



Oakham

co-operative fitness

Business Plan



Our Vision

A self-sustaining, community, exercise co-operative for Oakham and the surrounding area. Oakham Co-operative Fitness will prioritise creating a community with healthy minds and bodies.



Our aims

- To build an inclusive, supportive, affordable fitness culture for Oakham and the surrounding areas through group exercise classes and other means.
- To help build, support and maintain healthy bodies and minds for our members.
- To provide fun, motivating, empowering and high quality fitness classes that are affordable and fairly priced.

Who are we?

A group of Catmose members who led the successful campaign to save Catmose in 2023 and now want to secure a future for our community. We were drawn to Catmose for a range of different reasons, which gives us a broad understanding of what makes our exercise community special. Collectively, we have a wealth of varied experiences from diverse backgrounds. Between us, we have both “born and bred” residents and recent movers to the town, and we use group exercise classes for strength, health, medical reasons, mental wellbeing and to build a friendship network.

Why is Catmose special?

Catmose is not just a gym or a sports centre; it is a community that looks out for each other and provides multiple roots to wellness. This is what we want to keep, what we want to take with us to Oakham Fitness Co-operative.





Rationale

Catfoss Sports Centre has spent the last 18 months under threat. Despite a successful campaign to save the facility in 2023, it will now close on the 31st May because of decision making at Rutland County Council. As a group, we are devastated by this decision but we have decided to take matters into our own hands. We cannot replicate everything that made Catfoss an amazing space but there are elements of the offer that we believe can be supported through a community run fitness co-operative. Oakham Co-Operative Fitness will take the fate of our amazing community, and the health and wellbeing of our members, out of the control of county council decisions and allow the community itself to build something sustainable on our own terms, that cannot be at risk of budget cuts.



What do we offer?

Oakham Co-Operative Fitness will deliver group fitness classes in a community space. We know that the social aspect of exercise classes is really important so we will provide a designated space, where the community can come together before and after class; we will explore options to allow personal workouts. In addition, our instructors will be able to offer PT and sports massage from our venue.

If the co-operative were successful, we might be able to expand the offer in future years.

Why group fitness classes

Group fitness classes work for diverse audiences. Instructors provide the guidance that allows people of all abilities to work out safely, and the motivation to encourage people to work at their best level. When delivered by expert instructors, fitness classes work for everyone in the room - from the person exercising for the first time, to the new Mum returning to exercise after pregnancy; from the older person working to keep fit, to someone who trains seriously 6 days a week.

The range of classes that can be provided allow for strength, flexibility, core and cardio training to be mixed together through the course of a single class and a weekly timetable. Even more importantly, group exercise classes are social. Our current mental health and loneliness crisis means that many people now seek connection and friendship through exercise. Group classes facilitate this most effectively, they provide a support network for members and a shared experience that bonds people together.



Competition and the market

Our offer is very specifically not a gym. BeFit, Oakham school and Oakham Crossfit all offer great gym facilities for those who want them and we do not want to be in competition with them. Gyms also have large upfront costs that are beyond the scope of a community co-operative to open. Group exercise classes were very popular at Catmose - the mix of professional coaching, a motivating instructor and a social environment appeals to many people. BeFit and Oakham school both offer very limited group classes for different reasons, and we will move into the space left behind by Catmose's closure.

Competition	Per month	Pay as you go per class	Joining fees	In person classes per week	Distance from Catmose
Catmose	£36.95	£7.00	£0	60	N/A
BEFit	£40.00	£7.00	£0	19	1 mile
Oakham School	£37.00	£8.00	£0	25	0.9 miles
Crossfit	£90.00	£15.00	£135.00	Members limited to 1 class per day	0.9 miles
Uppingham	£44.00	N/A	£60.00	73	8 miles
Rhinos	£39.00	£6.00	£0	6	13 miles
Equilibrium	£79.00	N/A	£79.00	86	12 miles

One of the main draws of a group fitness class is the instructor - instructors from Catmose are at the core of Oakham Co-operative Fitness and are excited for this new venture.

Premises

We have viewed premises off Pillings Road that would be suitable. This is a long disused Victorian warehouse building, which is being broken into 5 units and will be ready to rent in the next 5 weeks. We know that another leisure business is looking to take one of the other units. The area has good parking, street lighting, is walkable from the town centre and train station, and not far from the current Catmose centre. Opening Oakham Co-operative Fitness at this site would help revitalise the area more generally. The space also provides potential for further expansion.



Legal set up

Oakham Co-operative Fitness will be run as a co-operative community interest company.

A co-operative is “a business or organisation that’s owned and controlled by its members, to meet their shared needs” (Co-operatives UK, 2024). Oakham Co-Operative Fitness will be owned and run by its members. We will hold 4 meetings a year, where members can vote on how their co-operative is being run. Any profits made will be reinvested back into the Co-operative for the benefit of its members. Membership is open to anyone aged over 18 (non-voting members aged 16+ can attend classes and aged 14-18 can access the work-out space with adult supervision).

At our 4 general meetings a year, members will be able to make suggestions, have their ideas heard and vote to see the co-operative grow or change in the way they think best.

The co-operative will appoint a management team at their AGM - this will include a Director, a secretary, a finance lead, a marketing lead, a membership lead and a compliance lead. These roles exist to help guide the co-operative, and to carry out the will of the membership - who ultimately make all decisions.

Role	Normal term of office	Start-up appointment length
Director - oversees operations	2 years max	3 years
Secretary - legal management of the co-operative	2 years max	3 years
Finance lead - accounting and reporting	2 years max	2 years
Marketing lead - branding and social media	2 years max	2 years
Membership lead - communication with membership, record keeping, oversight of membership management	2 years max	1 years
Compliance lead - safeguarding, policies, GDPR, and health and safety oversight	2 years max	1 years

The roles will be appointed through the election of the members. The normal term of office will be 2 years. Initially, the roles will have different lengths so that the leadership team do not all depart their roles at the same time, creating stability and institutional memory for the co-operative.



Financial sustainability

We have produced an estimated monthly budget for the running costs.

Lease	£2,480	Accounting software	£12
Landlord's insurance	£84	Staffing - management	0
Service charge	£310	Waste management	£60
Business rates	£208	Insurance	£55
Heating	£385	Cleaning	£135
Electricity	£100	Internet connection	£50
Staffing - classes	£3,762	Management/booking software	£13
Staffing - gym instructor (handles reception, light cleaning, free weight supervision)	£1,836	Consumables (cleaning sprays, toilet paper etc)	£100
Music licensing	£85	Water cooler	£36
Google Workspace	£12	Total cost per month	£9723

Our current calculations suggest we need to be making £9723 per month.

Current Catmose membership is £36.95 a month and there are 700 members at present.

These 700 members are just paying gym and class users, this figure

excludes pay as go gym users and those who hire the sports hall for things like badminton, kickboxing, dancing etc.

We have taken a conservative estimate and hope that we will recruit around 250 members, who we would charge £39 a month. This is slightly more than Catmose and less than most of our competitors.

We have already successfully launched social media pages and a mailing list. Together these mechanisms are helping us to evidence interest in the centre more effectively. Over 170 people signed up to our mailing list in the first week, but we know that there are many existing Catmose members who do not use social media who we are working to reach through the press, leaflets and word of mouth.

If we successfully recruit more members, we would, together with our membership explore options such as reducing fees, improving our building and facilities, enhance our class and free weights offer, and bringing in a manager to reduce the workload on members.

Membership							
Monthly fee	100	150	200	250	300	350	400
£30	£3,000	£4,500	£6,000	£7,500	£9,000	£10,500	£12,000
£35	£3,500	£5,250	£7,000	£8,750	£10,500	£12,250	£14,000
£39	£3,900	£5,850	£7,800	£9,750	£11,700	£13,650	£15,600
£40	£4,000	£6,000	£8,000	£10,000	£12,000	£14,000	£16,000
£45	£4,000	£6,750	£9,000	£11,250	£13,500	£15,750	£18,000



Marketing strategy

We have completed a brand treatment for Oakham Co-Operative Fitness, which gives us a clear visual identity and aligns with our values and aims. This visual identity will help to show our members, and the community that we are a serious enterprise; it is visually distinct from the other providers in the space and emphasises inclusivity.



A week in the life of Oakham Co-operative Fitness



We will run classes that start at 6.30am on weekdays to allow before work exercise and around 9am to allow people without work commitments (retirees, parents, and shift workers). At Catmose, both of these time slots are popular with different audiences. Between 6-9am (times subject to change), the free weights training area will be open for members to exercise independently.

Following morning classes, the centre will close to members to keep costs down. Our Instructors can use the facilities, when closed to members, for PT and sports massage.

We will re-open in the afternoon from 4-8pm for independent exercise in the free weights area. The timing here would allow supervised under 18s to access the space after school, and also those finishing work. Classes will also run in the evenings.

On the weekend, there will be classes in the mornings and access to the free weights area for independent exercise between 8-10am.

Hot and cold drinks and snacks will be available in an area with comfortable seating to help encourage the community ethos.

Outside our opening time for members we will look at hiring the venue out to local community groups to help build our revenue and to provide a home for the groups that used to use Catmose.



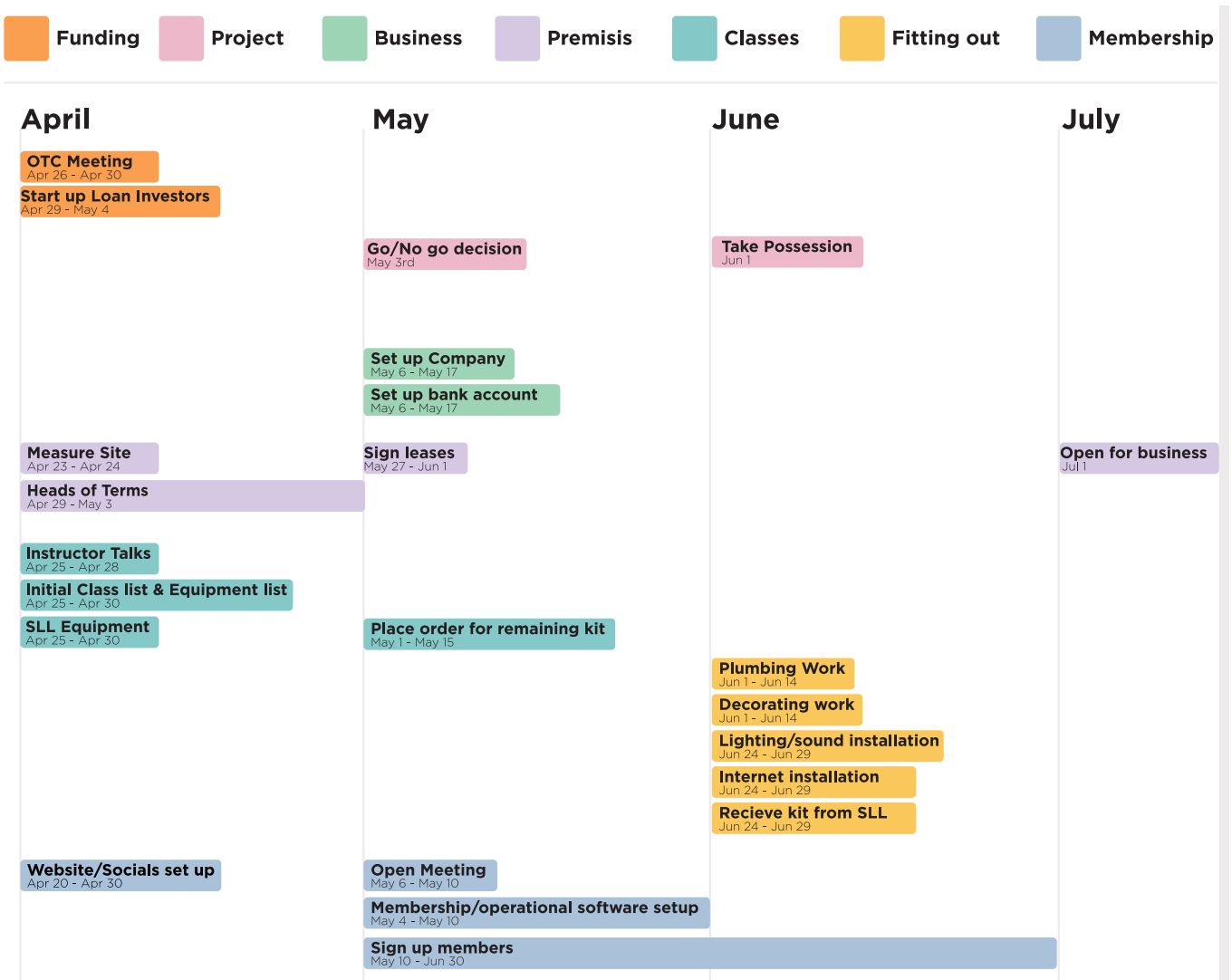
Caring for our instructors

Instructors will be self-employed and paid by OFC. They will be paid £22 per hour for class instructing. There will be the potential for c. 40 hours per week at £12 an hour to help run the facilities when the free weights area is open to members (6-9am and 4-8pm on weekdays; 8-10am weekends) [this person cannot be running PT sessions at this time].

Our instructors will be able to run their own PT and sports massage services out of the centre. When they are doing PT or sports massage for our own members, we will not take a percentage of their fee. If they are PTing or sports massaging people who are not OCF members, then we take 25% of their fee.



Timelines





Risk analysis

Strengths

We are highly motivated and able. We know we have a very keen existing membership, many of whom want to come with us when Catmose closes. We've moved at speed in the hope that people will be able to move from Catmose straight to Oakham Co-operative Fitness. We've identified great premises and are negotiating a generous deal on rental payments and break deals.

Our team has expertise in start-ups, running businesses and charities, branding and marketing, safeguarding and social care and, of course, exercise! The community is behind us due to the wide upset caused by the closure.

Weaknesses

Our current biggest weakness surrounds start up costs. Getting the building ready for classes (flooring, decorating, furniture) and acquiring the necessary equipment and licences, is a financial outlay. We are approaching Oakham Town Council initially to look at potential funding opportunities. We also have options for sponsorship from local businesses and fund raising activities. We will approach SLL, who currently run Catmose, to see what equipment we might be able to take from them. We will also consider a loan if necessary.

Our other weakness surrounds the building itself. It was advertised as requiring 3 months rent in advance and with a 5 year lease. On the one hand, this provides stability for us and is more flexible and cheaper than the other options currently on the market (e.g. Tungsten business park) but it also requires us to be successful. We are in negotiations with the landlord, aiming to put in a 2.5year break clause and to delay rental payment for the first 2 months. This will reduce our liability. If the co-operative were to fail, we would look to sublet until our lease contract ended.

Opportunities

The closure of Catmose is devastating for this group but also provides the opportunity to create something owned by members, where the risk of closure by outside forces can be removed. If successful, particularly if we were to attract around 400 members, we would have the possibility of further growth and providing more paid work.

Threats

The dissipation of the current Catmose membership to other venues, or away from exercise entirely is our biggest threat. We need a membership of at least 200 to make the business sustainable. Moving at speed helps reduce this threat, as does taking instructors from Catmose with us to Oakham Co-operative Fitness; we know many members want to stay with the instructors they love.

The other significant threat would be the loss of our





instructors. We have put together what we hope is a favourable offer for our instructors but we also appreciate that they have spent the last 18 months under threat and need to make the right decisions for themselves and their families. For the co-operative, balancing the finances whilst supporting the instructors will be important and we will work closely together to do this. If the business develops successfully, there will be opportunities to expand the paid work and potentially bring in other instructors to increase the range of our offer and make us more resilient.

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Benchmarks for success

Our key goals in terms of success are to create a financially sustainable business and a community fitness facility that is inclusive and welcoming. In the short term, our benchmarks are therefore:

- Set-up success - securing the building, basic equipment, and 200 members
- 3 month success - up and running effectively with membership stable or growing
- 12 month success - self-sustaining business covering running costs

How can you help?

We need help with start-up costs. The model we have developed will lead to a self-sustaining co-operative business, which should not need help with running costs. We do however need an investment of funds at the outset to complete necessary transformation work on the building and buy key pieces of equipment and licences.





Start up costs

We have estimated the necessary start up costs, we have both a 'dream budget' and a 'minimum to make this real' budget. For example, if we were able to acquire some of the old equipment from SLL when Catmose closes, and we make some savings, we could get the project off the ground with as little as £15,000.

Item	Dream scenario	Minimum to make this real
Building deposit	£7440	£7440
Lighting	£6000	£100
Sound	£2000	£400
Flooring	£7600	£4828.60
Fitness Equipment (essentials)	£16977	£0
Fitness Equipment (Higher Standard)	£14274	£0
Furniture	£1500	£1000
Toilet fittings	£700	£700
IT	£500	£200
Mirror walls	£1000	£0
First Aid Kits	£32	£32
Total	£58023	£14701

Get in touch

If you are interested in being part of our journey as a member of as a donor then please get in touch by emailing admin@oakham.fitness

