

# Growth Hub Newsletter

May 2026

## Support for your business

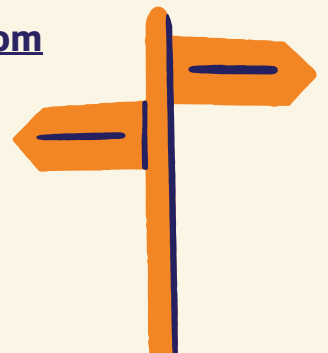
We provide fully funded support for every stage of business, from start-up to growth. This includes one to one support with one of our expert advisors, facilitated workshops and webinars, peer groups and much more.

## Get started...

Complete the Enterprise Oxfordshire Business Support Tool today, to get started and receive your business support plan signposting you to profit boosting, market growing business support:

**[Business Support Tool](#)**

If you have any questions or requests for support please email us directly at: **[business@enterpriseoxfordshire.com](mailto:business@enterpriseoxfordshire.com)**



## Oxfordshire High Street Summit Brought Businesses Together in Didcot

Enterprise Oxfordshire – the business support arm of which operated as the Growth Hub for Oxfordshire businesses – urged the county’s high street businesses to sign up to its High Street Summit event, as its ‘Helping High Streets’ programme drew to a close.

Taking place on Thursday 16th of April 2026, at the Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot, the event was an opportunity to hear business stories, experience the keynote: ‘The High Street is Human’, take part in an ‘open mic’ opportunity and turn insight into action in a dedicated afternoon session.

The event also featured a networking lunch, giving businesses within the sector the opportunity to share, collaborate and learn from each other.

The event marked the end of Enterprise Oxfordshire’s Government-funded ‘Helping High Streets’ programme – designed to boost the prospects of businesses operating in high-footfall, town and city centre locations – which was nearing the end of its delivery period, with programme-specific support having finished at the end of March and the Summit taking place in mid-April.

The initiative took a place-based approach, working intensively within identified geographical areas in each district, while also offering wider online support accessible to eligible high street businesses across the county.

Oxfordshire is home to a diverse mix of high streets – from rural market towns to the bustling city centre streets of Oxford – the programme recognised that different locations faced different challenges, customer bases and opportunities.

Sarah Beal – Growth Hub Manager at Enterprise Oxfordshire – said:

*“High streets remain the heartbeat of our communities, and the Helping High Streets programme has been about helping businesses adapt, grow and remain vibrant in a changing economic landscape.*

*“The High Street Summit event is the first of its kind for Oxfordshire, putting high street businesses at the centre, with councils and partners in a supporting role.*

*“Nationally, there have been a small number of high street branded gatherings, but most have focussed heavily on big structural and infrastructure issues – the Oxfordshire High Street Summit is uniquely business centred and collaboration-led in its design and content.”*



## Calling Oxfordshire Start-ups to Scale-ups: Get Involved This November

Enterprise Oxfordshire's Marketplace and Celebration Event returns to Oxford Town Hall on 4 November, bringing together businesses, start-ups and entrepreneurs from across the county.

The event combines a lively marketplace of Oxfordshire-based organisations with a programme of peer-judged awards, creating a space for businesses to connect, share ideas and celebrate success.

Last year's event welcomed around 200 attendees from a wide range of sectors and is expected to build on that momentum in 2026.

Open to businesses at every stage – from start-up to scale-up – the event reflects our wider commitment to supporting the county's business community. Entry is completely free, so whether you want to shout about your own business, nominate a brilliant business you admire, or grab a spot in our buzzing marketplace, now's the time.

Exhibitors can showcase products and services, while the awards highlight outstanding achievements, with all categories free to enter.

To take part in the Marketplace and Celebration Event – as an exhibitor or award nominee – businesses or individuals must have engaged with Enterprise Oxfordshire Business at any point since April 2022.

**We are still looking for supporters!**  
**If you'd like to learn more about how you can support our event, please feel free to get in touch. We'd love to hear from you!**  
**Email: [business@enterpriseoxfordshire.com](mailto:business@enterpriseoxfordshire.com)**

**Your business could join the line up of fantastic businesses supporting #MAC26...**



## Enterprise Oxfordshire Business Directory

Our fast-growing Business Directory is the perfect place for you to showcase your business, connect with other local enterprises, and take advantage of the numerous opportunities that our network offers. Whether you're a small startup or an established company, listing your business in our directory can significantly enhance your visibility and reach.

The process is simple and straightforward, and our team is here to assist you every step of the way.

[List your business](#)

## Oxfordshire Network Groups

Are you looking to make valuable connections and boost your business success? We have some exciting news for you! There are numerous networking groups and events happening right here in Oxfordshire that can help you expand your professional network and open new doors for your business.

The Oxfordshire Network Groups directory is a great resource for discovering the best ways to find networking groups and events near you. Whether you're looking to connect with like-minded professionals, share ideas, or simply grow your business, this is the perfect place to start.

[Find out more about these fantastic opportunities](#)

## Other Resources Available to Businesses

As part of Enterprise Oxfordshire's unwavering commitment to deliver the best possible service to Oxfordshire's SMEs, we continuously strive to ensure that other services and grant opportunities available to businesses within Oxfordshire are highlighted and signposted on our 'External Resources' website page.

Check out our 'External Resources' page and keep updated with any new opportunities that could benefit your business.

[Find out more](#)

## Enterprise Oxfordshire Business Events

Find out more about upcoming Enterprise Oxfordshire Business events, workshops and webinars designed to help your business.

[View events](#)

Join us for...

**Introducing your 2026/27  
Business Support - Find your  
Pathway to Growth**

 Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May

 12:30pm - 1:30pm

 Online



**Your Pathways to Growth – Business Support in 2026/27**

Online Event

**Thursday 7 May 12:30 - 13:30**

*Pathways to Growth is your inside look at what's new, what's working, and how your business can plug into the Enterprise Oxfordshire Business support programme running across the county through to March 2027.*

*With thousands of hours of fully funded support available for Oxfordshire's SME community, we'll share some of the most impactful ways you can get help – from start-up basics and leadership development, to innovation, exporting and investment readiness.*

[Register Here](#)

Join us for...

**From Idea to Legal structure:  
Setting your business up  
right**

 Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May

 5:00pm - 6:00pm

 Online



**From Idea to Legal Structure: Setting Your Business Up Right**

Online Event

**Thursday 14 May from 5pm to 6pm**

*One of the first big decisions for any new business is how to set it up – and it can feel confusing fast. In this free webinar for Oxfordshire pre-start entrepreneurs, we'll demystify your options and help you choose the structure that fits your idea, values and ambitions.*

[Register Here](#)

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Find out more about upcoming Enterprise Oxfordshire Business events, workshops and webinars designed to help your business.

[View events](#)



**START-UP CLUB**

Start or grow your brilliant business!

 **Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May**

 **5:00pm - 7:00pm**

 **Online**



### Enterprise Oxfordshire Start-Up Club (1) - Planning Your Business

Online Event

**Wednesday 20 May 2026 from 5 pm to 7 pm**

Start-Up Club is back! Session 1 of 3, designed to help you to create and grow the business you always dreamed about!

[Register Here](#)



Join us for...

**Business Decision Making: From Stuck to Taking Action (Part 1)**

 **Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May**

 **9:30am - 11:30am**

 **Online**



### Business Decision Making: From Stuck to Taking Action (Part 1)

Online Event

**Thursday 21 May 9:30 am – 11:30 am**

Helping business owners break decision blocks and simplify choices with clear, practical steps.

[Register Here](#)





**Build It, Launch It, Grow It: The 6 Steps to Tech Start-up Success**

 **Tuesday 26 May 16:00 - 18:00**

 **Inventa, Botley Rd, Oxford OX2 0HA**

### Build It, Launch It, Grow It: The 6 Steps to Tech Start-up Success

Inventa, Oxford

**Tuesday 26 May 4:00pm - 6:00pm**

Whether you're scribbling down your first idea or gearing up to scale, this Ox Tech Week session breaks down the real, practical stages of building a successful tech start-up.

[Register Here](#)

## Enterprise Oxfordshire Skills

For more information on Enterprise Oxfordshire Skills please visit:  
[enterpriseoxfordshireskills.com](https://enterpriseoxfordshireskills.com)

### Finalists Announced for 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards

[Find out more about the awards](#)

Enterprise Oxfordshire has announced the finalists of this year's much anticipated Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards, taking place on Thursday 21 May at the Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities – the University of Oxford's new world-class centre for the arts and humanities.

The event - organised by Enterprise Oxfordshire, with the support of a business-led awards committee - is set to celebrate its tenth anniversary in 2026, bringing together those who are starting or developing their career as apprentices, companies committed to apprenticeship provision and those driving-forward such opportunities in the county.

A total of 30 finalists – including apprentices, businesses and representatives from a variety of employers and education providers – now eagerly await finding out whether they will be announced as winners at the awards celebration evening, which will once again shine a light on apprenticeship successes across Oxfordshire.



The graphic features a blue background with a pattern of white stars and arrows. On the right, there is a circular inset photo of a group of people, some holding awards. The text is white and yellow.

**OXFORDSHIRE APPRENTICESHIP Awards 2026**  
10th ANNIVERSARY

### Finalist announcement

Congratulations to all the finalists in the Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards 2026!

Winners will be announced at the celebration evening on 21 May.

[enterpriseoxfordshireskills.com/oaawards](https://enterpriseoxfordshireskills.com/oaawards)  
#OAAwards2026



The finalists reflect the breadth and strength of apprenticeships across the county, showcasing talent from a diverse range of industries - from construction, engineering and advanced manufacturing to health and social care, digital and IT, business and professional services, education and training, hospitality, events, energy, logistics, the creative industries and the public sector. From NHS trusts, local authorities and universities to global brands, heritage destinations and growing SMEs, finalists span entry-level to Master's level apprenticeships. Together, they demonstrate how apprenticeships power Oxfordshire's economy, support priority sectors and create inclusive, high-quality pathways for people at every stage of their career.

[See a full list of finalists](#)

## Enterprise Oxfordshire Reaffirms Support for Businesses as Levy Changes Begin

[Find out more](#)

On 1 April, the government announced major changes to the national skills funding system, replacing the Apprenticeship Levy with a new Growth and Skills Levy. The new arrangement has been designed to give employers greater flexibility to invest in workforce training and address skills shortages. The reforms will also reduce the time period in which funds must be used, encouraging more active planning and investment in training.

The change in national policy sees the Growth and Skills Levy build on the existing apprenticeship model while broadening how levy funds can be used. This includes enabling employers to support a wider range of training opportunities aligned to their business needs and growth prospects. Apprenticeships are set to remain central to the system, but the new approach is expected to allow businesses to pivot and respond more quickly to changing skills demands.

The government's announcement comes as Enterprise Oxfordshire highlights the significant, long term impact its support for apprenticeships and wider training schemes has had on the local economy.

Building on a strong legacy of supporting Oxfordshire businesses to fully understand and utilise Apprenticeship Levy funding, Enterprise Oxfordshire hopes to encourage even more organisations across the county to engage with the new levy and support their growth ambitions. Find out more on our Apprenticeship Levy Support Scheme.

By building strong relationships with Oxfordshire based large businesses applicable to the former Apprenticeship Levy, alongside developing a pipeline of smaller organisations seeking to create apprenticeship opportunities, Enterprise Oxfordshire ensured that significant funding for apprenticeship provision was retained within the county.

Between the launch of the Apprenticeship Levy and March 2026, Enterprise Oxfordshire has delivered the following outcomes associated with levy spend and pledges:

- £6.6 million in levy funding utilised through Enterprise Oxfordshire activity – investment that would otherwise have been lost to the county and returned to the Treasury.
- 551 apprenticeship and learner starts achieved across Oxfordshire businesses in a wide range of sectors.
- 276 employers supported by Enterprise Oxfordshire to understand and access the levy.

If you are interested in donating or receiving levy funds through our Apprenticeship Levy Support Scheme, please email [ApprenticeshipLevy@enterpriseoxfordshire.com](mailto:ApprenticeshipLevy@enterpriseoxfordshire.com) and a member of our team will get in touch.



## Careers Fest 2026 Inspires Thousands of Oxfordshire Students to Explore Future Pathways

Careers Fest 2026 returned on 18 and 19 March, welcoming around 3,000 students from 33 schools and colleges to connect with employers, educators and training providers from across Oxfordshire. Organised by Enterprise Oxfordshire Skills at the Kassam Conference & Events Centre, the two-day event once again proved a powerful opportunity to inform, inspire and broaden young people's understanding of the career routes available to them locally.

With more than 80 exhibitors representing a wide range of sectors, students had the chance to speak directly with professionals about apprenticeships, university routes, technical training and employment opportunities. Many students highlighted how valuable it was to talk to people already working in roles they aspire to, helping them fill in knowledge gaps and gain a clearer understanding of the skills needed for further education, training or employment.

Alongside the school and college sessions, Careers Fest also hosted a dedicated twilight session for parents, carers and young people, which was attended by more than 600 people. This session gave families the opportunity to explore post-16 and post-18 options together, speak to local employers and providers and gain practical advice to support informed decision-making.

Feedback from students showed the event had a lasting impact, with many saying they planned to research new career options, apply for relevant work experience, work on their CVs and stay open-minded about future pathways. Others said Careers Fest encouraged them to look beyond familiar choices, consider local businesses and focus on achieving their goals.

Employers and educators also praised the event, with 88% of exhibitors reporting that their organisation benefitted from attending. Exhibitors valued the opportunity to raise awareness of their industries, engage with future talent and network with other organisations. Tokamak Energy highlighted the event as a way to strengthen their visibility among young people and inspire interest in STEM and the growing fusion energy sector, while others commented on the enthusiasm, curiosity and confidence shown by the young people throughout the event.

Careers Fest 2026 once again demonstrated the importance of bringing young people, families, employers and educators together, helping the next generation make confident, informed choices about their futures and showcasing the breadth of opportunities available across Oxfordshire.

[Find out more](#)



## Oxfordshire Net Zero Business Support

SMEs across Oxfordshire play a vital role in helping the county reach net zero emissions by 2050. To make this journey easier, Enterprise Oxfordshire have created a one stop resource hub offering guidance, tools and funding opportunities – no matter your sector or where you are on your sustainability journey.

We believe that with the right support and resources, every business can make a meaningful contribution to a greener future. Let's work together to achieve net zero and make Oxfordshire a leader in sustainability.

[Find Out More](#)

## Other Net Zero Support

### Low Carbon Hub

Low Carbon Hub work with businesses and organisations across Oxfordshire on their energy efficiency, helping them to save money on their energy bills as well as generate clean energy.

[Find Out More](#)

## Oxfordshire Business Support

### Business Support Service

Join The Business Support Service on Wednesday 27th May 12-1pm for a Marketing for Growth webinar, designed to help pre start and early stage businesses build a clear, practical marketing plan from day one. This live, interactive session will cover: What marketing really means for a new business (and what it doesn't); Understanding your ideal customer and their needs; Creating clear, confident messaging and a strong value proposition and more. Whether you're shaping an idea or preparing to launch, this session will help you strengthen your confidence, avoid costly mistakes, and take practical steps towards sustainable business growth.

[Find Out More](#)

### West Oxfordshire Achieve Customer Excellence (ACE) Programme now open: Transform Your Customer Experience and Grow Your Business

The fully funded West Oxfordshire Achieve Customer Excellence (ACE) Programme is now open to local small and micro businesses. ACE helps you understand your customer journey, improve service, and boost loyalty and spend. Through professional mystery shopping, you'll see your business exactly as customers do, with clear insight into strengths and areas for improvement. You'll also receive practical reports, free customer-experience training, one-to-one mentoring, and a follow-up audit to track progress. All participants are entered into the West Oxfordshire Service Excellence Awards. Spaces are limited - open to retail, hospitality, professional services and independent traders.

[Find Out More](#)

## Oxfordshire Business Support

### Oxford City Council launches new app to help everyone discover more of Oxford

Oxford City Council has partnered with Discover to launch the Discover App, a 'whole of place' app highlighting everything there is to shop, eat and do in the city. The free app is already a recognised tool for visitors and locals throughout the UK. It is a one-stop shop showcasing local businesses, activities and useful information to the people using it. It also acts as a business support tool. Highlighting offers, promotions, and new businesses, all tailored to individuals' preferences.

[Learn More](#)

### MADE SMARTER

Are you a manufacturer looking to accelerate the growth of your business but struggling to understand the best route forward?

We understand that adopting new technology can be daunting, but we can support you throughout your journey to digitalisation, whatever stage you are currently at.

View blogs, guides, useful downloads, and case studies from Made Smarter and trusted partners. Made Smarter helps you secure this competitive edge. Find out how Made Smarter developed.

[Learn More](#)

### Safer Food Means Better Business

Growing your food business? Get free training, resources, allergen guidance and more from the FSA's Safer Food Means Better Business campaign. It's a one stop shop for all your food safety essentials.

[Learn More](#)

### NatWest Accelerator Pitch competition

Pitch your business and you could win a share of £1m. For 10 years NatWest Accelerator has been helping businesses get going and get growing. The prize pot for this competition is £100k and they want to hear you pitch your success and your plans for growth. Have you got brilliant ideas and a burning passion to grow your business? Yes? Then it sounds like you're ready to enter!

[Learn More](#)

## Oxfordshire Business Support

As part of our ongoing commitment to provide the best possible service to Oxfordshire's SMEs, we always ensure that other services and opportunities which may be available to business within the county are highlighted and signposted.

### Business & IP Centre Oxfordshire

At the Oxford Westgate Library

Supporting Oxfordshire residents to start, protect and grow their own business.



[Learn More](#)

### OSEP

OSEP provides support, empowerment, and advocacy for local social enterprises, enterprising charities, and purposeful businesses in Oxfordshire. Email: [hello@osep.org.uk](mailto:hello@osep.org.uk)



[Learn More](#)

### Business Growth Service

The Business Growth Service is accessible via a new digital platform which acts as a single-entry point for tailored support.

Whether you're looking for funding, mentoring, or export advice, the platform helps you find what you need quickly and easily.

Enterprise Oxfordshire Business is integrating the Business Growth Service into our communications and promotional activities, making it easier for local businesses to discover and access support. This builds on our existing offer, which has already delivered significant impact.

[Learn More](#)

## District Council Support for Businesses

[Cherwell District Council](#)

[Oxford City Council](#)

[South Oxfordshire District Council](#)

[Vale of White Horse District Council](#)

[West Oxfordshire District Council](#)

## Non Business News/Events:

### Free park and ride bus travel to continue

Oxfordshire County Council's current offer of free park and ride bus journeys in Oxford will continue until at least the end of May 2026.

[Learn More](#)

### Un-fair Trade In Global Supply Chains: And What We Can Do About It Wednesday 13th May, 7pm, Holywell Music Room

Curious about where your chocolate, coffee or clothes really come from? Join Oxford Fairtrade at Un-Fair Trade in Global Supply Chains: and what we can do about it on 13th May at 7pm, at the beautiful Holywell Music Room.

Hear from an inspiring panel, including farmers and global Fair Trade leaders, who are lifting the lid on how unfair supply chains impact real people, and how we in Oxford can help drive change. Expect real life stories and practical ideas for action.

PLUS there will also be a brilliant performance by Oxford's Feisty Choir.

This is your chance to learn more Fair Trade and be part of a positive movement for change. It is free to attend, but places are limited, so grab your ticket now at WeGotTickets.

[Learn More](#)

### Free Museum Late Event

The Museum of Oxford will be hosting a museum late event to celebrate the opening of the exhibition on Friday 15 May from 6pm-8pm. The special late opening will include traditional music, Bharatanatyam dance performances, henna, and the chance to explore the museum after hours. The event is free and open to all.

[Learn More](#)

### The Oxford Magazine: What's on in Oxfordshire

[Learn More](#)

### Oxfordshire County Council News

[Learn More](#)

### Experience Oxfordshire: What's on

[Learn More](#)

If you have anything you would like sharing in future editions, please  
email: [business@enterpriseoxfordshire.com](mailto:business@enterpriseoxfordshire.com)