



CASE STUDIES OF PREVIOUSLY FUNDED PROJECTS LOCAL TO COLCHESTER CITY COUNCIL AREA AND BEYOND

The following case studies showcase successful projects supported through Colchester City Council's 2023–2025 Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF).

These projects demonstrate how targeted capital investment can unlock innovation, support rural business resilience, create jobs, reduce environmental impact, and strengthen community assets across Colchester's countryside.

Activity Area	Case Study
<p>Business Support: Business development</p> <p>Supporting Local Craft and Timber Supply</p> 	<p>A small rural business has developed a new timber yard operation to supply hobbyists and local joiners with sustainably sourced, characterful hardwood. The project funded by REPF, supports woodland management and adds value to timber that would otherwise be overlooked. Investment in specialist equipment is enabling the business to respond to growing demand and smooth out the seasonal nature of traditional tree work. As a result, it is creating new jobs, supporting local woodland owners, and encouraging a stronger, more circular rural supply chain.</p>
<p>Business Support: Farm Diversification</p> <p>Farm Diversification Brings New Childcare Places</p> 	<p>Responding to high local demand for early years childcare, a farming family has diversified by constructing a new nursery building, enabling Little Doves Nursery to double in size using REPF. The expansion creates seven new jobs and 25 new daily places for children aged six months to five years. This builds on the nursery's strong community reputation and will support local parents to return to work. The nursery operates on a rural farm site, offering children a rich, outdoor-focused experience</p>

while contributing to the long-term sustainability of the farming enterprise.

**Business support:
Business development**

**Solar Power Future-Proofs
Rural Workspace**



A small rural enterprise has transformed its converted office spaces by installing rooftop solar panels and battery storage **using REPF**. The upgrade cuts grid energy use by 50%, reduces CO₂ emissions by over 2.5 tonnes annually, and supports four local businesses by stabilising running costs. This investment not only supports Colchester's Climate Emergency Action Plan but also demonstrates how green infrastructure can boost the long-term resilience of repurposed rural assets. Surplus energy will be sold back to the grid, creating a future income stream and supporting affordable rents for tenants.

Though no new jobs were created, the project enhances productivity, keeps costs down, and supports the sustainability of a former pub now acting as a valuable rural business hub.

**Community Support:
Community Infrastructure,
generation of a rural circular
economy.**

**Swimming School Takes the
Plunge into Low-Carbon
Growth**



A private swimming facility in rural Colchester has made a major investment in green energy, **supported by REPF**. The installation of solar panels, heat pumps and EV charging points is helping the business cut energy bills and lower emissions – saving over 8 tonnes of CO₂ annually. As well as securing jobs and reducing reliance on fossil fuels, the improvements have enabled extended use of the pool, especially during colder months. The facility now serves more local schools and families, promoting health, wellbeing, and environmental responsibility in the heart of the community.

**Community support:
Support infrastructure for
community benefit &
improvement in digital
infrastructure for
community facility.**

**ChatGPT said:
Lighting the Way:
Modernising a Village
Church for Community Use**



Responding to local demand for improved community spaces, a rural church is enhancing its facilities to better support gatherings, meetings, and shared activities. **Using REPF**, the project will deliver a new kitchen, upgraded lighting and sound systems, a Hearing Loop, and essential electrical works. These improvements will create a more inclusive, welcoming environment for all users and strengthen the church's role as a community hub.

**Community support:
Investment in capacity
building and infrastructure
support for local civil
society and community
groups**

**Expanding Rural Hubs:
Creating Space for
Community Connection**



Responding to growing local demand for flexible and inclusive community space, a rural village hall is expanding its facilities through the construction of a new 30 square metre, highly insulated “Community Hub” extension. **Funded by REPF**, the project will provide a dedicated meeting area, accessible toilet, and desk space, enhancing the hall's capacity to host a wider range of activities and services. The extension supports the long-term sustainability of this valued community asset and strengthens its role at the heart of village life.

The following case studies are all projects that have received funding from previous rural development grant schemes. They provide an indication as to the breadth of what can be delivered and achieved under the Rural England Prosperity Fund grant scheme to promote growth in the rural economy through support for rural businesses and rural communities.

Business Support:
Adding Value

Fruit Farm – New Products






A soft fruit farm (strawberries, raspberries and blackberries) in south Suffolk who supplies the East of England Co-op as well as several farm shops received funding support to create a purpose-built pack-house and workshop that includes a kitchen area for developing new products. The new building has helped the business to increase productivity and as part of the project the new kitchen area will develop a new range of products. The project created 1 full time job.

Business Support:
Farm Diversification

Plant Nursery






A retail plant nursery received funding support for the building of a new covered structure to expand their outdoor retail area for displaying and selling plants. The project helped reduce wastage of plants and provides a better shopping experience for customers (especially in poor weather) as well as improving turnover. The project created 2 full time jobs.

Activity Area		Case Study
<p>Business Support: Farm Diversification & Adding Value</p> <p>Farm Shop and Butchery</p>		<p>A family farm received funding to build and fit out a new butchery and farm shop. The project enabled the farm business to butcher its home-grown meat and sell it in the newly built farm shop. The project has supported the farm business by increasing its turnover and profit margins. The new diversified enterprise has created 4.5 full time jobs.</p>
<p>Business Support: Farm Diversification and Tourism</p> <p>Cafe</p>		<p>An existing diversified farm business set out the goal to make a 'destination' for visitors. It had already utilised redundant buildings to diversify with a cookery school, wine shop and accommodation. It received funding to add a café onto the site. The new enterprise has increased the farm business turnover and created 4 new jobs.</p>
<p>Business Support: Farm Diversification & Tourism</p> <p>Glamping</p>		<p>A farm that had diversified into a vineyard with a 'cellar door' where events (weddings) are held responded to demand from visitor to provide high quality glamping accommodation on the edge of the vineyard. Grant was received for the conversion of a redundant grain silo to a self-contained two bed glamping unit. A Poachers Hut was also added to the site that sleeps two people. 2 new jobs were created.</p>

Activity Area	Case Study
<p>Business Support: Tourism</p> <p>Accommodation</p>	<p>A wedding venue business (with attached gardens and vineyard) was awarded a grant to refurbish a disused barn into quality accommodation. The accommodation could be used for wedding parties or, when not needed, be available for bed and breakfast or self-catering bookings. The project helped the business to meet an existing demand for accommodation and expand demand for their vineyard tours. The project created an additional 1000 overnight stays per year and 1.5 new full-time jobs.</p>
<p>Business Support: Adding Value</p> <p>Food Processing</p>	<p>The company source, sell and deliver game & wild meat including venison, game birds, rabbit and even squirrel from farms and estates, directly to customers, butchers and supermarkets. They received a grant towards the purchase of new equipment to assist them in making the business more efficient and effective through the creation of a bespoke cutting, wrapping, labelling and branding service, to help the business grow further. 2.5 new full-time jobs were created.</p>
<p>Business support: adding value</p>	<p>A fruit grower and juice and puree manufacturer produce fruit juices for several well-known drinks brands. They were awarded grant money towards the purchase of two new pieces of equipment to enable them to create clarified fruit juices for their customers and new freezer units to enable them to blast freeze fruit and increase their capacity to cope with increased demand for their products. This has increased their productivity due to the new machinery providing a higher yield from the fruit used. A further benefit of the project is that the business have also now started up their own fruit juice brand. 3 new jobs were created.</p>



Activity Area	Case Study
<p>Rural Communities: Green Space & Social Action Projects</p> 	<p>A local nature conservation charity is responsible for looking after nearly 8000 acres of important wildlife sites. They received a small grant towards the purchase of a firewood processor for their Nature Reserve to help improve the efficiency of their woodland management on the site.</p>
<p>Rural Communities: Green Space & Volunteering</p> 	<p>A small woodland trust whose aim is to preserve and conserve the woodland area, installed infrastructure for the advancement of education and history of the woodland flora and fauna and provide a well maintained facility for the recreation of local residents and users</p>
<p>Rural Communities: Community Shop</p> 	<p>A group of passionate residents agreed that the community needed and would benefit from a new shop and café selling local produce to local people and providing a new community hub. Funding was awarded that helped to fund the construction of the new specially designed building by a local builder, and other grants then contributed to kitting out the kitchen and café. Over 90 volunteers have signed up to work in the shop, while the business has also hired a full-time manager and two part-time supervisors and offered paid summer work experience for six local school-leavers.</p>

Activity Area

**Rural Communities:
Community Infrastructure,
Volunteering and Social
Projects**



Case Study

This project supported a small mental health charity to offer its services to a new group of users - people with mobility problems - through the funding of new walkways around the Charity's 5-acre site to enable improved access to wheelchair users and those with poor mobility. 4 new jobs were created.

**Rural Communities:
Community Groups**

New Cricket Practice Facility



Funding was provided to support a village Cricket Club install a new 2-bay cricket practice facility at their ground but outside of the field play (therefore allowing coaching/ training to happen concurrently with matches, both junior and senior). The need arose due to increased demand as a result of growing Junior and Adult sections.