

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of Steward Community Woodland's 2014/2015 planning application.

I am an international teacher and consultant on ecological living, delivering Permaculture trainings, projects and personal mentoring around Europe and beyond. I am also a founding member of Steward Community Woodland, and I lived there for 7 years between 2000 and 2007 - it is where I trained in Permaculture and sustainable living practices.

I now visit the community a few times a year to keep up to date with the people and projects there.

Learning important skills

My years at Steward Wood enabled me to research and develop many different techniques and areas of regenerative living – from food forests to low impact eco buildings, from compost toilets to inter personal communication tools. I completed my three and a half year Diploma in Applied Permaculture Design there in 2007.

I learned a huge amount in my 7 years there, and I now pass on the wisdom and experience I gained on the project in the courses and tutoring that I do. In the past few years I have run courses in Finland, Portugal, Jamaica, Greece and Cyprus, sharing stories and photos from Steward Wood and other pioneering sites as I travel and train people.

Vital research and development

Cutting edge projects like this are important test fields for new (and old!) ways of living, enabling passionate and committed people to develop better ways of meeting our needs, in better ecological balance with our surroundings and the biosphere that we ultimately all rely upon.

We desperately need to do a lot of research into many areas of sustainable design – we need better homes, land management, community regeneration, food production... and places like Steward Community Woodland are important hubs for learning and sharing good practice, as they are visited by many people, and as the inhabitants share their research and learnings with others at talks, consultancies, craft fairs, courses etc.

A multifaceted educational resource

I have taught some of my courses at Steward Wood, and I know first hand what an important resource it is for visitors looking to learn about ecology and low impact living. I am sure it has inspired thousands of people in its 14 year history – volunteers visiting for a day or several weeks, course attendees, visitors on Open Days, and people who visit the rich website.

To see ideas and techniques actually manifested in reality is a much deeper, more empowering experience for people, and positive impact projects like this hold that opportunity for people who may only have read about micro-hydro schemes or Continuous Cover Forestry or chicken tractors in books before.

I hope that Steward Community Woodland is granted permission and high level support for its ongoing and important explorations of sustainable practices and regenerative living.

Yours sincerely,
Peter Cow Dip. Perm. Des.