

## Belle Cole WMA:

### A Rural Enterprise Exmoor business case study



Belle Cole is a sculptor and artist creating unique gifts, artisan designs and garden sculptures all inspired by nature.

Established in October 2018, Belle's workshop is based at Cowbridge Sawmill, Timberscombe right in the heart of the Exmoor.

She has a varied portfolio of pieces commissioned by customers worldwide and is an emerging environmental conceptual artist, showcasing sculptures at Devon Sculpture Park the UK's first sculpture and wildlife park.

Belle was born and raised in the West Country and has lived around the world however, returned to her roots with her son. They are both so happy to call Exmoor their home.

Belle feels Exmoor has the most beautiful landscapes and she has a real connection with nature here taking her inspiration for new exciting pieces from her adventures around the moor.

Belle qualified with her Engineering Diploma in 2015 however, whilst studying she worked on custom motorbikes. This is where she connected and learnt how to work with stainless steel. Belle uses high-grade stainless steel for all of her artwork. Not only does it have a unique aesthetic, it has a multitude of other benefits as a material inclusive of being classified as a green product. It is non-degradable and 100% recyclable making it environmentally friendly and sustainable.

# Benefits and challenges of working on Exmoor

## Benefits

Belle believes her business benefits from being based on Exmoor for a few reasons:

- I'm inspired by the landscapes and wildlife in Exmoor. It's a very peaceful environment so it helps me focus.
- The local community have been very supportive and I'm fortunate to have/had a variety of commissions from customers in the area.

## Challenges

Some of the challenges they have faced running a business on Exmoor are things such as:

Although Exmoor is a tourist based area and has a lot of through traffic, I am based in a more rural part of the area so I may not be noticed as much as other businesses. To counteract this I am now stocking pieces in local retail outlets which I'll be continuing to do so throughout the summer/autumn.

# Aspirations and advice

## Aspirations

"My aspiration over the next 3-5 years is to be in a position to employ an apprentice who may be in the same situation as I was. I've always dreamt of having a female workshop. It is a male orientated industry so I'd like to create work/opportunities for younger women."

"I hope to continue creating larger scale sculptures and move further into environmental art and also public art."

## Advice

"My advice for others doing business on Exmoor is to embrace social media. It is a proven way to promote your business and widen your customer base. It takes time to learn what best suits your business and what content to create but it is worth the investment of time in the long run."

Don't be put off by the apparent success of others or feel like you need to seek validation by how many followers/likes you get. Engagement is the most important aspect of social media and if that's what you are achieving from your network then you're on the right path."

