

Press Statement

Public Inquiry - Steward Community Woodland (SCW) seeking to overturn the refusal of planning permission and issue of Enforcement Notices by Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) - being held at DNPA HQ, Parke, Bovey Tracey, TQ13 9JQ
26th-28th April, commencing at 10am each day

This Public Inquiry is the culmination of 16 years of a legal challenge with the DNPA. The thriving low impact living project, has twice received five year temporary planning permission on Appeal against the wishes of the DNPA. After our second temporary planning permission expired in 2014 we applied for permanent planning permission to continue our low impact living project at Steward Community Woodland, Moretonhampstead. The DNPA refused our application despite the huge level of support for the project both from the local community and further afield. In all around 400 letters supporting the planning application were submitted to the DNPA. We have appealed against the decision resulting in the Public Inquiry,

We are a community of 14 adults, five children and four teenagers living and working together successfully in our woodland home. If we lose the appeal we face eviction from our beautiful home and community and will be unable to continue our project demonstrating more sustainable and low impact ways of living.

Over the last 16 years we have been experimenting with:

- permaculture food growing and land use;
- community organisation and dynamics;
- renewable energy and appropriate technology;
- building and maintaining our own low impact dwellings;
- small-scale woodland management;
- experiential and home education.

We run a volunteer program, run courses and are open to educational and recreational visits.

The Proof of Evidence of one of our community members, Daniel Thompson-Mills, lays out the foundation of our case with supporting documents such as our Management Plan for the land, and our Needs Analysis which calculates that we meet 81.5% of our basic needs by living at Steward Wood.

“Our world is in severe crisis. Those of us around on the planet at the moment, as a result of what we are learning from science and from our own experience, are charged with beginning to turn this around. This means adopting more sustainable lifestyles. It means coming into alignment with Earth Care, People Care, and Fair Share – the three founding ethics of permaculture. This can happen and is happening in many ways. Low impact living is one of those ways.”

“Steward Community Woodland is a success story and an asset to the Dartmoor National Park. The project is meeting its Aims in full and is fulfilling National Park policies as well as the [government's Planning Framework]. It is demonstrating much

needed solutions to the huge environmental challenges we face. We urge both the Dartmoor National Park and the Planning Inspectorate to actively support this project by allowing its continuation with permanent planning permission.”

From the Proof of Evidence of Daniel Thompson Mills
(Resident of SCW)

“I am convinced of the powerful role that the Steward Community does in modelling and promoting ecological living. They are well respected and liked by the people I know in the local community. And whenever there is promotion of conservation and encouraging the people of Moreton to consider responsible use of energy, they are always at the forefront, because they have the authority of being daily practitioners. So they are well known for their involvement through the Moreton Development Trust, the Primary school and various projects and events.”

The Revd. Preb. Simon Franklin
(Vicar of Moretonhampstead)

“The thing that excites me most living at Steward Community Woodland is the opportunity to experiment with, and invent innovative solutions to help tackle the environmental problems we face, using appropriate technologies such as renewable energy systems”

Merlin Howse
(Resident of SCW)

“Many of us are concerned about climate change and finding a good way of living a simpler and more sustainable lifestyle. It is the inventiveness, resourcefulness and commitment Steward Community Woodland bring to being a living example of this concern, that has earned it such a lot of support and admiration from the local community and from further afield.”

“Emerson and Thoreau, the founding fathers of the world wide National Parks movement would have understood and supported the aims of Steward Community Woodland. I ask you allow this community to continue this exemplar of low carbon living in harmony with the natural environment.”

From the Proof of Evidence of Jane Willis
(Moretonhampstead resident and Chair of the Parish Council)

Having received so much support from the local community, including the Parish Council, and further afield via our successful crowdfunding campaign we are optimistic that the appeal will go in our favour.

Affinity Woodland Workers Coop Ltd

More information available at: www.stewardwood.org

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