



# **BUSINESS SHOWCASE**

Business Support  
Success Stories

September 2023



# 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.**



Welcome to the first ever edition of this new 'Business Showcase', a publication we will produce every 2 months to promote some of the businesses that we have been supporting.

The UK and Oxfordshire economy have been in a constant state of change over the last 3 years. Successful businesses have needed to be flexible and adapt to the changing context and economic drivers. OxLEP Business has been flexing too, ensuring that the support we develop and offer can meet the changing needs of businesses.

Sadly though, too many business owners feel that they are on their own, or don't access support when needed, that could help them to grow their customer base, land that big contract or create new jobs.

This Business Showcase is an example of OxLEP Business trying new things.

We want to shout about some of the brave and bold businesses that have reached out and engaged with our support. We want more Oxfordshire Businesses to see the success stories and make the decision to reach out and engage with this fully funded support.

OxLEP Business should not be Oxfordshire's best kept secret!

# OxLEP Business Celebration Event

On 7th June 2023 OxLEP Business held a celebration event at the Natural History Museum Oxford. This event was to showcase and celebrate the support OxLEP Business has given to Oxfordshire's small and medium sized enterprises (SME's) over the last 5 years through the support of our eScalate and Innovation Support for Business (ISfB) programmes.

The European Regional Development Fund programmes, Innovation Support for Businesses (ISfB) and eScalate, finished on 30th April 2023. Together these programmes represented a multi-million-pound business support investment in Oxfordshire, through which OxLEP Business has supported over 1,400 SME's.

The ISfB programme, which began in 2017, was designed to drive and commercialise the innovative business ideas of Oxfordshire's small and medium sized enterprises (SME's) and entrepreneurs, by assisting the development and commercialisation of innovative business ideas, as well as enhancing research and innovation infrastructure in Oxfordshire. Through the programme SME's could access grants, 1:1 support and workshops to support their innovation journey.

The eScalate programme, officially launched in November 2019, targeted scale-up businesses and those with scale-up potential as well as social enterprise SME's. Through the programme scale-up SME's could access grants, 1:1 support, workshops and peer groups to support their growth, with a particular focus on access to finance and investment readiness. Social enterprises, including enterprise charities, social entrepreneurs and purposeful businesses, accessed grants, 1:1 support, workshops, peer groups and networking events delivered via six Hubs to enable their development and growth.

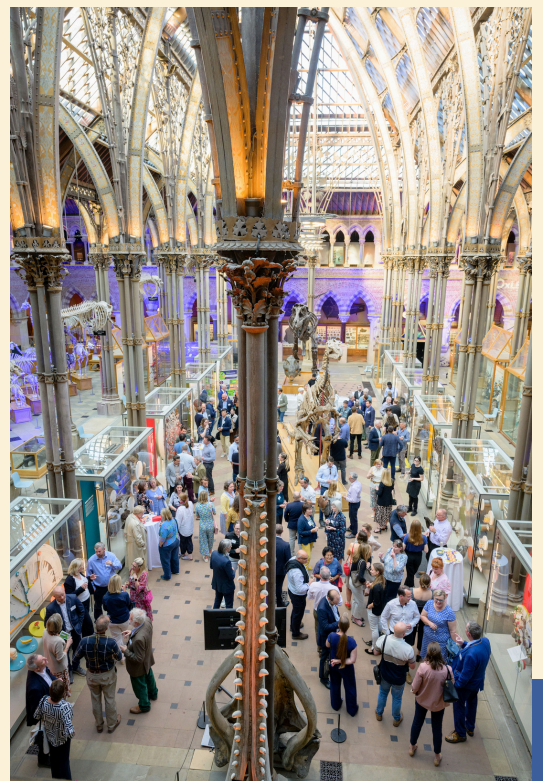
Since their respective launches, the programmes have made a significant impact on the Oxfordshire business community.

Impacts for the ISfB programme including:

- 86 grants awarded – total value of £1,338,034.61
- 683 businesses signed up to the programme
- 4340 hours of support to these businesses
- 135 businesses have had 12 hours or more of support
- 1068 hours of 1:1 support to 351 businesses
- 108 events (including workshops, webinars, etc)

Meanwhile, impacts for the eScalate programme included:

- 58 grants awarded – total value of £629,376.50
- 717 businesses signed up to the programme
- 7350 hours of support to these businesses
- 231 businesses have had 12 hours or more of support
- 1,648 hours of 1:1 support to 439 businesses
- 28 peer groups
- 118 workshops and webinars





The event was hosted by Nigel Tipple, OxLEP's CEO, Helen Brind, OxLEP Growth Hub Manager, Sarah Beal, OxLEP Growth Hub Programme Executive and Richard Byard OxLEP Director of Business Development, with Rhys Saunders from 'Lick Me I'm Delicious' as a guest speaker.

During the evening, a number of awards were handed out to businesses who accessed support through the programmes. Businesses could nominate themselves for an award in one of the categories, the award categories were then judged by an independent panel, with the exception of the 'Business Hero's' award, which was voted for by the public.

OxLEP Business are pleased to congratulate the following businesses and are very proud to have been able to offer support to them on their journey:

Category	Winner	Highly Commended
Most impactful new product or service organisation	Darcica Logistics Ltd	Save My Knickers
Most socially minded	Send it to Alex	Ducky Zebra
Most thriving business	Cognitant Group Ltd	Driving Miss Daisy Ltd
Most innovative business	Fermtech	Fine Treatment
Most environmentally sustainable business	Low Carbon Hub	Tumblebug Ltd
Business Hero	Outside Ideas Ltd	People, Place and Participation Ltd

# BUSINESS SHOWCASES



Annabel Lee a writer, consultant and speaker focusing on work and wellness, parenting and purpose driven businesses. Her work includes freelance journalism and events as well as business consulting on communications.

[www.annabelle.co.uk](http://www.annabelle.co.uk)

The wellness industry, where I do a lot of work is growing hugely, but it remains hard to navigate it well and safely. I write about this space often, as well as working with people within it, and wanted to create a platform to talk about both the good and the bad sides of the industry. My ambition was to develop a podcast which explored with nuance, how to do wellness, well.

I received a grant as part of the Cherwell Innovation Fund to support my podcast Selfie Development, which looks critically at the growing wellness space. This has allowed me to professionally record the second season, and the upcoming third season as well as boost the audience with strategic marketing.

Over the next 6 months I plan to roll out season 2 of the podcast and grow the audience, providing a free B2C product (the podcast) to an engaged community. I will also start recording the third season, and plan to monetise the show with advertising. This will support my work and positioning in this space and supplement other activity like journalism, consulting and speaking.



Family-owned, award winning Darcica Logistics specialise in sustainable, cost-effective ecommerce fulfilment, parcel and pallet storage, deliveries and collections. Darcica was created as a force for good. We wanted to show that even as a small business in a high impact sector, we can make a difference. Through our passion, dedication, and innovative projects; we can make big impacts to both people and planet. Our aim was to build a family business with a focus on sustainable logistics.

With over 20 years' experience in transport logistics and environmental management, Darcica was created from the names of our daughters, Darcey and Jessica and focuses on 'driving towards a better future'. With a commitment to reducing our impact on the environment and increasing social value, Darcica is leading the way for a more sustainable logistics industry across Oxfordshire and beyond. Carbon reductions play a big part in everything Darcica does; from route optimisation, plastic-free fulfilment, electric deliveries, and innovation towards a zero emissions fleet.

Visit [darcica.co.uk](http://darcica.co.uk) for more information.

We were looking for local business networks we could join and came across OxLEP, initially completing their business support tool. A fantastic tool we would recommend to any business, as it guides you directly to the support you can get. It highlights all the opportunities and support available. From there we joined a couple of OxLEP programmes including Innovation Support for Business and were lucky enough to receive funding from the Business Investment Fund for our 'Greening Logistics' project which enabled us to purchase a pallet wrap machine to improve efficiency and productivity whilst reducing our carbon impact. As part of the funding, we had one-to-one support from an innovation advisor which helped us focus on our future vision over the next five to ten years.

We also joined the eScalate programme which included the Women in Business event. It was great to be with other women who have the same challenges, juggling a home life with running a business. We also joined some more general business webinars which were really useful, helping your business grow and keeping up with the ever changing business landscape.

We are continually looking to innovate and use new green initiatives to provide the most sustainable logistics service we can, whether that be vehicles, packaging alternatives or reducing our impact in terms of fuel use and zero emission deliveries. We already have a fleet of electric vehicles and the first electric pallet delivery vehicle in Oxfordshire. We are currently in discussions with the Low Carbon Hub about infrastructure support to reduce our energy use. Already accredited with Mission Zero, we are now working on our Sustainability Action Plan which aligns to the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) – looking at the environmental, social, governance and economic aspects of all of our operations. Growing the fulfilment side of the business is a key focus and we have a few new exciting, local and sustainable businesses starting with us in the next few months, we're looking forward to sharing more information about these new customers very soon!

Our scale up and growth over the last two years has created 25 new full-time positions for local people in Oxfordshire. We're a fair and inclusive employer, keen to develop local skills and provide employment opportunities which will continue to grow.



# Global Dream Travel

We are a tour operator based in Abingdon specialising in small group, high-end bespoke tours with a focus on sustainability and supporting local businesses.

The majority of our customers are from North America visiting the UK and Ireland, mainland Europe, Africa and South America but we offer a range of tours and products to people all over the world. Whilst we are very experienced in the travel sector, we made plans to set up the company at the beginning of 2020, and despite the pandemic we were able to significantly broaden our portfolio of products and operate a handful of tours in 2021, before making the most of the wave of 'revenge tourism' that followed. We have since operated trips in South America, North America, Europe, Africa and even Antarctica!

Our biggest challenge throughout this time has of course been financial management as a result of the impacts of the pandemic, although our loyal and repeat travellers have helped minimise the impact. We are now pushing ahead with getting more new business through different marketing campaigns which can allow us to grow organically and sustainably, which will also help us address the next challenge of scaling up our resources to cope with additional demand.

The support we have had from OxLEP has been fantastic. We have had a number of 1:1 sessions with specialists covering key functions of the business, such as marketing, accounting and finance as well as growth plans through the eScalate programme. 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.

Our full range of products can be seen on our website [www.globaldreamtravel.co.uk](http://www.globaldreamtravel.co.uk)

# BLACKMORE

PRECISION ENGINEERING

B H Blackmore Limited was founded in 2002, by Brendan Blackmore. It is now a nationally recognised development company supplying complex and innovative precision engineered components. It is strategically based in Oxfordshire to support the Formula One motorsport industry and the range of scientific companies based around the area. The Company has always focused on creating new processes to manufacture these complex components using five-axis machinery, which can be programmed to Machine solid cuboid material on all six sides allowing one hit manufacture. This has placed the Company in a unique position within the UK marketplace, which was proven after the onset of the Coronavirus Pandemic, where the company was able to support the high-tech companies develop new complex components in a very short time frame.

As well as operating in the F1 motorsport sector, Blackmore also offers its state-of-the-art technology to develop products for automotive, scientific, medical, aerospace and the expanding renewable energy sector. In the past year, the company has continued to develop its customer base, which has allowed the company to access new sectors of the market. A key strategic focus for the company is to come up with innovative manufacturing processes to produce unique precision engineered products. The Company has had to continuously invest in the latest machinery and software to achieve its technological goals.

[www.bhblackmore.co.uk](http://www.bhblackmore.co.uk)

The performance of the business was severely impaired after the onset of the Coronavirus Pandemic in 2020, where we saw sales orders in respect of Aerospace, Automotive and Formula One especially, drastically fall. At the onset of the pandemic, we made the decision to keep the business open, although operating at a reduced level of turnover, we used this time as an opportunity to streamline our processes, make continued improvements to the factory by creating extra space, and developing the workforce by accelerating personal development plans. As a response to the Coronavirus Pandemic, by working with our Business Developer and Sales team, we actively began pursuing new customers in a variety of different industries to diversify the markets that we operate in. We have steadily built the business back up to the level that we were operating at Pre-Pandemic. We are now further expanding the business to cope with sales demand and have a Goodway GLS2000 Lathe and additional DMG Mori DMU95 Monoblock 5 Axis machining centre on order.

Last summer, we invested in a new DMG Mori DMU95 Monoblock 5 Axis Machining Centre to increase our sales capacity. To enhance the efficiency of this machine, we applied for a grant from the Cherwell Business Adaption Fund which allowed our business to fit out the new machine with a complete standardised tooling package and Lang Quick-Point adaptor system. This has saved us significant time on setting the machine up for each new project as well as enabling our business to take on projects to produce larger sized components which we could not fulfil in the past. The time saved and increased revenue has allowed us to take on more wide ranging Research & Development projects as well as employ an additional member of staff.

During the next 6 months, we hope to recruit another member of staff, and continue to diversify our customer base. We hope to increase the sales capacity of the business following the delivery of our new machines to allow us to take on more projects and new R & D opportunities.

# Managing the Menopause

Why do we need to talk about peri/menopause in the workplace?

Across the board, companies are experiencing skills shortages and pressures on recruitment - which makes attracting and retaining skilled employees critical for continued success. Women over 50 are the fastest growing demographic in the workplace and nearly 8 out of 10 of menopausal women are in work.

The Fawcett Society's Menopause and the Workplace report (2022) revealed that one in ten women who worked during their menopause had left a job due to their symptoms. Eight out of ten women say their employer hasn't shared information, trained staff, or put in place a menopause policy.

Tackling the taboo and raising awareness can help you: retain skilled employees; reduce absence rates; improve engagement and productivity; increase gender balance at senior levels of your organization; and attract the best talent.

Managing the Menopause ([www.managingthemenopause.com](http://www.managingthemenopause.com)) is developing a new self-directed e-learning course specifically for SMEs.

We are looking for ten companies to provide feedback in return for free access to the course, please email [emma@managingthemenopause.com](mailto:emma@managingthemenopause.com) if you would like to participate.



<https://pampeano.co.uk>

Pampeano is a premium leather goods company specialising in stunning, colourful leather belts and matching pet accessories, as well as a fabulous range of leather goods all featuring our hand-woven pampa diamond motif. All of our items are handmade using vegetable tanned leather and wax-dipped saddlery threads. We have just opened a warehousing facility for our products in Holland to facilitate growth of our EU business post Brexit. Our website generates one third of our revenue and we celebrate our 15th anniversary this summer!

Post Brexit challenges to growth; as well as the Holland warehouse opened in Feb 23, late summer we are sending a colleague to open our first overseas office – in Dallas, US. We won funding from DIT to attend two trade fairs in the US, and on the success of those i.e. the support for the Brand and the product range in the US, we feel sufficiently confident to drive pampeano Inc. forward.

We recently participated in the Peer Networks Leadership programme which was very helpful indeed to increase confidence and also to handle challenging situations amongst our team.

We are seeing a fantastic surge in premium brands seeking to replace ties with membership belts; we are providing exquisite quality belts and pet accessories to regiments, sports clubs, corporates, independent schools. With the opening of US office and some really exciting brands on board, we have exciting things to announce very soon.



Advanced Witness Systems Ltd.  
*Torque Measurement & Calibration*

<http://www.awstorque.co.uk>

For over 30 years, Advanced Witness Systems Ltd have been trading as a designer of torque calibration and verification equipment, instrumentation control systems and torque calibration and management software, as well as being a trusted consultant in the torque industry. AWS' main product line is torque calibration machines, including the Universal Torque Screwdriver Calibration Machine, the only automated torque screwdriver calibrator to meet ISO 6789:2017 standards, allowing for much faster calibration times to the standard. AWS also produce the automated Universal Torque Wrench Calibration Machine, for the calibration of torque wrenches to ISO 6789:2017. AWS' expertise also includes a range of torque transducers, testers, displays and adapters, as well as design services to help customers integrate AWS products into their current system.

One challenge AWS has faced has been the ongoing electronic component supply chain issues and component redundancies. Banking services also continue to be inefficient and poorly responsive for SMEs. This can compromise credit ratings and ratings with credit agencies. Trusted technical services are also in short supply and will need to be addressed through in-house training. The need for apprentice training is important, however the quality of that training by outside sources does not seem to be uniformly of the required standard. The company continues to strive to increase its sales both at home and in export markets, building on last year's successes. Development of new products are in the pipeline with some currently well advanced. International standard requirements are also useful drivers.

Support given to us from OxLEP has enabled us to overcome sales and marketing weaknesses by the use of expert advice. This expert advice has resulted in an additional employee, better use of our sales pipeline software (CRM) and increased effective marketing deployment, both nationally and internationally. This continues to consolidate, expand our sales, marketing, and forecasting. It has also helped with grant funding, enabling us to future proof some electronic instrumentation modules by the use of an external consultant.



# Streamlines

STREAMLINES – BRINGING ACCURATE AUTOMATED RIDER AERO OPTIMISATION IN OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTS TO THE MASS CYCLING MARKET.

Oxford-based business, Streamlines, was launched in 2021 following years of aerodynamic research. They have now developed cycling performance technologies to enable cyclists to test and improve their aerodynamic performance on everyday roads with wind tunnel accuracy.

As a new start-up company, Streamlines founder John Buckley was looking for additional financial support opportunities locally which could help them bring their product to market. “A business contact of ours told us about OxLEP and explained that they offer no cost support for innovative businesses in Oxfordshire. So, we got in touch with them and straight away they were interested in what we were doing. They signposted us to their Go-Create grant, which was part of their Innovation Support for Business Programme (ISfB). It was available for businesses who were developing innovative products.

We applied for the grant to support the final steps of the development needed to bring the FORMA position sensor to market. We were awarded the grant which meant we could move faster with our final steps.

We used the funding specifically for external assistance to help with self-certifying the product, which is a lengthy and costly process. We also used the money to support the creation of an app that allows clients to update their FORMA software via Bluetooth, which is key to operability, because when we make changes, those changes need to be reflected on the clients’ sensors too. Lastly, the funding helped pay for Streamlines’ Bluetooth SIG organisation membership, which is a requirement for businesses which sell products commercially that use Bluetooth technology.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON STREAMLINES  
PLEASE VISIT: [STREAMLINES.AERO](https://streamlines.aero)



I joined the founding Fat Squirrel Outdoor team in March 2020 after experiencing digital burnout. I am Kate Drewett and twenty-five years of running my own digital and technology marketing agencies had taken its toll, I needed a significant change in my life. Making an unplanned leap into the Tourism and Leisure sector for the first time, at the onset of a global pandemic, followed by a cost-of-living crisis, hasn't been without its challenges. Despite the difficulties of keeping a small business afloat in this sector over the past three years, I am now a much happier and calmer person compared to the beginning of the decade. Being outdoors has worked its magic on my own well-being and self-esteem. Regularly spending time outdoors now – which is in stark contrast to the average 10 hours a day I used to spend in front of screens during my previous career, and it has proven to be one of my best life decisions.

However, the most rewarding part of my new role is witnessing the difference being outdoors makes to my team and our customers. Seeing people arrive looking stressed and then bringing smiles back to their faces is the primary reason why I took over sole ownership of the company in 2022.

The company has changed direction, adapted and grown to provide a range of outdoor experiences all designed to bring people closer together to relax and have fun. Looking to the future, I hope Fat Squirrel Outdoor will help many other people improve their sense of self and well-being. We are already assisting managers in bringing their teams together to connect and build better relationships during the week. On the weekends, Fat Squirrel Outdoor offers all the best aspects of camping without the need to sleep under canvas. Our daytime experiences in the woods bring multi-generational families and friends together to learn fire lighting, build dens, shoot soft arrows, release some inner tension by throwing axes, or simply relax in a hammock under the trees.

We are now looking for new locations, with some financing required to become a multi-site venture. The goal is to become a sustainable off-grid chain. Competition for attracting families remains strong and cost of living pressures continue to have an impact on how much people are spending on leisure. We are building up the corporate offer, to be able to offer senior management new options for managing team wellbeing.

OxLEP has supported me in a number of ways:

- Regaining my networking confidence after suffering a burnout
- Practical advice and mentorship
- A grant to help us achieve our sustainability goals.



I am looking to strengthen my team and build out our capabilities to deliver a wider range of experiences. We want to focus on making our offer more appealing to adults – both for leisure and our offer to business.

<https://fatsquirreloutdoor.co.uk>



Photo credit: Anna McKay (photographer)

As a marketing translator and SEO content writer, Claudia Kozeny-Pelling can help businesses sell their products more ethically while advising them on how they could improve their rankings. Even better, she is fully qualified in both English>German and German>English translations, which is rare. Her one-woman company, Translate Digital Marketing, was launched in 2020 (yes, in the middle of the pandemic!).

Claudia had been working in publishing and communications for many years but wanted to specialise in writing and translating digital marketing content. Her main focus as a freelancer has been to support ethical and sustainable businesses in the UK and Germany. Automatic translation software and SEO tools have become better. However, nothing can beat a qualified, experienced marketing translator & SEO content writer who's a native German and English speaker and fully understands both target markets. Plus, with the introduction of the CMA's Green Claims Code, it's important to make sure businesses don't "greenwash" their products or services. This is something Claudia feels passionate about. Recent clients have included e.g., an ethical homeware company and businesses producing eco-friendlier towels and wallpaper.

The translation and copywriting market is very competitive – and more so since the rise of AI tools. This is both a challenge and an opportunity, as Claudia now focuses on things AI can't help with:

- Creative translations (a mix of copywriting and translations) rather than literal translations of marketing copy;
- A genuine understanding of German and British culture as well as any sensitivities (e.g., gendering issues and when to use informal/formal address in German);
- Knowledge of how to use puns and a humorous approach in marketing copy (and when it's not appropriate);
- Understanding of sustainability issues and greenwashing pitfalls;
- Experience in digital and social media marketing tactics (she is a qualified Meta Certified Digital Marketing Associate and has completed social media marketing training).

Claudia has been impressed with OxLEP's business support services:

"I was lucky enough to be able to join OxLEP Foundations to Growth Network in early 2023. It was a great series of online workshops, which helped all participants think through their business challenges and opportunities. Many of us experienced similar issues, so we could all help each other think about solutions to our problems.

Additionally, I received free mentoring support from a communications expert and marketing expert. Both were very helpful and I can highly recommend them. As a result, I've made some changes to the services I offer.

Claudia has a few exciting plans: "My main aim for the next 6 months is to attract more direct business clients in addition to working with relevant SEO and marketing agencies. I'd like to focus on gaining direct repeat customers through my SEO content writing & marketing translation services. I also offer website translations as well as social media audits and strategies."

<https://translatedigitalmarketing.com>

# CLARITY VIDEO



Clarity Video, a production company focuses on helping clients achieve their business goals by understanding their brand and audience, producing video content specifically targeted for that purpose. The business was founded by Gillan Williams, an award winning marketer and film producer, who is passionate about storytelling. In less than one year, Clarity went from working with small businesses right up to multinational brands, delivering content from engaging social videos, branded content, short series, testimonial videos, event coverage, and several podcasts. Every business and project is unique, we spend our time crafting the right video content for your brand, so you can tell your story in meaningful way that builds your audience.

Find out more via our website: <https://clarityvideo.co.uk/>

Our biggest challenge has been managing the growing service of video podcast production. The service is called the Content Pyramid, which involves recording a video podcast, using that to create an audio podcast, several social media videos, and a transcription of the podcast, a highly efficient content production process. Currently, we shoot all of our projects at the client's location, which is not the most efficient way of doing things for us. We are in the process of acquiring a new premises that we can kit out to be a flexible podcasting studio, to help reduce costs and serve more customers.

We are also in the process of building an online community around the art of storytelling, done largely through our new YouTube channel, we want to provide content that helps demystify storytelling, and help businesses understand it's importance, so they can also become expert communicators and storytellers. This will feed into the already existing online course - Storytelling for Business (<https://claritycourses.com/>)

The 1-2-1 mentorship with a communications expert via OxLEP was hugely helpful. We now have plans to expand our podcast services to help more clients, and grow the team to enable us to do that. We will also invest in more filming equipment and develop our other video production service, so that the business isn't relying too much on one service.

# Your Business Showcase could be here...

**What would be in your story?**

**Send your case study or story to [Business@oxfordshirelep.com](mailto:Business@oxfordshirelep.com)**

**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/>**

**Scan here:**

