel Wilson's  
Loan Trust



**Jacqueline Watts**  
A City Law Firm



**Mark O'Neil**  
Kinetic Business Advice

*You can find panellist bios on [page 8](#)*

# PANEL 2: BEYOND THE BANK

## *Exploring investment options*

This panel will focus on investment and equity funding, including angel investment, venture capital, SEIS/EIS schemes, and crowdfunding. Please submit any questions you have for the panel via [SMEevents@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:SMEevents@cityoflondon.gov.uk) before the event.

### Panellists:



**Indie Gordon**  
The 40% Club



**Anna Sweetman**  
Active Partners



**Christiana  
Stewart-Lockhart**  
Enterprise Investment  
Scheme Association



**Henry Whorwood**  
Beauhurst



**John McNamara**  
Newable

*You can find panellist bios on [page 9](#)*



# BUSINESS SHOWCASE

Network with key business and finance support services that can provide you with guidance and resources to better access funding.

## Connect with:



Entrepreneurs Collective



CAPITAL ENTERPRISE



NatWest



## Pitching competition

We are collaborating with Indie Gordon and the 40% Club to host a pitching competition during the Business Showcase. This is a great opportunity to practice your pitching skills, get valuable feedback, and win prizes - including, but not limited to, £500 vouchers, 3 months free Canva Premium access, and 1 month of complimentary business mentoring. Come and watch to learn more about pitching for your business!



**Access to Finance**  
*Early-Stage Investment for SMEs*



# SPEAKERS AND PANELLISTS

## **Katie Stewart**

*Executive Director of Environment, City of London Corporation*



Katie Stewart is the Executive Director Environment at the City of London and is responsible for helping sustainably develop the Square Mile's built environment, as well as managing the City's highways, waste and public protection services and the 11,000 acres of green spaces for which the City has responsibility within and beyond its boundaries. She also is second Vice President of the Association for Directors for Economy, Environment, Planning and Transport (ADEPT), and a co-chair of the ADEPT Southeast Board.

Katie is American by birth and moved to England 20 years ago. In her spare time, Katie is an amateur runner and when not running around nearby Richmond Park, is found running around after her five-year old son.

## **Louis Taylor**

*CEO, British Business Bank*



Louis Taylor is CEO of the British Business Bank. Prior to that, he was Chief Executive of UK Export Finance (UKEF), the UK's export credit agency. He also held roles as a Director General in the Department for International Trade, and a member of its Executive Committee and Management Board. Before joining UKEF, Louis held a range of senior roles at Standard Chartered Bank, including from 2013 to 2015 as Chief Operating Officer of Group Treasury, based in London. Before that, he spent three years as the bank's CEO for Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, based in Ho Chi Minh City.

## **Nick David**

*Principal, Alator Capital*



Nick leads Alator Capital, a leading London HQ'd advisory boutique that supports early and growth stage companies with equity and debt financing. Nick focuses on the technology, wellness, and life science sectors, having assisted dozens of companies, and a few funds, on successful capital raises. Alongside his role at Alator, Nick works part-time as a Venture Partner for Starship Ventures, a US deep tech VC. Nick also has operational experience, having co-founded and exited Kodoku Studios in 2021.



**Alderman Vincent Keaveney**  
*Chair of the Samuel Wilson's Loan Trust*

Vincent is a Senior Adviser in the international law firm, DLA Piper, having previously been the international co-head of the Financial Services Sector at the firm. Vincent served as Lord Mayor of the City of London in 2021/22, when his Mayoral theme – People and Purpose – championed a purpose led and people focused UK FPS sector. He co-chaired the HMT and BEIS sponsored Socio-Economic Diversity Taskforce and is Chair of Progress Together, the financial services membership body promoting greater socio-economic diversity in the financial services industry. He chairs the Samuel Wilson's Loan Trust, is Governor of The Honourable The Irish Society and Chair of Governors at The Charterhouse in Smithfield. He is the senior independent trustee of the Sir John Soane's Museum, a Council member of Gresham College and chairs the board of the vocal ensemble, Exaudi.



**Leon Ifayemi**  
*Director of Coalitions and Research, CFIT*

Leon is the Director of Coalitions and Research at CFIT Innovation and Technology, where he leads strategy and has convened over 100 global firms to drive innovation in the UK. He is also a Board Member at Digital Leaders, focusing on AI, digital transformation, and public policy. Leon has extensive fintech experience, having served as Director at SPCE Group and Senior Associate in Private Equity at Edmond de Rothschild. A seasoned panellist, he brings expert insights on fintech strategy, innovation, and transformation to industry events.



**Nick Howe**  
*Enterprise Manager, Natwest*

Nick has a passion for supporting people and businesses and has built a strong network and a track record for spotting and signposting opportunities. He's a great listener to business owner challenges and makes suggestions on the back of those to introduce people to solutions to the identified needs. Nick also helps business community organisations build their offer and range of events, workshops, contacts and reach to help their local business economy thrive.



**Justine Dignam**  
*Director of Incentives & Reliefs, Markel UK*

Justine drives the development, growth, and management of the tax incentives and relief division at Markel Tax. Since joining Markel in 2014, Justine has led the strategy for introducing tax incentives to accountancy partners and developed market sector propositions. Previously, Justine held senior positions in the professional service and accountancy sector and served as a non-executive director for several firms.



**Jacqueline Watts**  
*Director, A City Law Firm*

A distinguished solicitor and Director at A City Law Firm, Jacqueline specialises in supporting founders, SMEs, and scale-ups through investment readiness, due diligence, and navigating complex legal landscapes. With a particular expertise in emerging technologies, blockchain, cryptocurrency, AI, and machine learning, Jacqueline has successfully advised on numerous investment rounds, including angel investments and venture capital funding, from seed stages to Series A and beyond.



**Mark O'Neil**  
*Managing Director, Kinetic Business Advice*

Mark is Managing Director of Kinetic Business Advice, and has been delivering strategic problem-solving, executive mentoring, coaching, and access to finance for over 30 years to drive business growth. He holds multiple NED and advisory roles in commercial finance and serves as Chief Commercial Officer for the Association of Business Mentors. A Freeman of both The Company of Entrepreneurs and the City of London, Mark brings extensive expertise and a collaborative approach to supporting businesses and leaders.





### **Indie Gordon**

*Serial Entrepreneur, Angel Investor and UN Delegate*

Indie Love Gordon is a multi-award-winning entrepreneur, government consultant, UN delegate, angel investor, and global speaker. As the founder of brands like Halo and the 40% Club, she's dedicated to building spaces for dreams, growth, and impact. Her passion as an entrepreneurial activist drives her to disrupt the business ecosystem, empowering rising stars to innovate and create change. She believes in cultivating opportunities where unicorn companies can emerge and unlocking the potential for greatness in everyone.



### **Anna Sweetman**

*Associate, Active Partners*

Anna joined the early-stage investment team in January 2023 after working at several early-stage start-ups. Her previous roles include Founders Associate and Product Manager at Vira Health and Head of Client Development at GrassRootsWeb, as well as strategy consulting for early-stage businesses. Prior to this, Anna completed two degrees at the University of Oxford, a BSc in Human Sciences, and an MSc in Global Health Science and Epidemiology. She is particularly interested in healthtech and femtech, as well as sustainable foods and sustainable fashion.



### **Christiana Stewart-Lockhart**

*Director General, EISA*

Christiana is Director General of the EIS Association (EISA), the trade body for the EIS and SEIS ecosystem. EISA has more than 400 members including entrepreneurs, advisers and investors who use the schemes. Christiana previously spent more than a decade working in Westminster and holds a BA in Politics from the University of York. She is a member of TISA's Financial Education Council and sits on the Advisory Board for the APPG for Entrepreneurship.



### **Henry Whorwood**

*Managing Director - Research & Consultancy, Beauhurst*

Henry started and runs Beauhurst's Research & Consultancy unit which produces research on the UK's economy, with a focus on innovation and growth. He has worked on briefs for clients including the British Business Bank, HM Treasury, DSIT and Innovate UK. Henry is an expert on business finance, entrepreneurship and innovation, and regularly gives presentations on market trends at events around the country. He studied Classics at the University of Oxford.



### **John McNamara**

*Investment Specialist, Newable*

Johnny McNamara brings over 20 years of experience in founding, consulting, and advising startups, with a focus on early-stage deep technology companies. He specialises in helping founders secure investment, scale ventures, and turn groundbreaking ideas into reality. Known for his hands-on approach and deep understanding of the funding landscape, Johnny equips startups with the strategies and insights needed to thrive, making him a trusted advisor in bridging the gap between innovation and capital.

**Have any questions for the panel?**

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