

# Otley Village Stores, Suffolk

Andrew Sunaway and his wife Penny were previously employed as a Sales and Marketing Director in industry, and in the NHS respectively, but decided that a lifestyle change was needed, and in early 2004 they bought Otley Village Stores and Post Office, deep in rural Suffolk. The shop had been built back up over six years by the previous owners, having previously been run down. Andrew decided that the store was ideal for his needs, being in a good location without immediate competition, and he had plenty of ideas how he might be able to develop it further. Now, two years later, total sales have grown by 14% between the two years, and Andrew's new ideas have paid off in achieving that position.

The need was identified early on for some investment in the premises, including a kitchen refit, better refrigeration, air conditioning, and Andrew decided to utilise some wasted land behind the shop for a small garden centre and for some storage. He managed to secure £10,000 towards the costs involved from an excellent grant scheme managed by the RSA's Associate Member, Suffolk County Council.

Amongst other things, this work enabled a number of fundamental changes to be made to the range on offer in the shop, and the food side, in particular, has been developed into bake off, filled rolls, and outside catering with buffet lunches and events catering. Additionally the lottery was secured, and Andrew has increased sales on wine considerably by choosing the right range and suppliers carefully enabling him to undercut Supermarket prices.

Chilled foods, ready meals, a particular food supplier and video hire were not really working well, so changes were made in those areas enabling a wider range of both chilled and ambient foods to be stocked.

Looking back over a busy two years, Andrew does not regret his lifestyle change one bit. He is enjoying being his own boss, and in seeking out changes



Top: The attractive frontage Bottom: The newly developed garden centre

to help the business to continue to move forward. The grant scheme helped considerably to achieve the necessary physical changes – if only such support was available across the whole country!

With the benefit of hindsight, Andrew wishes he had negotiated earlier and harder with utility suppliers, where he was

eventually able to secure considerable economies through changing energy suppliers and waste collection arrangements. The changes he has made have worked very well however, and the outcome is an excellent retail facility for the local community, and the answer to Andrew and Penny's desire to change direction.