

## South REPF 2023/24 - officer evaluation report

*Scoring summary for Capital grants for growing the local social economy and supporting innovation.*

Ref no.	Organisation	Scheme	Total Project Cost	Amount Requested	Suggested score
SREPF\100036	Thomley Hall Centre Ltd	Eco-Woodland Outdoor Adventure and Learning Centre (OLC)	£63,070	£63,070	7
			<b>Total Requested</b>	£63,070	
			<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>£45,000</b>	
			<b>Budget Remaining</b>	<b>-£18,070</b>	

## Scoring and award matrix for REPF Grant applications

<b>Suggested Scores</b>	<b>Scores:</b> The scoring thresholds which identify what priority level the project falls into can be amended, depending on the number of applications received and potential allocation of funds to ensure maximum community benefit. As agreed by the Cabinet Member.
7 - 12	Project is recommended for funding
0 - 6	Project is not recommended for funding

**Projects MUST score at least one point in the Project outputs/outcomes section in order to be recommended for funding.**

### Need for project.

Points		
0	No evidence of need for project has been provided	
1	Limited evidence for need for project has been provided	A small scale survey of employees or service users has been carried out.
2	Good evidence of need for project has been provided	A larger scale survey has been carried out asking the wider community
3	Detailed evidence of need for project has been provided	A full business plan or formal community consultation have been provided.
+ 1	If no other projects like this are located locally	Is there a similar facility or business within a reasonable distance or not. For example, EV charging points, will the project provide the only charging point in a village, or are there already several public charging points available in the village.

## Climate Action

Points		
-1	The project will negatively impact on the council's climate agenda,	The project will have a detrimental effect on the local environment without any mitigation in place, this could be via destruction of green space and wildlife habitat, increase in greenhouse gas emissions, installation of non-energy efficient equipment, or purchase of new diesel or petrol vehicles etc.
0	The project has not considered its impact on the environment, or not provided any information in this area.	No evidence of environmental impact of the project has been provided in the application form.
1	The project will have some positive impact on the council's climate agenda	Small scale improvements such as replacing some lightbulbs with energy efficient ones, installing bike racks, implementing an energy smart meter
2	The project will have a positive impact on the council's climate agenda	Installation of EV charging points, renewable energy systems, creation of green spaces for nature, creation of new cycle paths or active travel routes.
+ 1	The organisation applying has a sustainability/climate action forward plan or strategy in place	Evidence of a climate action policy has been provided

## Social Action

Points		
0	The project has no wider community benefits	The project only benefits the immediate applicants, such as a private business e.g. installation of equipment to cut costs for the business
1	The project has limited wider community benefits	The project will benefit a small number of groups or individuals, less than 50 people
2	The project has several wider community benefits	The project will benefit a large number of community groups or more than 50 people

## Projects MUST score at least one point in one of the following sections.

### Projects outputs/outcomes

Applications applying for **Capital grants for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas** will be assessed against the following outputs/outcomes. Please note, projects will be scored against their highest achieving output i.e. if a project will increase productivity by over 10% and safeguard 3 jobs it will score 3 points. The jobs safeguarded will be brought to the grant panels attention but not scored.

Points	Jobs safe-guarded	Adoption of new to the firm technology or process	number of firms with improved productivity
0	0 jobs safe-guarded	Adoption of 0 new to firm technology or processes	Expected 0% increase in productivity
1	1-5 jobs safe-guarded	Adoption of 1 new to firm technology or processes	Expected 1%-5% increase in productivity
2	6-10 jobs safe-guarded	Adoption of 2 new to firm technologies or processes	Expected in 6%-10% increase in productivity
3	10+ jobs safe-guarded	Adoption of 3 or more new to firm technologies or processes	Expected over 10% increase in productivity

Applications applying for **Capital grants for growing the local social economy and supporting innovation areas** will be assessed against the following outputs/outcomes. Please note, projects will be scored against their highest achieving output i.e. if a project will create a new business and create 3 jobs it will score 3 points. The jobs created will be brought to the grant panels attention but not scored.

Points	Jobs created	Number of new businesses created
1	1-5 jobs created	
2	6-10 jobs created	
3	10+ jobs created	New business created

Applications applying for **Capital grants for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups** will be assessed against the following outputs/outcomes. Please note, projects will be scored against their highest achieving output i.e. if a project will increase user numbers by over 50% and increase perceptions of facilities by 20% it will score 3 points. The increase in perceptions will be brought to the grant panels attention but not scored.

Points	Expected improved perceptions of facilities or amenities	Increase users of facilities or amenities
1	1-25% expected increase in perception of facilities or amenities	1-25% expected increase in user numbers
2	26-50% expected increase in perception of facilities or amenities	26-50% expected increase in user numbers
3	50%+ expected increase in perception of facilities or amenities	50% + expected increase in user numbers

<b>Thomley Hall Centre Ltd</b>	<b>Ref</b>	<b>SREPF\100036</b>
<b>Project Name: Eco-Woodland Outdoor Adventure and Learning Centre (OLC)</b>		
<p><b>Project Description:</b> Thomley sits on an eight-acre, rural site. We provide activities outdoors, but want to offer more 'outdoor activities' that take advantage of our rural setting and help children and young people with disabilities get better in touch with nature.</p> <p>We are planning to build an Eco-Woodland Outdoor Adventure and Learning Centre (OLC hereafter). A Fort Treehouse with an obstacle course will sit at the hub, with paths leading to seven themed activity areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Den Building</li> <li>• Insectopia</li> <li>• Fairy Garden</li> <li>• Floor is Lava</li> <li>• Picnic Area</li> <li>• Fire Pit</li> <li>• Woodland Area</li> </ul> <p>Once completed, we plan to use this area to provide structured and unstructured outdoor learning activities as a part of our regular daily activities. Each day at Thomley has a specific visitor focus and IWF activities will be planned accordingly to accommodate the needs of visitors on the day:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preschool Days</li> <li>• 13+ Days</li> <li>• Disability Family Days (adapted activities for whole-family participation)</li> <li>• Open For All Days (open to everyone, with or without disabilities)</li> <li>• Quiet Days (for visitors who need a calmer environment)</li> </ul> <p>The OLC will also be used as a delivery site for parts of the Thomley Achieve Life Skills Programme (for young people with autism, ages 16-25).</p> <p>The goals of the OLC are linked with Thomley's strategy (Survive, Adapt and Thrive – 2021-2024):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop our site to its full potential – This includes building new programmes and services for visitors, and creating new, sustainable income streams that reduce reliance on grant funding.</li> <li>• Demonstrate and measure our impact – It is essential that our activities deliver impact so we attract and retain support from beneficiaries, funders and partners.</li> <li>• Grow awareness of Thomley – We must reach and support as many people as possible by improving our marketing and communications.</li> </ul>		
<b>Application Theme:</b> Capital grants for growing the local social economy and supporting innovation.		
<b>Location of Project:</b> Wормinghall		
<b>Potential number of beneficiaries:</b> 11,646		

<b>Total project cost</b>	£63,070
<b>Organisation's contribution</b>	£0
<b>Other secured funding</b>	£0
<b>REPF Grant Requested</b>	£63,070
<b>Organisation's latest bank balance</b>	£242,222.74

## Scoring

<p><b>Need for Project</b>          Limited evidence of need for the project has been provided. The applicant states they have carried out customer research and the project has been requested, however they have not attached a copy of the survey so this can not be verified. There is limited provision of similar services within the county allowing them to score the additional point</p>	<p><b>Score</b></p>	<p>2/4</p>
<p><b>Action on Climate Emergency</b>          The project will have some positive impact on the council's climate agenda. The prjoect has considered its environmental impact and how to mitigate. The organisation have supplied their cimate action policy allowing them to score an additional point.</p>	<p><b>Score</b></p>	<p>2/3</p>
<p><b>Social Action</b>          Thomley has a large customer base that they are able to evidence via their booking system</p>	<p><b>Score</b></p>	<p>2/2</p>
<p><b>Project Outputs</b>          1-5 jobs created, New business created if the forest school is set up as a new company. No evidence to suggest this will be its own legal entity so 1 point awarded</p>	<p><b>Score</b></p>	<p>1/3</p>
<p><b>Financial and project management plans</b>          Organisation has the funding to support the project until they are able to raise other funds</p> <p><b>Demand for services and other similar facilities</b>          There is a high demand for the services Thomley provide as they are the only disability focused play centre in the county of this scale. They have a significant customer base and offer a unique venue to the families with young people with disabilities.</p> <p><b>Project completion within timeframe</b>          01/06/24 - 26/07/24 2 month project fits timescale</p>		
<p><b>DEDUCTIONS, CONCERNS AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS</b>          They have requested 100% funding. The grant policy states organisations can only request up to 75 percent unless exceptional circumstances apply such as major funder pulling out or the project will provide significant benefit to our residents. They have applied for funding under each intervention.</p>	<p><b>Total score</b></p>	<p><b>7/12</b></p>



## **Applicant responses**

### **Need for Project**

#### **How do you know there is a need for your project?**

As a part of Thomley's Marketing and Communications Strategy, we perform market research and regularly survey our visitors to better understand their needs.

Thomley's visitors help shape our services, programmes and developments in a several ways:

- Ongoing, informal conversations with staff and management
- End-of-activity surveys
- Regular, large-scale visitor surveys
- Visitor Voice group that meets regularly with staff and management
- Visitor representation on the Capital Projects sub-committee of our Board

In our surveys, parents and carers described the challenges their children with disabilities face:

- Don't have access to play, leisure and recreation facilities/opportunities
- Don't have access to age appropriate social/friendship opportunities
- Don't have access to age appropriate developmental/transitional opportunities
- Lack the skills to be independent
- Don't have freedom of choice
- Lack places to be able to take risks
- The community may lack an understanding of disabilities

A key differentiating feature of Thomley's OLC will be its focus on accessible, inclusive, outdoor learning opportunities for people with disabilities.

Our market research shows there are no disability-focused outdoor learning centres located in Oxfordshire.

There are outdoor learning centres in the following locations:

Bucks Activity Centre – Green Park (21.1 miles; 45 minutes)

Hill End Outdoor Education Centre (15.7 miles/48 minutes from Thomley)

Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre (47.5 miles; 65 minutes)

These centres mainly provide residential-style provision, with limited or no day access, and no disability-focused services.

### **Social Action**

**Please provide an estimate of the number of people who will benefit from your project**  
11646

#### **Who will benefit from your project?**

- 4,164 people with autism and/or other disabilities
- 1,238 people with disabilities other than autism
- 5,495 parents, carers, siblings and family members
- 749 non-disabled people who have limited experiences of disability
- 20+ community and disability groups

Thomley has developed an outcome and impact model

(<https://thomley.org.uk/Thomley/#/slide-16>) that is aligned with our Theory of Change

(<https://thomley.org.uk/Thomley/#/slide-3>). The activities provide by the IWF will help people with disabilities make progress towards all 7 of our key outcomes:

- empowerment (trying new things; engaging with others; engaging with activities; making choices independently; confidence in group situations)
- physical wellness (engaging in physical activity)
- emotional wellness (being involved in activities; engaging with others; being relaxed; showing positive behavioural changes; coping with difficult situations)
- positive relationships (using appropriate skills with others; increasing interactions with others; socialising with someone outside of Thomley)
- developing skills (trying/doing new things; actively choosing activities; informing themes, and activities; using a new skill learnt at Thomley, at home or somewhere else)
- inclusion (feeling welcomed at Thomley; feeling accepted by other visitors; embracing differences)

Parents and carers (<https://thomley.org.uk/Thomley/#/slide-23>) will also benefit in the following ways :

- Feeling relaxed
- Feeling positive and able to cope
- Feeling less isolated
- Being able to share and benefit from the experiences and support of other parents and carers
- Being able to take a short break from their caring role
- Better able to understand and embrace differences

We track progress towards all of the above outcomes by gathering on-the-day feedback supplemented by regular, large-scale visitor surveys (<https://thomley.org.uk/Thomley/#/slide-17>).

## **Action on Climate Emergency**

### **Please tell us about any steps your organisation has taken to improve it's own environmental sustainability?**

Thomley has an Environmental Policy that commits the Charity to minimising the impact of its activities on the environment. Included in the Policy is a commitment to 'minimise toxic and greenhouse gas emissions generated by our activities.'

Thomley has taken the following steps to improve its environmental sustainability:

- Site-wide audit conducted to identify and address energy, waste, and water usage reduction opportunities
- Biodigester installed to break down food waste and other organic material
- Replacement of all lighting to energy-efficient LED bulbs
- Elimination of single-use plastic items in our café
- Planned capital projects include solar panels and EV charging points
- Adoption of hybrid working for staff members who do not need to be on site to carry out their duties
- Use of Cloud-based computing systems to reduce the amount of computer hardware we need to purchase and replace
- Extension of our Sensory Garden to create more green space
- Creation of a Horticultural Area that allows us to grow vegetables and fruit that are used in our café

### **Please tell us about the environmental impact this project may have.**

The environmental impacts of the OLC will extend beyond Thomley's site and have wider-ranging positive effects on local ecosystems, climate, and ecological sustainability.

The OLC will advance the council's climate agenda in the following ways:

Creation of green space for nature:

One acre of unused outdoor space at Thomley will be transformed into a green space

enjoyed by more than 11,646 people each year.

Biodiversity and pollinator support:

Diverse native trees, plants and flowers will be planted that attract and provide a new habitat for essential pollinators (e.g. bees and butterflies), and support the local ecosystem.

Carbon capture and air quality improvement:

Through photosynthesis, carbon dioxide will be absorbed and oxygen will be released. This will result in a reduction of greenhouse gases and contribute to a reduction of air-quality related respiratory issues.

Storm water management, water quality improvement and erosion prevention:

The green space created will act as natural filter, absorbing rainwater, preventing pollutants from reaching water bodies, and reducing the risk of flooding. The vegetation will help stabilise underlying soil, preventing erosion.

Sustainable practices:

The OLC will be designed with sustainable materials and eco-friendly infrastructure, such as permeable pathways, reducing its environmental impact.

Connection with nature:

Visitors will build a deeper connection with nature, fostering a sense of appreciation and responsibility for the environment.

## **Project outcomes**

**Tell us more about the key outcomes you want to achieve through your project, and how you will know if it was a success.**

1. Improved financial sustainability through the creation of a new rural community business and 1 new job at Thomley
2. People with disabilities make progress towards all 7 of our key outcomes through learning and play opportunities in the OLC
3. Parents and carers of children with disabilities will enjoy a greater range of choice in local activities
4. Non-disabled people better understand and are better prepared to meet the needs of people with disabilities in the community through shared experiences provided by the OLC

We predict that building an OLC will increase visitor numbers to Thomley by 17,000 in its first five years of operation, generating £153,000 in visitor income and secondary visitor income.

Increased visitor numbers will drive increased sales in our café on the day and will also lead to greater awareness of our other services that will result in an increase in long-term income from more stays in our overnight Camping Pods and Camping, increased bookings of Sensory Play rooms, and increased enrolment in Achieve Life Skills programme.

We will demonstrate these outcomes through our existing monitoring and evaluation, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Electronic Point of Sales (EPoS) systems; visitor surveys; and our management accounts and annual accounts.

Our project outcomes are linked to the strategic objectives of Thomley's current strategy (Survive, Adapt and Thrive – 2021-2024):

1. Develop our site to its full potential – This includes building new programmes and services for visitors, and creating new, sustainable income streams that reduce reliance on grant funding.
2. Demonstrate and measure our impact – It is essential that our activities deliver impact so we attract and retain support from beneficiaries, funders and partners.
3. Grow awareness of Thomley – We must reach and support as many people as possible by improving our marketing and communications.