

BCC Strategy Day 23rd October 2021

Welcome and apologies for absences: Susanne Kelly, Clare Stone, Mary Grimson, Simon Thompson. (Also, Paul Coleman, who was to be Facilitator.)

Introductions and hope for the day:

We welcomed Sasha East, who is a new Bradwell Committee member and Trustee, and everyone gave a short intro into their connection with Othona. There were many hopes for the day, including a tangible outcome, practical results, no point in reinventing things so should learn from the previous strategy outcomes, see what we have achieved and aim for 'SMART' targets with specific aims.

Richard led the opening prayer

Context of Strategy-looking back

We decided that we would shorten the meeting and finish after lunch rather than stick to the original meeting plan with an afternoon session. This was in part due to the number of Committee members who were unable to attend and the lack of the facilitator.

We started by watching the video from the 2017/20 strategy report:

<https://youtu.be/xVSV-lfF7HE>

This was not reviewed in 2020 but was reflected on in May of this year during a BCC Zoom Meeting. We looked at our Mission Statement, it was pointed out by Sasha that this was not on our website and should be displayed. The wording of the first sentence was discussed and the general consensus was that Christian tradition would be much better replaced by Christian Faith-'*Othona is an open and inclusive Community rooted in the Christian faith and drawing on a wealth of other inspirations.*' As this is an Othona-wide statement from Trustees, the BCC recommends this is reviewed by the Trustees.

Reconciliation-

Strategic aim- *To facilitate reconciliation and dialogue both locally and internationally.* This is a key part of our heritage. We have hosted key international groups here before such as - Together Beyond Words (who run training courses for Arab Palestinian and Jewish women to promote empowerment of women and healing of emotional wounds). However, we can also consider more local groups such as Survivors together and YMCA as those requiring the space and peace of Othona to promote personal reconciliation. There are also conflicts with the Othona Community as a whole and this should be a key part of our mission. Do we do enough to promote the work here to the wider Community, how could this be improved? We should be linked with Reconcilers Together- an ecumenical network of Christian organisations across the UK and Ireland comprising St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, St Michaels House at Coventry Cathedral, The Blackley Centre, The Rose Castle Foundation, Corrymeela, Bridge Builders Ministries, Place for Hope, and the Archbishop of Canterbury's Reconciliation Ministry. Should we invite groups that are unreconciled eg; gangs? The whole process of living, eating and working together can help to promote reconciliation. We have been involved in external groups over the years such as Greenbelt and more recently CTEEL (Churches together in Essex & East London). We should look again at multifaith groups. We did have Community Payback

volunteers coming here once a week for a while, this had many benefits but was stopped due to the large numbers coming and the lack of supervision from the person bringing them. Perhaps it could be restarted but with a better structure.

Christian Spirituality-

Strategic aim - *Christian based spirituality will continue to remain at the heart of Othona Bradwell in Community Life.*

The Christian core is very important but we shouldn't be over zealous in forcing it on people or should we be more obvious in our message? It is not compulsory to attend Chapel but we should facilitate a safe space for people to explore their spirituality. Sometimes chaos can result from allowing anyone to lead a Chapel, this is where the Chaplain role is very important to provide guidance. Whilst people are here it was felt that they should have some exposure to Christian teachings otherwise they may leave without having a chance to meet with God. It was felt that children should be encouraged to lead/participate in Chapel services.

We have been involved with the Bradwell Pilgrimage/Festival over many years and this is something we should continue to support. It was discussed that the Trustees appear to look at financial accountability very stringently but not whether we as a charity are delivering on our Mission aims. Sasha asked the question about who does the Charity seek to serve? The members? The virtual community? Anyone coming here?

Education-

Strategic aim - *To be a centre of education, in its broadest sense.*

We have for many years had several primary schools visit for residential stays however the number has dwindled. Geraldine helped with the production of a leaflet specifically aimed at schools. This was to be distributed at the Schools Pilgrimage this year but this was cancelled due to covid. Can we offer packages to entice new schools here? We have the space but lack staffing for activities that other residential places can offer. Richard questioned whether Schools work is something we should be pursuing currently as we lack the right leads. There are wider educational programs we can promote; we have a University Filmmaking study group coming here in February/March for a residential trip. The lecturers coming will deliver the educational component whilst we supply the food/Centre.

Other ideas/thoughts:

- Include young people in all aspects of Community life
- Look at specific needs- special needs schools
- Look at the educational content of our own programme

A local resource-

Strategic aim - *To be a local resource, integrated into the Christian centre of Bradwell-on-Sea, sharing in the wider life of the community*

It is seen as a local resource now more than ever. The main emphasis is us going into the local community. This includes helping at the local shop, giving concerts at the local Church and carehome, use of the outdoor Centre at Bradwell Waterside and a more recent partnership with RAF Bradwell Bay preservation society.

We did have links with the local scouts and guides and should consider renewing these. We do have links with the local school. We should look to increase our links in the wider Maldon

area, we do use local contractors where possible. Currently Roo produces an article for the Village View, should we try to get this into the local Southminster/Mayland news?

Communication-

Strategic aim - To effectively communicate both within and without the Community

This was an area that was most lacking in 2017; the Community likes to be listened to. A communication strategy was put into place including Martin Riemer to run his virtual events. Tim suggested that maybe it would be worthwhile to employ a part-time publicity person to cover both Centres, helping to raise our profile in the wider world. We discussed whether the current staffing models are sufficient.

There have been improvements to communication over the last 4 years, the new website is a great resource, we have made more use of social media and the Civi database for emailing.

Resources-

Strategic aim - To provide sufficient and sustainable resources to deliver the strategic plan.

There is a lot to celebrate from the work since the last Strategy meeting. We need resources to support the strategy. We discussed the role of the person who will eventually replace Tim, a Warden or Manager. They will have to be a hands-on manager. We discussed whether to have another strategy meeting but decided that whoever takes over should be involved in making future plans.

Meeting closed for lunch

These are some of the ideas/thoughts from the meeting from Steve Barnes:

Reconciliation:

- This is an essential component of Othona's original vision.
- We have great desire to be reconciled with our West Dorset sibling.
- St Ethelburger's Centre for Reconciliation in London has links with a number of other organisations with similar aim. We could add Othona to their network.
- Might we replay Norman's tactic of directly inviting groups that need reconciling. Someone suggested, not entirely joking, leavers and remainers!
- Be a place, once again, where folk in the criminal justice system could work out their community service hours.

Christian Spirituality:

Church says, "Come and be like us!"

Othona says, "Come and be you!"

There is a confusion of Othona mission statements. Some of us prefer the term "Christian faith" to "Christian tradition" as in the statement.

Trustee meetings demand financial accountability. Every meeting should show similar interest in accountability to our mission.

Training of clergy is in the trust deed. Many clergy do actually find our way here for various reasons and in the future this may even become formalised if Chelmsford diocese sells its retreat centre at Pleshey.

Education:

- Bradwell is good at being a welcoming host, giving space 'to be'. I liked the idea of giving space to specialist groups (autism support, for instance) who may be looking for an 'away' venue.
- Approach church schools, slated for lack of residential opportunities and Christian teaching.
- Many folk, especially when young, have picked up new skills at Bradwell (i.e, cooking). To be encouraged in future.

A local Resource

- re-kindle link with Guides/Scouts Bob-a-job equivalent.

...Other things that sparked my imagination will, no doubt, be picked up in the minutes. One thing that stuck in all our minds was Sasha's question, applicable in almost all situations: "Who are the beneficiaries?" (Who are we doing it for?). A good question to keep us focussed on our mission.

These are the additional comments from Ruth Bull:

Roo shares that this is her last few months as BCC Chair - the momentum for the direction of Bradwell, and for the Bradwell Strategy is now moving into new hands.

All our Members and friends should be enabled to share with us the successes we have achieved since we asked for Community views. Most of these successes were noted under each topic we discussed at this Strategy Meeting - it would be a great Christmas gift to members if we could list - or even better do some kind of YouTube or presentation - what we are celebrating. This includes committed staff team, great volunteers, developing our EVS programme, fundraising and all sorts of online activities to sustain Othona through the Lockdown; bursaries; upholding our green and sustainable policies, including scoping out and completing our Energy Project; much improved Health and Safety features; building up a good and responsive Programme; bringing in a wider spectrum of groups that reflect our strategy including Reconciliation and Christian Spirituality; working with our Diocese; completing and using the Education Building for exhibitions, art, education and accommodation - a look back at our BCC minutes will reveal more that we may now take as part of our everyday work.

We have opportunities, which we must bring to fruition to fulfill our purpose even though they are financially challenging: we have Planning Permission to build an accommodation extension to the Norman Motley Building, with an initial sketched internal layout by Susanne for accommodation with en-suites to be inclusive of people of all ages and abilities; and we are working towards planning permission for a second Wind Turbine. This gives us the potential to be carbon neutral. not only saving money and CO2 emissions but to be a real example and attract students and visitors.

We have concerns - Bradwell B and the Government desire to support "carbon neutral" nuclear energy; and achieving the right balance between the face-to-face work of Othona with the need to bring in the money to do the job.

Strategic thinking is key to the way we work at Bradwell, moving from far-ranging vision towards long-term strategic planning, then taking realistic achievable bite-sized projects without taking our eyes off the vision - that is hard to do in a succession of overlapping Trustee, BCC and local Management regimes - but all spring from the Purpose, the Calling, the Mission and Objects of the Community.

Business Planning necessarily arises from strategic thinking - the Who What When Where How must include the right structure, and sustaining a sufficient financial footing for us to build upon.

As society moves forward, eyes are open to matters not seen by Norman Motley, so we must look back at the principles, forward to the practicalities. Still we have wars and all manner of national and international conflicts. In addition, people are emerging from Covid with new views on what is important - including spiritual yearnings, a sense of exhaustion and the need for renewal of individuals and communities. We also have Climate Change - and how better to engage with young people than for Othona to offer a connection with what really matters, through our Green credentials and the space for young people to meet and explore the opportunities to combat climate change?

Othona is rooted in Christian faith with arms open to welcome people of all faiths and none, all ages, abilities and backgrounds, so that we can build Community at Centres, and Virtually, that spreads from Othona out into the wider world. I don't think Jesus ever said that working towards God's kingdom would be easy, but somehow with His love "My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

The comments below were submitted for discussion at the Strategy meeting by Simon Thompson:

As to thoughts for the strategy meeting:- like the rest of the country and the rest of the world, the ongoing effects of COVID have made many re-evaluate their lives. People are now moving to be with family, are looking to work part-time or even early retirement and thinking more about improving their lives rather than improving their bank balances. The addition of the continuing awareness of climate change issues is also causing a lot of people to rethink how they live. Add to that the issues that EU exit has brought and there are a lot of people who want to look at a different way to do things. I believe that Othona now should be looking to bring ideas and options to as many people as possible - continuing with the basic ideas of Work, Worship, Study and Play but also look more deeply into sustainability (how we can, as a country and as individuals, better live within our own environment), reconciliation (living as a wider community by respecting others beliefs and ways of life) and learning/education (making us all think how we can use existing and future resources better to improve our lives). I believe we also need to consider how we can better help those with care issues and especially those suffering with poor mental health. COVID has shown us all how vulnerable we can be as individuals and as a nation - there are many who feel that they have been robbed of two years of their life, even if they have not directly suffered illness or bereavement. Othona can be a place where those fears and concerns can start to be healed. This is not an easy thing to do as we are not, and should

not be, a direct care institution, but I feel that it is right at the core of 'a place to simply be'. Obviously this all goes hand in hand with the fact that Othona Bradwell needs to be able to meet its financial obligations - again, not an easy matter.

Would it also be possible to consider looking at other outside projects that Othona Bradwell could be associated with - for example, I mentioned to Roo on the phone a community farm on a smallholding in Witnesham (just north of Ipswich) that we have become associated with - links are www.greenacressmallholding.co.uk and

www.facebook.com/Greenacres-Smallholding-110001007943544 This is a project that is bringing back traditional and sustainable livestock farming whilst also revitalising hedgerows, exploring renewable energy sources and getting people to engage with the land. I am sure that there are many such small projects in East Anglia (look at the number of plastic free refillable shops and stalls that have sprung up) that could be associated with us at Othona. Just a thought.