

15TH MAY 2026, BLENHEIM PALACE

PEOPLE | PROCESS | PROMOTION

OBS2026

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THE OXFORDSHIRE
BUSINESS SUMMIT

Speaker Profiles Summit Agenda

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125+
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LEADERS

Explore the full programme for OBS2026, including keynote sessions, breakout discussions and speaker insights. Designed to help you navigate the day and maximise every opportunity to learn, connect and grow.

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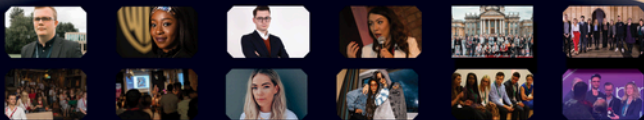
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Launch Event

Oxford | 27 May 2026



27 May · 17:45
The Randolph Hotel
Oxford

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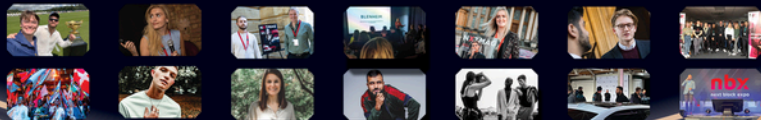
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RAISE





WELCOME TO OBS2026

Welcome to Blenheim Palace. It is a pleasure to host the Oxfordshire Business Summit 2026 in such a historic and inspiring setting. Blenheim has long been a place where ideas, leadership and ambition come together, and we are proud to continue that tradition by welcoming so many influential business leaders today. We hope you enjoy your time here, make valuable connections, and leave with fresh perspectives to take back into your organisations.

**Dominic Hare, CEO,
Blenheim Palace**

Welcome, and thank you for being part of the Oxfordshire Business Summit 2026. This event is only possible through the collective support of so many—our sponsors, speakers, partners, and suppliers, and of course you, our delegates. Above all, my sincere thanks to Dominic and the entire Blenheim Palace team for hosting us in such an exceptional setting. Your support helps create an environment where meaningful conversations and valuable connections can thrive.

**Richard Rosser, CEO,
B4 & Founder of OBS**



**OBS
2026**

Where
Better
Decisions
Begin

Today will explore how People, Process and Promotion
come together in the decisions businesses make.

**OBS
2026**

Where
Better
Decisions
Begin

AGENDA

7.30am –
8.00am

**REGISTRATION
& LEADERS PHOTO**

8.00am –
8.45am

BREAKFAST
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9.00am –
10.45am

PEOPLE
Breakouts followed by
People Plenary with
Rain Newton-Smith,
CEO, CBI



11.00am –
12.45pm

PROMOTION
Oxfordshire growth, AI,
customer decisions and
inclusive innovation



1.00pm –
2.00pm

LUNCH
Sponsored by Freeths



2.00pm –
3.45pm

PROCESS
Decision-making,
technology, risk,
systems and scale



4.00pm –
4.30pm

TEA
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4.30pm –
5.15pm

CLOSING KEYNOTE
Tom Cheeswright,
Applied Futurist



5.15pm –
6.00pm

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ABOUT TODAY



OBS2026 is packed full of great information but don't worry if you miss anything. Our good friends from Oxford Brookes will be capturing everything for an **Impact Report** which will be sent to you after summit.



With **10 sessions** across the day and movement needing to be quick between the sessions, our fantastic students from Oxford Brookes will be moving you on between sessions to make sure we stay on time throughout the day.



Sessions will start **on time** so if 18 students can't break you away from that vital conversation, the rooms will be closed with no entry allowed after the session starts out of respect for our brilliant speakers.



TABLE PLANS

Will be in place for every session today so please do sit on the **correct table** otherwise the dietary arrangements will be thrown into confusion. Please respect our fantastic hosts who are catering for you today.



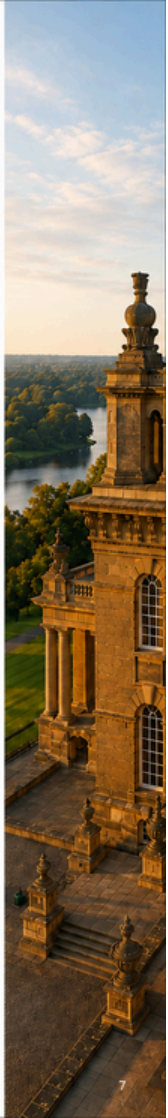
THANK YOU

Today wouldn't be possible without you so if you're a sponsor, speaker, supplier or delegate, **thank you** so much. The speakers are noted throughout the programme and our sponsors and suppliers can be found on pages 16 and 17.



TINA

With an incredible eye for detail, Tina has once again managed the registration process from start to finish. Superb event planning once again, **thank you**.





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ABOUT TODAY

David Finch, Founder, Thinking in Fields

Today's agenda has been carefully masterminded by David. Here's how he put it together.



David has worked with the OBS team to help shape the structure of the day, focusing on how the different sessions connect rather than treating them as stand-alone topics. The agenda is built around three areas - People, Process and Promotion - but the intention is to explore how these interact inside real businesses. Not as theory, but as everyday decisions: how they are made, where they slow down, and how they translate into outcomes.

Across the sessions, the aim is to move between perspective and practice. From the wider environment in which businesses operate, through the internal realities of capability and process, to how organisations present themselves and grow.

The thread running through the day is a simple one:

How do businesses make better decisions in a more complex environment, and what needs to change to make that possible?

PEOPLE BREAKOUT 1

How do you build a pipeline of people your business actually needs?

A practical look at how businesses can develop sustainable talent pipelines, aligning education, apprenticeships and entry pathways with real commercial need.

Jacqui Canton, CEO, Abingdon & Witney College

Jacqui Canton has been Principal and CEO of Abingdon & Witney College since 2020. With over 20 years in further education, she specialises in employer partnerships and apprenticeships. She has led major skills initiatives across Oxfordshire and is a passionate advocate for lifelong learning, inclusion, and economic growth through skills development.

Edward Collett, Commercial Director, Abingdon & Witney College

Edward began his career in Further Education nearly 15 years ago and has spent the past 12 at Abingdon & Witney College. He has built strong partnerships with major Oxfordshire employers, driving apprenticeships and workforce development, and now leads the College's commercial function, aligning education with business needs.



Sarah Jaycock, Co-Founder and Executive Director, High Spec Composites Ltd

High Spec Composites supplies high-performance carbon fibre components to Formula 1 and specialist engineering sectors. Sarah has grown the business from start-up to a trusted supplier and is a strong advocate for skills, apprenticeships, and access to engineering careers across Oxfordshire.



Natalie Pierre-Davis, Senior Commercial Director, Abingdon & Witney College

Natalie is a senior commercial and delivery leader with experience across education, government and industry. She has led major government-funded skills programmes and built strong cross-sector partnerships. Her work focuses on delivering practical, high-impact workforce solutions, with an emphasis on collaboration, outcomes and long-term value.



PEOPLE BREAKOUT 2

How does leadership need to change as AI reshapes decision-making?

An exploration of how leadership, culture and decision-making must evolve in an AI-enabled world to improve retention, performance and long-term value.

Phil Lewis, Corporate Punk



Phil Lewis is a coach, consultant and keynote speaker who believes that organisations are not predictable machines but bodies alive with human energy. Founder of the multi-award-winning Corporate Punk, Phil specialises in helping leaders transform their business without negatively impacting morale. If difficulties have already arisen, he supports them in rebuilding more humanistic, empathetic and innovative workplaces.

Phil's work solves business problems and transforms leaders and performance at organisations like the BBC, Sony Music, Google, Nationwide and KPMG. He partners extensively with high-growth, PE- and VC-backed businesses across Europe and the US, and is a pro-bono advisor to various educational institutions and charities.



What does a productive, growing business environment actually require—and what's holding businesses back day-to-day?

Building on the themes explored in the breakout sessions, the opening plenary grounds the day in the real operating environment facing UK businesses. This session cuts through headlines and theory to explore the practical constraints on growth—skills, productivity, leadership capacity, and decision-making and what this means for how businesses are structured to make decisions and act.

Rain Newton-Smith, CEO, CBI in conversation with Frank Nigriello, Chairman, B4

Rain Newton-Smith is the CBI's Chief Executive. Before taking up the role, she was Managing Director, Strategy and Policy, Sustainability and ESG at Barclays.

From August 2014 until March 2023, Rain was Chief Economist at the CBI where she led its economic policy, analysis and survey teams and the CBI's work with HM Treasury. She also led the international team, focused on global business leadership around the B7 and B20, and championed the CBI's work to support the transition to a low carbon, sustainable economy. Rain was instrumental in shaping the CBI's work to help business navigate through the Covid pandemic.

Prior to joining the economics team at the CBI, Rain was Head of Emerging Markets at Oxford Economics, where she was the lead expert on China.

Rain's earlier career included nine years at the Bank of England, where her responsibilities included preparing global forecasts for the Monetary Policy Committee. During her time at the Bank, Rain was seconded to the International Monetary Fund in Washington DC.

Rain holds an MSc in Economics from LSE and studied Philosophy and Economics at Oxford University, and is now a Policy Fellow with the Department of Economics at the University. In 2012, Rain was honoured by the World Economic Forum as a Young Global Leader.

Frank Nigriello is Non-Executive Chairman of B4 and Co-Chair of Trustees at Earth Trust. He is also a founder member of Ideas Network 2030. His career includes senior roles at Unipart, Barclays and IBM, and he has worked across sectors to build collaborative networks and drive responsible, long-term growth.



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Simon Blake

Strategic Corporate Finance Partner
T +44 (0) 770 266 5342
E: Simon.Blake@pricebailey.co.uk

Michael Cooper-Davis

Audit & Assurance Partner
T +44 (0) 755 775 8634
E: Michael.Cooper-Davis@pricebailey.co.uk

Price Bailey, The Quad, Lambourne House, 311-321 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 7JH

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PROMOTION PLENARY

What could growth look like for Oxfordshire if the right structures and connections are in place? With Oxfordshire County Council & Blake Morgan

This session expands the lens from internal capability to external opportunity. It explores Oxfordshire's role within wider regional & national growth agendas, including the potential impact of a mayoralty & stronger economic alignment. The focus is on what becomes possible when the right connections, partnerships and structures are in place and what this creates in terms of opportunity for businesses.

Facilitator: Richard Wade **Partner, Blake Morgan**

Richard is a Partner in Blake Morgan's Construction group, advising clients across Oxfordshire on projects supporting growth and regeneration. With over 30 years' experience, he specialises in procurement and contract negotiation, and has led teams on complex disputes. He advises developers, funders, contractors and education institutions across major commercial and housing projects.

Dr Martin Reeves **Chief Executive, Oxfordshire County Council**

Martin has been Chief Executive of Oxfordshire County Council since March 2023, following over 14 years as Chief Executive of Coventry City Council. He has held senior leadership roles across local government and combined authorities, and began his career in academia. Martin is a former President of SOLACE and current LGA National Procurement Champion.



Kim Sawyer, Programme Director for **Devolution at Oxfordshire County Council**

Kim leads complex initiatives shaping regional policy and transformation. An experienced public sector leader, she has held senior roles including Acting CEO at Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Interim CEO at Havant Borough Council, with a strong background in governance, legal counsel and strategy.

Philip Campbell **Commercial Director, MEPC Ltd**

Commercial Director at MEPC Ltd, responsible for Milton Park, the UK's largest single-ownership science and technology community. A Chartered Surveyor, he leads a team of 25 supporting organisations across life sciences, energy, AI and agri-tech. He also holds roles with the University of Oxford, Didcot First Ltd and the Didcot Powerhouse Fund.

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PROMOTION BREAKOUT 1

How are customer decisions shaped—and where can AI improve them to drive growth?

Using real-world examples, this session examines how customer journeys are evolving and where AI can enhance decision-making to deliver stronger commercial outcomes.



Dr Matthias Rolf is an Associate Professor in Computer Science at Oxford Brookes University

Matthias is an experienced AI researcher with over 50 peer-reviewed publications. His work spans robotics, autonomous systems, ethical AI and commercial applications. He co-created Brookes' BSc and MSc Artificial Intelligence degrees and plays a leading role across teaching, research and knowledge exchange.

He has led a successful AI collaboration with Blenheim Palace, delivering measurable improvements in efficiency and customer experience. This partnership, now independently funded, has influenced the wider UK visitor attraction sector. He is also Principal Investigator on a government-funded Knowledge Transfer Partnership focused on transforming go-to-market consultancy through AI.

Paul is an academic at Oxford Brookes University, contributing across teaching, research, knowledge exchange and consulting, including MSc International Business Management. He specialises in digital strategy and leadership, new venture planning, digital business management and MBA supervision. His research focuses on digital innovation and transformation, particularly the role of AI and machine learning in organisational change. With experience across public, private and social sectors, his work has delivered impact through Knowledge Transfer Partnerships with organisations including Brethertons Solicitors and Blenheim Palace.



Paul Jackson, Associate Professor of Information Systems at Oxford Brookes University

The Creative Collective
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B4's new branding
and website, and we
are excited to see it
go live in June.

creativecollectiveuk.com



PROMOTION BREAKOUT 2

How does Oxfordshire ensure innovation benefits a broad mix of organisations?

This session explores how innovation can be more inclusive—ensuring businesses of all sizes can contribute to and benefit from the region's innovation economy.

Facilitator: Dr Olga Kozlova
Director of Innovation and Engagement,
University of Oxford

Olga specialises in technology commercialisation, start-ups, investment and innovation ecosystems. She previously led innovation at the University of Strathclyde and founded Converge, Scotland's national entrepreneurship programme. A Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, she is an experienced board member, mentor and advisor supporting high-growth ventures and innovation initiatives.

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Chief Executive, Oxfordshire County Council

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Emmy O'Shaughnessy
Deputy CEO and Director of Innovation
and Growth, Oxfordshire Youth

Emmy combines personal experience of the care system with 20 years in the voluntary sector. Her work spans youth programmes in care homes and pupil referral units, supporting survivors of exploitation, community arts, fundraising, and most recently serving as a charity CEO, driving impact across regional and national initiatives.

Victoria Collett, Devt Director,
Thomas White Oxford

Victoria Collett is Development Director at Thomas White Oxford, leading delivery of Oxford North, a £700m innovation district. A chartered surveyor with 20 years' experience, she has worked across the UK and internationally, including at Legal & General Capital, specialising in large-scale development, regeneration and strategic partnerships.



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with Prico Bailey
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The Randolph Hotel
10th May 2024


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Dominic Hale
Chief Executive Officer, Blenheim

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PROCESS PLENARY

How is decision-making changing as technology, automation and scale increase? Hosted by Freeths.

A panel discussion exploring how organisations are adapting as decision-making becomes more distributed, while accountability remains central. Where are the tensions—and how should businesses respond?

Facilitator: Will Richmond-Coggan, Head of AI & Data Privacy, Freeths

Will specialises in technology disputes, media and reputation, advising companies on data and privacy issues. With over 20 years' experience, he handles complex, high-value litigation, often internationally.

A recognised thought leader in AI and data law, he regularly speaks at conferences and is instructed in major multi-party disputes.

Adrian Sweeney, Chief Commercial Officer, Planet IT

With over 20 years at Planet IT, a leading UK managed service provider, Adrian drives revenue growth, go-to-market strategy and client relationships. He leads sales, marketing and commercial operations, ensuring solutions deliver real outcomes. Known for his hands-on approach, he translates complex technology into clear, tangible business value.



Rob Pilkington, Joint CEO, Ebbon-Group

Rob is a founder of Ebbon Group and a computer scientist with a long track record in technology innovation. He pioneered Leaselink, now an industry-standard automotive platform. Today, he focuses on strategic growth, emerging talent and AI, including new ventures in robotics, while continuing to support initiatives across Oxfordshire.

Paola Cuneo, Lead Entrepreneurial Engagement, Rathbones

Paola joined Rathbones in 2020 to lead engagement with entrepreneurs. Previously at London Stock Exchange Group, she connected companies with capital and led entrepreneur communities. She also ran EY Entrepreneur of the Year and launched a UK startup programme for international graduates. She mentors women in STEM through RisingWISE.

PROCESS BREAKOUT 1

Where do risk and value sit inside your systems—and what starts to fail as you scale?

Reframing digital infrastructure and cyber around decision-making, this session explores how risk accumulates and where value can be unlocked as organisations grow.

Adrian Sweeney, Chief Commercial Officer, Planet IT



Adrian Sweeney is Chief Commercial Officer at Planet IT, a leading UK managed service provider. With over 20 years at the company, he plays a central role in driving revenue growth, shaping go-to-market strategy, and strengthening client relationships.

Adrian leads sales, marketing, and commercial operations, ensuring solutions align with client outcomes. He is known for his hands-on approach, strategic insight, and ability to translate complex technology into tangible business value.

PROCESS BREAKOUT 2

Where do processes stop working—and what does that mean for growth?

Hosted by Freeths.

An honest look at operational pressure points, and how businesses can scale effectively without losing control or introducing fragility.



**Facilitator: Will Richmond-Coggan,
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Will specialises in technology disputes, media and reputation, advising companies on data and privacy issues. With over 20 years' experience, he handles complex, high-value litigation, often internationally.

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PURPOSE PLENARY

If the environment is changing this quickly, how do businesses stay relevant & make good decisions?

We conclude with a forward-looking perspective on how organisations can navigate accelerating change. The session brings together the themes of People, Process and Promotion—focusing on how businesses interpret information, make decisions & take action in an increasingly complex world.

Expect to leave with a clearer understanding of what's changing—and how to respond inside your own organisation.

Tom Cheesewright, Applied Futurist

Tom helps leaders to see the future more clearly and tell their stories to the audiences that matter, whether that's the board, their staff, or their customers and prospects. Trusted by more than 30 of the global 500, as well as major government bodies such as NASA, Tom is in demand as a consultant, commentator, speaker and spokesperson.

Recognised from his thousands of media appearances, Tom explains tomorrow's world across TV, radio, print and online. He is currently the resident expert on BBC Radio 4 series *Dough* and a frequent contributor to BBC Breakfast and News, but has also appeared on popular shows such as *Sunday Brunch*, *You and Yours*, and *The Big Questions*.

The author of three acclaimed books, Tom brings huge credibility to the stage, using his storytelling skills to teach audiences new skills, shift their thinking, and leave them inspired.

How do you apply everything you've learned today to your business? How do you ensure that as the trends and pressures facing the world change, you stay ahead of the game? Applied Futurist Tom Cheesewright works with global brands like Pepsi, Meta and NASA to help them to see the future more clearly, and to respond with innovation.

In this closing session he shares one of the powerful tools he teaches leaders to help them to navigate a fast-changing environment and plot a path for their organisation, while bringing together the themes from the day.





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