

# Dorset LEP invests £194k in rural skills support

**Dorset Local Enterprise is committed to supporting the local rural and natural economy, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, and has invested £194,000 towards improving rural further education.**

**Local Growth Fund investment has been provided to enable two new infrastructure upgrades at Kingston Maurward College, a leading further education provider of land-based studies located near Dorchester, to provide a boost to rural skills development as well as helping to attract and retain talent to support the sector.**

The first project will provide digital innovations such as the rollout of 5G and superfast broadband to improve the quality of education and increase capacity for students. The second 'Green Classroom' project will create a new environmental education facility at Hengistbury Head, providing a space for students to run engaging, original and inspirational activities involving the use of Augmented Reality.

Supporting this project is an evolving report on [Natural Value](#), co-authored by Dorset LEP and Dorset Local Nature Partnership (DLNP) to support economic growth which is not at the expense for the natural environment, and underpinning the Dorset Local Industrial Strategy commitment to creating a programme of cultural excellence that enhances natural assets.

**Lorna Carver, Dorset LEP Director, said:**

**"Support for our local education and skills providers is not just a good thing to do but plays a major role in helping to get Dorset's economy back on track. Set in the heart of rural Dorset and attended by students from across the region, Kingston Maurward College is one of our key economic assets and we are pleased to be investing in projects that link so well with our priorities for supporting our rural economy and protecting and enhancing our high-quality natural environment."**

Luke Rake, Principal of Kingston Maurward College said: "As a vibrant and growing provider of land-based studies our student numbers have increased in recent years and are projected to grow further. This latest investment from Dorset LEP will significantly improve college facilities, reduce ongoing costs and the risk of network failure, increase the speed of our network and most importantly, improve the student experience."

Dorset LEP has already invested £900,000 of Local Growth funding towards a new cutting-edge agritech training facility at the college as well as provided a £250,000 Growing Places Fund loan for a new café and play barn within its Animal Park and Gardens.

The college is also set to receive a proposed allocation of up to £3.5 million for a new University Centre and Rural Business Development Hub as part of Dorset LEP's award from the Government's new Getting Building Fund.

Details of all projects benefitting from Dorset LEP investment - completed, on-going and pre-contract - can be viewed on the [Dorset LEP website](#).