

## DIGITAL REVOLUTION COULD BOOST RURAL ECONOMY



Unlocking rural digital potential could add up to £26bn annually to the UK economy, says a new report. Research by Rural England and Scotland's Rural College shows that greater use of digital tools and services could deliver as much as 8.8% of additional Gross Value Added for the rural economy. Annual business turnover in rural areas could grow by at least £15 billion, with rural microbusiness and small-sized business seeing the greatest returns, it suggests. The report – sponsored by e-commerce giant Amazon – outlines five themes for the private and

public sectors to help support this opportunity. They include Rural Digital Enterprise Hubs, training and skills development and future support programmes targeting digital growth for rural businesses. The report found that the South West, Eastern and South East regions, which have the largest share of rural businesses in the country, are set to benefit the most from greater digital adoption.

Transformation - Amazon UK country manager Doug Gurr said opportunities for rural entrepreneurs had been transformed through e-commerce, faster broadband and better delivery services over the past 20 years.

But he added: "There's much further to go before anyone can say the rural-urban divide has closed."

"Embracing digital technology not only benefits the economy, it also allows rural communities to combine great quality of life with access to global opportunities."

If digital constraints were removed and rural digital potential realised, an estimated £15bn or more could also be generated in additional business turnover.

To read the full article please [click here](#)

## RULE CHANGE TO INCREASE RURAL HOMES



Rural communities are to be given more options to convert agricultural buildings into family homes. The change in planning rules to better meet local housing needs was announced 12<sup>th</sup> March. Housing Minister Dominic Raab said changes to permitted development rights would mean up to five new homes could be created from existing agricultural buildings on a farm. Currently, only a maximum of three homes are permitted.

Several hundred new homes each year are created through conversions of agricultural buildings, and these changes are expected to boost these numbers further. The changes will help communities make the best use of existing buildings to help meet local housing needs more efficiently, said Mr Raab. At the same time, they would help ensure homes remain in keeping with the character of the area and safeguard people's privacy.

The government is also giving applicants an extra year to convert further storage and distribution buildings into new homes that will help relieve local housing pressures.

Mr Raab said: "We need to be more creative if we are to meet the housing needs of rural communities."

"That's why I'm changing planning rules so rural communities have more flexibility on how best to use existing buildings to deliver more much needed homes for families."

The new measures will also help farmers adopt the latest innovations in modern farming practices by increasing the size limit of new agricultural buildings on larger farms from 465 square metres to 1,000 square metres.

To read further please [click here](#)



## SPECIAL CONSTABLE SWAPS LOCAL POLICING FOR RURAL POLICING



Colchester based Sc Jade Smith has volunteered her time with Essex Police for almost two years.

One of her police officer friends left Colchester's Local Policing Team to join a new team introduced to tackle rural crime called the Gypsy, Traveller and Rural Engagement Team (GTRET).

When Pc Matt Harkness offered Jade the chance to go on duty with his team, she jumped at the opportunity and has been on duty with the team several times already.

Jade said: "Matt is always popping into Colchester station and telling us how fun his new role is and all the exciting things he gets up to. I decided that I wanted to see what a day in the life of a GTRET officer involves as I am an LPT volunteer myself. I can honestly say I thoroughly enjoyed my experience and I'm glad I booked more than one shift with them!"

The team began their first shift by liaising with local farmers; Jade was shown the different hare coursing tracks people have created on local famers' land. She said: "You don't realise how bad it is until you see it first-hand."

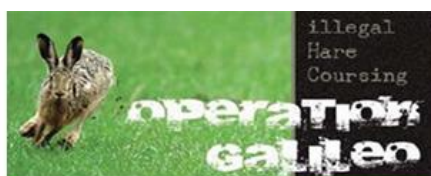
On another shift, Jade learned more about the kind of crime the team is cracking down on when they paid a visit to an unauthorised encampment and progressed an investigation around a vehicle being used on false plates to commit crime.



The officers are primarily rural based but assist other units where possible and after leaving an unauthorised encampment, the team helped colleagues at a Road Traffic Collision on a busy roundabout in Chelmsford and then helped a driver who had broken down on the A12.

Follow Jade on Twitter to see how she gets on in her next shift with the team:

[www.twitter.com/SCJadeSmith](https://www.twitter.com/SCJadeSmith)



**IF YOU SEE IT PLEASE REPORT IT**

## HEALTHY PACKED LUNCH PLOT COMPETITION WINNERS ANNOUNCED!



The Healthy Packed Lunch Plot Competition was open to all primary and special schools in Essex. It encouraged pupils to design a kitchen garden plot and create a recipe for a healthy packed lunch using its produce. Growing Communities received an over whelming response this year and once again the entries were of an outstanding standard.

From sweet fruity creations to scrummy savory dishes, all the entries showcased the children's green-fingered aspirations and culinary creativity. Judges were particularly looking for an easy to prepare lunchbox dish which was healthy and included a variety of different produce.

RCCE's Chairman Nicholas Charrington helped judge the competition and he had this to say:

"On behalf of the RCCE I was delighted to be part of the judge's panel this year. The competition is a fun innovative way of encouraging children to think about what they eat and try new healthier options. I was most impressed with the level of commitment and inspirational work the children created, which proved very hard when deciding the winners. The very best entrants demonstrated a clear understanding of the brief, as well as a willingness to let their imagination run wild. All the judges left feeling hungry - inspired by the recipes and descriptions of the packed lunches. Well done to all the entrants!"

Primary, Infant and Junior Schools of Essex Category **WINNER**

**Congratulations to:**

**Notley Green Primary School - Rebecca Warder age 8 - Rocket Powered Pasta**



### First Prize

- £750 allotment equipment from Perrywood Garden Centre
- Plant the winning design at Notley Green School with the help of RCCE and Perrywood Garden Centre.
- x1 CPD RHS Course Voucher

**Runners up** - Each runner up receives £200 allotment equipment from Perrywood Garden Centre for their school



**Wentworth Primary School**

**Flynn Gibaud age 5 - Super Healthy Wrap**



**Down Hall Primary School**

**Finlay Addison age 8 - Yummy Veggie Pizza**

Special Schools of Essex Category **Winner**

**Congratulations to:**

**Cedar Hall School - Owen Vilday age 14 - Owen's Healthy Lunch**

**First Prize**



- **£750 allotment equipment from Perrywood Garden Centre**
- **Plant the winning design at Cedar Hall School with RCCE and the Royal Horticultural Society**
- **x1 CPD RHS Course Voucher**

**Runner up**



**Harlow Fields School - Suzzie Appiah age, 12 - Spanish Omelette**

**Suzzie receives £200 allotment equipment from Perrywood Garden Centre for her school**

The competition was sponsored by Perrywood Garden Centre, Kings Seeds, Augustine Courtauld Trust and Royal Horticultural Society



## **DO YOU LOOK AFTER A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND?**



Then you are a carer.

There are over 6.5 million carers across the UK and 3 in 5 of us will be carers in our lifetime.

Essex County Council is committed to supporting those who look after a family member or friend and have recently commissioned a new provider, Carers First.

Carers First have a wealth of experience across the country working with families and individuals and they are delighted to be working with them.

For information, advice and support please visit their [website](#) , register with them [here](#) or call 0300 303 1555

## MOBILE LIBRARY TIMETABLE CHANGES



Mobile libraries timetables are changing from 3 April 2018. For further information on changes to mobile library services please [click here](#)

## CHALLENGE YOURSELF TO A PINK RIBBON WALK FOR BREAST CANCER CARE



Audley End House and Gardens, Essex – Saturday 9 June  
Challenge yourself to a Pink Ribbon Walk and enjoy tailor-made 10 and 20 mile routes in a unique location. Starting and finishing in the stunning grounds of Audley End House and Gardens, the walk will showcase the best of Essex's splendid rural scenery.  
Breast Cancer Care will support you with every step while you do something special to support the thousands of people going through one of the toughest challenges they'll ever face – breast cancer.

Find out more and register today at [www.breastcancercare.org.uk/ribbonwalks](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk/ribbonwalks)

### FULL ERP FUTURE MEETING DATES 2018

**Date:** Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018

**Time:** 2pm – 5pm

**Venue:** Essex Young Farmers Conference Centre, Whitbreads Farm Lane, Chelmsford CM3 3LQ



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