

Minutes of the Bradwell Centre Committee Meeting – Sunday 29th May 2022

Present:

Paul Coleman (Chair) Ruth Bull, Debbie Sanders, Richard Sanders, Steve Barnes, Clare Stone, Susanne Kelly, Geraldine O'Grady

Not Present: Nicholas Mannoukas, Sasha East

Apologies: Simon Thomson, Mary Grimson

Opening Prayer - PC

Welcome and handover of Chair

RB welcomed the group. She gave a brief background of her history as Chair of BCC and Trustee over the past 10 years. RB thanked the committee for being so responsive and committed and for holding everything together throughout Covid. RB then passed the Chair over to PC. He thanked RB for her hard work and dedication over the years and said that he has been working with her to ensure a natural handover. PC introduced himself to the group by sharing some personal and professional information.

Updates of names/titles on the GDrive etc.

RB said that she will have her Othona Gmail account removed on June 12th and Gareth James will change the Essex Chair email address to PC's name. RB will also no longer be Safeguarding Lead. RB reminded the group that MG is no longer acting as Bradwell Treasurer due to family commitments so there is still a vacancy for this post.

Action: To make any necessary changes regarding the BCC on the website.

Matter arising from the February Meeting.

It was noted that any matters arising from the previous meeting will be covered in this agenda so this was not a separate item.

Report from Bradwell including recruitment/remuneration of new team members.

DS and RS updated the committee on all the events that had taken place since February. These included:

- Queen Mary film students
- March Working Weekend
- Launch of partnership with A Rocha
- Spring Retreat
- Fox Fest
- Chocolate making
- International Week
- Easter celebrations
- Festival of Song
- YMCA group
- Essex Green Weekend
- AA group
- Yoga group
- Spring Watch

Some of the groups have already booked for future events. There are plans for further partnership working with Matt King from Trust Links to run another Essex Green weekend next year, as this year's event was so successful with around 150 people attending. DS and RS thanked SK and her team for catering so well for so many people.

DS and RS said that the current Working Weekend is going well and there is a packed diary ahead with events and bookings until the end of November.

In relation to the recruitment of new team members, the committee was told that Phil Martin has agreed to join the team (c.17th June), this will coincide with when the European volunteers leave. Also, Chris Bliss, who has been volunteering, will now be given a short-term contract. DS mentioned the possibility of another volunteer from Brazil being available from September to January.

PC said that he has spoken to the YMCA about the possibility of recruiting volunteers from Germany. The YMCA only offers short term placements (6 months) due to visa and NHS costs but they will keep Othona in mind if anything comes up. PC also said that DS and RS need to let the committee know asap if they need any additional resources.

The group discussed the hourly rate given to a long standing and reliable person who currently works one day a week at Bradwell. He is currently being paid the UK Living wage but the team would like to acknowledge his experience, skills and dedication to Othona by paying him more. It was agreed that the content of this discussion would be shared with him to acknowledge how much he is appreciated and his hourly rate would be increased to £10 an hour.

Action: This will be reviewed in three months and be an agenda item in the next meeting.

DS and RS said that bookings were looking good and there is some money in the pot for staffing which hasn't been spent yet. They would like there to be three other team members available if possible as this would help with contingency planning when both DS and RS are away at the same time. PC agreed for them to seek another person and asked them to work out and share a proposal for what they need.

The pricing for events was then discussed. The rates have not been changed despite having to pay more for food and fuel etc. As the team has started to take bookings for 2023, it was agreed that from the 1st Jan 2023, there would be a 10% increase. (£5 per person per night for group bookings). PC felt that most people would understand why there needed to be an increase and of course we would be mindful of the unsettling times and offer financial support for those who were struggling.

Health & Safety/Safeguarding

DS reported that one of the participants of the Yoga group, slipped and broke her wrist and ankle when she was on a walk at the sea wall. The accident had been reported to the HSE and it is highly unlikely that anything else will come from this as the lady did not complain or blame Othona. Ale cut his thumb in the kitchen and this has healed up well. Simon has also been informed of both accidents. On a recent visit to Othona recently, Simon undertook a site walk and there were no further issues to report.

There were no safeguarding issues to report. There is a meeting planned with the Trustees to discuss the Volunteer Policy and what the requirements will be in regards to obtaining DBSs for short term volunteers.

Update on Wind Turbine Planning (and installation.)

PC reported that although Othona had received a grant to help obtain planning permission for a new wind turbine and it has gone as far as Maldon Council, there is now a new hurdle to cross. We have been told by Natural England that a full environment survey needs to take place which could cost £28,000. PC recommended that we take a pause to find out more information. The group members considered a range of questions as a result of this news including whether the survey has to be taken by someone approved by Natural England or whether we could recommend someone ourselves? Also, what would we do with the money already raised for the new turbine if we were unable to go ahead with the project?

SK suggested that this might be a good time to take stock of the situation. She suggested that some members of the Committee could do a desk top exercise looking at the pros and cons of having a new wind turbine and whether there might be other ways to generate clean energy. SK said that her brother is an Electronic Engineer with experience in this area and he might be available to speak with a working party about different possibilities. There was an initial discussion about power generation at Othona and the advantages and disadvantages of the existing wind turbine, solar panels and diesel generator etc. Although the group is still committed to following up on the project for the new wind turbine, it was agreed that it would be useful to look at alternative suggestions.

RB said that the work of the Buildings subcommittee Committee has now finished.

Action: To set up a new Energy subcommittee (as some of the members of the exiting committee are no longer on the Bradwell Committee).

Budget update / funding and fundraising priorities for Bradwell.

RS passed around some information about the 2021/22 budget. He reported that visitor receipts and donations had been positive and income was £25K more than expected. RS explained about Gift Aid and that although claims had not been consistent in the past, systems were now in place to ensure that regular claims are being made.

RS also circulated information about the current budget. It looks like there is a good profit at the moment, mostly due to the Essex Green Weekend. The Central debt has been paid for this year and we are slightly ahead of predicted income at the moment. However, there are other expenses that will need to be paid including the motor vehicle insurance and servicing and the maintenance contract. The group had a discussion about whether it would be better to pay for one or three years for the maintenance contract.

Action: RS to ask Michael Hunt to look into the small print of the maintenance contract in more detail.

Response to Government Energy Plan (see recent email)

PC felt that this area should be put on the next agenda as there is a lot of research taking place in this area at the moment and we will hopefully be more informed by events in time for the next meeting.

Action: To discuss the Government Energy Plan in the next BCC meeting.

Programme Planning Group

DS reported that planning has already started for the 2022/2023 programme.

Action: DS to arrange a Zoom meeting with Nicholas, Nastassja and Geraldine to follow up with ideas and tasks.

AOB

A discussion took place about fundraising and the different ways that Dorset and Bradwell approach this. The Committee is very aware that some people are struggling due to the difficult times and will remain sensitive in their approach about balancing how to raise funds but also offering support and bursaries for those who need it.

SB mentioned the 11 acres and trying to find a grant or support that will be beneficial and practical but not involve tying Othona into something that could involve a massive amount of work.

RB said that her husband has prepared "The Nails", (which is the symbol of the Othona Community) to give as leaving gifts to the ESC volunteers.

RB mentioned that Othona will be welcoming a family from Ukraine for a short holiday using the Andrew Hardy memorial fund to pay for their stay. They are currently living with a Quaker family and will be coming to Othona to give them all a break.

SK mentioned that she has been thinking about a possible solution to the on-going issue in the accessible shower. She will follow this up with DS and RS. DS mentioned that Sarah Thompson has been in contact with a company to look into this too.

Dates of future BCC Meetings.

The possibility of having an Open BCC meeting in the summer was discussed and agreed that this might be a good idea.

Action: Dates of future BCC meetings to be confirmed.

PC thanked everyone for their time and contributions and the meeting was then closed

