



CARLOW  
COUNTY COUNCIL

Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil  
Local Enterprise Office



# Focus on Enterprise – Technology



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European Union  
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Enterprise  
Office



Niall Mínnagh, Mimergy



Meave Sheridan, Western Herd Brewing Company



John Collier, Lifekitchen.ie

#localenterprise

Want to grow your  
business?

We're ready  
if you are!

At your **Local Enterprise Office (LEO)** you'll find a hub of expert advice, information and practical supports to help you with this next important step. And we're right here on your doorstep!

Tell us about your plans and we'll match you with the relevant services, resources and progression pathways to enable your business to grow and realise its full potential, and yours.

Visit [www.localenterprise.ie](http://www.localenterprise.ie) and let's talk business!

Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil Ceatharlach

Local Enterprise Office Carlow

# Technology Key to Business Development

## – On-Line Trading Vouchers

**Kieran Comerford - Carlow County Council's Head of Enterprise**



### Web Voucher scheme designed to help grow your business

Local companies are missing out according to Carlow County Council's Head of Enterprise – Kieran Comerford in not developing their business online to complement their offline offering and avoiding the reality that the needs of the consumer are changing.

Recent research has shown that Irish consumers spend €850,000 an hour online, 24 hours a day, every day. While many small businesses have a web presence, less than one in four is actually trading online, with nearly 90% of Irish consumers using the internet to research and buy products and services, not having a trading online presence is a missed opportunity.

Comerford urged that Carlow companies like all “Irish small businesses need to be part of the online conversation. Customers are looking for brands

they trust, as well as products and services of quality and value”.

Discussing the supports available for SME's to develop online, Carlow County Council

“Irish small businesses that they need to be part of the online conversation. Customers are looking for brands they trust, as well as products and services of quality and value”.

operates a Trading Online Voucher Scheme which is a Government initiative to assist small businesses to trade online. Operated through the national network of 31 Local Enterprise Offices, the scheme offers a financial incentive of up to €2,500 (subject to match funding), along with training, mentoring and networking support.

If you have a small business, with 10 or fewer employees and less than €2m in revenue, that has little or no capacity to trade online, call your Local Enterprise Office today.

Over 2,000 small businesses have benefitted so far, and rollout of the scheme continues nationwide. Your business could be next:

- Benefit from expert advice and peer-to-peer support

- available
- Halve the cost developing your online trade capacity [50% grant available, up to a maximum €2,500]
- Increase your sales by on average 20%
- Boost sales leads by over 80%
- Increase your business exports – 3 in 5 export for the first time.

One such company that has participated in this scheme locally is Superior Storage Solutions a Carlow-based business specialising in the design, supply & installation of lockers, shelving, storage products and systems throughout Ireland. Here's what business-owner David Rice, who availed of the scheme, has to say:-

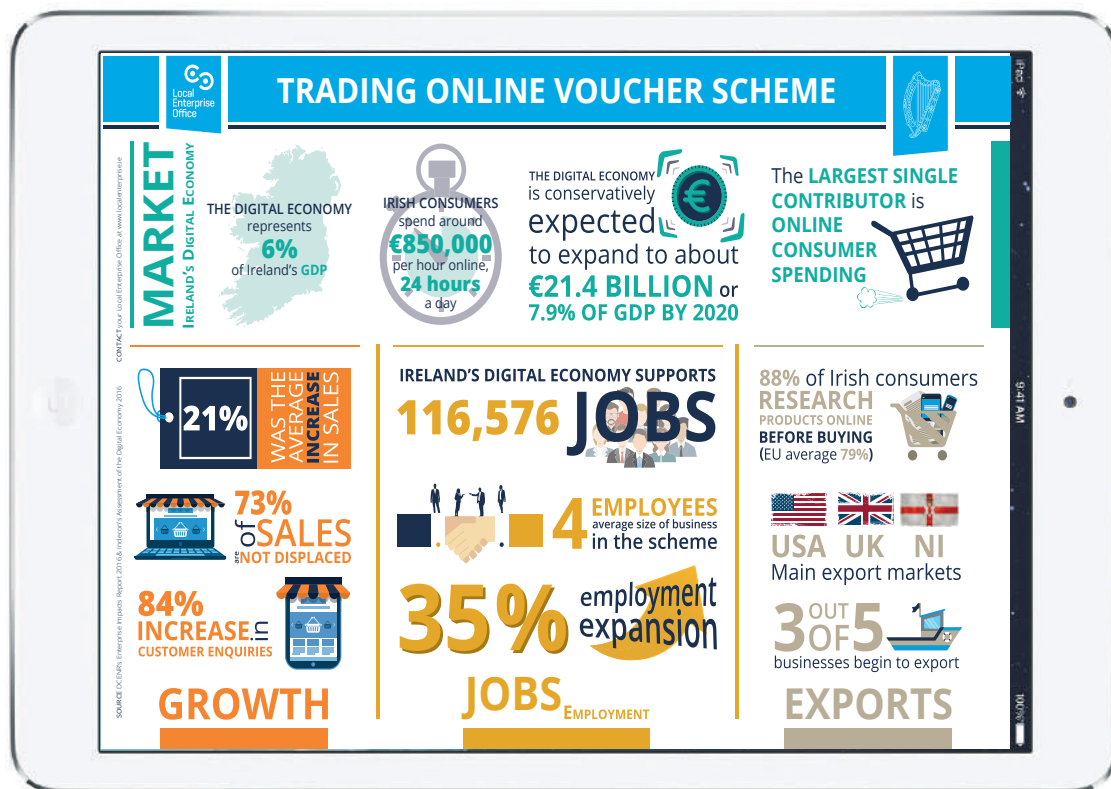
“I would recommend any small

business to contact their Local Enterprise Office about the Trading Online Voucher Scheme.

The process was very straightforward and LEO Carlow supported us every step of the way.

We used the voucher to invest in a new ecommerce website that customers can use to purchase our products online. Since the launch of the new website last year, our sales have increased by 10 – 15% owing to our enhanced online presence. With the increased business, we hope to take on a new employee in the coming months.” ([www.superiorstoragesolutions.ie](http://www.superiorstoragesolutions.ie))

**For further information on how your business can avail of an online trading voucher contact [www.localenterprise.ie/carlow](http://www.localenterprise.ie/carlow) or call 059/9129783**





# Technology & Tourism - Mount Wolsley Hotel, Spa & Golf Resort

Hospitality and tourism companies have to keep up with the latest technology trends as they attempt to reach potential customers.

Technology and social media has become a vital influencer when it comes to visitors selecting destinations while technology plays a key role in the operation of a successful hospitality business.

Resort Sales and Marketing Manager of Mount Wolsley Hotel, Spa & Golf Resort Sheena McCanny, said the varied use of technology at Mount Wolsley Hotel, Spa & Golf Resort was essential for the day to day running of the hotel.

She said: "We have an online booking system in place in the hotel which gives our potential guests the opportunity to book their bedrooms online. This is also a large part of our business and online bookings are increasing year on year. Our website and online booking system gives our leisure and corporate guests the opportunity to view our special offers, packages and images of our property online."

A large amount of business comes from 3rd party websites such as Bookings.com which is an important part of the Tullow hotel's online business and sales.

Hospitality businesses such as Mount Wolsley are among the strongest adopters of digital marketing in Ireland due to the important role of online reviews with the sector.



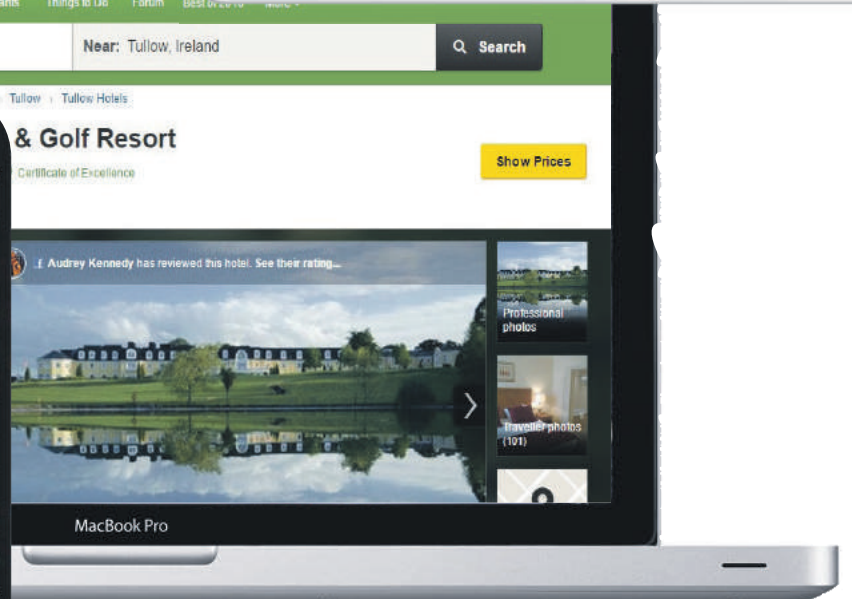
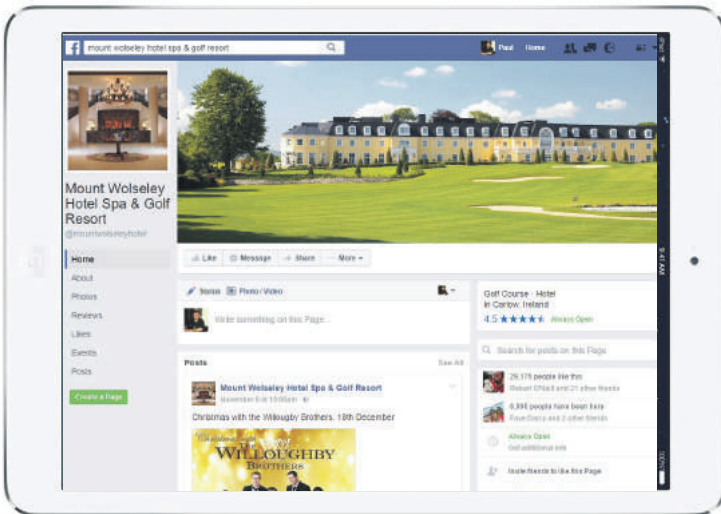
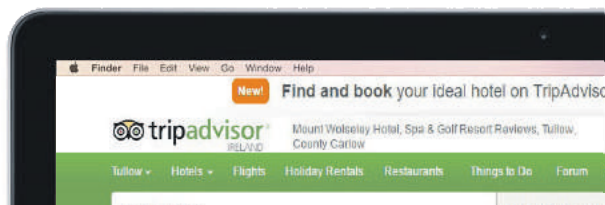
Facebook plays an important role in the hotel and staff are very interactive on a daily basis on the business page. The hotel has over 29,000 people who like the Facebook page and it is a platform to inform our guests of special offers and events that are happening in the hotel.

In addition to this, Mount Wolsley have 3500, twitter followers and there is also daily interaction and tweets. This is particularly important for such large events as the Volopa European Challenge Tour that was held at the hotel this September and which will be returning next year.

TripAdvisor is also another

online tool that is important for the hotel to gain feedback from our clients. A source of pride is the hotel received the '2016 Certificate of Excellence' from TripAdvisor recently and this reflected all the positive reviews the hotel had throughout the year.

Visitors to the hotel can also enjoy the excellent wifi system in place which is imperative for corporate and leisure guests and crucial to attracting larger corporate and conference events to Carlow.





# Retail Sector & Technology

## The Little Irish Shop

Des Lee – Proprietor  
The Little Irish Shop



Des Lee had a brainwave when he heard his brother, John in Spain, had an awful grá on him for crisps. Irish crisps.

And John wasn't the only Irish man abroad who missed the food from far flung native country. So Des' idea of directly exporting such goodies as crisps, chocolates, sweets, biscuits and even dried soups abroad to the hungry and homesick diaspora was born.

"There are Irish shops abroad, of course, but they can be difficult to get to for the people living there. I heard of one guy who travelled 60 kilometres to Sydney to buy Irish goods but that when he got them home, he discovered that some of them were out of date," Des explained. "My online business, [www.dolmencounty.com](http://www.dolmencounty.com), delivers directly to the customer's door within a very short space of time. Nothing competes with seeing a parcel of goodies on your doorstep. I also throw in a little extra treat, too!"

"I think Irish people abroad miss the food from home because the quality

here is really good. Chocolate, for example, in America is really sugary whereas here we have anything from Cadbury's right up to handmade goods of excellent quality," he continued. "There's also the element of homesickness. Your mammy might not be able to make your dinner but at least you can have a bag of Tayto!"

His online presence is growing steadily but now Des also has an actual premises, The Little Irish Shop, on Caste Street in Carlow. There, visitors can buy all sorts of snack foods through to chocolates and biscuits. They may also pick up a fridge magnet or an ornament as a memento from their time in County Carlow.

"There are always visitors in Carlow, whether they're Irish or from abroad, they'll call into the shop to pick up a gift," Des pointed out. Des' background is in retail and he used that experience to select and source the products he sells.

But three years ago, he found himself unemployed and was anxious to get back into the work place.

When he hit upon the idea of opening an online shop to sell Irish foodstuffs abroad, in small, personalised quantities,

*"There are always visitors in Carlow, whether they're Irish or from abroad, they'll call into the shop to pick up a gift"*



Carlow's Local Enterprise Office was immediately attracted to the idea.

"They gave me support and mentoring from the very start," Des recalled. "They were keen on the idea and always listened to me."

Des designed his own website almost three years ago and will now apply to the Local Enterprise Office for their on-line voucher scheme where he'll receive up

to €2,500 in matched funding to develop his on-line presence.

"My website is three years old now and needs to be refreshed so I'll apply to that scheme to do that," Des concluded. "Just think, three years ago I was on the dole and trying to figure out how to get back to work. Now, I've my shop and my on-line business so this is a huge personal achievement for me."





## Online Trading & My Business – online trading voucher case study

Fiona Dillon, author of the Freddy Buttons – food investigator series



When Fiona Dillon moved to County Carlow from Dublin in 1999, she had no idea what she was letting herself in for!

Rather than finding the transition from city to rural life difficult, she took the change firmly with both hands and embraced it.

One of the first things she did at her beautiful home in Huntington Lodge was to learn to grow her own food.

In her acre-big garden, she cultivated fruit, vegetables, bees, pigs and turkeys.

"As a person coming from the city, I hadn't a clue about how to grow things at first," Fiona laughs.

A creative, artistic person, Fiona started a blog about her new life. This led to a life-style book, *Food from a country garden*, which was such a success that the publishers wanted her to write a follow-up volume.

"But I didn't want to write another life-style book," Fiona told *The Nationalist*. "I had also learnt the importance of knowing where food came from and teaching my four children about that. My whole world was now immersed in food and I wanted to do something on that."

And so her creation, Freddy Buttons, was born. Freddy is the

eight-year-old hero in a series of six illustrated books in which he goes on "food adventures". He and his team of Freddy Buttons Investigators, (FBI) go on missions to find out where food comes from and how it's produced.

The character of Freddy was brought to the page by Carlow illustrator, Derry Dillon, (no relation) and was even the theme of a garden in the garden festival, *Bloom*.

*"Starting your own business is a lonely place in the beginning but there's so much support out there so I would advise anyone to go to Carlow LEO. They'll assist you in whatever way they can."*

But that was only the beginning of Freddy's intrepid adventures. He's going to head up a nationwide, healthier-eating campaign that's to be rolled out in national schools next year. Children will be encouraged to learn about food, be supported to make good dietary choices and even learn how to cook!

Pupils will be able to follow their

school's progress on a league table online with their ranking locally and nationally, while the Freddy Buttons ambassadors for their school (school staff or volunteering parents) can access a huge amount of resources, activities, recipes and advice on how to set up initiatives like breakfast clubs.

"I needed an exceptional website for the next Freddy stage so I'm working with Kevin Condon, who was involved with Disney," Fiona explained.

"He's incredibly talented and he's from Carlow too, so this is a real Carlow story! The website will be a magical place for children to visit, with plenty to do and see, and even prizes to be won."

Fiona received help from the Local Enterprise Office Carlow (LEO) when she set up the original Freddie website and they're now assisting her with the super-duper, updated version.

"With the help of Kevin Condon and the LEO it's going to be incredible," Fiona said.

As well as financial assistance from the LEO, she also got key advice and guidance that led her in the right business direction.

"That kind of support is really important for a start-up business like mine," Fiona explained.

What piece of advice would she have for those starting out in business?

"Starting your own business is a lonely place in the beginning but there's so much support out there so I would advise anyone to go to LEO Carlow. They'll assist you in whatever way they can."

With a Freddy Buttons app in the pipeline and a proposed animation series, where is the intrepid food investigator going to stop in his quest for healthy diets?

"I don't know where it's going to end! World-wide maybe?" Fiona laughed.

[www.freddybuttons.com](http://www.freddybuttons.com)



Fiona with Marketing Manager Sandy Duane and daughter Ruth





# Without a website, Miriam Lloyd would not have a business

**Online Trading & My Business**  
– online trading voucher case study - Miriam Lyold



The Carlow businesswoman put the success of her Christening Generations business of transforming wedding and communion dresses into christening gowns down to the internet.

Miriam has been in business since 2011 setting up Sewing Concepts, a dressmaking and alterations business from her Ballon studio.

After three years of hard work and effort, Miriam came to realisation that the business was simply not making enough money. The alterations market in Carlow was becoming increasingly crowded. However, she researched and hatched her unique idea for Christening Generations which quickly attracted national attention and sales.

"The last year, its changed my

life," she said. "I've been very lucky this year, being on Irish TV and RTE Nationwide. I have had people from all over the country sending me their dresses through the website and paying online. There are a lot of dressmakers in Ireland that do what I do but nobody in Ireland specialises in this area."

While much of her alterations business was local, Christening Generations customers all come from outside the county and even the US.

"We were in the throes of the recession and dressmaking is expensive and people did not have a budget over the last few years.

Because christenings are emotional occasions people will find money to spend on things that are emotionally important."

From the start Miriam has

placed emphasis on her websites, sewingconcepts.ie and christeninggenerations.ie, for both her businesses making them as customer friendly as possible. She decided to get a professional in to design the websites in the shape of Avalanche Designs in Kerry.

She hosts the website with Carlow firm Blacknight Internet Solutions allowing her the freedom to make changes with ease.

Such is the importance of the website, Miriam plans to upgrade the Christening Generations website with more customer friendly features.

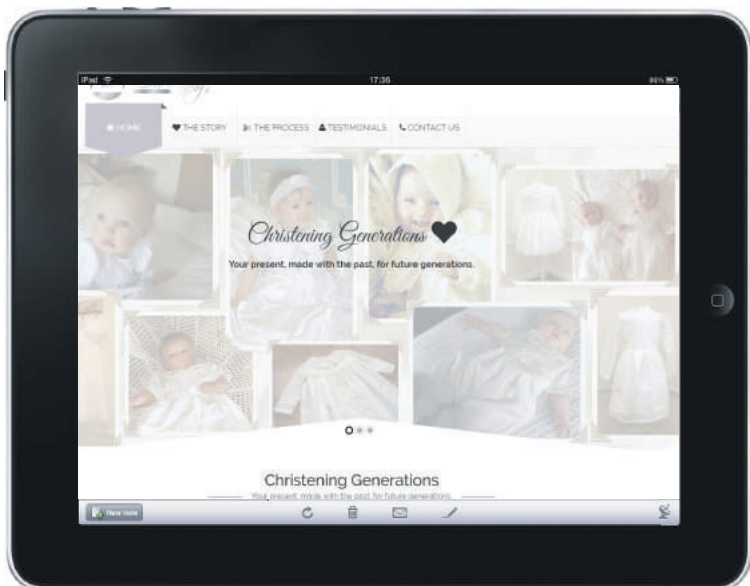
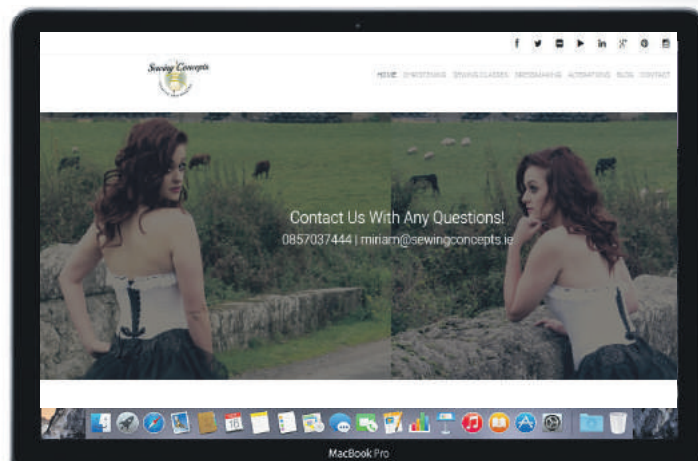
Miriam has long been a client of the Local Enterprise Office Carlow (LEO) and lauded its Trading Online Voucher Scheme which assists small businesses to trade online. Trading online can be a golden opportunity.

"It's fantastic, for any business that is not online they are really missing out.

They are really missing an opportunity."



Miriam Lloyd of Sewing Concepts and Christening Generations



## Miriam's online tips for start-ups.

### Research

You need to research the market. Who is your customer? Not everyone is. 20 year old lads are not my customer. You need to know who they are so you know where they are.

### Name

A lot of people come up with quirky company names and with SEO it does not work. Take Christening Generations, if you Google Christening of course I am going to come up because it's in the name. You see some companies with obscure names and you'd be thinking what even are they?

### Customer Point of View

It's all fine having a lovely website but nobody can find their way around it. The average Joe Soap is very busy.

They want to find out what they are looking for and get it quickly. Whoever is setting up your website needs be clear about the message you are trying to convey.





# Technology Key to Council Services

**Eoin Lyng - Head of Information Systems at Carlow County Council**



Carlow County Council aims to exploit opportunities in technology to better deliver its services to the people of Carlow.

Whether working with start ups, software giants such as Amazon and Microsoft or developing in-house solutions, there is a forward thinking approach about how to develop services using technology in the local authority.

Carlow County Council utilises an alert scheme MapAlerter to send out roads, water, community alerts to the public.

Map Alerter was developed by Carlow company, Pin Point Alerts.

The council have added functionality to the system by linking MapAlerter to update their Twitter account and news section on the council website.

At this time of the year, the gritting of icy roads is very important to motorists and the council also sends notifications on its treatment schedule. It also uses mapping technology to show which routes are being treated.

Community events have been added to MapAlerter giving an opportunity to groups to highlight



their events.

"MapAlerter is a very useful tool and the more people that sign up to it or follow us on Twitter the more people we can get our message out to," said Head of Information Systems at Carlow County Council Eoin Lyng.

During the summer, the council also launched a new tourism app for Android and iOS called 'Carlow' on an app platform which has been adopted by many international cities but was a first for an Irish local authority.

The app contains comprehensive map tours with text and even audio so people can listen as they stroll.

They are five tours on it currently including the trails of St Lazerian's and St Moling along with walking tour of Carlow Gardens.

"We have many more tours being finalised which we hope to have available in the new year," added

Eoin. "It's been very positive the feedback so far. The app looks very good and it has a very clean design."

Carlow County Council were also national leaders in mapping the county's graveyards and cemeteries for the web. In 2014, it began working with a company called PlotBox to document the county's graveyards to produce a "Google Maps of cemeteries".

"We were looking for a graveyard management system," said Eoin. "Currently the caretakers have ledgers where they write in the details and which is brought in a couple of times a year to be inputted into our system. We



lands for plots. The council also regularly receive queries about where individuals were buried and the search function on PlotBox was ideal.

There are currently 46 graveyards and cemeteries in the county mapped and are available to view in the County Library and Museum.

The mapping will also be available shortly on the www.discovereverafter.com website.

PlotBox have gone from strength to strength since first working with the council and have begun mapping in other countries ie including America while the Antrim company were also finalists in the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Awards.

The council have looked to reduce inefficiency using technology including customising software normally associated with the commercial sector. The council had developed

Microsoft Customer Relationship Management software for planning enforcement. It enables automated generation of enforcement letters and reminders of inspections along with other features.

"It helps reduce inefficiency and getting the job done, free staff up to do other tasks. Potentially we see it replacing other systems in the organisation," said Eoin.

Eoin added the council's achievements in utilising technology was a result of the commitment of the Chief Executive and council management along with all staff.

"Without the cooperation of all the staff here it would not be possible particularly the ICT team here, they are willing to take on new projects and challenges with enthusiasm and we are doing that on an ongoing basis," he said.

"MapAlerter is a very useful tool and the more people that sign up to it or follow us on Twitter the more people we can get our message out to"

were looking for something a little bit more modern than that. There was little in the market but we were introduced to PlotBox."

The mapping would allow the council to know in advance when it needed to secure new

