

Reflections from the EISA 30th Anniversary and Ready, Steady, Grow Events



October was a particularly active month for RW Blears and our involvement with the Enterprise Investment Scheme Association (EISA) with both Ready, Steady, Grow events and the 30th Anniversary celebration of the Enterprise Investment Scheme taking place.

READY, STEADY, GROW

RW Blears continues to be a proud sponsor of Ready, Steady, Grow, a series of free knowledge-sharing and networking events organised by the EISA in cities across the UK.

Valerie Whalley joined a panel at the recent Ready, Steady, Grow event in Manchester to discuss best practices and pitfalls related to EIS. In Cardiff, Adam Lawrence presented on incorporating EIS and (S)EIS into investment rounds. These events aim to boost awareness of EIS and SEIS funding, helping companies — especially those in the regions — understand and access these crucial funding opportunities.



Val on a panel discussion in Manchester



Adam presenting in Cardiff

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF EIS

Earlier in October, various members of the Blears team had the pleasure of attending the 30th Anniversary celebration of the EIS held at the Institute of Directors in London. This celebration featured insightful panel discussions with founders, fund managers, and industry experts, focusing on the transformative impact of the EIS on the UK economy and the EIS's success over the past three decades, alongside discussions about its future. We set out our key takeaways below.

Extension of 'sunset clause'

One particular cause for celebration on the day related to the extension of the EIS and Venture Capital Trust (VCT) 'sunset clause' to 5 April 2035, a decision welcomed by many in the investment community. This extension will continue to support early-stage businesses by ensuring these vital tax reliefs remain available for investors and the continued backing to EIS given by Rachel Reeves in last week's Autumn Budget signals its importance as a tool for stimulating the growth of new business and innovation in the UK.

Addressing the Seven-Year Rule for EIS Eligibility

A technical point raised during the event was the potential extension to the seven-year age limit for EIS-qualifying companies. Under the current EIS rules, companies are eligible for EIS investments if they receive funding within seven years of their first commercial sale (or ten years for a 'knowledge intensive' company). However, this rule does not account for the extended development cycles and pivots in business models faced by science-based sectors like biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, clean energy, and deep-tech industries.

These sectors often require longer periods of research and higher upfront capital investment. Consequently, the seven-year rule can disproportionately limit access to critical funding during crucial stages of growth. There was optimism from EISA representatives that this limitation would be addressed, and we look forward to providing further updates as and when new developments arise.

Empowering Women in Entrepreneurship and Investment

An insightful panel discussion focusing on empowering women in entrepreneurship and investment formed one of the day's highlights. The panel included Debbie Wosskow OBE who spotlighted the Invest in Women Taskforce, a Rachel Reeves backed initiative designed to accelerate female-driven business ventures. With the aim of deploying £250 million into women-led businesses across the UK, the Taskforce seeks to tackle the barriers female entrepreneurs face in accessing capital.

The Invest in Women Taskforce builds on the foundation of the Alison Rose review of female entrepreneurship. The review revealed that if women were to start and scale businesses at the same rate as men, the UK economy could see a staggering £250 billion boost. This highlights the immense, yet overlooked, impact female founders can have on driving significant economic growth in the UK economy, which the Taskforce is working to unlock.

Finally, it was pleasing to hear Rachel Reeves confirm in Wednesday's Budget that the government will *"continue to work with leading entrepreneurs and venture capital firms to ensure that our policies support a positive environment for entrepreneurship in the UK"* and mention the EIS scheme specifically with no changes to the existing reliefs.



Lannie and Henry at the 30th Anniversary of the EISA event

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