



VISITOR ECONOMY RENAISSANCE PROGRAMME

GRANT SCHEME SHOWCASE

**Business Support Success
Stories**

September 2024



ALP Synergy Ltd



OUR BIGGEST, BOLDEST, BEST SEASON EVER!

RELAXED FAMILY THEATRE

The very best Comedy (Friday, 8pm), Murder (Saturday, 8pm) and Family (Sunday, 11am) to suit every taste every week!

MURDER in Finesse

Non-stop laughter with AC&A including The Localing Museum (February to 4), Comedy Double (February to 11) and a Double Duke (John to 18) and a Hypnotist (combining Super Kaleb Cooper (October, 2-9))

50 YEARS

LIVE THEATRE AT 50

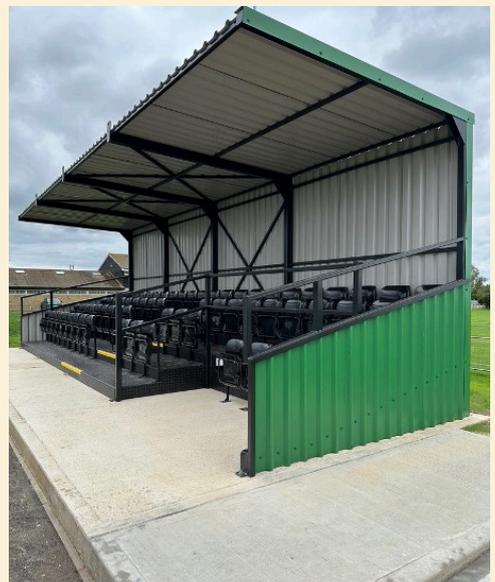
A THEATRE FEAST

PE Kitchen will be cooking up a feast for a Theatre Feast with Tuesday providing chaotic fun. (October, 2-31)

EPIC COMMUNITY PLAYS

Two innovative community productions, Lark Rise and Walk Down (a new play from a multi-Olivier award-winning writer) celebrating rural Oxfordshire. (June, 2-10)

Farmen Scene, including exclusive water Jullie Stevenson (May, 2-11), Bake-Off superstar Fran Lewis (March, 2-8) and national comedian and impressionist Rory Bremner (April, 2-10)



Visitor Economy Impact



Businesses who received a Visitor Economy Grant reported a fantastic range of outcomes:

- 35.2 jobs have been created,
- 117 freelance / contractor roles have been created,
- 112.5 jobs have been protected,
- 78 freelance / contractor roles have been protected.

Outcomes	Achieved
Adapt, diversify, or innovate its visitor economy offering.	44
Enhance their higher spend customer offer.	22
Encourage visitors to areas not traditionally known as 'hotspots'.	53
Encourage shoulder season/off peak visitor opportunities.	39
Encourage longer stays/overnight visitors.	33
Improve digital presence to grow market share and attract new customers.	27
Support the county's aim to be known as a COVID safe destination.	28
Support the county's aim to become Net Zero through adopting sustainable practices.	8

Welcome to OxLEP Business

"OxLEP Business is here to support every small and medium sized business in Oxfordshire to overcome challenges and achieve their ambitions. We support sole-traders, not for profits, social enterprises, charities, and limited companies with up to 249 staff. So, if you have a business based and trading in Oxfordshire, then the chances are that we can help you in one way or another."

Helen Brind, Growth Hub Manager at OxLEP Business.



The OxLEP Visitor Economy Grant scheme was a key objective in the Visitor Economy Renaissance Programme being delivered by OxLEP.

OxLEP Business contracted ALP Synergy Ltd to support them in delivering this grant scheme, creating a team which had collectively delivered over £4.5m worth of grants to SME businesses.

The OxLEP Visitor Economy Grant scheme (VEG) was delivered between October 2022 and May 2024 in two phases so that more businesses could engage.

Overall, 118 businesses applied for grants between the two VEG schemes with grants ranging from £5,000 through to £24,999 per business. Following a detailed internal and external assessment of applications, the VEG scheme supported 52 businesses with total grants allocated of £840,884.

I am proud to introduce a selection of case studies from the businesses who have benefitted from the Visitor Economy Grant Scheme delivered through OxLEP Business.

Big Scary Monsters

Founded in Oxford in 2001, Big Scary Monsters is an independent record label that has made its mark by discovering and promoting new talent from around the world. With a commitment to innovative music, the label not only produces records but also organises live music events and pop-up shop experiences across the UK, bringing fresh sounds to a broader audience.

Navigating the ever-changing music industry, Big Scary Monsters has developed creative solutions to help artists thrive in both the physical and digital world. This has helped in maintaining the label's relevance amidst increasing competition and technological advancements.

The support from OxLEP has been instrumental in the label's recent success. With their assistance, we were connected with a business mentor who provided invaluable guidance, helping us establish a long-term strategy and clear business goals. Additionally, the Visitor Economy Grant we received enabled us to host a series of live music showcases, including a festival in East Oxford. These events have significantly boosted our visibility, raising awareness of both our business and our talented roster of artists on local and national levels.

Looking ahead, we have an exciting few months planned. A rebrand and the launch of our new website are on the horizon, alongside the opening of a pop-up shop in Norwich. We are also preparing to release several new albums from a diverse range of artists. This period promises to be one of the most dynamic and promising phases in our history.

Discover more at bsmrocks.com.



Cotswold Electric Bike Tours

As a pioneer of guided e-bike tours in the Cotswolds, we are thrilled to see the market continue to flourish, especially post-Covid. The influx of other operators in the area highlights the growing demand for greener and more engaging ways to explore our outstanding landscapes and charming villages. Unlike conventional whistle-stop bus tours, our e-bike tours make the journey as enjoyable as the destination.

Despite increased competition and unexpected challenges, Cotswold Electric Bike Tours celebrated a record year in 2023. A significant contributor to our success was the OxLEP Visitor Economy Grant, which allowed us to introduce family-friendly tours. Previously, families with children aged 5-13 faced limitations, but our new fleet of Tern e-cargo bikes has solved this issue. Now, children can ride comfortably on the back, enjoying the adventure alongside their parents.

With 25-30% of our guests being repeat customers or referrals, we anticipate even more bookings in 2024. Families who enjoyed our tours are likely to return and recommend us to friends and family, ensuring a steady influx of new guests.

2023 was not without its hurdles. Unseasonably poor weather in July and August affected spontaneous bookings, while rail disputes and station closures also impacted guest arrivals. Nevertheless, the development of family e-bike experiences, funded by the Visitor Economy Grant, played a crucial role in our continued growth. As we look ahead to the 2024 season, we aim to enhance our offerings by collaborating with local businesses and promoting car-free travel to the Cotswolds. The OxLEP grant not only provided financial support but also valuable partnerships and insights.

Over 75% of our guests this season were from the USA or Canada, many of whom didn't enjoy driving their driving experience. By promoting the rail/e-bike, we offer a greener, stress-free way for international visitors to experience the Cotswolds.

For more information, visit our website: www.cotswoldelectricbiketours.co.uk.



The Hill End Centre



For over a century, The Hill End Centre has been inspiring visitors with exceptional outdoor learning experiences. Nestled in a picturesque 67-acre estate, we offer a variety of engaging outdoor activities for day and residential guests, along with adult and teacher training, unique venue spaces, and the opportunity to reconnect with nature.

In 2023, we welcomed over 17,500 visitors of all ages from schools, colleges, youth and faith groups, charities, public bodies, businesses, and families. A visit to Hill End is about embracing the outdoors for education, fun, adventure, socialising, health, and wellbeing. Our guests cherish the chance to explore our natural surroundings, but to enhance their experiences and attract new visitors, we are committed to modernising our historic facilities.

Having been managed by local authorities for many years, Hill End became a charity in 2017. With ambitious plans for the future, we aim to provide more inclusive outdoor experiences, promoting sustainability and ensuring Hill End thrives for the next 100 years and beyond.

Support from OxLEP Business has been crucial during our transition to a more commercial model while preserving our unique character. Their guidance, training, and 1:1 business planning advice, along with networking opportunities, have been invaluable. We were thrilled to receive funding in 2023 from the OxLEP Visitor Economy Grant Scheme for a new Woodland Challenge Zone. This fun, accessible play area has been a hit, serving thousands of children and expanding our capacity for outdoor sessions.

Our vision is to create a beautiful, unique space where everyone can learn about nature and enrich their lives. We are dedicated to improving our facilities and developing new programmes focused on sustainability and climate. As we expand our alternative education offerings for children outside mainstream schooling, we are seeking new partnerships to continue offering this exceptional resource to those who need it most.

The Mill Arts Centre

Located in the heart of Banbury, The Mill Arts Centre (charity reg. no. 1165998) stands as the sole dedicated arts venue in the Cherwell district. We pride ourselves on offering an exciting and diverse live events programme that includes theatre, dance, music, comedy, workshops, classes, and exhibitions. In partnership with local organisations, we run numerous community projects and initiatives aimed at inspiring creativity and enriching lives.

Our vision to provide high-quality artistic, educational, and participatory programmes took a significant leap forward in April 2023, when we joined Arts Council England's National Portfolio. This recognition has brought substantial investment into the Cherwell district, which is a major step forward in securing our vision.

Housed in a historic former grain mill on the banks of the Oxford Canal, The Mill's unique setting comes with its own set of challenges. The building's age presents accessibility issues, and its proximity to water sources has made it increasingly vulnerable to flooding. Our long-term goal is to find alternative premises to overcome these obstacles and expand our offerings.

Thanks to a generous grant from OxLEP, we successfully trialled a new format and distribution method for our seasonal brochure, resulting in a remarkable increase in sales and positive customer feedback. This eco-friendly brochure format is now a staple in our communication strategy.

Our commitment to expanding our reach includes a growing programme of events in Bicester and the annual Banbury Canal Festival. This year's festival will feature The Mill's dance stage, presenting free events and activities to diverse audiences.

Despite recent flooding, which temporarily relocated our theatre programme to Woodgreen Leisure Centre, we are excited to return to our home venue in the autumn with a full schedule. The highlight of our upcoming season is the return of family favourite The Gruffalo for Christmas 2024, set to break box office records once again.

The
Mill
ARTS CENTRE / BANBURY

Oxford Playhouse



For over 85 years, Oxford Playhouse has been at the heart of cultural life in Oxford, offering a rich array of live performances in drama, dance, and comedy to an audience of 140,000 people annually. As the only mid-scale theatre in Oxfordshire, we have the unique ability to present world-class, inspirational theatre. We produce and co-produce new works, reimagine classics, and create new productions, such as the critically acclaimed "Persuasion" in collaboration with the Rose Theatre and Alexandra Palace, and Ralph Fiennes' mesmerising performance in "Four Quartets." Oxford Playhouse is committed to presenting distinctive and bold works to engage and develop new audiences, advance theatre practices, and break down barriers that prevent some community members from experiencing the magic of theatre. The diversity in scale and character of our productions sets us apart in the region.

Our impact extends beyond the stage. As a charity with artistic, social, and educational aims, we reach approximately 15,000 beneficiaries annually through our community programmes. These include literacy improvement initiatives in inner-city schools, free touring theatre across Oxfordshire, distributing 2,500 free tickets to those in need, and partnering with AgeUK and the NHS to deliver programmes for older adults. Additionally, we support over 100 creative artists in developing their careers.

Challenges and Ambitions

Post-pandemic recovery remains a challenge, with limited productions due to a lack of investment during the pandemic, and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis affects our audience's ability to afford tickets. Rising overheads and the high maintenance costs of our historic building add to our financial pressures.

Our business ambitions focus on improving digital systems, enhancing evaluation processes, and driving new income streams through innovative task forces. We are also working on a new five-year strategy to guide our future growth.

While we generate significant income from ticket and ancillary sales, grants are crucial for expanding our community work, improving facilities, and investing in support systems. Post-COVID, the theatre is buzzing with activity. Recent improvements funded by the OxLEP grant have enhanced our front-of-house facilities and advertising, boosting our income.

Decadent Times



Decadent Times CIC specialises in creating unforgettable corporate and private events, with the unique mission of supporting charities, community groups, and public engagement events at minimal cost. From event production and talent programming to providing event decor and structures, we can assist at any stage of your event planning.

We embrace decadence and live it passionately, all while maintaining a strong environmental and social conscience. Our portfolio includes notable events such as the 2024 Cowley Road Carnival where our role was the Events Management Team. The 2024 Glastonbury Festival, where we served as artistic programmers and event decorators, and the 2022 Oxford Canal Festival, where we took on the role of Festival Director.

Our mission is to foster more public music and cultural events in and around Oxford. We work with a variety of partners to support charities' public engagement activities, startup events, and budding festivals.

Our ambitions for the next six months:

- Delivering the Cowley Road Carnival for the first time since 2019.
- Hosting our own Silent Disco event in Oxford.
- Assisting a new festival with planning and direction to bring their vision to life.
- Organising exciting and challenging themed summer parties for private clients.

The Support from OxLEP included advice from experts in their field, webinar presentations on specialised subjects and introductions to other businesses and customers to further our ambitions. This has helped us immensely.

Chipping Norton Theatre Ltd

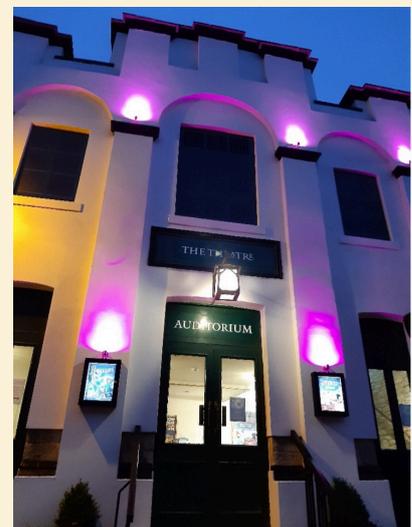
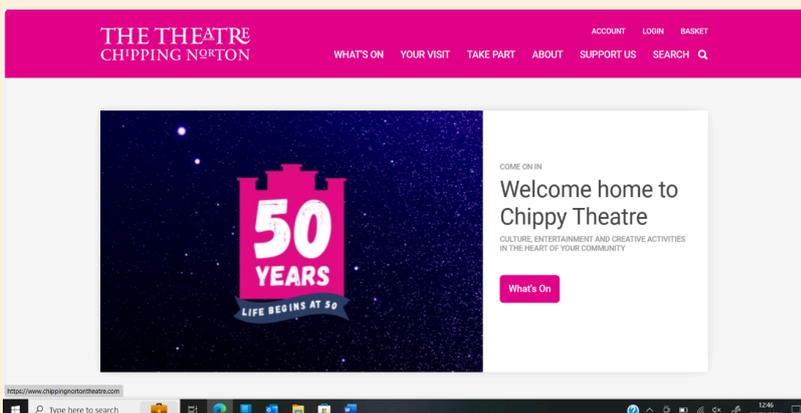
Nestled at the junction of three counties in the heart of North Oxfordshire, Chipping Norton Theatre has been a beacon of cultural vibrancy since 1974. Established as a registered charity, the theatre opened its doors in 1975 and has since evolved into a dynamic mixed arts venue. We proudly host and produce some of the most engaging, accessible, and entertaining cultural events in the region, attracting around 50,000 visitors annually.

Our diverse programme spans live theatre, music, comedy, dance, film, and visual art, with a strong ambition to expand our home-produced offerings and grow our audience. Recognised as a key rural arts hub in OxLEP's Creative, Cultural, Heritage and Tourism Investment Plan, we collaborate with various partners, from local artists and businesses to charities and community groups.

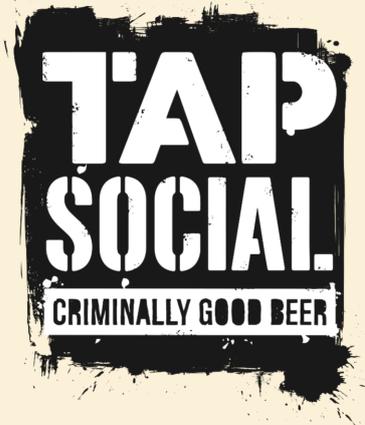
As we celebrate our 50th anniversary in 2024, our special programme will feature an array of home-produced work, events and activities. This milestone also marks the expansion of our arts-led community work beyond Chipping Norton and into the wider region.

A significant upgrade to our digital presence was made possible by a grant from OxLEP Business, allowing us to collaborate with Supercool to develop a new website. This modern platform offers enhanced functionality, enabling us to quickly update content, improve accessibility, and better support sales, memberships, fundraising, and special projects.

Discover more about our exciting anniversary programme at our new website: chippingnortontheatre.com.



Tap Social Movement



Since 2016, Tap Social Movement has been transforming lives and fostering a more inclusive labour market by creating over 80,000 hours of paid employment for prisoners and prison leavers. Remarkably, around one-third of our staff across five Oxfordshire hospitality venues and our production brewery have been involved with the UK's criminal justice system. In 2023 Tap Social earned the 'Purposeful Business' award at the Oxfordshire Business Awards, 'Best Community Food Endeavour' recognition at the Ox in a Box Food Awards, and was runner up in the 'Consumer-Facing Social Enterprise of the Year' category at the nation-wide UK Social Enterprise Awards.

Despite facing numerous challenges, including the cost of living crisis, fluctuating alcohol duty taxes, and increased prices of essential ingredients due to geopolitical events, we have remained resilient. We adapt by forecasting sales well in advance and making strategic adjustments in response to market changes.

A milestone achievement for us was the opening of The Market Tap by Tap Social on 4 May 2023, a café, bar, and bottle shop in Oxford's historic The Covered Market. This venue was made possible with the support of OxLEP Business, which funded essential construction, materials, and equipment. The Market Tap has not only boosted our sales but also contributed to the success of the 'Covered Market Nights' initiative, allowing traders to stay open late from Thursday to Saturday.

Looking ahead, we are thrilled about our plans to expand in 2024, including the launch of an alcohol-free beer and increased distribution of our award-winning craft beers across the UK. We will also strengthen our local ties through community events like yoga sessions, pub quizzes, and markets spotlighting independent traders.

Oxford SUP Club CIC

At Oxford SUP Club, we have cultivated a vibrant community of paddleboarding enthusiasts over the past decade, drawing members from across Oxfordshire and beyond. Our club is more than just a sport and recreation business; it's a haven for individuals of all ages and diverse backgrounds to enjoy stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) in a safe and supportive environment. Our passionate and experienced instructors are dedicated to ensuring everyone can experience the joy of SUP safely.

With over 130 members, we are proud to be one of the largest SUP clubs in the UK. We offer a variety of activities, including beginner lessons, one-on-one coaching, river tours, race training, youth coaching, and instructor training. Our aim is to provide quality coaching and foster personal development, resilience, and both physical and mental well-being.

As the Director and Head Coach, I am deeply committed to delivering top-notch coaching and training. My role as Chairman of the British Stand Up Paddle Association (BSUPA) involves national safety campaigns and promoting SUP across the UK. Our club's mission is to set the standard for others, driven by a dedication to our members and the sport's growth.

The support from the OxLEP grant has been instrumental, boosting our confidence and opening new opportunities for partnerships and growth. It has shown that there is help available for small businesses, and that there are a wealth of local experts willing to give their time and experience to support and develop others. The sense of community within OxLEP and its network in Oxfordshire is fantastic.

"I would love to be more involved with OxLEP and would welcome any opportunities to work together more closely"

Our greatest achievement from this is that 17-year-old Max is currently on course to become the Junior British Champion for 2024 and has been selected for Team GB to represent Great Britain at the ICF World Championships in Florida in November. Max recently spoke to the BBC in Oxford,

BBC Radio Oxford Interview: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/pojfn1hm> BBC

Oxfordshire Video:
<https://www.instagram.com/p/C-FTz5UsOWJ/>



Saunagus



Saunagus offers unique outdoor sauna experiences in the heart of Oxfordshire, tailored to enhance your physical and mental wellbeing while fostering a deep connection with nature. Our sessions, led by trained Saunameisters, are not only relaxing and harmonious but also fun, promoting responsible sauna practices. At Saunagus, we provide a variety of sauna experiences, including classic, communal, and bespoke sessions. These unique experiences often feature relaxing sauna sessions interspersed with invigorating cold plunges in Queenford Lake. Additionally, we offer saunas in diverse settings such as forests, gardens, and any location where there's a need for rejuvenation.

Our passion for the health benefits of regular sauna use drives our mission to bring authentic sauna experiences to Oxfordshire. We aim to offer everyone the chance to experience the transformative effects of regular sauna sessions. With support from OxLEP, we overcame initial challenges in understanding our customer offering, routes to market, and effective promotion strategies. This partnership has helped us achieve stable trading, participate in regular festivals, and offer seasonal sauna slots for paying customers.

Our growth is guided by ethical practices, and we have recently welcomed two directors to help expand our services. We are actively seeking collaborations with other wellness professionals and exploring opportunities to establish a community-run sauna. The invaluable coaching from OxLEP has given us confidence in our unique service we provide.

Join us at the September Song Festival for our second year as we enter our third season, transitioning from ad-hoc bookings to a frequently sold-out model. We are continuously connecting with landowners to discover new locations and further our mission of creating a community-run sauna.

No Vice Ice CIC



At No Vice Ice our mission is to support people living with long term invisible health conditions and reduce stigma within our community through the production of ice lollies and other products using locally sourced surplus food.

Despite facing challenges such as the seasonal nature of our business and our volunteer-led Director team, we remain committed to our growth plans. To expand, we will need to invest in some higher capacity production kit (new lolly machine, flow wrapper and freezers) in the next year.

Our trainee programme, running successfully for two years, has been a cornerstone of our efforts. It provides local people with invisible health conditions the opportunity to gain skills and confidence through lolly production. We're proud to have employed one of our 2023 graduates this season. The support of the OxLEP grant was instrumental, enabling us to fund local experts to redesign our product offerings for sustainable, long-term growth.

One of our proudest achievements is Louie the Lollymobile, our freezer bike. This innovative addition has allowed us to sell directly at events, providing a valuable revenue stream post-COVID. Through these events, we gained insights into staffing and identifying the most lucrative opportunities for future growth. This season, we've already attended four events, matching last year's target and generating an additional £1,300 in revenue.

Excitingly, we've launched the Latte Lolly, developed in partnership with local coffee roastery Missing Bean. This marks the beginning of our adult lolly range, which we sell at a higher price point. With another four events planned and more opportunities on the horizon, we are dedicated to making a positive impact in our community and continuing to grow.

JoJo's Vineyard



JoJo's Vineyard is excited to introduce the Adopt-a-Vine scheme, inviting wine enthusiasts to adopt a vine and gain a deeper understanding of how grapes are cultivated throughout the growing season. This innovative program leverages vineyard management software to provide personalised vine information, delivering detailed updates to participants via their accounts on the adopt-a-vine or individual grower's website.

In an industry where selling wine alone isn't highly profitable, adding value through unique experiences such as tastings and events is crucial. Traditional adopt-a-vine schemes have been limited to offering a certificate and a wine discount. JoJo's Vineyard revolutionises this concept by digitalising the process, offering customers extensive insights into vineyard activities throughout the season.

Our ambition is to have 20 growers, each with 20 customers, utilising this service by the end of the 2024 growing season. For JoJo's Vineyard specifically, the goal is to have 20 customers, each paying £150, by the end of 2024.

To be able to build the app and Wordpress website which will bring all this data together in one place and utilise the data already generated by the Vineyard manager. The support and funding we received from OxLEP played a vital role in allowing us to achieve this.

The service will be available on a standalone website – www.adoptavine.co.uk – and can also be integrated into individual vineyard websites, allowing vineyards to maintain close connections with their customers while preserving their unique branding.

The scheme will launch in Oxfordshire in Q2, following its initial rollout at JoJo's Vineyard in March. Eventually, this will evolve into a B2B product, enabling other vineyards to offer the same service, thereby generating additional revenue.

Flo's Trading

Founded in 2018 by local residents, **People, Place and Participation Ltd.** was born out of a desire to breathe new life into the former Children's Centre. Today, that once deserted building has transformed into Flo's – The Place in the Park, a cherished community hub that draws in both locals and visitors alike.

At the heart of Flo's is our community café, open daily, offering a delicious array of healthy food, drinks, and snacks. Our commitment to sustainability shines through in our plastic-free Refill Shop, where customers can purchase everyday essentials while minimising environmental impact. We are also proud to host a Forest School Nursery, where children's love for learning and the outdoors flourishes.

Flo's serves as a beacon of community support, with dedicated teams delivering programmes that promote equity and social enterprise. Our café plays a vital role in supporting vulnerable community members, offering free meals every Monday and to children during school holidays.

Looking forward, we are refining our strategy for 2025-2030, building on our strong community foundations. Currently, around 20% of our income is grant-funded, but we aim to strengthen our ethical business model to reduce reliance on grants.

The support from OxLEP has enabled us to learn and grow with real purpose. The investment that we put into our marketing plan and business development has encouraged us to look at our business in new ways that we believe will have a long term impact.

In the next five years, we envision expanding our building to enhance community workspaces and trading capacity. We are actively fundraising for this capital investment. Recent marketing and signage improvements have boosted footfall, and new projects, including a café hatch and a mural by a local artist, are set to further enrich our vibrant park setting.



Wake up to Woodstock



WUTW is a non-profit business association which has won multiple awards for their dedication to enhancing the visitor experience in Woodstock.

Recognised nationally and locally for its excellence, WUTW has earned prestigious awards, including the SME UK Enterprise Awards' 'Business Consulting NPO of the Year 2023' and the Thames Valley Business & Community Awards' 'Leisure & Tourism of the Year 2022.'

Our dedicated committee, comprised of passionate volunteers, business owners, and partners such as Blenheim Palace and founding member The Bear Hotel, works tirelessly to boost the local visitor economy. We foster collaboration and shared goals among our members to increase footfall and drive business growth.

With a growing membership base of approximately 60 local businesses, ranging from eateries and retailers to service providers and independent enterprises, WUTW is always seeking new members to join our vibrant community. Membership benefits include access to marketing and PR support, a database of over 35,000 opted-in local addresses, networking opportunities, and added value through partnerships with Experience Oxfordshire, Cotswold Tourism, and OxLEP.

Collaboration with OxLEP is incredibly beneficial in ensuring that our non-profit organisation is able to succeed in achieving its objectives.

The training opportunities that our Social Media & PR Consultant has taken have enhanced their ability to assist us, benefiting our marketing and business members. The LinkedIn learnings have been particularly helpful.

Our ultimate goal is to become the leading visitor information hub for Woodstock, promoting the town and its businesses to potential visitors from across Oxfordshire and beyond. We are committed to working closely with each business, ensuring their unique offerings are highlighted to attract and delight visitors.

For more information or to join us, please visit wutw.co.uk. Let's work together to make Woodstock thrive!

Earth Trust

Earth Trust is a charity devoted to promoting access to green spaces, environmental education, and nature-friendly farming. While these core charitable activities remain at the heart of our mission, we also offer unique spaces for weddings, private parties, and corporate events, allowing guests to celebrate in a stunning natural setting. Earth Trust goes beyond just venue hire. We offer guided ranger tours of our stunning landscape, outdoor spaces for team-building activities, and a curated list of local catering and activity providers. Our commitment to seamless indoor-outdoor experiences makes us a preferred choice for those looking to integrate their events with nature.

Our beautifully restored barns, including the main Fison Barn and the adjoining Poem Tree Barn, provide a flexible and charming environment for weddings and private parties, typically available on a dry-hire basis from May to October. With capacity for up to 80-100 guests, our facilities include state-of-the-art interactive screens, a large screen projector, and a PA system, perfect for corporate meetings, workshops, and away days.

With support and funding from OxLEP, the Trust has been able to redefine its approach to corporate hire. From selling a specific space and service, the Trust is now engaging with corporate clients in a completely different way. Clients have as a result become more engaged with the Trust's charitable aims, more likely to incorporate the landscape in their day activity and ultimately are more likely to book again. It is telling that in the last 12 months, 8 clients have booked multiple days.

Looking ahead, we are focusing on expanding our offerings, from enhancing our catering options to developing seasonal corporate events. As we continue to grow, we are committed to balancing our commercial activities with our charitable mission, ensuring that every event supports our broader goals.



Oxford Harlequins Trading Limited

Oxford Quins is proud to be the premier and largest rugby club in Oxford, with a rich tradition of competitive rugby across our men's and women's teams. Our men's teams compete in the RFU England Rugby Championship, with our 1st XV playing in National 3, our 2nd XV in Counties 1, and our 3rd XV in Counties 2. Our women's teams compete nationally at Level 4 in the RFU National Challenge 1 and 2 leagues.

Beyond rugby, Oxford Quins is a vibrant community hub located at Horspath Road. We host a variety of sports throughout the year, including Oxfordshire Softball, Eire Og Gaelic Football & Hurling, and La Crosse. Additionally, Oxford Brookes University, City of Oxford College, and numerous schools use our facilities for events and activities.

Our commitment to fostering youth rugby is unmatched in Oxfordshire, with a thriving youth section offering rugby for children aged 6 to 16, and an Under 18 Boys Academy led by semi-professional coaches.

In response to feedback from our supporters, especially senior citizens and those with mobility issues, we have embarked on a Spectator Experience Project. Thanks to OxLEP's support, we completed phase 1 in August 2023, installing a 70-seat pitchside area with wheelchair access. This initiative is already proving successful, with increased attendance and engagement, enhancing the social and mental well-being of our community.

Oxford Quins continues to champion community sport, ensuring that everyone, regardless of age or ability, can enjoy the benefits of participation.



The Story Museum

Nestled in the heart of Oxford, The Story Museum is unlike any other. With a mission to enrich lives—especially young ones—through the power of storytelling, the Museum curates and shares captivating tales from around the globe. Visitors of all ages can explore immersive galleries such as the Whispering Wood, the Enchanted Library, and Small Worlds. Our Hogwarts-inspired Learning Studio and studio theatre host a rich programme of family shows, author events, clubs, and courses, all of which are also available for private hire.

The Museum offers a unique venue for weddings, children's parties, business meetings, and corporate away days, alongside a new hot-desking facility. Visitors can also enjoy our café, with indoor and outdoor seating, and our independent book and gift shop, perfect for museum-goers and drop-in customers alike.

Despite the challenges posed by recent disruptions, The Story Museum has seen a steady increase in visitors since reopening in Summer 2021. Looking ahead, our priorities include reaching new audiences, encouraging repeat visits, and diversifying our income streams.

Our recent Visitor Economy Grant has enabled us to expand our café courtyard, create flexible venue hire options, and improve lighting for evening events. At a longer term strategic level, the grant has supported our marketing with support from a Box Office consultant resulting in an analysis of our existing visitor data and a roadmap for ways to use our data to build loyalty and repeat visits.

We're also excited to introduce a new range of adult-focused events, including writing masterclasses in collaboration with the University of Oxford and Museum-Lates with thrilling activities for adults.



Film Oxford



Film Oxford is an esteemed arts and creative media charity dedicated to nurturing filmmakers, artists, and digital creators. Located in the heart of Oxfordshire, we offer a wide range of studio-based and online training courses, exhibition and screening opportunities, and deliver impactful projects with young people and community groups across the region. Our work includes supporting disabled people, disadvantaged youth, and other marginalised groups, fostering a creative landscape that celebrates diverse voices and strengthens community bonds.

Location Oxfordshire (LOCO) is our dedicated service that assists production companies wishing to film in Oxfordshire. We provide crucial information on permits, iconic filming locations, parking, drone regulations, and more. Additionally, LOCO houses a local location library where owners can list their locations (for a small fee) making them accessible to film companies and the public alike. LOCO also honours Oxfordshire's rich film heritage, with updated Film Trails guiding visitors through iconic locations from films and TV series shot in the county.

The grant support we received from OxLEP enabled us to rebuild our website for Location Oxfordshire as it was dated, with unsafe code and our charity did not have the funds to continue with it. The rebuild gave the website a new lease of life with potential for growth once the film industry economic picture in the UK improves

Our projects

- **Our Going Out Coming Out (GOCO)** - explores the social lives of Oxfordshire's diverse communities through film.
- **Rose Hill TV** - empowers young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to showcase their community.
- **Shadowlight Artists** - engages learning disabled and autistic artists in creating a new film inspired by the Bauhaus movement.

We're also excited to be part of a consortium running the BFI Academy, providing vital training for young filmmakers.

Autoura



Autoura is a digital experience platform for real world experiences. Using AI, we operate location-based tourism, leisure & hospitality experiences. Sometimes we are the legal operator (we are the tour operator), sometimes we make our technology available to others.

Our vision is to become the "YouTube for digital experiences," a platform where businesses can effortlessly upload their own digital content, which we then manage and operate for their guests.

However, our journey is not without challenges. Traditional tour operators, often slow to adopt new technologies, pose a significant hurdle to gaining traction. Our focus remains on overcoming these barriers and driving revenue growth.

Thanks to the invaluable support from OxLEP Business, we have been able to utilise grant funding to engage talented freelancers in designing new and exciting experiences across Oxfordshire.

Looking ahead, the next six months are filled with exciting developments, including the launch of a new storytelling concept powered by generative AI. We are committed to providing local tourism companies with the advanced AI tools they need to create unforgettable experiences for their audiences.

Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum

Nestled in the heart of Woodstock, the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum is a hidden gem on the county's tourist map, offering a unique glimpse into the region's rich military heritage. Since its opening in 2014, the museum has captivated visitors with its permanent galleries and ever-changing temporary exhibitions.

One of the museum's most impactful projects, Women and War, has shed light on the vital roles women have played on the front lines and the home front, broadening our reach and connecting with diverse audiences. This follows the success of our Military Life: Military Children exhibition, which gave voice to the experiences of young people growing up in military families. As we approach our tenth anniversary, we are eager to uncover more hidden stories from Oxfordshire's military past, and to create new opportunities for engagement and funding.

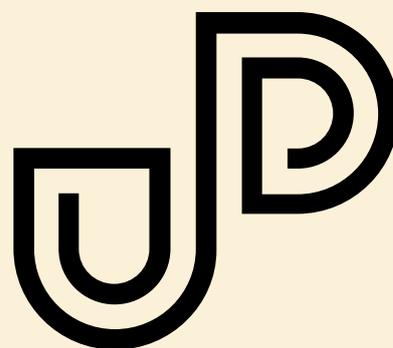
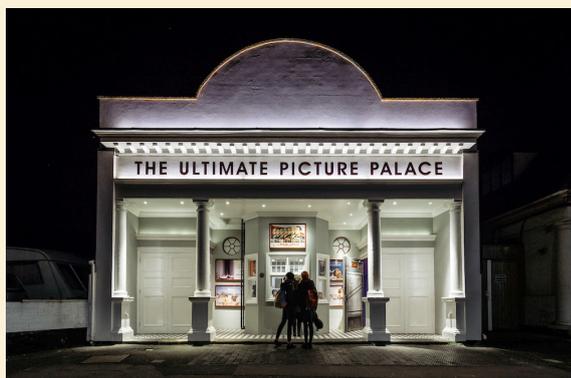
The grant support has helped us by providing opportunity for new permanent exhibition displays that explore themes around Women and war. The new exhibitions are supported for the first time by an audio guide which has helped us to appeal to a wider audience and has enhanced the visitors experience.

Continuing our tradition of blending popular culture with military history, we are thrilled to present Into Battle: The Art of British War Comics. Running from 1st October 2023 to 30th April 2024, this exhibition, in collaboration with Oxford's Rebellion Publishing, traces the evolution of British war comics.

Additionally, in October, we will unveil the Oxfordshire Gallantry Board, honouring 33 local recipients of the Victoria Cross and George Cross, Britain's highest awards for gallantry.



The Ultimate Picture Palace



The Ultimate Picture Palace is a community-owned independent cinema with a rich history and a single screen housed in a cosy, art deco auditorium. Established in 1911, our cinema is one of the oldest in the UK and still features its original box office window opening onto the street, a charming nod to its storied past.

Recovering from the impact of the covid pandemic has been a major challenge for the film exhibition sector, from pressures on film production leading to a shortage of content to customer confidence and changes in viewing habits. In 2022, thanks to the loyalty of our audience, The Ultimate Picture Palace transitioned to a community-owned business. Over 1,200 local investors supported our campaign, reinforcing our role as a vital cultural hub. Since then, we've seen a surge in admissions across all audience groups.

We were generously awarded a Visitor Economy Grant in 2023 that allowed us to develop and trial a new cinema product, themed weekend festivals. Whilst we have an established audience for classic films sold as single tickets, we took inspiration from established repertory cinemas such as London's Prince Charles Cinema who regularly run multi-film festivals over a weekend curated around a series of classic cult films.

We curated the programme and developed marketing campaigns for two events, firstly a Lord of the Rings all-dayer where we screened the three extended editions back-to-back, and then an Animé festival which included 6 films and themed snacks/bar offer. These proved highly popular and has given our team the knowledge and confidence to bring weekend festivals back throughout the year.

Our commitment to expanding the cinema's social value continues, particularly through partnerships with local schools, colleges, and universities. We offer Q&As, festivals, and other learning opportunities to inspire a lifelong love of cinema. We're excited about our Autumn programme and upcoming accessibility improvements, ensuring that everyone can enjoy a visit to The Ultimate Picture Palace.

Global Dream Travel Ltd



At Global Dream Travel, we are a tour operator based in Abingdon, specialising in small group, high-end bespoke tours with a strong focus on sustainability and supporting local businesses. Our clients, primarily from North America, trust us to craft memorable journeys across the UK and Ireland, mainland Europe, Africa, and South America, though our services are available to travellers worldwide.

Despite the challenges of establishing our company during the onset of the pandemic in 2020, we successfully expanded our portfolio and even operated tours in 2021. Our resilience paid off, and we've since led tours across continents, including Europe, Africa, North and South America, and even Antarctica. Our diverse range of travel products can be explored on our website: www.globaldreamtravel.co.uk. Financial management has been a significant challenge due to the pandemic's impact. However, our loyal and repeat customers have provided essential support. As we move forward, our focus is on sustainable growth through targeted marketing campaigns. This includes plans to scale up resources and expand our team, particularly by adding a sales representative to capitalise on the upcoming peak booking season.

We have had a number of 1:1 sessions with specialists covering key functionalities of the business, such as marketing, accounting and finance as well as growth plans.

Perhaps the biggest support came through the Visitor Economy Grant, which allowed us to sell a large group tour for a major magazine in the U.S. taking place in Oxford early April next year, which will help support local businesses in the off-season. This gives the potential to operate this at least once a year.

As part of our commitment to sustainability, we aim to introduce an electric or hybrid touring vehicle, enabling us to operate more eco-friendly tours and enhance our brand visibility across the UK.

Abingdon Events Partnership

Abingdon Events Partnership is an innovative events company specialising in Craft Fairs, Christmas Markets, and Community Festivals.

With a focus on boosting the local economy and showcasing the historic town centre, Abingdon Events Partnership introduced a series of new one-day festivals designed to attract visitors throughout the spring, summer, and autumn seasons. One of the standout events, the Walking Festival, was supported by the Ramblers Association and the Vale of White Horse District Council's Health Walks team. This festival catered to all levels of walkers, from beginners to seasoned hikers, and featured contributions from local groups such as the Nordic Walking Club and Friends of Abingdon.

Another popular event, the Easter Eggstravaganza, transformed the Market Place into a family-friendly hub. Sponsored by BH&O Family Law specialists, this event featured an Easter Egg Hunt, live entertainment, and a joyous community atmosphere.

In 2023, Abingdon Events Partnership also launched the Eco Fair in collaboration with One Planet Abingdon, providing a platform for local green businesses to connect with the community.

With support from OXLEP business grants, Abingdon Events Partnership secured essential equipment and marketing resources, enabling these events to flourish. Due to their success, all three events are set to return in 2024, alongside an exciting new addition – Taste the Flavours Festival on 2nd June. This culinary event promises to bring together local and international flavours for a day of delicious discovery in the riverside fields in Abingdon.

People's Theatre Collective



People's Theatre Collective, formerly known as Cherwell Theatre Company, is committed to empowering and inspiring young people and their communities through the arts. We cultivate creativity, confidence, and community engagement by providing an inclusive environment where young individuals can explore their creative potential and express themselves freely. We believe that young people, as experts in their own lives, have the ability to bring about meaningful change when given the right tools.

Our work often involves overcoming significant barriers faced by the young people we serve, such as financial constraints, health issues, and language barriers. To address these challenges, we bring our programmes directly into the community, eliminate costs for participants, and employ experienced freelance staff to promote inclusion. Despite these efforts, securing low-cost, accessible spaces for our activities remains a challenge, and we continue to seek new partnerships to enhance our offerings.

Thanks to the grant support received from OxLEP we have significantly enhanced the quality and reach of our activities, including the Tell Your Story Festival and the Enact programme. This support has also improved our digital presence, allowing us to engage a broader audience.

Looking ahead, we are excited to continue our embedded creative work and to embark on new initiatives, such as touring our show 'A Home For Harmony', expanding our Amplify programme, and developing a Cultural Enterprise Centre for young people. This is a pivotal time for our company as we rebrand and approach our 21st Birthday celebration.

MCS & JS Heritage Ltd



Welcome to our town centre pub and kitchen, where traditional hospitality meets modern comfort. With three beautifully appointed en-suite letting rooms, our establishment is designed to provide a warm and inviting experience for both locals and visitors.

In a challenging market, staying competitive and profitable is essential. Thanks to the invaluable support of the OxLEP grant, we've been able to make vital investments at a critical time. This support has not only allowed us to enhance our services but has also led to a significant increase in trade. Additionally, we've created new job opportunities that might not have been possible without this assistance.

Our commitment to community collaboration is evident in our outdoor trading areas, where we've introduced a unique partnership with a local flower and plant purveyor. By blending the aesthetics of a garden centre with our outdoor space, we've created a vibrant and attractive environment that benefits everyone. This initiative provides the local purveyor with a much-needed platform to showcase his plants, while offering our customers a delightful setting to enjoy.

BUSCOT MANOR

Buscot Manor has evolved from a traditional Bed & Breakfast to a versatile self-catering accommodation, offering guests a creative and immersive experience all year round. Nestled in the picturesque Oxfordshire countryside, our manor is more than just a place to stay; it's a destination for learning, creativity, and sustainable living.

We offer a range of heritage courses, art and antiques workshops, and rural skills and crafting sessions, all designed to enrich our guests' experience. These unique offerings not only enhance our accommodation but also encourage guests to stay longer, benefiting the local economy and collaborating with nearby businesses.

We provide bicycles for our guests, encouraging eco-friendly travel to explore local amenities. Additionally, the availability of paddleboards promotes health and wellness during their stay. Our package deals for extended stays ensure a unique and memorable experience, differentiating us from other accommodation providers.

Despite facing challenges, such as increased overheads from the National Trust and the impact of the global recession, we remain committed to our vision. We are exploring further diversification with eco-friendly shepherds' huts, though this comes with its own challenges.

We are grateful for the support from OxLEP, which has provided funding to help us develop workshops and expand our service offerings. It opened up the possibility for offering the use of paddle boards and bicycles to our guests, promoting healthy sustainable travel which is better for the environment. As a result of these new developments its been instrumental in the increase of our media presence.



Courtside Hubs CIC



Courtside is on a mission to bring people together through active lifestyles and social connections. As a social enterprise, our goal is to transform parks into dynamic, multi-activity hubs that cater to visitors of all ages and abilities. We achieve this by collaborating with Councils and local stakeholders, ensuring our spaces are welcoming, well-maintained, and bustling with activities.

In simple terms, we provide 'a brew, a loo and lots to do' for visitors of all ages and abilities.

Bringing these hubs to life involves overcoming key challenges, summarised by our 'MAPS' framework:

- **Money (M):** Securing diverse funding sources for transformative projects.
- **Agreement (A):** Establishing long-term leases with Councils.
- **Planning (P):** Navigating the planning process with respect for local heritage and environment.
- **Support (S):** Gaining political and public backing for our initiatives.

Our ambition is to develop 15 hubs by the end of 2030. We expect 3-5 of these to be in Oxfordshire.

OxLEP's VEG scheme has been instrumental in laying our growth foundations. It's particularly helped fund software development so we have both good UX and a slick booking journey to help build customer loyalty and support reporting to stakeholders.

In the next six months, we aim to:

- Complete our Witney hub and Hillsborough hub in Sheffield
- Progress 3 additional hubs (2 in Oxfordshire)
- Recruit and train teams, instilling our values of kindness, community, and resilience.



Happiness Horsebox CIC

The logo for The Happiness Horsebox CIC is displayed in a white rectangular box. The text is in a blue, sans-serif font. 'The' is smaller and positioned to the left of 'Happiness'. 'Happiness' is on the top line, and 'Horsebox CIC' is on the bottom line.

The Happiness Horsebox CIC is a pioneering social enterprise, designed to provide riders with disabilities the opportunity to safely mount and dismount horses, allowing them to enjoy the freedom of countryside riding. This concept evolved to offer more than just riding – we now create a safe and inclusive space where people can meet and interact with horses at care homes.

Our innovative vehicle, funded by equestrian charities and rural organisations, won a Sport England Innovation Award. Built during lockdown, the Horsebox is admired for its spacious, thoughtfully designed interior, featuring a heavy-duty lifting ramp with rails for easy access, even for wheelchair users. The pop-out side expands the space, and it includes essential facilities such as a kitchen and loo, ensuring comfort and warmth for all.

The Happiness Horsebox also facilitates our 'Precious Days Out' programme, allowing individuals with disabilities to access the countryside and engage with horses, promoting well-being and rural experiences.

The grant support from OxLEP came at a pivotal point for us, and the different elements really created a significant business benefit. We have added space for visitors through the awning which creates a lovely viewing area. We have rebuilt our website and added effective videos and photos. It is underpinned with both a venue and a visitor CRM that enables us to support people who want to enjoy 'Precious Days Out'. We can take bookings online and send out appropriate documentation, receipts and updates. We have built our own portfolio of photos and videos too.

We are committed to delivering professionally run equine-assisted activities, supported by the necessary licences, policies, and insurances. With the support from OxLEP, we were able to scale our operations, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the project.

As we look to the future, our collaborations, particularly with the National Trust, will allow us to offer more opportunities for inclusive, accessible experiences, using the Happiness Horsebox as a unique platform to bring the countryside and the joy of horses to all.

Cholsey and Wallingford Railway

CHOLSEY & WALLINGFORD

HERITAGE RAILWAY

The Cholsey and Wallingford Railway, a volunteer-run heritage railway that seamlessly connects the historic riverside town of Wallingford with the mainline railway at Cholsey.

With generous support from the OxLEP grant, we've revitalized our operations and expanded our offerings, crucial for recovering from the pandemic's economic impact. During the challenging years of 2020 and 2021, when COVID-19 restrictions halted or limited our activities, we recognized the need for innovation and diversification to ensure our survival and growth.

Thanks to the OxLEP grant we were able to make improvements and also introduce new offerings such as:

- **A New Digital Presence:** We launched a completely redesigned website, enhancing user experience and driving record sales during our Christmas period.
- **Heritage-Style Kiosk:** We introduced a newsagents Kiosk, diversifying our sales and significantly increasing revenue. Notably, over 750 pints of real ale and cider were sold during Wallingford's 'BunkFest' music festival in September 2023.
- **Enhanced Volunteer Training:** Twelve volunteers have been trained in food hygiene, setting the stage for expanding our retail offerings in 2024.
- **Marketing and Souvenirs:** We've developed new marketing materials and souvenirs featuring our "Wallingford on Thames" theme, boosting our promotional efforts.

Looking ahead in 2024, we plan to:

- Expand our events calendar, leveraging our enhanced website.
- Collaborate with Wallingford Town Council to promote local events.
- Introduce additional "day-trip to Wallingford" experiences.
- Increase our range of snacks and merchandise in our Kiosk.



Abingdon Distillery Ltd



ABINGDON DISTILLERY

Abingdon Distillery was born from a simple idea conceived abroad in Hong Kong. Disappointed by the limited selection and quality of gins available, we embarked on a journey to create a gin we could truly enjoy. What began as an experiment has now evolved into a thriving business rooted in the heart of Oxfordshire.

We are passionate about growth and innovation. Currently, we are seeking private investment to help us double our production capacity and workforce, as well as secure a new site to support our expansion plans over the next two years.

With support from the OxLEP grant, we've been able to diversify our offerings, moving beyond gin to craft exciting, limited-edition rums for people to taste over the next year as it develops

One of our proudest initiatives is our annual "Waste to Taste" community apple amnesty. During the apple harvest season, we visit local homes with surplus fruit and turn their unused apples into a delicious English apple brandy, set to be released in the coming years. This initiative not only reduces waste but also strengthens our connection to the community.

At Abingdon Distillery, we are committed to crafting exceptional spirits that celebrate both local ingredients and our dedication to quality.

Cogges Heritage Trust (Cogges Manor Farm)



Nestled in the heart of Witney, Cogges Manor Farm is a unique historic site offering visitors a rich blend of history, nature, and family-friendly activities. With its charming manor house, walled kitchen garden, flourishing orchard, and friendly farm animals, Cogges provides a peaceful escape set within 17 acres of open countryside. Whether exploring the adventure play area or attending one of our many seasonal events, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

In 2023, Cogges welcomed over 36,000 visitors, a number that has continued to rise in 2024. To build on this success, we are expanding our offerings and enhancing the visitor experience. A greater focus on rural heritage, farming, and food production will underpin our future development, alongside new initiatives designed to attract a broader audience.

Generous support from OxLEP has enabled us to take significant steps forward. With expert business advice, Cogges has connected with Oxfordshire's business network, explored new fundraising opportunities, and developed a longer-term strategy for growth. This support has encouraged us to consider product development and pricing strategies, setting the stage for future success.

Our future plans include new events for 2025, expanding the range of farm animals, further developing our meadow, and growing our wedding and commercial event offerings. As we continue to focus on these priorities, Cogges remains committed to enhancing our heritage farm experience, increasing visitor numbers, and generating vital income to sustain our historic site for years to come.

BMAN BREWERY LTD

The logo for BMAN Brewery features the word "BMAN" in a large, bold, black, blocky font with a white outline and a drop shadow effect. Below it, the word "Brewery" is written in a smaller, black, serif font.

BMAN Brewery Ltd is a small, independent brewery based in the heart of Oxfordshire, founded in January 2021 by Alex Berryman, a trained food scientist with a deep passion for brewing. Operating from a repurposed 40-foot shipping container, this artisanal brewery is dedicated to producing a unique selection of craft beers, including favourites like "Bezzamanjaro" Mountain IPA, "Bitter Buoy" West Coast IPA, and "Wheat Wizard" Wheat Beer.

Though small in scale, BMAN Brewery has faced the challenges common to independent brewers, including financial pressures, supply chain issues, and scaling limitations. However, their commitment to quality and innovation has allowed them to carve out a niche in the crowded craft beer market, and their close-knit community engagement has helped grow brand awareness.

To tackle these challenges with the support from OxLEP's grant, BMAN Brewery recently installed an automated canning line, significantly increasing production capacity and efficiency. This key development allows the brewery to meet growing demand without sacrificing quality, positioning them for expansion into new markets and distribution channels.

Looking ahead, BMAN Brewery aims to expand its reach by increasing distribution, opening a taproom or brewpub to connect directly with customers, and building its brand through targeted marketing and participation in craft beer festivals. With a focus on customer satisfaction and consistent quality, BMAN Brewery is set to grow its presence in the competitive craft beer industry while staying true to its artisanal roots.

COTSWOLD BOAT HIRE LTD

Located in the tranquil upper reaches of the River Thames, we have been a family-operated boatyard and hire business since 1991. Initially offering rowing boats on a rented site, we have since grown to provide a wide range of powered craft, including electric rowing boats, from our own premises.

During the summer months, we specialise in boat hire, with options for hourly, daily, or even week-long hires. Our offerings include everything from leisurely short trips to holiday boat hires, giving you the chance to explore the river at your own pace. We also provide moorings for private boaters, with 17 permanent spots and several visitor moorings available.

In the winter, our focus shifts to providing safe storage and maintenance services for up to 75 boats. This includes repairs, boat condition reports, safety exams, and essential maintenance like hull anti-fouling.

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 and a major road closure that impacted access to our site, we have embraced positive change, including relocating to Oxfordshire and launching an online booking system. With the support of the OxLEP grant, we have expanded our team and are investing in electric engine technology, allowing us to look forward to the 2025 season with optimism.

Our commitment to staff development continues, with apprenticeships and training opportunities helping us nurture the next generation of marine experts. As we move ahead, we're excited to welcome more customers and offer even better experiences on the Thames.



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2-4 Berth
27 Foot Cruiser

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COTSWOLD BOAT HIRE

HOME **BOAT HIRE** BOOKINGS MARINE SERVICES EXPLORE NEWS CONTACT

- Popular Seamaster 813
- Up to two double cushion berths
- Bathroom with shower (Please note no hot water as yet as new engine does not support.)
- Small kitchenette with oven, rings and fridge
- Radio/CD and TV/DVD available
- New Technology Electric powered engine for peaceful river cruising – no need to charge – silent with no fuel vapours
- Suitable for short breaks
- Ideal for couples or families with small children
- This vessel conversion to and Electric Motor was sponsored by Oxlep – Visitor Economy Grant Scheme 2023/2024

OxLEP
driving economic growth

DAMASCUS ROSE KITCHEN CIC



DAMASCUS ROSE KITCHEN

Damascus Rose Kitchen (DRK) is a unique catering business in Oxford, led exclusively by refugee women. It offers traditional Middle Eastern dishes, prepared with love and passion, providing a taste of home to the local community. Based in the café at the Old Fire Station, DRK also caters for weddings, parties, conferences, and community events. By sharing their culinary heritage, these women preserve a part of their identity, while also fostering connections and independence.

Originating from the Syrian Sisters community group, DRK remains rooted in refugee voices and is a powerful example of community-led empowerment. It has become a vital part of Oxfordshire's cultural landscape, offering a model of hope and resilience.

Despite growing demand, DRK faces challenges due to limited kitchen space, which restricts its capacity to meet external catering needs. However, with support from OxLEP's Visitor Economy Renaissance Programme, DRK has been able to develop the business, create jobs, and provide training for refugee women, equipping them with valuable skills.

OxLEP's support has been instrumental in centering refugee voices within Oxford's visitor economy, helping DRK's staff to share their rich cultural heritage with a broader audience.

DRK's ambitious future plans include securing additional kitchen space and launching a new website, further expanding operations to meet rising demand. These developments will enable DRK to offer more job opportunities, particularly to young refugee women, and increase its positive impact on the Oxford community.

Hoyle's of Oxford

Hoyle's Oxford

Established in 1997, Hoyle's Games is an independent, family-run games shop located in the heart of Oxford. We specialise in traditional and vintage tabletop games such as chess, backgammon, mahjong, and go, alongside an eclectic range of board games. From family favourites and award-winning titles to hard-to-find niche games, our collection offers something for everyone. Additionally, we stock puzzles, jigsaws, and playing cards, providing a wide variety of entertainment for all ages.

As a business navigating the challenges of the modern retail landscape, we recognise the need to adapt in order to thrive. Historically, we have sourced our products from wholesalers in smaller quantities, but we are transitioning to purchasing directly from manufacturers. This shift will allow us to benefit from higher margins, enabling us to invest in digital advertising and explore new avenues for growth.

To stay competitive in a market increasingly dominated by e-commerce giants, we are developing a unique Hoyle's own-label range. Our vision is to offer premium, plastic-free, and upcycled products, sold through carefully selected channels to maintain both brand integrity and profitability.

We are thrilled to have received support from OxLEP. The OxLEP grant that has been pivotal in helping us trial this exciting new venture. With this support, we've invested in a larger laser cutting machine, allowing us to create full-sized, roll-up leather game boards, a development that positions us strongly in the market. We look forward to the future as we continue to grow and innovate.

IF OXFORD LTD



IF Oxford provides an engaging platform that brings together businesses, academic institutions, and communities to showcase the relevance of science and innovation to people of all ages. By hosting events across the city, the Festival fosters authentic connections between the public and the scientific community, increasing trust and science confidence among adults, families, and young people alike.

In 2023, events reached 43,000 people, with over half of attendees joining as adult groups. Successfully attracted a diverse audience, many of whom had never attended a science-culture event before. With 90% of participants learning something new, IF Oxford has proven to be both an educational and social opportunity, appealing to those with varying levels of prior exposure to science.

The support we received from OxLEP's grant enabled us to convene a workshop which clarified the cultural and educational offer with delegates from various organisations. This workshop strengthened some relationships and highlighted to others the role an independent can play in connecting science and society.

Looking ahead, IF Oxford aims to enhance its storytelling capabilities and strengthen its role as a connector of people and ideas. By pushing the combination of arts and sciences, and extending engagement through social media, the Festival is committed to fostering meaningful conversations that address critical topics like net-zero emissions and integrating SHAPE and STEM agendas.

LYNRACE LTD



Lynrace is a luxury design and hospitality brand, Lynrace create visit Jericho to support the local community of independent businesses.

Visit Jericho (VJ), a start-up initiative aimed at supporting independent businesses within local communities. Launched in January 2024, VJ offers subscription-based websites for neighbourhood centres, both nationally and globally, with the goal of boosting visitor numbers and revenue for local businesses.

Set up in January 2024, VJ is developing its first website template for a district within Oxford, UK. The business proposal was successfully awarded funding by Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership under the visitor economy grant scheme.

Visit Jericho's model offers an affordable, automated platform that highlights local points of interest, businesses, and events, all displayed on a map-based, intuitive, and mobile-optimised site. The website is designed for both locals and visitors, from nearby areas to international travellers.

The grant support we received has meant that the creation of Visit Jericho website and its associated benefits to local businesses have been possible. Visit Jericho is becoming a reality, helping to increase footfall and awareness of everything this vibrant area has to offer, from history and culture to local commerce events.

OXFORDSHIRE ALE AND WINE

Explore the heart of England with a professional tour guide and published writer. Specialising in the stunning Cotswolds, historic Oxford, and the grandeur of Blenheim Palace, I offer a range of guided experiences, including walking, coach, and private driving tours. As a licensed private hire driver with Cotswold District Council, I ensure a safe and personalised journey through these iconic locations.

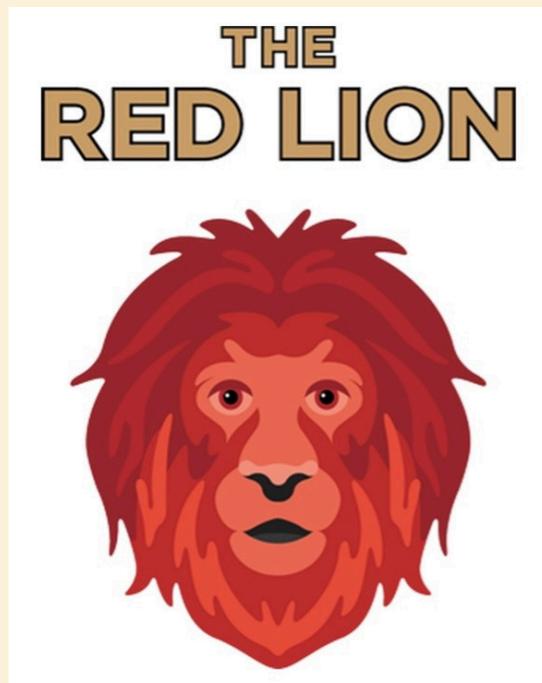
In addition to my work as a tour guide, I write articles for magazines and recently published my first book. Looking ahead, I'm excited to expand this side of my business by offering talks and tastings at local events, with plans for bespoke wine and vineyard tours in the future. While tour guiding is often seasonal, building my writing portfolio helps sustain my business during the quieter winter months.

Thanks to the invaluable support of OxLEP, I am already seeing a positive new income stream, giving me the freedom to promote my book and writing services, particularly at Christmas fairs. Long term, my goal is to invest in a luxury 8-seater vehicle, enabling me to offer direct, high-end experiences to clients.

With future collaborations with local retailers such as Pavilion Foods Henley and features in publications like BBC Radio Oxford and Oxford University's Quad magazine, the possibilities are endless. A guidebook to Oxfordshire's breweries and a prototype vineyard tour are also on the horizon, ensuring there's always something new to explore!



RED LION PEPPARD LTD



Located in the heart of Peppard Common, The Red Lion is a beautifully restored 18th-century pub. Since taking over in 2021, our mission has been to safeguard this cherished community hub and create a vibrant, welcoming space for locals and visitors alike. Reopening in 2022 after an extensive refurbishment, the pub has flourished thanks to strong local support and a renewed sense of purpose.

Our pub is the ideal venue for events of all sizes, offering a heated marquee for up to 100 guests in our garden, while inside, two working fireplaces and a stylish dining room provide the perfect setting for smaller gatherings. Our kitchen celebrates seasonal British cuisine, crafted with high-quality, locally sourced produce. We are proud to serve Oxfordshire-brewed draught beer, along with exceptional goods from suppliers like Wild Frog Bakehouse and Nettlebed Creamery.

With the support of a grant, we have launched a fully equipped catering trailer, specialising in rotisserie chicken. This addition has expanded our event catering capabilities and enabled us to offer takeaway services, as well as cater for larger functions. As we grow, we aim to make The Red Lion known for impeccable large-scale events and delicious rotisserie dishes.

Looking ahead, we're excited to enhance our offerings with potential new guest rooms and a permanent garden dining area. Our commitment to the local community remains strong, with regular events and charity support rounding out our vibrant calendar. Join us at The Red Lion for great food, excellent service, and warm hospitality.

THE LOOSE CANNON BREWING COMPANY LIMITED



Loose Cannon Brewery, established in 2010, has evolved significantly in response to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. With traditional sales channels closed, the business swiftly adapted, developing a strategy to cater to at-home consumption. By leveraging existing resources, Loose Cannon successfully increased market penetration and grew its direct-to-consumer sales.

As the hospitality sector reopened, cautious consumer behaviour and reduced footfall led to a decline in sales to local establishments. However, the brewery responded by creating a Covid-safe space, allowing consumers to socialise safely, thus providing a valuable new revenue stream. Investment in the Taproom, Brewery Shop, and a small craft beer brew kit has driven strong growth, with Taproom sales up 54% year on year and retail sales 14% higher than the previous year.

Grant support from OxLEP has provided a means for Loose Cannon to create further competitive advantage over their competitors as well as an additional source of income. Taproom income has also benefitted from incremental sales as a result of being able to provide food for our guests with the length of visiting time being extended. Customers now have extra reasons to visit the brewery and to stay longer.

Looking ahead, the long-term vision for Loose Cannon includes relocating to a larger site within Abingdon to accommodate expansion and create a visitor centre, bar, and restaurant. The business is also preparing for its 15th anniversary with a series of events and special brews. As it continues to innovate and improve, Loose Cannon remains committed to retaining its loyal customers while attracting new visitors through exciting new experiences.

The Thomley Hall Centre Limited



Thomley is a dynamic lifelong learning and leisure centre in rural Buckinghamshire, catering to people with disabilities and the wider community. Each year, we welcome over 40,000 visits, with 16,000+ from people with disabilities, primarily those with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Down's Syndrome. Our mission is to provide a safe, inclusive environment where people of all abilities can engage in learning and recreational activities, develop life skills, and gain confidence.

We operate five key areas: Visitor Activities, offering a variety of indoor and outdoor experiences; Learning Activities, including workshops and a Life Skills programme for young people with autism; Community Engagement, bringing disabled and non-disabled people together; Commercial Services, meeting the needs of local partners; and Fundraising, which is vital to subsidising our services, as only 20% of our income comes from visitor fees and memberships.

Demand for our services continues to grow, with a 24% increase in attendance since 2019. To support this, we have implemented our 'Survive, Adapt and Thrive' strategy, which includes developing new revenue-generating services such as serviced offices, camping pods, and an outdoor camping area. We are also expanding our facilities with major capital developments to further enhance the experiences of our visitors.

The grant support from OxLEP allowed us to modernise a popular piece of equipment and successfully complete the first phase of the planned, major capital developments listed in our application.

With ambitious plans for the future, Thomley remains committed to being a visitor-led organisation, continuously improving and growing to meet the evolving needs of our community.

Out of Oxford



Out of Oxford offers city dwellers the chance to leave behind the urban bustle and immerse themselves in nature for an overnight microadventure that revitalises both body and mind. Between 5pm and 9am, groups of up to 10 people experience a combination of walks, wild swims, and cycling, before arriving at a camping spot. Here, adventurers enjoy a hearty meal and campfire conversations, followed by a night sleeping under the stars. After an early breakfast, everyone returns to the city, refreshed and ready for their workday by 9am.

These microadventures foster deeper connections – with others, with nature, and with oneself – while offering a refreshing escape from the pressures of everyday life. In the time you might normally spend in front of a screen, Out of Oxford opens up the natural beauty of the green and blue spaces just outside the city. Without the hassle of planning or needing camping gear, these low-cost, low-carbon adventures make it easy to reconnect with nature.

OxLEP'S grant support boosted the confidence and belief in the basic concept of Out of Oxford. It also allowed us to be able to purchase essential camping equipment which has added value to our offering. We are able to supply to those who may not have the equipment needed for their microadventure. Alongside purchasing new equipment we were able to work with a local studio 'Fisher Studios' to create a powerful visual message to communicate the joy and benefit of microadventuring. These will be used on our website (Once fully developed)

Whether it's a weekday night out in nature or the excitement of a river swim, Out of Oxford's mission is to encourage people to embrace adventure, reset their well-being, and appreciate the hidden wonders that lie just beyond the city limits. Out of Oxford brings adventure into everyday life, offering a simple but profound way to reconnect and recharge in the great outdoors, without the need for elaborate plans or travel.



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Engage with OxLEP's Support by completing the Business Support Tool.

You will then receive your fully funded Business Support Action Plan.

Click here: <https://oxlepbusiness.co.uk/business-support-tool/>

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