

IW Rural Fund - Case Study - 2016  
 LIVING LARDER – Will & Aimee Steward



*“The IW Rural Fund grant has allowed us to make two confident leaps when we would have taken two hesitant steps. Receiving funding at the time we did will make a difference throughout the future of our business!”*

**Living Larder** is a wholesale vegetable grower and veg box distributor, run by Will & Aimee Steward in Apse Heath. The business was founded in June 2015, after Will Steward, a successful engineer, followed a long-held dream to return to the dormant family farm, started in 1922 and re-establish it as a successful horticultural business. Having first trialled the market in 2013 with a small bed of cucumbers the business has rapidly expanded to cover 6 of the 20 acres available and includes 3 commercial-size poly-tunnels growing a large range vegetables all year round.

Will first started selling his produce to a small number of retailers and restaurants plus just a few veg boxes made up for family and friends in the local area. Pictures on social media began to create enquiries and with the launch of Living Larder this growing demand began to be met. Alongside this the hugely popular wholesale business also grew and led to a waiting list of restaurants and shops seeking their fresh produce, which could be delivered to the kitchen door within hours of being picked and specialising in a range of heritage varieties chosen specifically for superior taste.

The IW Rural Fund grant has enabled this growth to develop at a faster pace than otherwise possible which in turn creates employment opportunities at an earlier stage. The direct retail business provides a greater margin and helps maintain the business throughout the year, when some seasonal wholesale demand can fall away. The funds provided a higher specification vehicle than previously possible and has also raised the profile of their brand. They now offer an island-wide vege box delivery service all year round, comprising fresh grown seasonal vege with weekly cooking tips and recipes often introducing customers to the unusual, heritage varieties, so popular with top chefs! The colourful liveried Living Larder van is now on the road daily, island-wide, loaded up with three sizes of retail boxes alongside the bespoke orders from a wide range of restaurants, hotels and shops. This physical presence is leading to increased website hits which can now be catered for as the web-shop is being developed and as off-island customers increase.

Besides the owners, the project has safeguarded the employed full time nurseryman; created 1 new ft job as a packer /delivery driver; plus created 0.75 fte re additional nursery help and marketing/admin support.



Range of courgettes, including the flowers which are also edible and popular with restaurant chefs