

## Bradwell Online Committee Meeting – 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023

Present – Steve, Debbie, Richard, Phil, Sasha, Clare, Chris, Emma, Geraldine

Apologies - Nicholas, Suzanne, Simon, Mary

Phil started the meeting with a prayer from the Tear Fund lent course about being open to God.

From the last meeting, Steve clarified that Chris is now another link trustee for Bradwell (along with Steve and Sasha) and will be Debbie and Richard's line manager while Steve will remain as the Bradwell Chair.

### **People**

Steve said that at the last meeting, we spoke about staffing and how urgent it is to recruit new people. Debbie said that they are looking for people for two specific roles (Housekeeper and a training post for Christian ministry/hospitality) and gave some information about two women who have expressed interest recently and are planning to visit.

Debbie also said that they have applied to a French Civic service through VAP, which will enable two French volunteers to work at Bradwell for six months for 100 euros per month. Nineteen people have expressed an interest so far. Debbie explained that they are still waiting for approval but hopefully, the screening and appointments can go ahead soon.

Chris Bliss is still volunteering at Bradwell but Debbie said he has been applying for paid work.

Debbie highlighted that the team will need to think about appropriate accommodation for volunteers. The men's block is not really energy efficient so this needs to be looked at if it's going to be used regularly.

### **Fundraising**

Steve highlighted that the committee would still benefit from a finance person. He highlighted that Richard is doing a very good job of this but traditionally, the committee has had a member who supports the team. Sasha volunteered her support as she said fundraising and finance are both integral to her job. To protect her workload, Chris Jones suggested that Sasha could be used as a "value – added" person whom the team can come to for advice about bids and grants.

It was acknowledged that because of past support with funding, access to central funds will not be forthcoming so we will have to focus on fundraising. Clare has a good record in applying for grants and another member of the committee said that Angenita has also been successful in applying for grants too. As there is one trustee place left, it was suggested that perhaps this person, once recruited, could have a fundraising remit and support Bradwell with this.

Fundraising for the accessible facilities was mentioned again. Debbie explained that an Othona member has said she would be willing to donate £10,000 with a few stipulations. However, no-one has been identified to do the work at present.

Chris brought up the need to raise money to replace the septic tank and acknowledged that this would be a "hard sell" despite it being at the heart of environmental issues.

## **Membership**

The discussion moved onto membership and how Phil has been doing a lot of work about this. Debbie mentioned the need to update the current website and how Warren, one of the Trustees has contacted a company to find out how much it will be to migrate the information to a new system. She explained how there are currently two separate websites for Othona but it is considered it might be better if there is a landing page about Othona in general which then directs people to information about the two different sites at Bradwell and Dorset. Currently the team have no idea about how much this might cost and the effects it might have on all the information that is currently held on the database - Drupal

Phil explained that the Trustee, Michael has suggested the team monitors membership payments and numbers. Trustees Clare and Rachel, along with Phil are working on developing a questionnaire to start a dialogue about what membership means to those involved and how to improve in the future. Phil said he would distribute the next draft to the group when available.

## **Safeguarding**

Mark, the Trustee with the safeguarding remit undertook a recent audit and everything was satisfactory. The group had a discussion about a couple of incidents in the summer and whether there was anything that could be learned from these. One incident linked to a long- time member making outdated and inappropriate comments about the behaviour of a young girl. Her parent complained and the issue was dealt with: The person was interviewed and acknowledged the need to change behaviour. As a result, the parent was happy to let her daughter remain at Othona with Debbie and Richard in loco parentis. Chris commented that the historical normalisation of such behaviour is never right but can see that the culture is changing.

Another incident related to a friendship breaking down between the child of a couple who were volunteering and another visitor. The importance of parents being responsible for their children, even if working at the centre, became clear as a result of this issue. Also, how it is important to take time to record any reported issues, however small and this is an area to develop further.

## **Health and Safety**

The team are in the process of appointing a new person to advise on Health and Safety and to support Simon and take some of the pressure off him. This has been accounted for in the revised budget. This person is also qualified to be able to do a food safety audit and support in this area.

There has been a recent fire safety assessment which the team are generally happy about. The Solar Building assessment was re-done and advised that the doors needed closures but should not be fire doors. It was also noted that the fire-resistant standards for the mattresses were of domestic rather than commercial standard. It will cost a lot of money to replace all mattresses. There was a discussion about whether a five-year rolling programme could be implemented to make sure that mattresses were changed regularly for new ones which met the recommended standards. This will be an on-going discussion. Chris suggested that a purchase date could be written on each new mattress so it would be clear when they needed to be replaced.

The Fire Assessor also gave some advice about adding some individual smoke alarms to the core block. There is only one system and exit to this building so it would be beneficial to link smoke alarms with the others in the site, including Debbie and Richard's and Phil's accommodation. Richard will get a quote for this.

## **Training**

All of the team have done safeguarding training, Phil is doing level 3 Food Safety and Hygiene and Richard is doing level 2.

Although everyone has done Fire Marshall training online, it is felt that it will be better to do this in person and also first aid, in the near future.

There was a discussion about lockable bedroom doors as Mark, the trustee mentioned this when he did a tour of the site recently. There are keys available for the doors if people would like them.

## **Strategy**

The team wrote a draft strategy document last November. There are five themes in the paper including aspirations and ideas for the future of Othona in Bradwell. It was suggested that the committee meet together to discuss this paper as it will be important for everyone to participate, contribute and feel they have ownership of this strategy. Phil is happy to facilitate this and said he will send around a doodle poll to find out the best time for the majority of the committee to meet during the Easter weekend. Steve asked the committee to take time to have a look at the document, reflect, make notes and share with the others.

Steve asked about the membership strategy and Phil is currently working on this. He feels that this needs a fresh look and he intends to survey members to identify where and what to focus on in the future.

## **Programme**

Steve asked the team if there were any gaps that needed to be filled for the programme. They suggested that it would be good to have Chaplains available during the summer. Members of the committee gave some ideas about who to ask and Steve said he would investigate further. The team explained that the low VAT status of Othona is due to the Centre providing "Spiritual Succour". The Treasurer of the Trustees, is currently putting together evidence to support this status, including twice daily chapel services and regular chaplaincy. It was suggested that it might be helpful to have a letter of appointment and job description for the role. Debbie said there is a job description which just needs to be updated.

Emma said she would be happy to help with programme planning and implementation as Nicholas is currently in his first year of teaching and is very busy.

Richard said that there will be a lot of good people coming for the up-coming Working Weekend which will mean that a lot of jobs will get done. Richard will be managing the roles and organising tools etc. to ensure everything runs smoothly.

Steve thanked the team for all their hard work in putting the programme together. Chris wondered whether Debbie and Richard thought it might be helpful to try 'rolling programme development' to plan a year ahead in order to help with organisation and time and to possibly get some "big names".

## **Development**

John, the trustee for development, has done an initial site visit. Following a suggestion that it might be helpful to soundproof the kitchen so that meetings can take place at the bottom of the main building, he has run with this idea and recommended that if this takes place, the Bank building could be demolished. It was suggested that Sasha, John and Susanne arrange to meet as soon as possible to discuss this suggestion in more detail (we may wish to reconsider our priorities - see next paragraph)

Currently there are plans to develop the staff and visitor accommodation at Burton Bradstock but there is not much money to develop the Bradwell site. Sasha said she was concerned there was a tight schedule and these plans seem to be going ahead quickly, without opportunities to discuss whether Bradwell might also benefit from more investment to extend the successful work they have been doing to fulfil the Othona mission. Burton Bradstock have been developing these plans for a long time and Bradwell hasn't got a current development strategy since the recent expenditure for the Energy project. However, Sasha said she felt John would like to have the opportunity to meet with the Bradwell team again, as soon as possible, to discuss the way forward. Chris said that the trustees haven't accepted any proposals yet as Clare wants to make sure that any development plans have been costed professionally and their feasibility has been discussed in detail.

It was discussed that it might be helpful if the Trustees looked at Othona as one charity rather than two competing ones. Sasha said that she felt she could already see a positive change in attitudes towards this aim and she has had discussions with Clare about possible governance and strategy for one organisation, rather than two separate entities.

Steve asked the team what would be the main priorities for the grounds and the buildings to make these sustainable. It was suggested that people sustainability was very important and then other areas would include accommodation, the septic tank, a new wind turbine, the roof on the Motley building and minor improvements such as replacing the sealed glass units in the Motley building. Richard said that he had received a quote for approximately £4000 for this and hoped to get the work done before April.

A discussion took place about the wind turbine and how nothing has moved forward since planning permission had been rejected. It was hoped that if the team could get a member of the local council and someone from English Nature to visit Othona, they might appreciate how environmentally friendly the organisation is, especially as the County Council has recently given a grant towards the forthcoming Green Weekend. The team were given six months to launch an appeal after the rejection although a few months have passed by quickly since then. An overspend of £800 had been identified from the initial grant to get planning permission, however, this has since been adjusted. Clare S had been instrumental in obtaining this first grant and felt that this situation was a travesty, particularly when Othona was striving to be sustainable. It was suggested that a letter could be written to the local MP if there was no success with the appeal. Chris mentioned that on the planning portal, it says that wind turbines must not be above 111 metres. He asked about the current one, and whether this could be replaced like for like without planning permission. He asked about how much working life the current one has and was given the answer of around 8 years.

Emma suggested that the local newspaper might be sympathetic and that this could be strategy B if the first Strategy A (i.e., going to the council and English Nature) was not successful. Clare mentioned recent changes in regulations and whether these might be helpful, however Richard said that the planning consultant didn't think these changes would make any difference.

Chris suggested that someone could prepare a letter for the local MP to have ready if needed. Clare said she was willing to write this. Steve also said he could send an email to the MP. Emma suggested that the forthcoming Green Weekend would be a good opportunity to raise awareness about the situation. (N.B. Emma hasn't got an Othona email address yet – Steve to ask Gareth about this).

## **Finance**

Richard had produced a revised budget which he shared with the committee. He talked through the positive figures relating to income over the past year but explained that he had been rather conservative with expenditure for the next financial year due to the current financial crisis. He said that Phi has been doing a good track of food costs. He explained that the budget was higher for core staff as he hoped that Phil could be paid a bit more for all the work he has been doing.

Richard also spoke about repairs and renewals, the service contract and the importance of being prepared for planned and unexpected situations.

## **Next meetings**

A doodle poll will be sent around to the committee members about dates for the next BCC meeting.

Phil will also send one out asap for the Strategy meeting in April.

Richard thanked the committee for their on-going support and Chris and Steve thanked the team for all their hard work and commitment and asked the members to take time to reflect on what makes Bradwell Othona different, before the Strategy meeting.