

Minutes of BCC meeting 15 Sept 2021 7pm Zoom

1. Opening Prayer.

2. **Present:** Steve Barnes, Tim Fox, Debbie Sanders, Richard Sanders, Nicholas Mannoukas, Geraldine O'Grady, Tim Fox, Sasha East. Ruth Bull (Chair/Minutes)
3. **Apologies/not present:** Clare Stone, Mary Grimson, Susanne Kelly, Simon Thompson.

4. Welcome and introductions, greeting Sasha.

Sasha introduced herself as our new Trustee link for Bradwell, speaking of her love for Othona and her relevant Charity qualifications and current Charity experience at CEO level. Everyone offered words of welcome and introduction.

5. How was the Summer at Bradwell? Feedback on anything you want to share, including what went well, and learning points for next year. All.

Tim, Debbie and Richard were pleased to report a good summer, well attended, old and new faces, excellent home-grown volunteers.

- Speaker Rachel Summers brought many new people who integrated, this is a good idea for the future.
- The summer was divided into weeks (Mon- Fri) and weekends (Fri-Sun). This worked well in part but with two travelling days this effectively shortened the programmed weeks to just three days; too short for creative events like music week..
- **BCC decision:** we agreed that next year we mix this approach with some full 7-day events such as Music Week.
- The EVS volunteers have joined us, we look forward to sharing time with them.
- Camping on the 11 acres: good to generate income and promote Othona, but felt rather “them and us” in the summer season, the facilities and state of the field would need addressing if we continue, and if we extend this Othona work the terms of the lease between the Trust and the Company should be reviewed.
- Susanne’s emailed comment about the summer season just gone is that “ I thought the Permaculture week went fantastically well, and there was a great atmosphere. As with Wild Worship,

Permaculture week was organised by someone who had lots of links with people outside Othona, so it attracted new people in a way that someone like me would never have been able to do. It was delightful to see so many people from Southend in Transition come to stay at Othona and share ideas. Hopefully they will feel encouraged to come regularly.

Bearing that in mind I think it would be great to proactively seek out similar contributors for at least 1-2 weeks next year, I think it's a really good way of bringing Othona to a wider group of like minded people."

6. Financial update - budget to date and predictions. Tim and Richard.

Thanks to Richard for producing financial data within a tight timescale. Richard spoke to the figures; noting that Bradwell is doing better than budgeted for this period, and that although the winter is predicted to produce less surplus, a positive outcome may be anticipated. On the positive side was a great response from our members/friends who made generous donations; and the high cost of maintenance includes up-front payment for our Service Contract that extends beyond this financial year, cheaper than paying in installments.

Steve commented that this is an amazingly good achievement considering the Covid challenges - this view was fully supported, with due thanks.

7. Update on Bookings and publicity: leaflets, website etc, Tim and Debbie.

There was no printed Programme booklet this year, but a much cheaper concise Programme leaflet drawing people's attention to the Website. Sasha expressed appreciation that we were moving towards less use of paper.

BCC decision: next year we do not have a big printed programme but continue to produce a programme leaflet as part of our outreach and publicity.

The Website is a good tool, and EVS Olivia has skills to help us make better use of social media.

There will be an Environment themed online course in mid-October.

The latest Newsletter was appreciated, many thanks to Debbie.

Bookings - good this summer. Autumn Retreat fully booked - all single rooms. Good use being made of Education/Art Building. Currently there are no plans to open Christmas 2021 as a programmed event.

Next year it is intended to run more retreats, for those who like a quieter off-season week. Church groups are returning at weekends.

Strategic action: we need to address the available off-season mid-week slots. We also need to hold events promoting our Green credentials.

8. Trustee update. - Roo and Steve.

Trustees started the process of seeking a new Manager for Bradwell as Tim leaves after Easter 2022.

We are also seeking one or two more Trustees for Bradwell, and as Roo's 10 year service ends next spring we seek a Bradwell Chair/Line Manager for the Bradwell Manager. The advert is on the Charity Website REACH.

Trustees are keeping a log of all major repairs and renewals required at each Centre. Richard confirms that this is quite significant for Bradwell, including the need to replace our septic tank.

Trustees made plans for the Othona Annual Report and Zoom AGM.

9. Progress on recruitment for Tim's successor -

2021 being Tim's last summer, Trustees Steve, Roo, Clare and Paul are meeting to plan recruitment and the advertising of the post, acknowledging that internal applicants are welcome as well as external applicants.

10. Anything else?

Newly acquired 11 acres. This sits alongside our existing site, useful as a buffer between our Centre and potential Bradwell B. It was used for camping this summer. The position and type of fencing is being taken forward by Tim, with the farmer. Richard reported from a small non-executive working group, with suggestions for wildlife options including natural rewilding. Trees and hedging are being added on a voluntary ad-hoc basis, with potential to seek grants.

Wind Turbine. Angenita has raised over £5,000 towards the fund. Clare Stone has worked on behalf of the BCC with an organisation to bid for a grant of around £27,000 to cover up-front costs, hopefully leading to the granting of planning permission. The Othona Essex Energy Contract

Manager has provided much of the information, but problems have been encountered in dealing with the local authority which we are aiming to overcome.

EVS - Tim spoke of this opportunity to bring in European volunteers through Erasmus (European) funding which will change post-Brexit. This year we have 4 volunteers for 10 months. We have also included VAPS Volunteers for over 40 years, on a weekly or fortnightly basis in the Summer Season.

11. Confirming details for next BCC Strategy Day Sat 23rd Oct.

Tim will confirm practical details. Paul Coleman has agreed to convene the day, not in his Trustee capacity but as a strategic thinker, professional in the fields of Safeguarding and HR.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm, renewing our welcome of Sasha.