



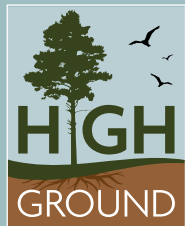
LIFE BEYOND THE MILITARY –
OUTDOORS

LAND BASED SECTOR GUIDE



SMALLHOLDING

www.highground-uk.org



SMALLHOLDING CAN
INCLUDE ALMOST
ALL OF THE ACTIVITIES
UNDERTAKEN ON
A LARGER FARM.

WHAT IS SMALLHOLDING?

- General term given to the management of a small scale farming enterprise.
 - Size will depend on the property owned or rented and the type of ‘farming’ activity.
 - ‘Small’ is Typically less than 50 acres.
 - More usually 1 – 20 acres.
- Smallholding can include almost all of the activities undertaken on a larger farm.
- The size of the holding will usually mean that it is more profitable to concentrate on quality rather than quantity.
 - Selling to a 3rd party is unlikely to be profitable and direct sale to the public is a more practical and reliable way to generating income.
- Many smallholders may supplement their farming income with other related enterprises.
 - Rural Leisure activity is a good option.
 - For example a Bed and Breakfast enterprise fits well with small scale farming. The farm offers a point of interest for visitors and visitors a potential market for the farming side of the business.
 - Other Synergistic businesses – wildlife tours, photography, adventure treks , Quad biking, Clay Pigeon shooting – the list is long.

FARMING ENTERPRISES

May include (but certainly not limited to);

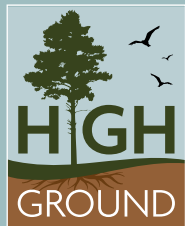
- Breeding, keeping and utilisation of livestock.
- Sheep - for meat, milk, wool and value added end products.
- Cattle – for meat or perhaps for specialist dairy production such as high value cheese.
- Pigs – for meat.
- Goats - for milk, fleece and niche meat.
- Alpaca for fleece.

All of these animals offer the possibility of additional income from sale of live animals for blood stock or ‘starters’ for new producers. With the right stock this can be very profitable.

Other possible include;

- Chickens – for egg and meat production.
- Vegetables and salad for table and sale.
- The growing of niche products e.g. herbs, chilli.
- The growing and harvesting of grass for hay and silage.
- Bees – for honey production.
- Orchards – for fruit and fruit-based drinks.





LAND BASED LEISURE

Possibilities are huge and can potentially generate a better income than farming;

- B&B
- Camping / Glamping
- Wildlife tourism / Nature Treks
- Photography
- Adventure activities – Hiking, climbing, Clay Pigeon shooting
- Off road vehicles and Quad bikes



A GOOD 2ND CAREER FOR VETERANS?

- Yes, it can be.
 - Veterans have the determination and resilience to overcome challenges and succeed.
 - A willingness to tackle everything from cold wet outdoor labour or general maintenance to selling produce and bookkeeping.
 - All skill that can be learnt with the determination to succeed.
 - The financial reward will not be huge but as a lifestyle small holding can offer independence and closeness to the environment and the immense satisfaction of succeeding for yourself.
- However, smallholding has some big down sides:
 - Critically it is expensive to get into. There are very few rented holdings now available (but some local authorities do still maintain small council farms).
 - Although prices vary a lot nationally if purchasing a property and land it is probable that costs will be in excess of £350,000. These websites are worth looking at to see what's out there: www.smallholdingsforsale.co.uk and www.greenshifters.co.uk
 - Whether a property is bought, or rented money will be needed to stock and equip the holding, sheep might cost approx £100 for a ewe lamb but the sky's the limited for mature breeding bull.
 - Similarly, basic machinery can range from a few hundred to several thousands of pounds. Strike a balance between the best stock available and the best return.
- Livestock needs land. Typically, about 5 sheep or 1 cow per acre.
 - Chickens require far less ground and can be a very cost-effective.
 - Advisable to make sure you have an outlet for produce first.
- Vegetable and fruit growing is an excellent alternative to keeping livestock and can be undertaken on a very small plot.
- Small holdings are often in beautiful spots but this means they are often isolated so the family or neighbour support network might be limited and social contact, particularly for young families, can be very difficult.

AGRICULTURAL TIE

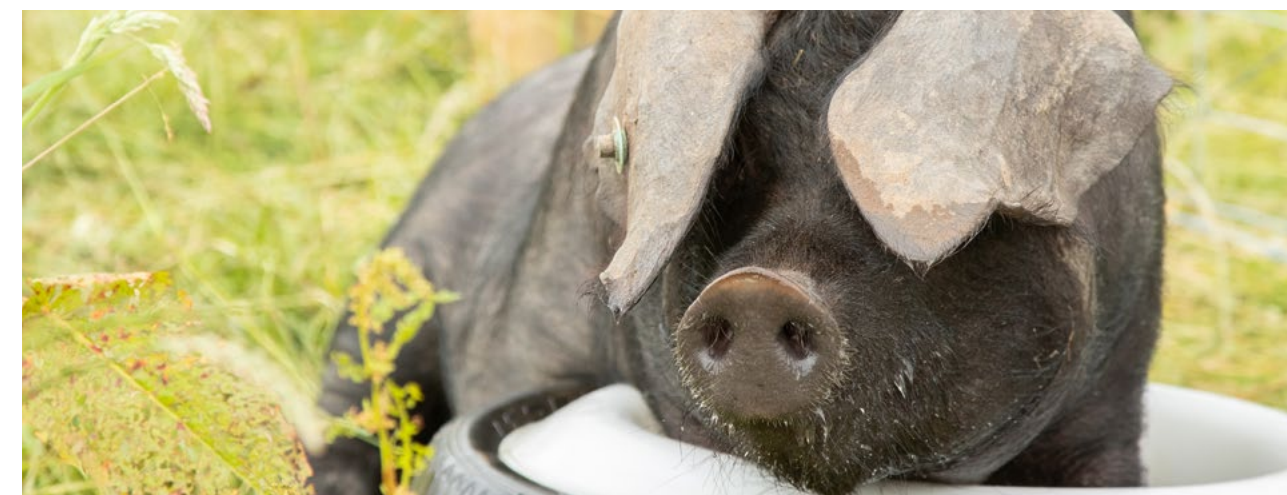
- Beware: Agricultural Ties – An Agricultural Occupancy Condition.
 - A covenant placed on a property by the local authority restricting its occupancy to agricultural workers who are actively involved in agriculture as their main occupation.
 - Ties are used by planning departments to stop people building houses in the countryside, claiming that they are needed to house an agricultural worker, and then selling them on the open market as second homes.
 - It may be possible to have the tie lifted but this is by no means assured and can be expensive.

AVAILABLE HELP

- There are no specific organisations that help the Service leaver move into smallholding.
- Research county agricultural associations, meet with farmers and landowners. Develop your network. Smallholdings and potential smallholding land is not always advertised for sale.
- Several smallholders organisations.
 - Many County based – eg Devon Association of Smallholders (DASH) devonsmallholders.co.uk
 - Offering practical training and advice at reasonable cost.
 - Ongoing networking and support.
- Also a huge amount of information on the internet, most of it accurate and useful but beware of marketing rather than advice.

DEMAND

- The demand for holdings is increasing,
- Sadly this is driving up prices for land and property.
- But..... on the bright side the market for smallholder grown produce is also growing.
 - However it is unlikely that the values of produce will ever compensate for the rapidly increasing land and property prices.





ROLES

- As a smallholder you will be a Jack of all trades – whether you master any of them only time will tell. Just some of the essential skill sets you may learn on the job include:
 - Farmer, woodsman, driver, stockman, engineer, plumber, buildings maintenance person, fencer, gardener
 - And ... bookkeeper, salesman, (potentially) butcher.
- In essence almost any profession in the land based economy may be found on an individual smallholding.
- Occasionally a smallholding may be found to rent.
 - These may include council farms – often bigger than the privately owned holding and afford the opportunity to diversify further or include more mainstream farming activities such as dairy management or crop production.



SELF EMPLOYMENT

The vast majority of smallholdings in the are owner occupied and there is no scope for recognisable career progression except to grow the holding or to branch out and expand either the scope of your own business or perhaps also offering the benefit of your experience to other new entrants.

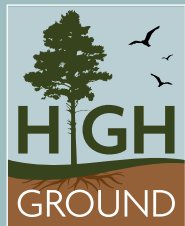
QUALIFICATIONS

- No formal qualification requirements but before embarking on life as a smallholder it is essential you understand basic safety particularly where animals, vehicles and machinery are concerned.
- Learn on the job with others.
- Where available get the 'Tickets' (qualifications) in, for example, tractor safety, chainsaw operation, spraying & chemicals.
- First Aid is important – particularly where you live remote from a town, surgery or hospital.
- Don't forget Heath (its not just about safety) – Your own health and that of your animals will be important on a holding you own or work.

TRAINING

- There are courses available across the country.
- Smallholders associations exist around the UK and are often set up and run on a county basis; these will provide a range of courses from the basic 'become a small holder' to detailed livestock management for each breed.
 - This link www.smallplotbigideas.co.uk/reference-information/smallholding-societies/ points to some of the associations around the country but a specific web search for your area will be useful.
- Generic skills courses such as chainsaw tickets or agricultural engineering are hugely valuable and some of these will be available through the resettlement process.





EARNING POTENTIAL

- You are unlikely to get rich as a small holder
- Income from sales of produce can be reasonable – find the right niche and it can be good BUT remember income does not equal earnings / profit
- Earnings (or profit) will often depend on the size of any outgoings of which borrowings are often the biggest part
- You are responsible for your own tax, national insurance and pension
- Your service pension can play a vital role
- Employ a good accountant!



INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

- Traditionally property prices in UK are significantly higher than in Europe or other commonwealth countries.
- Anecdotally it is possible to make a significantly better living smallholding abroad.
 - Leisure potential also improves overseas.
 - But language and culture will be an issue.

TRENDS

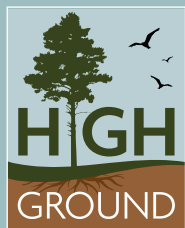
- The CV-19 pandemic has accelerated the trend for people to leave urban areas and follow the 'dream' of a self sufficient smallholding in the country.
- This is driving up prices and driving down the age of those taking on holdings.
- Supply and demand will exacerbate this trend further.

TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENTS

- High Tech developments in Agriculture do not always translate to the small holding.
- While technology has its place the small holding also offers the means to return to the agriculture of an earlier age.
 - Small fields.
 - Small low power tractors or indeed Heavy Horses.
 - UK native and rare breed stock often better suited to small scale agriculture.
 - Niche crops.



THE CV-19 PANDEMIC HAS ACCELERATED THE TREND FOR PEOPLE TO LEAVE URBAN AREAS AND FOLLOW THE 'DREAM' OF A SELF SUFFICIENT SMALLHOLDING IN THE COUNTRY.



USEFUL READING

WEBSITES

www.smallholder.co.uk

Smallholder news, what's on, where to go, how to guides, A to Z of poultry, buying a smallholding, property, land prices, setting up a small holding.

www.accidentalsmallholder.net/smallholding

A good guide to all things small holding related with lots of helpful links to other publications.

www.countrysmallholding.com/home

A membership based site providing a lot of helpful advice.

www.countryfile.com

Start a smallholding: tips and advice. An interesting article, considers a relatively recent (2014) start up on a small scale in Somerset.

[Smallholder Advice](#)

Five ways to help your smallholding pay its way.



BOOKS

The New Complete Book of Self Sufficiency
John Seymour

Smallholding Manual
Haynes

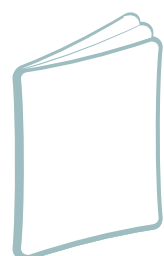
Smallholding
Georgina Starmer

A Little Piece of England
John Jackson



TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

[Smallholder associations and groups](#)



MAGAZINES

The Smallholder Magazine
Country Smallholding Magazine





For more information about HighGround's services please contact Tim Lever.

Email: timothy.lever@highground-uk.org Telephone: 07790 474029. www.highground-uk.org



Sign up to our quarterly [Friends of HighGround newsletter](#).
Follow HighGround at Stanford Hall on [Facebook](#).

Funded by the Armed Forces Covenant with funding from the Covenant Fund.

We are proud to be a member of Cobseo and supported by The Royal Foundation.



c/o The Poppy Factory, 20 Petersham Road, Richmond, Greater London TW10 6UR. Charity Reg. No. 1151225. Company limited by guarantee. Registered in England 08236843.

HighGround regards the concept Rural Weeks as intellectual property of the charity and will take any steps available to it to enforce its rights in such property if any other person or organisation seeks to copy it or to benefit from the goodwill associated with it.