Objective One case study
digital infrastructure

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The projects in the Digital Infrastructure investment cluster deliver both the roll out of broadband technology and importantly support this with business advice and training to maximise its use for business.

Modern Digital Infrastructure can be used to ensure connectivity across the globe and bring about long term improvements in business competitiveness. Key issues for Cornwall have been access to Broadband, business support to promote e-business as well as training to maximise ICT use for business, all of which have been tackled through this investment cluster.

Ellbridge Farm
J Congdon and NJ Congdon

Nicholas and his father John run Ellbridge Farm, a dairy farm consisting of 700 acres in the Saltash to Callington area.

"At present we have 250 cows which we are planning to expand to 300 in the next 9 months. We grow 100 acres of corn and 150 acres of maize each year and cut around 500 acres of grass silage. We also have 480 sheep and 12,000 free range hens."

Nicholas's wife Helen is responsible for all the record keeping for the dairy herd and the sheep flock on the farm, as well as dealing with grant funding, planning applications, subsidy claims, the new SP5 forms, the Entry Level Stewardship Scheme and any other form filling that comes to the farm.

The farm's use of technology has expanded rapidly in the last year. Helen says: "Having a broadband internet connection has made our reporting processes much easier. For all our cattle records we use the Interherd programme from National Milk Records and all communication with British Cattle Movements System is done over the internet, also using the Interherd programme. I also answer their queries and make appeals by email, all quite successfully. Our milk recordings are emailed direct to me from NMR and I download all monthly events for NMR to disc for the recording. We also register all our female breeding animals with Holstein UK (HUKI) over the internet, we are now starting to do internet banking, paying bills on line, and doing PAYE end of year returns, all online."

Helen's vision for the future is to be 100% computer driven, keeping paper records to the minimum or even none at all. "We had a laptop computer in my office at home that we were hoping to

Nicholas and Helen use a PDA and the Interherd software to enter cattle and milk records whilst on the farm.

take out to use on the farm, but it didn't really prove practical.

"There was still a paper trail to follow to get information from milking parlour and farm to office computer. The herdsman wrote all events onto a whiteboard in the dairy, which I had to copy and then go home to enter it into Interherd.

"Then I found out that NMR have a version of Interherd to run on a PDA, so entering on farm could be made possible and the system would be greatly improved." Having discussed her plans with **actnow**, Helen received a rebate towards the cost of the PDA and the Interherd software.

"Our herdsman now uses the PDA to enter information direct into the Interherd programme, leaving me just to do the downloading to main computer.

"There is still much more we'd like to do but our processes are already more efficient and I estimate we've saved 13 days a year in admin time already. We expect to see further productivity improvements in the future as the systems develop."

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