

Chair's Notes - Trustee Weekend 15-17 November

Trustees gathered at Bradwell for the second residential weekend of the year. All of the trustees attended other than Rachel Tocknell who was celebrating her wedding in India, and Michael Dyer who has resigned as trustee. Along with Tony and Katherine, and Richard and Debbie (and the team at Bradwell) we enjoyed the reasonably dry and autumnal setting. .

Worship on the Friday evening was led by the Bradwell management committee, helpfully incorporating the theme of remembrance, with OWD leading a quiet and reflective period of worship on the Saturday morning before the busy-ness and business of the day.

Saturday morning, as usual at these weekends, focussed on the operations and activities of the two centres. Bradwell reported on a successful summer programme, aided by the recovered and upgraded yurts. The variety of events and activities, and the range of groups and individuals attending was encouraging. Work on the replacement sewage system is now clear to proceed, with work hopefully starting in February 2025. Trustees also spent time considering the urgent need to increase the quantity and improve the quality of core accommodation on the site. There are no easy answers, and further work by the local management committee to investigate options was agreed.

OWD also reported on a busy summer programme, work on sprucing up community house and action to address roof repairs to address leaks. Tony commented on a new initiative of leading a zoom book group, which has been well received and a helpful way to support the wider Othona network. A planning application to address the need for more core accommodation has been submitted (thank you to all who contributed and enabled this to happen).

Trustees also heard about the behind the scenes but vital work of maintaining safety and safeguarding at both centres through reports from the lead trustees for both areas (Dan Dutfield - Safety, Mark MacDonald - Safeguarding). The Community Health and Safety Policy was reviewed and approved. Progress on implementing a new website for Othona is nearing completion (with a fair wind it will be in place by the end of December). Whilst progress has been slower than expected trustees agreed it was important to take time to get it right given the importance of being able to take bookings!

The afternoon sessions on Saturday were taken up with further conversations about governance of the community, bringing together discussions that have been started about membership, legal structures and charitable objects. It was helpful to have this discussion in person and good progress was made clarifying key issues and thinking about what to do next. A small group of trustees was tasked with doing some more exploration and thinking but with the aim of reporting back in February with definitive proposals for a way forward. The final session on Saturday looked at money - the financial position of the trust and the centres continues to be healthy - and risks. The risk register was comprehensively reviewed and trustees were re-assured that action to mitigate and minimise risk is in place.

After a busy day evening worship was led by Clare Gough, including an invitation to dream and express our hopes for the future.

Worship on Sunday morning, including the sharing of bread and wine, was led by Jane Pearse, before the final round of business - agreeing action points and priorities. In the immediate future trustees confirmed immediate priorities as recruiting a new Chair, recruiting a new centre manager at Bradwell, implementing the website and continuing to develop proposals for improving core accommodation.