

Steward Community Woodland

**Planning Application 2015
to Dartmoor National Park Authority**

for

Low impact living development involving change of use to forestry, agriculture, residential and education (informed by permaculture), with structures including 3 dwellings, 7 residential units, communal kitchen/longhouse with dormitory accommodation, bathhouse, two compost toilets and other ancillary buildings, roundhouse interpretation centre and polytunnel

by Affinity Woodland Workers Co-operative Ltd

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Introduction

Low impact living development involving change of use to forestry, agriculture, residential and education (informed by permaculture), with structures including 3 dwellings, 7 residential units, communal kitchen/longhouse with dormitory accommodation, bathhouse, two compost toilets and other ancillary buildings, roundhouse interpretation centre and polytunnel

1. Steward Community Woodland ('SCW') comprises a group of people who are living and working together and 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.
2. We live in 32 acres of formerly plantation woodland on a hillside, located in the beautiful Wray Valley on the edge of Dartmoor. We have been resident on the land since 22nd April 2000 and have been granted two five year periods of temporary permission: by Mr Tamplin (Planning Inspector) on 12th August 2002 (APP/J9497/C/01/1067412) and by Mr Cook (Planning Inspector) on 1st June 2009 (APP/J9497/C/08/2083419).
3. As the recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change ('IPCC') highlights, action is urgently needed to create a sustainable future (see www.ipcc.ch). The IPCC states, inter alia, in its Fifth Assessment Synthesis Report 2014 (Approved Summary for Policymakers – Nov 2014):

“Human influence on the climate system is clear, and recent anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases are the highest in history. Recent climate changes have had widespread impacts on human and natural systems.”

“Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and since the 1950s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia. The atmosphere and ocean have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, and sea level has risen.”

“Continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems. Limiting climate change

would require substantial and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions which, together with adaptation, can limit climate change risks.”

4. The National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') is based on the concept of sustainability (economic, social, and environmental). So governmental and intergovernmental guidance places sustainability at the heart of how we proceed as humanity. The way we are living and what we are doing at SCW and in the wider community is part of that movement towards a more sustainable future.
5. The NPPF creates a presumption in favour of sustainable development (at paragraph 14) which is carried forward by the Dartmoor National Park Authority ('DNPA') in DMD1a.
6. We are successful in meeting our Aims as set out below and therefore are now applying for permanent planning permission. Our project is one which conserves and enhances the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park and fosters the social and economic well being of the communities in the National Park (thus meeting the criteria in DMD1b). Our project also meets the criteria of DMD30, a policy that was specifically created following our last planning appeal success.
7. No one can doubt the huge environmental challenges we currently face on this beautiful planet of ours. As well as the IPCC, another example of what international bodies are saying in regard to these challenges is contained in the Trade and Environment Review 2013 of UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) which is entitled "Wake up before it is too late - make agriculture truly sustainable now for food security in a changing climate". One of the key messages of the document is that:

“The world needs a paradigm shift in agricultural development: from a ‘green revolution’ to an ‘ecological intensification’ approach. This implies a rapid and significant shift from conventional, monoculture-based and high-external-input-dependent industrial production towards mosaics of sustainable, regenerative production systems that also considerably improve the productivity of small-scale farmers. We need to see a move from a linear to a holistic approach in agricultural management, which recognises that a farmer is not only a producer of agricultural goods, but also a manager of an agro-ecological system that provides quite a number of public goods and services (eg. water, soil, landscape, energy, biodiversity, and recreation).”

SCW is a shining example of this holistic approach in agricultural management, which we urge the National Park Authority to support for the sake of humanity's future on this planet.

Vision Statement of SCW

8. We are a community of people living and working together on the land. We value open, honest communication, wisdom and group cohesion. We are committed to environmental awareness, sustainable and innovative solutions. We enjoy sharing our skills and knowledge and value learning from others.

Mission Statement of SCW

- Our community is based on the ethics of love, friendship, co-operation, earth care, people care, and resources for need not greed.
- We are managing the woods and our lives using permaculture principles.
- We are creating cyclical systems which are less reliant on fossil fuels.
- We are increasing our self-reliance concerning food and medicine.
- We are working towards financial sustainability within the context of our ethics.
- We are using materials from the wood and reused/recycled materials.
- We are reducing dependency on fossil fuels and exploring alternatives.
- We are educating our children with the aim of fostering wholeness, balance and empowerment.
- We are living together in community, respecting all life.
- We are connecting with the wider community with honesty and clarity.
- We are learning from all around us and passing on our knowledge, skills and experience.

Aims of SCW

- To generate much of our own food and medicine by growing organically, raising livestock, hunting and gathering.
- To encourage healthy, happy and empowered individuals.
- To generate enough income for our needs (subsistence and financial income) predominantly from the projects activities and otherwise from other ethically based work.
- To build our own homes from timber from Steward Wood and re-used materials.
- To manage the land using the principles of permaculture, forest gardening, and continuous cover forestry.
- To explore and promote innovative, sustainable practices and ways of living.
- To manage the woodland for fuel, timber, and the creation and protection of wildlife habitat.

Conditions And Guarantees

9. We propose in the granting of permanent planning permission that:
 - 1) The Settlement Area (ie. the area of human habitation) be limited to the defined area within the middle of the woodland holding as set out at Appendix 1.
 - 2) The project shall continue to be managed in a way as to comply with the detailed "Fifteen Criteria for developments associated with sustainable land-based rural activities" as produced by the Rural Planning Group. The Criteria relate to, inter alia, minimisation of car use and waste; integration of the project into the local economy and community; easily dismantlable structures made of local materials which are not visually intrusive; autonomous provision of water, energy and sewage disposal; ecological management of

the site; sustainable practices for agricultural and forestry activities. The Fifteen Criteria are set out at Appendix 2.

- 3) No petrol or diesel powered generator shall be operated on the site at any time.
- 4) Conditions are applied relating to Community and Structures (see below).

Continued Need for Residency in the Wood

10. We refer to the Appeal Decision (APP/J9497/C/01/1067412) of Mr Tamplin and rely on the Inspector's reasons for the granting of permission within the scope of planning law, planning guidance, and planning policies, as well as Agenda 21 and related policies. In particular, Mr Tamplin states at paragraph 29:

"Were the group to live off-site, the evidence on housing costs in Moretonhampstead bears out the appellant's claim that conventional housing costs and the need to find employment to fund them would lead to the group having little time available for the project. Therefore it would become little more than a hobby and its purpose would become completely negated."

11. We also refer to the decision of Mr Cook (APP/J9497/C/08/2083419) who stated in his Appeal Decision:

- *"..it is my view that the value of the project is its holistic nature."* (paragraph 73)
- *"I consider that the venture has evolved into one where the education resource provided by what is, in effect, a demonstration project of permaculture principles being applied in practice is of significant wider benefit."* (paragraph 76)

12. In addition we refer to the Appeal Decision of Mr Woolnough (APP/K1128/A/06/2018778) in 2007 concerning the LandMatters permaculture project in South Devon. The Planning Inspector states:

- *"The land is worked and occupied by the Appellants as a permaculture project. For the purposes of these appeals, I accept the definition of 'permaculture' adopted by both main parties, namely: 'the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive eco-systems which have the diversity, stability and resilience of natural eco-systems...the harmonious integration of landscape and people, providing their food, energy, shelter and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way'."* (paragraph 13)
- *"Permaculture is now an internationally recognised means of sustainable agriculture and the subject of much academic study in recent years. Moreover, the direction of travel of emerging national policy towards ever more sustainable approaches to development and the need to address the problem of climate change is readily apparent..."* (paragraph 43)
- *"...Annex A [of PPS7] makes it clear that whether residential accommodation is essential in any particular case will depend on the needs of the enterprise and, in any event, this project goes well beyond the conventional. Inherent in the concept of permaculture is*

the implementation of wide-ranging and inter-related sustainable initiatives on a single agricultural site in a communal way. I am thus persuaded that various activities set out in the Appellants' land management and enterprise plans should be considered cumulatively rather than individually, so that a holistic view of the overall project can be taken.” (paragraph 38)

- *“I am also satisfied that the evidence before me demonstrates clearly that, in order to practice permaculture properly and successfully on the scale envisaged in this case, a substantial and continuous residential presence is essential. I do not doubt that the Appellants or their successors would be able to carry out some of the activities planned without living on the land. However, such an arrangement would not amount to permaculture in its true sense and the scope and purpose of the experiment would, in such circumstances, be significantly altered and diluted.” (paragraph 39)*

13. Living on-site is essential for the continued viability of this project. Living in conventional housing in nearby towns and commuting to the site could only be supported by having full-time (and well-paid) jobs elsewhere, leaving us with little or no time to carry out the project. Living in the woods enables us to dedicate our time to the project and be fully committed to it. Living in the woods also enables us to home educate our children in a safe and nourishing environment. The part-time jobs that some members have involving work off-site (much of which is low paid) complements the work and activities carried out on-site. We reside in low impact, ecological dwellings and utilise renewable sources of energy while reducing our fossil fuel and vehicle use.
14. There is a proven need for sustainable land use and development (see, for example, the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, IPCC reports, and the UNCTAD Trade & Environment Review 2013). Permaculture and forest gardening are examples of sustainable land use. They are low input and high output in terms of energy and resources but are intensive in terms of people power. Living on-site facilitates us to grow food and live without connection to any of the utilities (water, electricity, gas, sewage disposal). We provide all these services ourselves by ecological and sustainable means (filtered spring water, compost toilets, renewable energy, using wood from the land for fuel, etc). We minimise pollution by promoting and practising a way of life that reduce unsustainable consumption, its associated wastes and throw away culture. We reduce, reuse, repair and recycle wherever possible – and encourage others to do the same.
15. The independent report produced by 4th World Ecological Design in June 2008 (at Appendix 3) showed that the average Ecological Footprint of the residents of SCW over the period studied was 2.06 gha, 39% of the the Ecological Footprint of a typical UK individual; and that the equivalent Carbon Footprint was 3.75 tonnes, 34% of the UK average at 10.92 tonnes. As activities with respect to our carbon footprint remain similar, we conclude that the findings of this report are still valid.
16. In short, this project is holistic in its nature and scope and would be impossible to achieve without a residential element.

17. Please note that paragraph 50 of the NPPF states: “[LPAs should] plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and **people wishing to build their own homes**).”
18. Paragraph 55 of the NPPF states: “To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. ... Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as:
 - the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside; or ...
 - the exceptional quality or innovative nature of the design of the dwelling.”
19. This document shows how we are meeting these criteria of paragraph 55. It is worth noting that this paragraph superceded Annex A of PPS7, which was the relevant policy in place for the last two planning appeal decisions. NPPF para 55 is deliberately less detailed than PPS7 and its Annex A and the criteria are looser, in particular the reference to ‘rural worker’ rather than ‘agricultural worker’.

Human Rights

20. We refer to our rights under Articles 8 & 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (as incorporated into British law by the Human Rights Act) and to the Appeal Decision relating to SCW of Mr Tamplin (APP/J9497/C/01/1067412) on this subject.
21. In paragraph 37, Mr Tamplin states:

“...on Article 8, the right to respect for private and family life and the home, it is considered that dismissal of this appeal would represent a serious interference with those rights, not only for the appellant, but for the entire group now on the site because the benders are their only homes. Given this conclusion, it is necessary to balance this interference against the wider public interests arising in this case, in terms of harm to the purposes of designation of the National Park, harm to the aims of rural settlement policies, effects on traffic generation and on the amenity of nearby residents.”
22. Mr Tamplin goes on to conclude that there is no or minimal harm in these areas and concludes by saying in paragraph 38 that “therefore, in the absence of harm caused by the development to the underlying aims of planning policies, and because of the interference with the appellant’s human rights under Article 8 were permission to be refused, the appeal on ground (a) should succeed.”
23. We also draw your attention to the appeal decision on Article 8 concerning Brook Farm, Butleigh (APP/Q3305/A/04/1138976).

24. It is important to note in this regard that the children at SCW (all of whom have spent all or most of their lives in the woodland) would find it difficult to give up this way of life and it would be highly detrimental to their well-being if they had to leave.

The Fifteen Criteria

25. Our project at SCW has always complied and continues to comply with the 'Fifteen criteria for developments associated with sustainable land-based rural activities' (see Appendix 2). The criteria provide the benchmark for what we do at SCW and were incorporated into the Appeal Decision of Mr Tamplin.
26. I set out below how we have met the criteria and continue to meet the criteria:
27. Criterion 1 – The project has always had and continues to have a Management Plan and a Business Strategy setting out how the objectives in the criteria will be achieved and maintained. Our Business Strategy is set out below and the former Management Plan is at Appendix 4. The Management Plan is currently being reviewed and updated (see Woodland Management section below).
28. Criterion 2 – Members need only pay a weekly 'rent' of £15 to live in the community, and no capital outlay is required to join the community.
29. Criterion 3 – We hold an Open Day each year in the summer, host numerous educational visits throughout the year, run courses and Home Education sessions, and we run an ongoing WWOOFing programme for volunteers to stay and get involved. There is a series of permissive paths running through the western end of the woodland, which is open to the public throughout the year which are accessible from the Wray Valley Trail.
30. Criterion 4 – See sections below on 'Business Strategy' and 'Community Outreach'. We have always been active members of the local community. We buy our food from as local sources as possible. We also aim to use local non-chain shops to keep our money as local as possible. Visiting family and friends often stay at local B&Bs and the self catering units at neighbouring Budleigh Farm. We are also involved in part time, paid and voluntary work within the local community.
31. Criterion 5 – We have stringent policies concerning the use of chainsaws, vehicles and other machinery in our woodland management and gardening so the work carried out in the woodland is relatively quiet. We are mindful of maintaining and improving visual screening of our dwellings when planning woodland work.
32. Criterion 6 – See the section on 'Vehicle Usage & Access' below.
33. Criterion 7 – The settlement is located within a mainly coniferous woodland, which screens it to all but a few places along the road and in the surrounding landscape (and more so in leafy summer than leafless winter). The dwellings are grouped around a spring in the Larch area of

the wood. The dwellings are located away from the neighbouring properties to reduce any visual or noise impact on our neighbours. The settlement is also located in that area to reduce any adverse effect on the local wildlife. We are close to our drinking water supply, and an abundant source of firewood.

34. Criterion 8 – The dwellings are mainly covered in green canvas, which blends into the woodland. They are also considerably screened by the trees that make up the woodland. All the materials (except for some timber – see below) used to construct the dwellings are produced from woodland resources or reclaimed. These include sawn timber, polewood, split wood, and hazel bender poles from the wood, second hand tarps, reused windows and timber, and reclaimed board. A very small amount of timber (approx. 1%) has been bought new but only when such timber has not been available from local reclamation yards and recycling depots. As a result of all these practices, the embodied energy and environmental impact of the dwellings is very low.
35. Criterion 9 – The dwellings are easily dismantlable, being made from wooden structures with canvas/board cladding. A number of structures have been dismantled over the years leaving little or no trace of their existence. The platform technique of construction means that the structures can be removed and leave only a few holes in the ground where the posts were, and most of the structures here are built in such a way. The other structures involve some levelling of ground, but this is easily reversible and no permanent foundations are ever used. See further in the section below entitled 'Community & Structures'. The other eco-build techniques we wish to employ would also meet this criterion (see 'Community & Structures' below).
36. Criterion 10 – We buy food and other resources in bulk minimising packaging. We compost food waste. Most of our non-edible consumption (such as furniture, clothes, toys and equipment) is second hand, and involves no packaging. We reuse cardboard on site for mulching in the gardens or fuel for firelighting (most of our bulk food comes in cardboard crates). We reuse plastic bags and glass jars for homemade jams and chutneys. Our compost toilet enables us to reuse our humanure around fruit trees and on our comfrey bed. We have a community policy of avoiding buying new plastics unless unavoidable.
37. Criterion 11 – All of our electricity is produced on site from renewable sources. We use very little power as we rely on energy efficient devices. We are limited by the amount of electricity we can produce from the hydro scheme and solar panels, and the hydro is usually only in operation for 6 months of the year. We use mostly wood for cooking (supplemented with LPG), and a mixture of wood and passive solar (combined with insulation) for heating our structures and domestic hot water. The dwellings have been and continue to be improved with greater insulation. Our use of candles is low as most structures are lit by electric lights. See our Renewable Energy Report at Appendix 5.
38. Criterion 12 – We have always had autonomous provision of all these services. We get water from a spring, produce our own electricity and compost our humanure. We will not hook up to any of the utilities. See our Renewable Energy Report at Appendix 5.

39. Criterion 13:

- (a) Sustainable forestry – We are converting a coniferous woodland to a largely native deciduous woodland, planting trees and facilitating natural regeneration. We use coppicing as a sustainable management technique for some of the existing broadleaves. We minimise fossil fuels in our woodland work, often felling by hand (using axes and cross cut saws) and mainly using human pulling power, gravity, rollers and levers.
- (b) Sustainable agriculture – All our growing is spray free, we recycle humanure and compost into our growing systems. We build up the soil and mulch or dig weeds rather than use chemical inputs.
- (c) Permaculture – This project has its basis in permaculture, and we endeavour to use its principles in everything we do, creating circular systems that link in with each other, producing increasing and multiple yields from less and less human work.

40. Criterion 14:

- (a) In the Growing Area, we use compost, cardboard and other mulches, green manures, ground cover plants and perennial plantings to improve soil structure, and we are cycling back humanure via comfrey and fruit trees. We have increased the tree cover in the Growing Area as well, which is improving the soil as the leaves fall and reduces any possible soil erosion.
- (b) Retaining and increasing the area of land under broadleaf forestry is allowing nature to slowly balance the soil pH where conifer needles have been falling for the last 85 years. The selective felling and continuous cover operations are protecting the soil, which is fairly well protected by a lower storey of young trees and undergrowth.
- (c) We have replanted felled larch areas with oak trees, and encouraging natural regeneration, boosting biodiversity and creating more semi-natural habitat. We have put aside the area at the top of the woods as a low intervention wildlife corridor/semi natural habitat, although some clearance of sycamore has and will be taking place here to reduce the impact of mature seeding trees and allow oak and ash to get more light. Part of this area is classified as ancient semi-natural woodland.
- (d) We store water from the spring in the Settlement Area for our water supply to the Kitchen and Bathhouse. Some dwellings, the compost toilet, and the shelter in the Growing Area catch and store rainwater from their roofs. We store water in containers in the Growing Area, and we have created a pond there. However, in general, it is not a high priority for us to store water here with the amount of rainfall we receive.
- (e) We have created and extended Forest Gardens, which include fruit trees. Where we fell trees we are committed to restocking and maintaining the woodland cover. See our Management Plan at Appendix 4.

41. Criterion 15 – The land is owned by a workers co-operative which is also our legal structure for membership and residence on the land, allowing control over changes in members and participants. Potential new members go through a six month live-in trial period to ensure suitability before they become equal members of the community and directors of the co-op.

DMD 30

42. We set out in all the sections above and below how we are meeting the criteria in paragraphs (i) to (vii) of DMD30. This also shows how we are meeting DMD1b.
43. Concerning paragraph(viii) of DMD30, our legal structure is not a trust but a co-operative. The co-operative owns and manages the land with adults resident on site being members and directors of the co-operative. The underlying objective of this paragraph is to ensure continuity of ownership, project aims and objectives. This is achieved by being a co-operative and this is the basis on which we have been granted planning permission previously by two planning inspectors. We also have, as part of our organisational structure, a committee consisting of members of the coop and people from the wider community. Therefore we meet this criterion.
44. In regard to this, we refer to Lord Justice Sedley's comments in the Court of Appeal judgment *Petter & Harris v Secretary of State for Environment* (1999, EPL 5-163.25):
"But - and this is precisely the value of policy guidance as against statutory prescription - circumstances will vary infinitely and a margin of flexibility may be needed to accommodate them. So here an unexpected but undoubtedly genuine application, by somebody living by what amounts to subsistence farming, requires not a rigid application of criteria designed for commercial agriculture, but a practical adaption of those criteria to secure the underlying purposes of the policy."

Community and Structures

45. We are a community of 13 adults, 7 children and two teenagers. All the adults are members and directors of Affinity Woodland Workers Co-operative, apart from Jamie Leeds (a long term visitor). We would like scope to house these members and our visitors comfortably.
46. At present, we have 9 family or individual dwellings on site which currently house:
 - John, Son, Daisy (age 16) & Asha (age 12)
 - Marly (age 17)
 - Chris, Owen & Aaron (age 10)
 - Ollie, Sky (age 5)
 - Sharif & Fern
 - Seth, Mel, Ash (age 11), Finn (age 8) & Isaac (age 5)
 - Daniel
 - Merlin, Beccy & Rowan (age 12)
 - Jamie
47. It is the policy of the Co-operative that all structures belong to the community. All buildings and infrastructure including the houses are owned by the Co-op and used by the community as the need arises.

48. We set out at Appendix 1 the Settlement Area, the area within which we confine our residential structures. We have shifted the Settlement Area downhill to an extent (red area on map) since the last period of planning permission. This is to enable us to have gravity fed water to all the dwellings on site. The green area indicates the part of the current Settlement Area to be removed by the end of November 2018, once the two structures above that line have been dismantled.
49. At present, we have the following structures on site:
- 10 individual dwellings (one soon to be dismantled)
 - Kitchen/Longhouse
 - Part covered firepit area with wooden benches
 - Field Kitchen
 - Compost Toilet
 - Bathhouse
 - Power Tower
 - Wood storage bays
 - Female Urinal
 - Half Bender* (in Glade)
 - Shed* (in Growing Area)
 - Bike Shed* (by entrance to woodland)
50. All the structures, other than those with an asterisk, are within the Settlement Area. We also had an arrangement with the DNPA as part of our previous planning permission for a limited number of tents to be erected at any one time (up to 20 hike-type tents with no tent remaining for more than 20 nights). We would like to continue this arrangement. The Block Plan shows the camping area (namely the Glade).
51. The structures have a small visual impact from outside the woodland, particularly due to the use of green tarpaulin and timber cladding, shingle and turf roofing, and their screening by the trees. The visual effect is minimal especially considering the number of people living here.
52. All of our structures are temporary, low impact structures without any foundations and comply with both the Fifteen Criteria (see above) and DMD 30.
53. Three structures (occupied by Seth, Mel & family, Merlin, Beccy & family, and Daniel) are currently at the end of their lives. We plan therefore to build new dwellings to replace these and then dismantle the old ones. Seth has recently completed building his new structure. We are also applying for permission to build a dwelling to house new member(s) should the need arise.
54. The part-covered Firepit, Field Kitchen and Half Bender (in the Glade) were not classified as buildings by Mr Cook, the Planning Inspector, in his Appeal decision in 2009.
55. We set out at Appendix 6 elevations and floor plans of all the existing structures (barring the three structures due to be dismantled soon), proposed extensions and rebuilds, and the three

new structures proposed to be built. The locations of these structures are set out in the Block Plan forming part of this application.

56. Please note that, regarding the proposed new construction, due to the nature of low impact building involving natural materials (eg. roundwood), and reclaimed and reused materials, the drawings for these dwellings show the principles involved but there may be small variations from the materials shown, sizes of windows etc once these are constructed. All dimensions will be within +/- 30cm.
57. Three of the structures are considered 'dwelling houses', namely Chris & Owen's house, Seth & Mel's new house, and Merlin & Beccy's new house, the latter of which has yet to be built. The remaining seven residential structures (whether existing or proposed) are considered 'residential units'.
58. We propose the following conditions to guarantee the low impact nature of the settlement:
 - No more than 18 adults and their dependent children shall be permanently resident on the land at any one time. [We have increased this from the condition in the last planning permission as we have teenagers who will become adults soon and may wish to continue residing here.]
 - All the structures on the land shall be low impact (complying with both the Fifteen Criteria and DMD30).
 - If the land or any part of it were sold, or if Affinity Woodland Workers Co-operative Ltd ('AWWCL') were dissolved, the planning permission for the land no longer owned by AWWCL would cease, with the consequence that any residential structures there would need to be removed and the land restored to its former condition, unless the DNPA authorised in writing the planning permission to continue under the new owner(s).
59. All structures are easily dismantlable allowing the land to be returned to its former state as stated in criterion 9 of the Fifteen Criteria.
60. In addition, we are applying for permission for the following structures outside of the Settlement Area:
 - Disabled Accessible Compost Toilet in the Growing Area (see details in MoreFood documentation at Appendix 7) .
 - Polytunnel in the Growing Area (see details in MoreFood documentation at Appendix 8) .
 - Roundhouse Interpretation Centre in the Growing Area (see details in MoreFood documentation at Appendix 9) .
 - Shed (in Growing Area).
 - Bikeshed (by entrance to woodland).
 - Half-Bender (in the Glade).
 - Tents (in the Glade – for WWOOFers and course students) .
61. The three MoreFood structures (along with the existing Shed in the Growing Area) would enable that project to be realised, facilitating growing, the running of courses, etc. The Bikeshed enables the storage of bicycles by the entrance to the woodland. The Half Bender in the Glade

facilitates the running of courses. As we have WWOOFers and other visitors staying throughout the year, we need scope for up to 20 hike-type tents to be erected for up to 20 nights each at any time of the year. This is needed, for example, to facilitate the holding of permaculture design courses with up to 15 students along with WWOOFers staying on site.

Business Strategy

Introduction

62. DMD 30 paragraph (vi) states “the proposal will provide sufficient livelihood for and substantially meet the needs of residents on the site”. This section shows how we are fulfilling this criterion and meeting our Aim in this area, namely “To generate enough income for our needs (subsistence and financial income) predominantly from the project’s activities and otherwise from other ethically based work.”
63. We meet our needs and provide ourselves with sufficient livelihood from:
 - Subsistence, Agriculture, Livelihoods & Lifestyle
 - The Gift Economy
 - Commercial Activities On Site
 - Part-Time Work Off Site

Subsistence Agriculture, Livelihoods & Lifestyle

64. While we generate financial income from our activities on and off site, the main factor in our sustainable livelihoods is the subsistence element. Rather than maximising income and profits from our business activities, we provide most of our material needs from the land and by ourselves, thus reducing the need to earn large sums of money. We aim to maximise the subsistence element. Subsistence is a significant and bonding element of our community and ethos – and it allays very significant costs (financial and environmental) that would otherwise be incurred if we lived elsewhere.
65. The subsistence goods and services we provide for ourselves include:
 - Water;
 - Fuel wood;
 - Wood as building material;
 - Food;
 - Electricity generated through renewable sources;
 - Sanitation and composting (organic waste recycling);
 - Shelter;
 - Homemade furniture, clothing, toys, etc;
 - Social goods such as shared childcare, shared transport;
 - Holistic health care including herbal medicine;
 - Maintenance of the low impact structures and infrastructure by ourselves or volunteers (rather than employing plumber, electrician, boiler man, builder, etc);

- Entertainment & Music (insofar as human interaction at the settlement reduces the need to seek entertainment elsewhere).
66. The sum total of these subsistence benefits results in a lifestyle which requires a considerably lower financial expenditure than would be engendered if we lived separately in houses. The reduced level of transport is also a reflection of the fact that this lifestyle provides us with physical and social goods and services which we would otherwise have to seek elsewhere.
 67. Thus the majority of our time is spent working on site to meet our needs. Day to day tasks include: child care and education, firewood processing, woodland management, human and organic waste disposal, structure maintenance, wildlife monitoring, garden maintenance, food production, community dynamics, peer counselling, recycling schemes, laundry, and herbal medicine making. These activities are an integral part of our day to day life and it is a vital part of what SCW has to offer in showing a sustainable way of life.
 68. The project enables us to meet our needs by fulfilling our emotional, spiritual and physical well being. By living a sustainable woodland way of life, we have more time to spend with our children, helping each other, pooling resources and skills and volunteering with projects and people outside the community. Although this way of life can have its challenges, we feel the holistic value far outweighs a conventional lifestyle. The children at Steward Wood (all of whom have spent all or most of their lives in the woodland) would find it difficult to give up this way of life and it would be highly detrimental to their well-being if they had to leave.
 69. The four survival needs are food, water, fuel and shelter. These are some of the bigger average household expenditures in the UK. A family of four in Moretonhampstead spend on average £1065 per month on rented accommodation and utilities, plus approximately £500 per month on food and household goods (data compiled from three families). We provide nearly all our own housing, water, fuel and power (meaning that the cost of a family living at Steward Wood is only £130 per month) and some of our own food (a family spends approximately £360 per month on food and household goods). This shows how we are providing for our needs predominantly by subsistence living.
 70. Our subsistence activities bring with them two main benefits.
 71. The first of these is that the subsistence lifestyle is by no means introverted, but provides the basis for a number of educational courses, on permaculture, biodiversity, low impact building, renewable energy, bushcraft skills, retreats etc. These are a benefit to the people who attend, and bring in a commercial income. There is a growing demand from the public for this kind of “back to the land” education and it is a common form of rural diversification carried out by farmers with a strong traditional or subsistence leaning. Visitors (such as WWOOF volunteers) also benefit by learning skills, taking part in the permaculture activities, etc.
 72. The subsistence element, as well as being pursued for its own sake, is therefore also an important component of our commercial and educational activity.

73. The second of these wider benefits is managing an attractive landscape and wildlife habitat. See our Management Plan for details (at Appendix 4). Many of the landscape benefits are a direct consequence of our dedication to traditional, non-mechanized and subsistence methods of managing the land. This is unsurprising since these were the techniques that created the valued landscape in the first place.
74. We refer to the Court of Appeal decision of *Petter & Harris v SSETR and Chichester DC* [1999, EPL 5-163.25]. The case of *Petter & Harris* is cited in Mr Tamplin's Appeal decision. The judgment states that although profitability is often an indicator of financial viability it is not an essential component and a non-profit making holding may satisfy the "underlying purposes of the policy." This lead to the subsistence policy of paragraph 8 of PPS7 which stated: "*Some enterprises which aim to operate broadly on a subsistence basis, but which nonetheless provide wider benefits (eg. in managing attractive landscapes or wildlife habitats) can be sustained on relatively low financial returns.*"
75. The means of reducing our ecological footprint are detailed below.
76. Our settlement is sited so as to take advantage of the potential for decentralized energy generation.
77. All of our structures are heated entirely with wood derived sustainably from woodland of considerable amenity value. If we lived in town we would (a) need more wood to heat larger and less well-adapted dwellings which typically take 7 to 9 tonnes of wood to heat; and (b) need to transport it to our homes. We would not be able to have a micro hydro scheme to generate electricity from water. As for public transport, we are fortunate to have good transport links.
78. We are thus attaining a far higher standard of sustainability than that achieved by conventional housing developments; and this achievement is conveyed to those who visit or take courses at the settlement. The dissemination of this degree of sustainability constitutes a wider benefit of the subsistence approach to land management; and the high level of sustainability is a significant material consideration for the renewal of our planning permission.
79. We are providing eco-friendly housing at incredibly low cost. All of us (apart from Sharif and Fern) have lived here continuously for over 2 years and nine of us for over 5 years (largely as families) placing most of us high on the points system for housing need as set out by Teignbridge District Council. By providing our own affordable housing, we are not a burden on the District Council in any way in relation to housing.

Gift Economy

80. We value the gift economy, bypassing the need for money. This operates through websites such as Freecycle, sharing skills and tools, exchanging goods and services.

81. For example, our Community Growing Day has been a great success and acts as a place to learn, grow and communicate with the local community. Volunteers come for the day to help us in our garden. We provide lunch to all and there are always questions about the project and our garden. We have found over the years that by having people here voluntarily and without payment is more beneficial for us and them. By not charging, we are being inclusive not exclusive to those without funds to participate. We see this as a huge benefit to the community, a place for people to come with their children and participate in a holistic activity. Some volunteers are experienced growers and others come to learn but all take away something from the experience.

Commercial Activities On-Site

82. We generate financial income from on-site activities by running courses, and making and selling timber, value added timber products, tools, and herbal preparations.
83. We are continuing to run courses on site at Steward Wood such as:
- Healing Hedgerow
 - Bird Language Interpretation and Nature Awareness
 - Green Woodworking
 - Wild Food Foray
 - Fungal Foray
 - Permaculture Design
 - Off-grid Renewable Energy
 - Sustainable Living
 - Bushcraft
 - Tours/visit
 - Home Ed Science Group
 - Wild Woods 'n Willow
84. With our range and depth of expertise and experience in various fields, our teaching skills, the high standard of facilities and structures now at SCW, and with the woods as a long-standing working model of permaculture, we are able to offer an increasing variety of courses and opportunities over the coming years. We detail some of these below.

Healing Hedgerow

85. The Healing Hedgerow was set up by Beccy and Sonia in 2007 and has increased in popularity over the last 5 years. They have over 10 years of practical knowledge and skill in how to identify, harvest and preserve medicine from nature. As well as selling herbal medicines, tinctures, tea, tonics, balms and other elixirs to the wider community, Sonia and Beccy have run many courses since 2007.

Nature Connections - finding yourself in nature

86. Nature Connections was set up in 2010 by Ollie. He has trained at Trackways, the leading nature awareness school in the UK. His woodland lifestyle has enabled him to develop an understanding of bird language and behaviour, ecology, tracking skills, ways of movement and sensory awareness that enables people to deeply engage, directly, with the natural world that surrounds them.

Green Woodworking Courses

87. Sharif is an award winning bowl turner and runs a variety of green woodworking courses from Steward Wood. Sharif is one of only a handful of people who teaches pole lathe bowl turning in the UK. This traditional craft has grown in popularity in the last few years and continues to gain a lot of interest. He takes his spoons and bowls for sale to various events and markets while also taking regular commissions and forging bespoke bowl turning tools for sale from his outdoor workshop at Steward Wood.

"I attended a spoon carving course held by Sharif and I am now totally addicted! Sharif is a natural teacher, very patient and clear in his instruction. He's very knowledgeable about the subject of greenwood carving and you can't help but be infected by his enthusiasm. Just looking at the spoons and bowls he has produced will inspire you to give it a go." - Edwin Mitchell-Finch

"Sharif is very patient and we all progressed at a good pace making a spoon to take home along with the skills to use for the future. His own work is superb and very inspiring. He also has spoons by many makers from around the world and can tell a story about each one. He is a natural teacher and thoroughly interesting chap to spend some time with." - Paul And Claire Mills

"I learnt to carve spoons with Sharif and even though I was a complete beginner, his clear instructions made me feel able to use the carving tools with confidence. Sharif's teaching really has opened up a new interest in my life. I went on to carve in my own time, even on Christmas day! I've made a spoon for a friend from a branch in her garden and my sister had an apple-wood spoon for her birthday. Sharif's gentle enthusiasm for his craft has enabled me to get to know different woods and how they look, feel and carve. I think everyone should carve at least one spoon in their lives...and Sharif is the man to help you do it!" - Annie Gill

Permaculture Design Courses

88. Since the granting of our last planning permission, we have run three permaculture design courses lasting two weeks (in 2009, 2010 and 2012) with 15 students each time.

"This was an experience of a lifetime. I feel inspired and empowered by the whole process. It's given me hope for the future of our beautiful, threatened planet."

“It was fantastic to be a part of a thriving permaculture community while learning about sustainability and permaculture – it helped me to make sense of it all. What a wonderful bunch of people – very friendly and helpful (including the children). The whole experience has been a delight.”

“I’ve got the bug to design all the gardens of people I know and spread the ethics and principles of permaculture.”

Educational Visits

89. See the section below headed ‘Education’. We often charge a fee for tours and educational visits.

Photography

90. Fern is a photographer and artist currently working on a long term project about her time at SCW. The project, entitled 'Wild Wood', has been shortlisted for the National Open Art Competition 2013, The Ideastap Photographic Award 2013 and The Magnum Showcase 2013. Wild Wood has been exhibited in group and solo shows across the UK and has been published in a variety of digital and print publications. This summer, Wild Wood travels to The Netherlands for the 2014 Noorderlicht Photography Festival and an image from the series has also been selected by The Royal Photographic Society for their International Print competition and will be touring London in venues such as the Berkeley Gallery and The Royal Festival Hall. At the end of the year, Fern has been invited to produce a second solo show at The Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World at Exeter University. Fern continues her practice from the woodland where she works and lives. She believes that immersing herself in this way of life is integral to the project’s success.
91. After the granting of our last planning permission, we found that meeting the majority of our cash needs from activities on site was unrealistic due to these three main factors:
- 1) Having to spend over £20,000 on legal fees for our last successful planning appeal in 2009. This resulted in an immediate need for us to earn money to pay back the legal fees which could only be met by working off site leaving little time to set up on-site enterprises.
 - 2) The economic downturn which has resulted in a marked decrease in people booking on courses.
 - 3) The MoreFood project planning application being refused by the DNPA in October 2012. We were successful in applying for a Local Food Grant (£76,000) from the Big Lottery Fund to develop our demonstration gardens and to provide community and local employment. However, the funding was conditional on planning permission and was refused by the DNPA. This was a major setback. We had spent a huge amount of time and money on the funding application (which involved two stages), the Business Plan (running to nearly 100 pages), and the planning application (with many detailed drawings).

Vision for the Future

Arts & Crafts Centre

92. We intend to turn our workshop room in the longhouse into a gallery, shop, and small workshop. Here we will display, make and sell the items we produce such as: woodcraft, photography, artwork, wild medicines and poetry. We plan to apply for funding for this in the next 5 years. NB. We are not applying for planning permission for this now.

Community Garden

93. When the planning application for the MoreFood project was turned down by the DNPA, the funding period for the Local Food Grant had come to its end. However, we intend to seek alternative funding for this project within the next three years.
94. Despite the recommendation by Stephen Belli (the Director of Planning) that temporary permission be granted (see Appendix 10), the structures associated with the MoreFood Community Garden project were refused planning permission on 15th October 2012 (see Appendix 11).
95. Mr Stephen Belli said in his report (Appendix 10):
“The development is consistent with the provisions of the Development Plan and government advice (and material considerations do not indicate otherwise) ”
“The development complies with the adopted Dartmoor National Park Authority Core Strategy Development Plan Document ”
“The development complies with the emerging policies of the Policy DMD8 of the Dartmoor National Park Authority Development Management and Delivery Development Plan Document Publication Version ”
and states the relevant Devon Structure Plan, DNPA Core Strategy, Development Management and Delivery Development policies and his reasons.
96. We believe that the reasons for refusal were unfounded and that, had it not been for the fact that the funding window had expired, we would have been successful on appeal. We set out below the reasons for this conclusion.
97. DNPA Reason(s) for Refusal:

1. In the absence of sufficient explicit detail submitted with the application such as a detailed site layout plan and the potential intensification of the use of this land, the proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the landscape character of this part of the Dartmoor National Park, contrary to policy CO2 of the Devon Structure Plan, the Dartmoor National Park Core Strategy Development Plan Document and in particular policies COR1, COR3 and COR4, policies DMD1 and DMD5 of the Dartmoor National Park Development Management and Delivery Development Plan Document and to the advice contained in The English National Parks and The

98. There was an enormous amount of detail submitted with the application including:
- a Business Plan (see Appendix 12) with appendices adding up to 95 pages
 - detailed, scale drawings of all the structures (see Appendices 7 to 9) which after consultation with the planning officer, Louise Smith, and some additions/amendments were approved by her as sufficient for the planning application.
99. There was enough detail to satisfy the Lottery funded Local Food Grant scheme to fund the project (after two stages in the application process). There was not a site plan for the garden because the design was going to be professionally created using funding from the grant which was dependent on receiving planning permission. The garden design was not a planning issue and should not have been a consideration in the decision. A concept design was submitted in order to put the structures in context.

2. The proposed development would not be low impact and increased levels of activity and visitor numbers coupled with additional vehicle movements, taken together with a lack of detail regarding effective monitoring of vehicle movements and car parking arrangements, would have a detrimental impact on the residential amenities of neighbouring occupiers and would detract from the special qualities of the area, contrary to policy DMD4 of the Dartmoor National Park Development Management and Delivery Development Plan Document.

100. We believe that the structures included in the MoreFood application would be low impact as defined by the Fifteen Criteria. Chris Gubby, the case officer from Devon County Council Highways Department, stated that he did not foresee any major highways issues and made no objections to the application. As the highways officer had no objections to the proposed development, we fail to see how it could contravene DMD4 in terms of highway safety. We also fail to see how a small number of visitor vehicle movements could have a detrimental impact on residential amenities. The site has good access and parking and strict conditions were suggested to ensure vehicle movements and parking would cause minimal disturbance.

3. It is considered that the proposed development does not enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park. Neither does it promote understanding of the special qualities of the Park or foster socio-economic well being to the extent that the concerns expressed above can be set aside. The proposal is considered to be contrary to policy CO2 of the Devon Structure Plan and policy DMD1 of the National Park Development Management Delivery Plan Document.

101. The MoreFood project proposed a community garden including a forest garden, bee sanctuary, and play and picnic areas in place of an area of land consisting of low scrub (mainly bramble). An ecological survey was undertaken and submitted with the application giving appropriate recommendations.

102. The proposal is in alignment with many of the DNPA Core and Development management policies, as set out in the officers report (see Appendix 10, and should therefore have been granted planning permission.
103. As part of this current planning application for permanent permission, we are applying for permission for the structures associated with the MoreFood project (namely the Roundhouse Interpretation Centre, Polytunnel and Disabled Accessible Composting Toilet) so that in future we can obtain funding and establish the community garden.

Education

104. We have witnessed the educational benefit SCW has on the people who visit the project. We want to invite more Universities, organisations, schools and camps to come and visit the woodland and learn about our way of life. With the Roundhouse Interpretation Centre in the Growing Area and the extra scope in the Settlement Area this permission would give us to create more functional structures, we can increase the visits from these groups.

Social Media

105. Our Facebook page (set up in July 2013) has over 650 followers and is growing rapidly. We have found there is great interest in what we are doing here at Steward Wood. Social Media is enabling us to connect to a wider audience increasing the educational benefit of the woodland. With the growing support of people from this page we predict this will be a great way for us to increase the educational value of SCW. Our next step is to use a crowdfunding platform to raise money for the MoreFood project so we can continue what we set out to do in 2007.

Part-Time Work Off-Site

106. In addition to the commercial activities carried out on site, we also earn money from activities off site. Often these are the same activities carried out at other locations, for example teaching bushcraft and nature connection. All members of the community work part-time off-site through employment or self-employment.
107. Most of our off-site work is within the local community.
- Beccy – local village shop.
 - Son – Healing Hedgerow, cleaning & care work.
 - John – bushcraft instructor, care work, Tanglewood (roundhouse building in schools and mentoring of young people in rural crafts), nature connection & Forest School.
 - Seth – electrical safety testing, event waste and recycling management for local festival, farm work for local farmers, sawmilling.
 - Mel – Teacher's Assistant in Moretonhampstead Primary School.
 - Merlin – computer support and website development, running courses at Moreton Library, Community Renewables project coordinator with the Moretonhampstead Development Trust.

- Fern – Photography, Green Shoes in Moretonhampstead.
- Sharif – making and selling wooden bowls & spoons, forging and selling tools, running courses in above.
- Daniel – storytelling, bushcraft and nature awareness instructor, archery instructor.
- Ollie – Proper Job Resource Centre in Chagford.
- Owen – Retained Firefighter in Moretonhampstead.
- Chris – Project Manager of the Moretonhampstead Development Trust.

108. Our activities off-site make an important contribution to the economic, social and educational life of the wider community, and there is a cross-fertilisation between our work and jobs off-site and the project. For example, by some members working within Moretonhampstead, both members and local residents benefit from the sharing of resources and expertise. With our low housing and living costs at the woods, we can afford to work at the low wage level.

Woodland Management

109. Our Aims in this area are:

- To manage the land using the principles of permaculture, forest gardening, and continuous cover forestry.
- To manage the woodland for fuel, timber, and the creation and protection of wildlife habitat.

110. This section shows how we are meeting these Aims and the criteria in DMD30, in particular paragraph (v).

111. In July 2012, it was decided that the principles and practices set out in the Management Plan 2007-12 (see Appendix 4) would be continued until 2014 when a thorough review was to be carried out. We have, however, decided in the meantime not to replant with sweet chestnut due to the risks of *Phytophthora ramorum*. We are currently in the process of the review.

112. As part of the Management Plan review, we sought the advice of the Devon Wildlife Trust and received a visit from Lynne Kenderdine (Land Management Advisory Officer) on 16th April 2014. Subsequently we received a letter from Ms Kenderdine dated 20th June 2014 (attached at Appendix 13 which provides written advice on how we can enhance our management of the woodland. This has informed our updating process, in particular concerning the management of wildlife habitat.

113. Ms Kenderdine states:

“In terms of landscape scale conservation, Steward Wood has a very valuable contribution to make to biodiversity within the local area, not least as it forms the northern end of the Bovey woodland ridge; much of which is ancient in origin. As such your land provides something of a transition zone between the adjoining farmed environment to the north and woodland to the south. Your phased and sustainable

approach to management, as well as construction of your settlement area, has created an interesting array of niche habitats providing much structural diversity for wildlife.”

114. and her letter concludes by saying:

“Overall we consider that your management is having a very positive impact on your local biodiversity.”

115. We are also consulting with other experts and advisers in this area as part of our review of the Management Plan. We are due to visit soon a DWT reserve with Andy Backare (DWT Nature Reserves Officer) to see an example showing the results of the management suggestions made in Ms Kenderdine’s letter.

116. Wildlife conservation and restoration are at the heart of our Management Plan, and the natural regeneration occurring in the Settlement Area is a prime example of our success at creating and managing wildlife habitat and the increase in species biodiversity this brings. According to the UN Environment Programme, the Earth is in the midst of a mass extinction of life. Scientists estimate that 150-200 species of plant, insect, bird and mammal become extinct every 24 hours. This is nearly 1,000 times the "natural" or "background" rate and, say many biologists, is greater than anything the world has experienced since the vanishing of the dinosaurs nearly 65m years ago. There is scientific consensus that this is caused mostly by human activity including habitat loss, climate change, increasing consumption, overpopulation, deforestation, pollution, and the hypoxiation and acidification of the oceans.

117. The State of Nature Report, produced in 2013 by an exciting new coalition of conservation and research organisations, is the first of its kind to document the status and population trends of animals and plants in the UK. Sir David Attenborough writes in the foreword:

“This important document provides a stark warning: far more species are declining than increasing in the UK, including many of our most treasured species. Alarming, a large number of them are threatened with extinction. The causes are varied, but most are ultimately due to the way we are using our land and seas and their natural resources, often with little regard for the wildlife with which we share them. The impact on plants and animals has been profound.”

118. A quote from Defra on gov.uk echoes the severity of the situation:

“In England, much of our biodiversity, including many of our birds, butterflies and plants, is declining. Our wildlife areas are too disjointed and fragmented, which makes it harder for wildlife to flourish and respond to climate change and other pressures, like pollution. All countries need to act to improve biodiversity and preserve natural ecosystems. Otherwise the natural environment, wildlife and human life as we know it are all at risk.”

119. In 2010, Ahmed Djoghlaif, the Secretary-General of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, stated:

"What we are seeing today is a total disaster. ... We are losing biodiversity at an unprecedented rate. If current levels [of destruction] go on we will reach a tipping point very soon. ... The loss of biodiversity compounds poverty. Destroy your nature and you increase poverty and insecurity. Biodiversity is fundamental to social life, education and aesthetics. It's a human right to live in a healthy environment."

120. It is clear that the conservation and restoration of the natural world are vital to the survival of humankind, our non-human neighbours, and the world as we know it. We are proud that it's been confirmed by our own observations and monitoring over the years, combined with our recent visit from the Devon Wildlife Trust, that we are being successful in achieving our aims of creating and managing wildlife habitat. We look forward to further collaborating with local and national conservation organisations to continue our valuable work in this critical area for the benefit of the local biodiversity, and as a part of the global effort to protect the natural world we all depend on.

121. We attach at Appendix 18 our Licence to Fell Growing Trees issued by the Forestry Commission on 2nd December 2014. Roger Ford (Woodland Officer of the Forestry Commission for Exeter, South Hams, Teignbridge, Torbay and Dartmoor National Park) visited SCW in October 2014 and stated:

"I had a great time walking through your woods and I think you're doing a wonderful job of managing the woodland."

122. Here is a non-exhaustive list of woodland management tasks we have undertaken during our time here:

- observation and species identification;
- drawing up and updating our Management Plan;
- felling and processing larch, ash & sycamore for firewood and building needs, and for sale;
- replanting with oak in the Settlement Area and restocking where required;
- clearing around newly planted oaks;
- coppicing of ash, hazel and sycamore and protection of coppiced stools from deer browsing;
- killing ivy on veteran trees at risk from wind throw;
- planting areas of standard and dwarfing fruit trees and fruit bushes to create Forest Gardens;
- pruning and maintenance of Forest Garden trees;
- erecting a deer fence in the Growing Area;
- maintenance of forestry tracks and paths, including marking out permissive paths for walkers;
- clearing windblown trees and dangerous trees/branches;
- clearing invasive species (such as laurel and rhododendron);
- creating habitat piles from brash;

- attending woodland management courses and events (including Continuous Cover Forestry training) and attending chainsaw courses;
- carrying out Continuous Cover Forestry monitoring of the woodland and analysing the results;
- marking of trees for felling;
- making and putting up bird, bat, and mammal boxes and bird feeders;
- Monitoring for any signs of disease such as canker, Phytophthora ramorum and ash dieback;
- Ecological monitoring (for example, dormice, bat and bird nest monitoring);
- Protecting area's of diverse flora and fauna.

123. The analysis of our Continuous Cover Forestry monitoring is attached at Appendix 14. This shows the wide range of plant and tree sizes, their different ages and the variety of habitats. It helps us to identify trees and species that need encouraging or cropping. It shows that using the CCF approach means we are being successful in meeting our aim of re-establishing native broadleaf woodland from what was previously a plantation woodland with limited biodiversity. For example, it can be seen that there is a large number of young broadleaf trees coming through as we fell the mature conifers.

124. Our emphasis has shifted from replanting with oak, which takes a considerable time to grow. We considered planting sweet chestnut but decided not to when Phytophthora became prolific. Instead we have mainly encouraged natural regeneration and planted a mixture of fruit and nut trees and other broadleaves (such as hazel, rowan, birch, lime, ash and hornbeam). Our restocking plans are due to be approved by the Forestry Commission (when we receive the latest Felling Licence).

125. Our activities are an integral part of the life of the woodland. Humans are a part of the ecology, of the land, not separate from it. Whilst it would not be appropriate for humans to live in every part of the countryside, there are places where we can return to our natural place (woodland dwellers) living in harmony with the flora and fauna. The residents of Steward Wood are achieving this in a way that is admired and enjoyed by many who come to visit.

126. We can compare our residence in and management of the wood with the likely management had the woodland remained a commercial one: group felling and replanting with conifers. Our approach is one of on-going, day to day woodland management rather than large scale forestry. This approach promotes the life of the woodland, its diversity and tranquility. In addition, we are facilitating people's understanding of and interaction with nature through our being here. Our on site presence is of great assistance to deer, rabbit and squirrel management.

127. The site is designated as a Section 3 woodland by the DNPA. Section 3 woodlands are expected to be retained and enhanced and are inappropriate for development unless for the proper management of the site. Dave Wood, our forestry expert at the Planning Appeal in 2009, stated in his Proof of Evidence that *"it is unusual to see conventional conifer plantations listed under section 3 unless there is a significant landscape value. It seems at odds with National*

Park objectives not to support the gradual conversion of conifer plantation to predominantly broadleaves via continuous cover practise. Forest gardens and small low-impact dwelling sites will hardly be visible within the woodland structure proposed from any potential viewpoints available. The structural changes will only bring improved landscape character and a community supporting itself from it's woodland assets.” This remains the case.

128. We process timber using a mobile band saw (owned by Chris & Owen). This includes planing softwoods (in various sizes), making shingles, cladding, and floor boards.
129. Owen runs a business <www.coppiceandcleave.co.uk> hiring his mobile sawmill, and producing and selling value added timber products. Sharif uses wood from the land to make spoons and bowls for sale, as well as running green woodworking courses. Merlin makes and sells catapults. Sonia sells hand crafted crochet hooks from coppiced hazel, oak and sycamore. John and others often use hazel poles from Steward Wood to create bender structures off site to be used as teaching structures and to promote the project. Occasionally, other woodland products are sold (such as split larch fenceposts and planked wood for shelving). For several years now, poles from the wood are used as flagpoles in Moretonhampstead's annual community flag festival.
130. Please note that we are using Aspen fuel for our chainsaws, an alkylate petrol which is sulphur and solvent free and contains less than 1% of the amount of benzene found in normal petrol. It costs three times the amount of normal petrol. Also, we use vegetable oil rather than mineral oil as the lubricant. We use an electric chainsaw for small jobs when there's sufficient power.

Growing at SCW

131. Our Aim in this area is:
 - “ To generate much of our own food and medicine by growing organically, raising livestock, hunting and gathering.”
132. This section contributes to us meeting the criteria in DMD30 paragraphs (i), (ii), (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii).
133. At SCW providing food and medicine for ourselves and volunteers is a vital and intrinsic part of demonstrating low impact living. We do so by:
 - Growing/cultivating
 - Gathering and preserving wild foods, herbs and medicines
 - Animal husbandry
 - Swapping excess produce and seeds with other local growers
 - Hunting
134. Growing organic food is an important part of our daily lives and we produce healthy, nutritious food and herbal medicines for ourselves, friends and volunteers. We have a weekly Growing Day when we invite local volunteers to join in with the work and then share the produce of our

Growing Area thus exchanging important skills and knowledge as well as seeds and plants. Furthermore, by increasing our capacity to feed ourselves, we reduce our dependence on international agriculture and global transport networks which are reliant on fossil fuel and pesticide use. Given the context of climate change and the environmental crises we face, the fostering of awareness of organic, local food growing is hugely important.

135. In our main Growing Area (which incorporates a Forest Garden), we grow a wide range of produce in quantity. We also grow food in raised beds beside our homes and have another four Forest Gardens of various sizes.
136. Our Growing Area is set up with linear raised beds with mulched paths in between. We have recently constructed a rabbit and deer proof fence surrounding these beds. We have a Shed for storage of tools and other materials, which also provides a covered space for those working in the garden. The roof of the Shed also provides rainwater collection for watering the beds.
137. In the last 5 years we have extended our Forest Garden in the Growing Area with more fruit and nut bearing trees and shrubs.
138. We are working to find funding to implement the MoreFood project which will enable us to expand the range and quantity of food grown in the Growing Area. The MoreFood project incorporates a polytunnel which would extend the growing season of a variety of different foods, increasing our capacity to produce food all year round in this climate (see Appendix 8).
139. We make our own compost from food waste. This is clearly an excellent way of minimising our reliance on resources outside the community, whilst improving our crop yield. Humanure is also produced from the compost loo which we use to fertilise comfrey plants and fruit bushes.
140. We have many WWOOFers, course students and other visitors throughout the year who are able to gain knowledge of organic and permacultural food growing methods whilst staying at SCW, as well as sharing the skills and knowledge they have.
141. The DNPA's refusal of planning permission for the 'MoreFood' project was a huge setback and has meant that productivity in this area has not been as high as we hoped, particularly as the MoreFood project incorporates a polytunnel and deer and rabbit proof fencing. The DNPA has refused permission for a polytunnel at SCW on two occasions. We downscaled the area for our deer and rabbit proof fencing, which was put that up this year. We hope to find more funding in the near future to enable us to move forward with the project, providing increasing amounts of food for ourselves and the local community as well as demonstrating organic and permacultural growing.

Gathering

142. Our diets include a large portion of foods which grow wild in our woodland. The intimate knowledge of the land we have from living here enables us to know what grows where, and at what time of the year. Daniel, in particular, runs Wild Food Forays, passing this knowledge on to

children and adults. Also, two members of the community have been studying the medicinal flora and fauna of this land for the last 10 years and they sustainably harvest and prepare medicine for the whole community, enabling us to stay healthy and vibrant throughout the year and ward off serious illness and infections. As well as providing for the community they are able to guide and teach children, volunteers and course attendees in the ancient ways of wild medicine making through hands on experience, and above all, connection to the land and plant life that has only been possible through living so closely with it.

Animal Husbandry

143. Seth and Sharif both keep small flocks of sheep in nearby fields by arrangement with local landowners to feed their families and others. Chris & Owen keep chickens and goats to help meet their needs and we intend to build a communal chicken run within the next year.

Hunting

144. By hunting squirrels, rabbits and deer, we control local pests and provide ourselves meat with no food miles. Seth performs deer management for us and local landowners and holds a DSC1 certificate. By managing the local Roe & Fallow population, he provides venison for his family and the community here as well as the local landowners.

Education

145. Our Mission Statement states:
- We are educating our children with the aim of fostering wholeness, balance and empowerment.
 - We are learning from all around us and passing on our knowledge, skills and experience.
146. Our Aims in this area are:
- To encourage healthy, happy and empowered individuals.
 - To explore and promote innovative, sustainable practices and ways of living.
147. This section contributes to showing how we are meeting the criteria of DMD30 paragraphs (i), (ii), (v), (vi) and (vii).
148. This section covers the following topics;
- Education of Children
 - Courses
 - Community Outreach/Voluntary Work
 - Online Presence
 - Media
 - Higher Education
 - Volunteers

- Visitors

149. In the previous planning appeal decision, Mr Cook states at paragraph 73;

"...it is my view that the value of the project is its holistic nature. Mr Goldring explained that the Community was one of the best developed and most cohesive and that a number of lessons were being learned about how it might be possible to live in and from a wood. I have noted the many representations from those who have visited the Community and gained from the experience and heard the evidence of interested parties about the contribution that the Community members make to the local area and the flexible skills resource that they can offer to those involved with environmental projects. Mr Goldring emphasised the value to be gained from what is in effect a working example of a permaculture system and, in my view, the increased educational role planned represents a further stage in the project."

150. and at paragraph 76:

"I consider that the venture has evolved into one where the education resource provided by what is, in effect, a demonstration project of permaculture principles being applied in practice is of significant wider benefit."

151. We set out at Appendix 15 a letter dated 10/11/14 from Peter Cow, an international teacher and consultant on ecological living, and one of the founding members of SCW who lived here from 2000-7. He states, inter alia:

"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."

Education of Children

152. Four of the children at SCW go to Moretonhampstead Primary School, while two children and one teenager currently choose to be home educated. The education they all receive by living at SCW and being a part of the community is a vital part of their lives.

153. Given the prospects of climate change and other environmental challenges, we believe that living at Steward Wood with the children fully integrated, is the best way to teach our children important skills in sustainable living, being in harmony with nature, caretaking the land and its creatures.

154. We encourage the children to have active involvement in every aspect of communal living as part of their education. This includes generating their own power, keeping themselves clean and warm, growing and cooking food, sustainably harvesting wild food and medicine, providing shelter, woodland management, dealing with waste, and relearning lost skills of communication and resolving conflict in a peaceful way.
155. The children of SCW are also able to pass on their skills and knowledge to other children and adults through play and other communication as well as being a part of running workshops and courses, giving tours, talks and demonstrations. Visitors are frequently amazed when the children demonstrate their skills in firewood chopping, fire making, cooking, music, and contribution to social interaction. The children at SCW frequently bring their friends back to the woods to play and for sleepovers, increasing the connections with the wider community and giving those other children the opportunity to experience low impact living and community life.
156. As well as learning from living at SCW, all the children take part in activities within the wider community. These activities include: swimming, martial arts, natural horsemanship, camping, singing and music lessons, country sports, walking on the moors and home education groups. There are visits to the library, museums, youth clubs, festivals, the local resource centre Proper Job, scouts, and local home education groups. The latter two groups sometimes come to SCW for science groups and Forest School sessions.
157. The volunteer weeks and courses at SCW (attracting people from a range of backgrounds and occupations from all over the world) has brought great opportunities for learning for the children. They are able to learn directly from visitors, seeing every one as a potential new teacher, and having the confidence to talk and ask questions, at the same time as sharing their own knowledge. It has become clear that for our children to create a more sustainable future that they can in turn pass to their children, friends and wider community, they need to live sustainably. SCW offers many opportunities for this.

Community Outreach and Voluntary Work

158. The residents of SCW have a significant positive effect on the local community through the activities and groups we are involved with, some of which are listed below.
159. **Green Hill Arts Centre** - Fern works voluntarily at the Green Hill Arts centre in Moretonhampstead.
160. **Moretonhampstead Primary School** - Mel has spent time listening to children read at the local primary school and volunteers on school trips.
161. **Teaching IT to the local community, computer repair & support** – Merlin provides IT tuition and support within the local community by running courses, and IT surgery in conjunction with the Moretonhampstead Development Trust. He also provides computer support to local individuals and community businesses.

- 162. **Woodcraft** – Sharif gives demonstrations to visitors on traditional crafts as well as travelling to shows and craft fairs to demonstrate his skills.
- 163. **Tours/Open days** - Members of SCW regularly give tours to individuals, local groups and organisations such as: Exeter University, Plymouth University, Silvanas Trust, Devon Wildlife Trust, Kingsteignton Conservation Group, and various permaculture student groups. Our Open Day each summer is always well attended.
- 164. **Science Sessions** - Merlin runs science sessions for home educated children at Steward Wood and other locations in the local area.
- 165. **Media and Communication** - Fern has published various articles and photographs about Steward Wood. She continues to give talks, exhibitions and writes about the project. Her work has been shortlisted for various arts awards in relation to her photography.
- 166. **Nature Culture Network** - Daniel, Son, John and Ollie are involved in facilitating gatherings and events in nature connection and the mentoring of young people.
- 167. **Skills Exchange** - Community members often exchange skills with people in the local community as well as each other. For example we employed the services of a Tree Surgeon in exchange for a bowl turning course, employed James Priest (Sociocracy Trainer) in exchange for web hosting, and wood processing in exchange for spoon carving.

Within SCW we exchange music lessons, herbal medicine, labour, counselling, child care, tools, plumbing skills, building skills, electrical skills, IT skills, art and crafts as well as knowledge sharing. A lot of these skills have been learnt though living at Steward Wood. As well as being active in the wider community this way of living enables us to be more resourceful in the way we live.

- 168. **Tanglewood Project** - John has been involved in the Tanglewood project for many years now, both in a voluntary and paid position. The Tanglewood Project is an emerging charity, whose values are rooted in community; connecting people of all ages and abilities to share traditional skills and knowledge, providing opportunities in celebrating the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Devon. Traditional round houses are built in school grounds as outdoor learning spaces while bringing in local craftsmen and women to continue mentoring the children after the structures are complete. The structure is called a reciprocal roofed roundhouse, as every beam supports one another. This metaphor of mutual support is the underpinning ethos of The Tanglewood Project.
- 169. **Community Growing Day** - Every Tuesday we invite people from the wider and local community to get involved in our Growing Area. Our garden (with easy access from the Wray Valley Trail) is a place where people can come and grow, learn and interact with a working permaculture project. This to be a great asset to the National Park and wider community. Realisation of the MoreFood project will expand these benefits.

170. Natasha Mihailovic, an Exeter resident, explains what she gains from being involved in the Growing Day:
- “Attending the growing day at Steward Wood gave me the opportunity to learn about permaculture growing methods and to witness the amazing biodiversity of a natural, chemical-free environment. I have never seen a slow-worm before, but in the Growing Area I saw three in one morning! I also had the chance to talk with Community members about their way of life and the values which inspire them and the Community. In addition to learning about food production, visiting the Wood has given me the opportunity to learn other practical skills, such as the use of maul, hatchet and machete for chopping logs and kindling. I hope that on future visits I will continue to gain the practical skills and knowledge needed to live a sustainable and self-reliant woodland life, and to draw inspiration from the dedication and enthusiasm of Community members.”*
171. **Chagfood** - Daniel volunteers with this local growing project.
172. **Festival talks, workshops & demonstrations held by members of SCW**
Sonia, John and Ollie offer free workshops and talks at festivals based on nature connection and living in community on the land, as well as holding a space where people can come and peruse information and photos and ask questions about home education, wild food and medicine, community life, forest gardening, food growing, forest management, communication techniques, appropriate technology and self sufficiency ... and sign up for more in depth courses held at the woodland.
173. **Healing Hedgerow Workshops** - People come on the Healing Hedgerow walks and talks at festivals and learn to identify, sustainably harvest & preserve their own health tonics and elixirs from Mother Nature. Individuals are also given the opportunity to purchase some of the finest, home made, sustainably wildcrafted, hedgerow preserves made from the plant life at Steward Wood, enabling people who do not ordinarily have access to organic wilderness the opportunity to keep their families healthy and nourished while supporting this valuable project.
174. **Primitive Fire Making** - Enables participants to experience the ancient art of fire by friction, learn to identify suitable materials from the landscape around them, get hands on experience of the ember making process and finally ignite tinder bundles. Ancient Bow and hand drill techniques are covered. Participants often report higher self esteem and feelings of empowerment after such an experience.
175. **Survival Shelter Building** - John covers the principles of building real life survival shelters from just the natural materials around, incorporating tree and plant identification. These shelters have and will continue to save lives around the world.
176. **Nature Connection** - Through games and activities that enhance sensory awareness, adults and children learn to move practically unseen in nature thus deepening their connection and improving the chances of close encounters with wildlife.

177. **Bird Language Interpretation** - Ollie introduces the concept of bird language and how to begin the journey into the secret world of the birds. Learn how an understanding of bird vocalisations, behaviour and pattern recognition enables us to reconnect to the natural world and read the landscape around us.
178. Sonia, John and Ollie are invited back year after year to many different festivals to create beautiful hand built spaces and run workshops, walks and talks as the organisers know that they offer a unique opportunity for customers to connect with nature and learn traditional and ancient skills and crafts that are all but lost and forgotten. Delivered in an authentic way as these skills and techniques are practised daily through life at SCW.

Courses

179. See the Business Strategy section above for a list of courses we run from the woods.
180. Course participants who come to learn at Steward Wood come away not just with new skills but an insight into community life that often leaves a lasting impact. Whilst here they engage in activities such as: cooking on an open fire, chopping wood, nature connection, plant identification, low-impact structure maintenance, sustainable energy harnessing. This holistic nature of learning and how we live on the land adds to the experience and students often come away with a deep understanding of our land based way of life.
181. Recent course participant Adrian Lloyd expresses his view as a Headteacher on the educational value of SCW (see Appendix 16 for the complete letter):

“Much has been written about the educational value of time spent in woodlands, but I know that Steward Community Woodland takes learning in the great outdoors to a whole new level. Just the diversity of the programme that is and can be offered at the wood not just for it’s residents, but for the local and wider community as a whole. I know the local community are extremely supportive of the work that the residents share with them and feel sure that they would be really missed if they were not there.

On a personal level, I was extremely fortunate to spend some quality time at Steward Community Woodland at the end of March this year, visiting and learning from one of the residents, Sharif Adams. Sharif is an outstanding green wood craftsman and an exceptional bowl turner, and I visited to see if some of his skills would improve my own turning – which they did immensely I’m pleased to say! I received a really warm welcome from all of the residents that I had the opportunity to meet, who were most enthusiastic in sharing their woodland life with me. I was also really pleased to be given a guided tour of some of the woodland facilities – there is so much resourcefulness that could be shared about living a low impact life and making a positive impact on the landscape that it almost seems unethical not to allow the residents to share it?

I wholeheartedly lend my support to this planning application and hope that I am able to visit again in the future, maybe with some of the young people that I care for so they too can be inspired and learn from the residents of Steward Community Woodland.”

182. Here are two testimonials from participants on Ollie's Bird Language Interpretation and Nature Connection courses:

"I became really happy when practicing the techniques Ollie shared with us, fox walking, owl eyes and deer ears. Especially the owl eyes I think. I found these really awareness expanding, and just became really happy, also happy because much hope was born in me. Some of these 'techniques' are really ways of genuine meditation, and the attitude of gratitude and appreciation, which seem to be the main motivations, guided everything. Really genuinely major and life changing experiences and teachings for those who find themselves in the right place at the right time. Thank you." - Anna Morgan

"Thank you for such a deep and reviving experience. The skills you have taught I am sure will help me experience a greater sense of connection with a far more vivid life. I feel I have also learned a deeper connection with myself and my emotions which will help me in all my life relationships with others." - Derek Kirkup

Online Presence

Website

183. Our website (stewardwood.org) receives 200-300 unique visitors per day on average, which shows that a large number of people are learning from us.

Facebook

184. Our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/stewardcommunitywoodland) set up in July 2013 has over 650 active followers and is increasing by the day.

Blogs

185. Sharif's blog has received over 35,000 hits and continues to become increasingly popular, again this is another example of people learning from our activities on site.

Media

186. As well as internet coverage, there are articles about the project on occasion in newspapers and magazines, and reports on television or radio. For example, there was an article on Sharif's bowl turning skills recently in 'Living Woods' magazine.

Higher Education

187. Over the years we have had many students visit Steward Wood writing papers and dissertations from Permaculture to Anthropology. We recently had a visit from a group of undergraduate students from the University of Exeter who were doing a project on 're-orienting education'. They were investigating how education could/should be different from the standard English schooling model.

188. Here is the response from tutor Laura Moralee on their visit:

“My students had a fantastic time on Wednesday, thank you so much for giving them an experience that they will not forget. They told me that they thought about some things in ways that they had never done before as a result of their visit. That's a real success; their undergraduate education is all about just that. Thank you.” - Laura Moralee, University of Exeter 07/06/2014

189. Projects like SCW enable students in the UK to observe/study communal land based living, wildlife, conservation & permaculture without the need to travel abroad. This in itself reduces the carbon footprint of students and gives them the possibility to directly learn and engage with a community without the need for sufficient funds.

Volunteers

190. SCW is a WWOOF host (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) and accommodates volunteers through the year from all over the world. They engage in a spectrum of activities such as:

- permaculture food growing and land use
- community dynamics
- renewable energy and appropriate technology
- building dwellings using low-impact materials
- small-scale woodland management
- experiential and home education
- Sociocracy

191. As with course participants, volunteers often come away with many new skills and experiences.

Visitors

192. We set out in Appendix 17 a summary of the record of all activities provided for the public at the land as required by our previous planning permission.

Vehicle Usage and Access

193. Our Mission Statement says:

- “We are reducing dependency on fossil fuels and exploring alternatives.”

194. Our Aim in this area is:

- “To explore and promote innovative, sustainable practices and ways of living.”

195. This section shows how we are meeting the criteria in DMD30 paragraph (i).

196. Part of SCW is a section of disused railway track that once served Moretonhampstead. It is now part of the Wray Valley Trail with designated parking areas and a turning circle. The area from the road to the end of the parking zone is tarmaced. At the point where the railway track crossed the A382, there is a highly visible entrance which provides safe access to and from the road. There is ample parking on the track for the limited number of vehicles used by the project and for our neighbours. We have granted rights to all three of the neighbouring cottages allowing them access and parking.
197. Our section of parking on the track has 20 parking spaces.
198. We are committed to reducing vehicle usage with the following objectives:
- * Continue to increase levels of self-sufficiency on the land thus reducing the need to travel.
 - * Encourage walking, cycling and public transport use among ourselves and our visitors. Now community path and cycleway along the route of the disused railway track between Moretonhampstead and Bovey Tracey which makes it easier and safer to make journeys by foot or bicycle.
 - * Use sustainable bio-fuels (eg reused veg oil) when possible.
 - * No petrol cars.
 - * Co-ordinating and sharing journeys.
199. We use a quad bike and 4-wheel drive vehicles on occasion to transport materials up to the Glade along the hardcore track from the carpark area.

Renewable Energy

200. Our Mission Statement says:
- “We are reducing dependency on fossil fuels and exploring alternatives.”
201. Our Aim in this area is:
- “To explore and promote innovative, sustainable practices and ways of living.”
202. This section shows how we are meeting the criteria in DMD30 paragraphs (i), (ii), (iv), (v), and (vi).
203. See Appendix 5 for our detailed report on this subject.

Conclusion

204. SCW is a success story and an asset to the National Park. The project is meeting its Aims in full and is fulfilling DNPA policies as well as the NPPF. It is demonstrating much needed solutions to the huge environmental challenges we face.
205. We urge the National Park Authority to actively support this project by allowing its continuation with permanent planning permission.