



**Strong Roots** **New Growth**

**Norfolk Rural Strategy**  
2017-2020

## Case Studies

### **Squilla and Squidge – Priscilla White**

‘Sassy Gracie’ is a 1969 VW T2 Adventure wagon and is central to this LEADER funded project. The project was relatively small, receiving £9,600 (40% of the full project) of funding to set up a new website and kit out the renovated camper van with a kitchen and servery, ready for the ‘top quality artisan street food truck’ to start trading in late spring of 2016.



The business wanted to differentiate itself from other street food traders by offering a healthy and flavourful Middle Eastern and Mediterranean style vegetarian menu, including falafel and halloumi wraps, sweet potato fries and a ‘Norfolk Berry Smoothy’. The target market included selling street food, and being available for hire for festivals and wedding feasts.

Funding was needed, as the business had already invested in the renovation of the van itself, and

based on the unit price of the product, getting a loan for 100% of kitchen costs would have resulted in a very long payback term.

Without investment, the van would probably have not looked as good and eye-catching as spend would have been focussed on the practicalities of getting a kitchen fitted, without the impressive coffee machine. This could have impacted on the business as the vibrant look of the van and the smell of fresh coffee are the main selling points, especially at festivals and weddings.

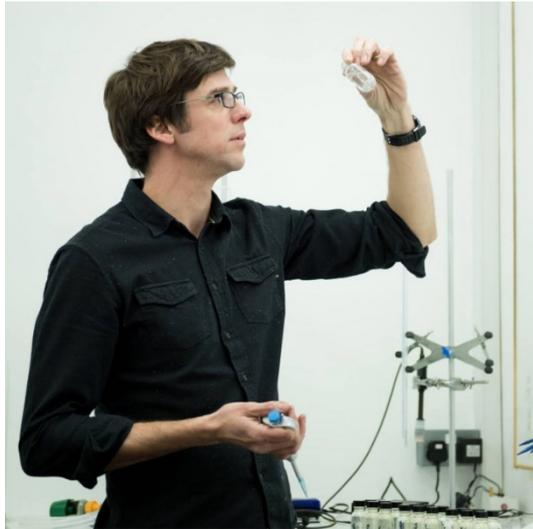
Although finding the application process daunting, it did help the owner to think through the project more thoroughly, and they would definitely seek funding again, if they wished to grow the business.

Setting up a new business isn't plain sailing, as they have had a few setbacks in the past twelve months, but are now seeing a return on their investment. A year later, Squilla and Squidge now employs two part time people, as well as the owner, and also calls on a long list of casual labour to support busy times. The business has also branched out into selling their homemade sauces and cakes.

**This investment in a progressive, value-added food business, has benefits for many other companies in rural Norfolk. With products such as the 'Norfolk Berry Smoothy', the company is providing a new market for Norfolk fruit producers and helping develop the 'Norfolk' brand and a distinctive locally based offer for visitors to the area which in turn supports the leisure and tourism industry.**

## Flint and Vine - Ben and Hannah Witchell

Set up by husband and wife team Ben and Hannah Witchell, Flint and Vine grew from a shared enjoyment of wine and a desire to create their own varieties. After becoming qualified and gaining experience in the industry, Ben secured a plot of land in Norfolk suitable for a vineyard.



In 2016, the business secured £42,500 LEADER funding to support an expansion and diversification of the vineyard and to introduce new processing equipment to improve the handling of the grapes and the processing and storage of the wine.

In the same year, the business was awarded £23,000 funding through the Eastern Agri-Tech Growth Initiative to carry out research into the Bacchus grape variety.

The research is unique in the UK, and aims to understand more about the aromatic profile of the grape in the hope to acquire better winemaking techniques and improve the class of wine produced at the vineyard.

To date results have proved interesting and will help Flint and Vine develop a unique approach to making wine. Results are being shared with the wider winemaking community, to support the English winemaking industry as a whole.

The business sought external funding as they wished to produce premium wines and compete at a high level from the start, which needed significant investment, which could not be gained elsewhere.

The future impact of these projects is projected to be that the business will employ six people by 2020. Already they have achieved good growth, securing a significant wine producing contract, and almost selling out of stock in 2017.



**Wine is a high value use of farmland and investing in the sector therefore increases the value of Norfolk farm output. However, as with other products, the food chain creates most of its value beyond the farmgate. This investment in the wine industry gives a knock-on benefit in increased demand for food processing equipment, packaging, logistics and other food chain services thus benefiting many other local businesses.**

## **Herd Navigation & Gel Cooling System - R.D.J Burridge**

The existing farm business of R.D.J. Burridge has 230 milking cows, 6,000 laying hens and 600 acres of combinable arable and forage crops. All of the milk produced at the farm is marketed through Arla Foods.

The business was using two DeLaval robotic units for milking, and late lactation cows were milked through a conventional herringbone parlour. The farm also had plans to introduce a third unit to replace the old milking parlour.



The business applied for and received £28,524 through LEADER funding to support the purchase and installation of

a Gel Cooling system to cool and refrigerate milk efficiently and a new De-Laval Herd Navigator™ system to attach to the robotic milking system.

The gel cooling system works by pre-cooling the milk before it enters a bulk tank, cooling it quicker and using less energy. The system works in tandem with robots and will calculate how much pre-cooling is required dependant on the flow of milk.

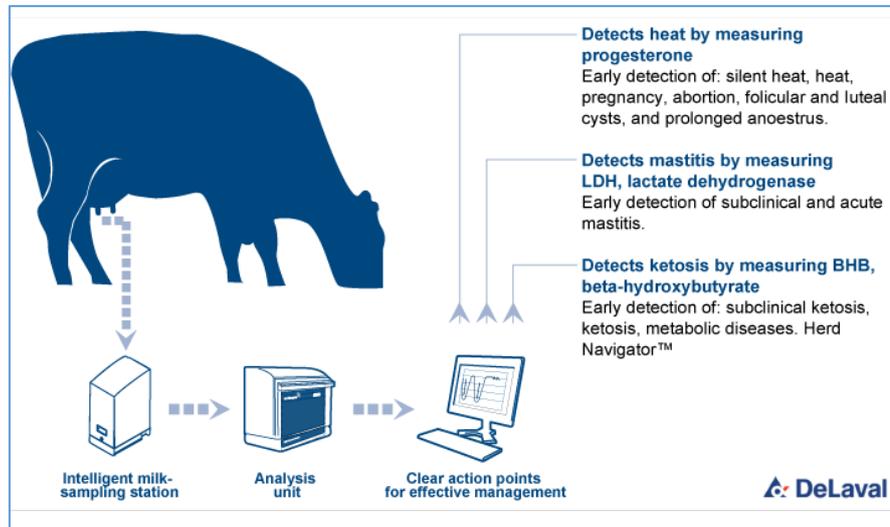
The Herd Navigator™ system is an advanced management tool to "navigate" around large herds and pinpoint any cows in need of special attention, for example requiring separation for insemination, treatment of mastitis or ketosis, special feeding or for a visit from the vet.

The system automatically samples and analyses the milk, and all the data is linked through a database, producing results about the condition of the animal. The calculated figures are sent through to a PC and cows that may require attention, insemination or treatment can be segregated and checked.

The benefits to the business of introducing this new technology is improved efficiency and cost savings through taking preventative measures regarding herd health and welfare, reducing milk loss and maximising feeding and managing feeding-related conditions.

The total potential savings amount to £46,376 per year and the business believes that 50% of these savings could be gained in the first year after installation.

The UK dairy sector is undergoing significant change and the number of



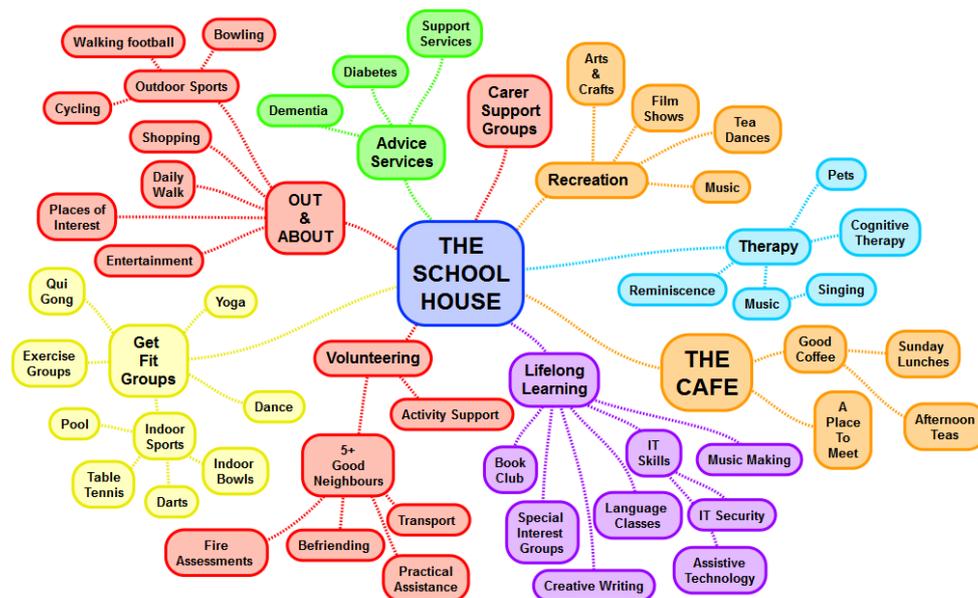
herds in Norfolk has been declining. By investing in gel cooling and herd monitoring the business is ensuring that it is sustainable in the long term and can thus continue to provide Norfolk milk, which is critical to the wider food supply chain given that consumers are increasing the emphasis they place on local sourcing.

## The School House CiC - Gwen Nightingale

The School House, formerly a primary school, is set within Framingham Earl, a busy and rapidly growing community. With a background in health and social care, Gwen believed it would be the ideal place to use for a community centre, and provide much needed services for the local area, including the six surrounding villages.



The School House projects' aim is to put the building at the forefront of creating a dementia friendly community, and to create opportunities for people who are lonely and socially isolated, those living with or caring for someone with dementia, or people with other mental or physical health problems. It will be developed as a welcoming place that enables people of all ages to interact with others, receive support, information and guidance and take part in a wide range of activities. Activities on offer will include indoor sports, physical and therapeutic classes, singing, music and dance, arts and crafts and contact with support groups across a wide range of issues.



The project received £96,116 from LEADER to fund the demolition of store sheds, and build a new 24m<sup>2</sup> extension to the existing building to create a new entrance, modern café area, accessible toilets and storage for activity equipment. The café, due to open early in November 2017, will be open to all, but there will be an emphasis on meeting the needs of people finding it difficult to manage in a non-adapted environment due to cognitive, mobility, physical and/or sensory impairment.

Profits from the building will provide core funding to support activities and services, as well as the maintenance of the building and reduce future needs for fundraising. It is anticipated that the project will provide seven new jobs and a useful new community service, as well as encourage people to visit and enjoy the new Café space.

**With an ageing population and constraints on care budgets, rural Norfolk faces a challenge in how to support the increasing number of people with dementia, ill health or who are lonely. Innovative projects such as The School House CIC, help to manage this challenge whilst reducing the pressure on public sector services and helping those who would otherwise have to care for relatives alone, creating benefits across the community.**

## Gropod Limited – Dan Hewitt, Director

Gropod, based at Scottow Enterprise Park, is a new innovative business first incorporated in February 2016. The business is currently in the late R&D stages of a project focusing on the next generation of growing systems using hydroponic techniques for vegetables, salads, fruit and research crops.



The company was formed to design and build modular 'pods', for vertical growing. The pods will be designed for a range of applications, from household right through to industrial scale.

The business was awarded funding of £53,356 through the Eastern Agri-Tech Growth Initiative to support a research and development project, starting in August 2016, to prove the concept of 'Pod' production on a pilot commercial scale.



The aim is to provide evidence for upscaling the pilot in order to meet the needs of a local food processor.

Primarily the research is to enable the growing of sweet potatoes for the crisp industry. The crop is currently air-freighted from Florida, USA, so enabling sweet potatoes to be grown locally, would reduce air miles, and the associated carbon footprint and

overall operating costs.

Gropod sought external funding because, as an innovative start up business still within the stages of R&D, finding private or bank investment proved to be too much of a challenge. The business had some funds but fell short of the full amount required to deliver the project. Without the additional financial support through the Agri-Tech initiative, the project could not have happened.

As a result of the grant funding, the business has already employed three people and supported the indirect employment of three more people since December 2016.

**Innovative companies such as Gropod have the potential to grow rapidly and in doing so purchase products and services from other local companies. Specifically Gropod, with its first product development is also directly linked with a local food producer who, once the Gropod process is perfected, will**

**have a new UK sourced food product to extend its own market into new areas, thus supporting additional local supply chain job creation.**