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DEVON BEST ECOLOGICAL HOME

Philip and Margaret Nierop were self-build novices when they bought an unexpectedly isolated plot high on a hill four miles from Exeter. Their aim was to build an energy-efficient retirement home and establish a smallholding. But, however worthy their ambition, the couple make unlikely eco-warriors and there has been no scrimping on comfort. There are four bedrooms, a large reception room with a partly glazed roof, and raised kitchen and dining areas that follow the slope of the site.

Their house's frame is built from sustainable local timber and clad in larch; it is highly insulated, has solar panels and large windows to make the most of the solar gain. The underfloor heating is warmed by a ground-source heat pump.

The couple project-managed the build themselves and it is indicative of their energy that they are now enthusiastically establishing a vegetable patch and making plans for a small colony of livestock.

Build cost £362,000 (£1,436 per sq m)
Architect Paul Humphries Architects
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