

Othona Community  
Bradwell Open Meeting  
17<sup>th</sup> August 2024

Who's Who

Steve Barnes opened with a prayer and a welcome to all those onsite and joining remotely.

Richard Sanders introduced the core team and volunteers.

Steve gave an introduction to the committee. Apologies received from Ann Froggatt. Sasha East is standing down.

Michael Dyer, a new Bradwell link trustee was also introduced.

Vacancies

Still looking for core members.

Governance

Health and Safety: Generally everything is going well in this area and training for fire safety, health and safety and food hygiene takes place regularly.

Richard said that there was one recent issue where Pete stood on a nail but was treated successfully by Amanda.

Infrastructure

Yurts have been upgraded recently and have new canvases. These look stunning. Katherine Pixton noted that the darker canvas makes a difference to the light but the skylight still brightens it a lot. Fundraising is ongoing as costs are not yet fully covered. Richard thanked everyone who has contributed so far.

Members of St. Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation have been planting hedges on the 11 acres for visual and wind screening and environmental habitats. They will return this winter to complete the job.

New septic tank has been ordered. This is essential.

New website – awaiting Beta version in November. Plan to release it in December.

Programme

There is scope for interested folk to join the small programme planning team, headed by Debbie. Kate Portal expressed interest if it would be helpful. and would like to know who to contact about programme ideas or how to help. Debbie is the main contact for this.

It was noted by several people that speakers can be difficult to hear at times due to acoustics in the main building. For Roger Noble's talks, during Astronomy Week, the microphone was not working.

Kate Portal highlighted that audibility is a disability issue and improving this is important.

Maria Freeman highlighted that there has been an excellent, varied programme on offer this year. She really enjoyed Amanda's Herb week and is looking forward to Preserves week.

### Pricing

Food inflation has hit. The pricing strategy is for group prices to increase rather than individual rates. Adult day rate is £50. There will also be some additional costs for Christmas or when extra materials are needed.

Susanne Kelly said that reduction for campers is a valuable initiative.

Katherine Pixton commented that having additional numbers has not led to extra facilities for campers and showers have run out of water recently.

Susanne Kelly suggested staggering times of showers.

Trevor Darley commented that there are showers and toilets in the Lower Field hut which could be used as well, but Catarina Riemer mentioned that the Lower Field is always locked so not easy to use.

Chris Jones suggested that a keypad lock could be installed. Another suggestion was that campers could be given keys.

### Money

We are building up some reserves to reinvest in maintenance and infrastructure projects and for emergencies.

Trevor Darley said that letting people know how much is actually needed helps them feel that they might be able to contribute in some way. Richard Sanders said that the Yurts cost £25k: £12k grant was received, £8k received in donations so £5k still needed in fundraising. Richard also let everyone know that most of the costs for the new sewage system have now been covered.

Ruth Gilman commented that beds and mattresses still remain an issue (she finds them too soft). One of her friend's had such a bad time with beds, she said she won't come again.

Maria Freeman asked how are we doing in providing for the core team as they are Bradwell's greatest asset.

Staff Accommodation is the most pressing issue and way off what is available and planned at Burton Bradstock.

Clare Gough said that Trustees recognise how poor the accommodation for the core team is and during the winter, there will be a focus on how to possibly get planning permission for

extra accommodation. She also said that Trustees are aware of the poor acoustics and will be looking for some low-cost upgrades for this and for accommodation.

Susanne Kelly explained that planning is a major issue for the buildings because of the flood risk and concern locally about over-developing the site. In previous engagement with planners, they have expressed the opinion that the site has reached its development capacity.

Dave Bull commented that temporary buildings might be feasible under planning regulations but there will be little chance of getting planning permission for more permanent buildings such as lodges etc.

Susanne Kelly felt that engaging with the local authorities might involve them looking more closely at our operations and we might be forced to take down the yurts after limited permitted periods for camping. The Bank cannot be used for sleeping as we gave up the right to do this for the Solar building. However, toilets and showers in The Bank could perhaps be refurbished to provide extra capacity?

### Membership

Jane Pearce explained that the Legal “members” of Othona are the Trustees and Board members. There are layers of “membership” around this. There have been difficulties in administering paid membership. A working group is looking at a membership policy and will be inviting everyone to renew their membership.

Martin Riemer said that international payments can be awkward and it would be helpful to find a way to make payments easier for overseas members.

Kate Portal expressed interest in the voting process. She noted that local committees were elected at the AGM in the past. She felt that this gave more interest to the members. She also felt that The Nails are symbolically important to the ethos of Othona.

Dave Bull explained that many years ago there were many younger people around and so there was a surplus of volunteers for committees. This ceased to be the case some time ago.

Katherine Pixton said that she is a member of several organisations and they all have the same questions and issues about membership.

Jane Pearce explained that she has been looking at several models of membership.

Trevor Darley asked about the role of The Nails for members of Othona.

Jan Marshall explained that Audrey Day took over administration of The Nails after Norman Motley and then Jan took it on.

It was explained that The Nails are not unique to Othona. There are the Coventry Nails and other Christian movements use them too.

A concern was expressed that the Nails could be seen as elitist but Rosie Sinden Evans said that membership is very much about commitment and wanting to give. The Nails are a symbol of this.

David Martin also commented that in Norman's writing about The Nails, it is very clear what they mean and they are a symbol of service and commitment to The Community.

Clare Gough then went on to explain the process of appointing Trustees and how thorough and diligent this is. If internal recruitment fails, we advertise externally and as widely as possible. The roles of Trustees are based on competence mapping to ensure we get committed people with the skills needed.

Dave Bull highlighted that as a Parish Councillor, he automatically became a Trustee of three organisations and he is very aware of how Trustees have significant responsibility to prevent a charity diverging from its objectives.

Kate Portal said that members want to support the running of the centres and would like to see more participation in the work of committees.

Chris Jones commented about the importance of keeping a light administration load and having a flexible structure with limited paper and computer work.

Jane Pearce told the group that Clare Gough is going to stand down as Chair of the Trustees and we are now looking for a new chair.

Clare Gough explained that she is standing down due to health reasons. She has been the Chair for six years and it's been an absolute joy and privilege and one of the best things she has done in her life. She feels that Othona needs a chair who is more "available". She will not be leaving the Board and will serve as long as she is able and useful. There is a job description and person specification on the website and for more information ask Clare or Jane.

Susanne Kelly expressed her gratitude to Clare and how impressed she has been by the serious commitment and work Clare has done to bring diligence. She said that Othona has been in great hands and Clare has been wonderful. Everyone agreed and gave Clare a hearty round of applause.

### Questions and Ideas

Martin Riemer would like more bells so he can leave his watch behind. Most useful would be a reinstatement of the ten-minute warning bell before activities and then the actual bell to signal the start.

Katherine Pixton said that people who come to Othona should be told about the rhythm of the place and what the bells mean.

Dave Bull said he discovered Othona because of the bells!

Inken Riemer gave an example from the first lecture this week and how it had started ten minutes early, before the bell. She felt that a warning bell would have been helpful.

Jan Marshall also commented that it would be helpful to have two bells for some people who are getting older.

Richard said he would try to follow up on these comments.

Clare Gough gave thanks and appreciation for all that Richard and Debbie do and everyone applauded in gratitude. Thanks was also given to Steve for chairing the meeting.