

**Othona Community**  
**Bradwell Centre Management Committee**  
**Zoom meeting, Tuesday 4th March 2025**

**Minutes**

*[notes in brackets and italics are subsequent developments or edits]*

**Welcome, Introductions, Apologies and Prayer**

- Apologies from Clare Stone and Inken. Susanne thought she'd be late - but arrived a few minutes later.
- Acknowledged Michael Dyer's resignation and promised to look after our committee members/trustees better next time.
- Welcomed Maria Freeman to her first BCC as a link trustee.
- Mark Ringrose has become Chair of Trustees, replacing Clare Gough. We have appreciated his company since the summer and he now goes with our blessing. As much as he would like to be at this meeting he said, technically, that he should not be [*He needs to be seen as neutral*]. Mark wished everyone a good meeting and signed off.
- This now leaves a vacancy on the BCC, as is the case at OWD. The question arises, do we need a 4th member? There is no urgency to appoint and it's an opportunity to look at our skills gap. This could be in relation to particular facets of governance. [*And we don't have a book-keeper/finance wizard*]

Steve said a welcome prayer

Present - Emma, Steve, Mark (at the beginning) , Nicholas, Maria, Debbie, Richard, Chris. Geraldine and Susanne.

**Recruitment of next warden/s**

From the 11 applications, 4 were shortlisted but interviews whittled this down to one contender for manager. Two others have potential for joining the core. Richard and Debbie will follow them up [*and have done. One has responded, Winnie, a young woman moving here from Hong Kong this month. She was a VAP in 2022 so knows what she's coming to.*]

The remaining candidate for manager/warden is named David Jenkins. He visited in January, while Debbie and Richard were away, and Kirstie and Chris gave a positive account. He has been interviewed on Zoom and is attending the working weekend (Fri - Sat). He is currently working in the Netherlands - seems keen. If anyone is available, please come along at the weekend. Steve, Al, Kate, Jonney, Jan, Trev, Sandra, Jan and Richard Marshall are among those already intending to be there. Sat evening, after David has left, would be a good time to gather everyone's impressions

Background to David Jenkins. Started with faith – He is a Quaker but has experience and understanding in Protestantism, contemplative Islam and understands the importance of an open church to make friendships across boundaries. He hasn't led worship yet but is willing to learn how to do this. He has had a long career as a Design and Technology teacher. He's a carpenter. He chose to go into career path as a "Super Teacher" and had responsibility for signing off training for Health and Safety so he is aware of safeguarding issues. He has overseen work going on in a workshop environment and has lived in community in the Netherlands. He has run the café which has been open to members and the local community and has had responsibility for providing food and drink

for 50+ people. When he saw the advert he felt strongly that the role at Othona is something he has been building up to. He applied for Deputy Centre Manager role but was considered qualified enough to be the manager. He said he would be interested in that if offered.

*[Following on from that, David impressed the folk attending the working weekend, and we him, his references are positive, he was interviewed the following weekend, offered the job and accepted. Reports here. We are now negotiating start dates, and sorting other paperwork.]* Paul Lucas is leading Easter weekend and, after formal interview procedures *[now completed]*, will stay and work alongside David for the ensuing 6 months.

**[ACTION: Being new to Othona David will need lots of support and encouragement from us and the whole community.]**

### **Recruitment of a caterer**

- Maria, Debbie and Steve have pilfered OWD's ad and modified it for Bradwell [20250223 Job advert - Caterer Othona Bradwell](#).
- Currently there are 3 documents for the role of caterer which need to be adjusted; a long advert, a short advert and a full job description (in shared folder in Google Drive).
- It is proposed to advertise in The Lady, Diggers and Dreamers, Oscar and The Friend.
- Emma suggested approaching catering colleges as there might be graduates available, or students needing work placements. There are colleges in Chelmsford, South Essex, Colchester, Harlow and Milton Keynes that we could approach for starters). We would need to think about the age range as lots of students would only be 18+. They might need some Level 2 or 3 placements which could be helpful in the short term. However, for the longer term, students usually don't finish their courses until May /June which might not be ideal.
- A question was posed about whether there is a collective way of getting in touch with a range of colleges. **ACTION: Emma to enquire, followed by some of us approaching our local college if we have one.**

### **Core Accommodation**

It is acknowledged that more adequate accommodation is needed for long-term core members. It is important for people to have somewhere to retreat to and get away from the crowd from time to time. Reasonable accommodation is essential for recruitment and retention. A generous £50k has been donated to get this project moving.

A number of ideas are being investigated; at trustee level this was primarily taken on by Chris and Mark who are looking into location, type of structure, number of units, and possible modifications of or extensions to existing buildings. Chris has devised a scoring system but hasn't yet had the opportunity to draft it.

Several points and ideas were raised at this meeting:

- At mention of the Bank, Susanne cried, "Sterilised!" (Translation/explanation needed, Susanne!). Some walls in The Bank are solid breeze-block, other sections are falling apart. The toilets and showers have recently been removed. And it provides useful storage at present.
- The Solar building has existing planning permission for an extension (a wing to the east of the lounge to mirror the existing rooms to the west. As it stands, it would possibly make reasonable core accommodation.
- The site of the former chicken coup/lamp shed wins a lot of approval. There has been a building on this spot for a long time. Its footprint is very roughly 3 metres by 7.5 or 10 feet by

25 feet [*the size of the current tool shed?*]. Planning permission is always a problem and maybe a conversion of an existing building would be more likely to get approval..

- The Lower field hut has showers, toilets and some kitchen facilities. Some suggest it is under-utilised but Debbie and Richard emphasised its usefulness for school and art groups.
- Perhaps we can repurpose something we already have? The deputy's flat perhaps? Is there any mileage in putting in an upstairs, e.g. an attic room that would create a third room, on a par with the warden's home. Or possibly two rooms could be added which would be separate from rooms downstairs.
- There was then a suggestion that a second storey could be put on the whole of Medlar Corner. Susanne said it this might be possible as it has well-built foundations. Chris has a structural engineering friend who could look at the drawings and say whether load capacity is feasible. **ACTION: Find the drawings (Richard?) and Chris to consult his engineer friend.**
- Plans have already been shared in a previous meeting for a possible conversion of Medlar Corner to provide en-suite facilities and modest kitchen facilities, but at the cost of one bedroom.
- Perhaps we could 'trade' our planning permission for the Solar building with a development with The Bank, or on its site. Susanne drew us back to the need for a flood risk assessment.
- A question was asked about whether the south end of our site is outside of the flood risk zone? Richard shared the most recent flood risk assessment and the answer is Yes, the south end of our site (nearest the road entrance) is outside the flood zone.
- The Salvation Army have erected rows of prefabricated pods somewhere. We have no idea of price. Susanne said drainage would be an issue, [*but this is true of whatever solution we choose.*]
- Susanne said all ideas must take into account a flood risk assessment and she thinks a new building would not pass and, indeed, existing buildings may not pass either. All suggestions would also be subject to planning permission. Maldon council is aware of the importance of the natural environment so take planning permission seriously and want to avoid over-development of this sensitive location.
- In response to that, it was suggested that as Othona uses St Peter's Chapel every day, all year round, a thriving, sustainable community is essential for the upkeep of this historic building, and to prevent it falling into dis-use. We are not asking to increase the number of residents on the site but merely improving the accommodation of the present number in order to ensure our presence into the future.

### Catch-up on previous minutes

Fire and flood evacuation policies ([Evacuation Policy.docx](#)):

This policy is reasonably comprehensive, especially regarding making electric supply safe. It is supplemented with helpful photos. Some work still needs to be done to locate and document stop-cocks and isolation valves. Plans/maps would also be useful. Gas supply no longer applies; we don't have any. [*Oil for the generator?*]

A lot of the information exists in a few people's heads. Richard acknowledges a need for documentation but admits a lot of info is "soft", people stuff which is difficult to write down, i.e. nothing can replace an in-person tour of the site with new managers, hence the hope for a long enough hand-over.

One suggestion is to record information on SharePoint, on Microsoft Store(?).

### Fire Compliance

We have conflicting advice from the local fire brigade and the fire inspector. A few actions remain outstanding and need a decision on:

- In Solar, the windows between rooms and the corridor should be locked shut (although the fire assessment people said this was not needed). These doors and

windows are not fire-rated so there will be no benefit in locking them. The corridor has a sprinkler system and the travel distances are not too far, either way along the corridor to an exit. In addition, the rooms get very hot in summer and need ventilation. We therefore agreed that locks are not required.

- Install fire doors in the lower field hut. The two bedrooms and central space access into a short vestibule with an outside door. Installing fire doors would be possible but expensive, with limited benefit. It was also felt that people would wedge these doors open.
- Another condition is to provide vibrating (fire alarm) pillows for people who are deaf. Questions about how many would be needed and where would they be stored were discussed. It was agreed that the risk for deaf people would be covered by a management plan where someone is allocated the job to look out for people with any disability including deafness and to make sure they are in a safe place if there is a fire.

Susanne to look at British standards document and other relevant documents and will advise later if there are any further obligations we should be aware of.

Service Contract for the heating and energy system:

Kevin's 3-year service contract is due for renewal. He is reducing his workload and offering only a one year contract in future. Is this time to look for an alternative contractor? They are difficult to find for this remote location. It was agreed that, for continuity, we should keep it going for another year. In the meantime, Cathrin Jones knows of a contractor who may be interested in the work. **ACTION: Chris to invite him to visit and tender for the work.**

It would also be helpful if Kevin can walk someone through the system and this information recorded on an iPad. Maria invited us to be conscious of what's in it for Kevin if he is asked to write everything down? He has given us lots of information already, including the Operational and Maintenance manual which will be very useful.

Google Drive

Bradwell's G-Drives are in a mess! It is difficult to locate files. Chris and Inken started to look at this and have a plan to sort everything out. **ACTION: Chris and Inken to continue.**

Sewerage system

Although this was due to have been installed by now, poor weather has held up the contractor on a previous job. In the meantime electricity and mains water have been run to the site. Both will also enhance the convenience of campers and the water means we can develop extra allotment space in the camping field.

**Report from Debbie and Richard** [Bradwell report for BCC 02032025.docx](#)

Taken as read, with the following extra information:

- Explanation of VAP fees:  
The scheme paid 500 euros a month to the volunteers from the French government and we were supposed to pay 100 euros but this was waived. VAP was taking 300 euros from each volunteer per month for visa and other associated costs such as advertising and meetings etc. This was thought exorbitant. A one-off charge would be better. Our volunteers stopped paying the charge. This caused problems with the organisation. Going forward there is a suggestion that we pay VAPs for sponsorship. Either we do this ourselves or negotiate with

them - e.g. 200 euros per month per volunteer. We also need to tighten up recruitment procedures. The volunteers can be useful for 6 months but need to be confident that they are a good fit for Othona. It is too late to go forward with this for 2025 but something to consider for 2026..

We will host one work camp in the summer as we have such a long-standing relationship with the organisation. (first camp was 1948).

- Chris suggested that committee members could take responsibility for specific issues while a new warden becomes established.  
Susanne said she will follow up with the planning for both accommodation and wind turbines.  
Richard mentioned that the Committee used to have a treasurer when he first joined Othona but he has been doing all the finance for most of his time as warden. It would be appropriate for someone to pick this up to assist the next warden. We can co-opt a book-keeper; and it has been said that anyone who can read a spreadsheet can do it!  
Steve will draw up a list of areas of interest and skills of committee members and, after conversations with them, suggest what they think they can help with.
- Richard will be on BBC Politics East on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> March.
- Essex Green weekend – Matt and Debbie have done some grant applications together but have not been successful yet. In previous years there were climate specific grants and we were in the right position to receive these at the time. They have reapplied for lottery fund and have had a reply asking for more evidence of local impact so they are hopeful about this application. [*The result of this has just been returned to us, sadly, again in the negative.*]
- For Environment Week, the planned speaker can only make a few days. A number of people have been contacted who might be willing to do different things on different days. It was felt this will make it more manageable and hopefully attract day visitors too.
- Unfortunately, mouse droppings were in evidence the day we were inspected for food hygiene. The Paperwork was the best it has ever been but our usual 5 star rating was reduced to 3. The team has done a deep clean and want to make sure everything is satisfactory before having a re-assessment.

#### **Matters arising from Trustee residential meeting, February 14 -16**

- Website development:  
Was due to go live in early January but not working yet. Still under development
- Plot of land in East End Road:  
We haven't heard from Mrs Reeve. Warren Douglas (trustee lawyer) is going to request from Othona's solicitors, Hunt and Hunt, to confirm the termination of the old licence and initiate drafting of a new one, or the sale of the plot. [*Hunt and Hunt have not replied to our requests but Steve is going to call on Mrs Reeve on Saturday 22nd March*]

#### **Programme**

- Dave James's memorial ceremony on Saturday 22nd March. Steve and Richard Srms will be doing the service. Chris is leading a band of musicians and Nicholas and Eleanor will be in the kitchen. More help will be needed with cleaning and preparing etc. during the week prior to the 22<sup>nd</sup> March.

- Leaving party for Debbie and Richard, w/e 30 May -1 June (end of half term week and w/e after Green Weekend)?. Debbie wants the leaving party to be a thank you for people who have helped with volunteering.
- Any news about Martin Riemer? No. [*As of 15 March he is out of hospital and expecting to come to Dave James's do on the 22nd, accompanied by Marcus and Inken. He is still very unwell, however.*]

Steve suggested if there are any more questions or comments, ask them via WhatsApp or email.

### **Date of next meeting,**

Chris will send us one of his famous spreadsheets.

[*Suggested date of the open Meeting in the summer - Saturday 16 or 23 August. Any bids?*]

### **Prayer and close**