

Three Atop Woodland Services:

A Rural Enterprise Exmoor business case study



Three Atop Woodland Services is a family run business providing all aspects of tree work, from tree removal, forestry, woodland management, conservation projects and sawmilling across Exmoor and the surrounding areas.

Following their Pinnacle award win in 2017, Nick and his partner Kerrie have strived to unlock the potential of Exmoor woodlands, whether that be harvesting a purpose grown crop, to create a tranquil escape or to, develop conversation projects.

In 2019, Three Atop took on a licence and have been working alongside Exmoor National Park Authority to breathe life back to the heritage, water powered sawmill at Simonsbath.

They have taken on 3 full time employees as well as providing working opportunities for other self employed land based people.

Their ethos has long been to reduce the wastage of wood and timber on Exmoor. They feel the trees of Exmoor have a far greater purpose than just heating our homes. Three Atop provide an alternative cyclical future for trees by processing them into outdoor tables & seating, fencing & building materials or with more time and finesse open them up to the world of furniture and tool making.

Not only do they offer a cyclical service, they are in the throws of launching new historic tour content at the Sawmill alongside rolling out plans to support local businesses across all sectors.

Benefits and challenges of working on Exmoor

Benefits

Nick believes their business benefits from being based on Exmoor for several reasons:

- Exmoor really is one of the most beautiful places in the country and to be able to help promote the longevity of that beauty really is an honour.
- There is a huge variety of different landscapes on Exmoor making our work varied providing the opportunity to upskill.
- The local community is very close nit. In our sector it's not about what you know on Exmoor, it's about who you know. Land based businesses and agriculture go hand in hand, the community will do anything to help one another.

Challenges

The challenges we face working on Exmoor are:

- Having an agricultural or land based business when you don't have ready access to land, a yard, or storage facilities is very difficult to run.
- As a start up business you have a choice, save to by a property or throw everything you have into the business. The disparity between wages and housing prices are vast.
- Getting skilled working age people in this area is tough. Certified training is a huge expense and cannot be carried out on Exmoor therefore, vehicles are necessary. Younger people in this area struggle to rent a property and maintain a vehicle.

Aspirations and advice

Aspirations

“Our aspirations for the next 3-5 years are to continue to promote a cyclical and sustainable culture for the trees of Exmoor.

We want to expand our offering and work force through employment and apprenticeship opportunities, ensuring the traditional land based skills are not lost, continuing for generations to come.”

Advice

“Work with other businesses. There is plenty of work out there for everyone if you provide a good service or product. There is nothing wrong with asking for or offering help to others. We're all just trying to live and work in the area we love.”

“Advice for young people: If you want to live, work and one day have a family on Exmoor, seek additional skills and learning outside of school. Identify your strengths and use them whether they're practical or social skills apply them to something useful. Exmoor is a true working place in need of lots of different talents in lots of different professions.”

