

**Othona Community - Open Bradwell Centre Committee Meeting**  
**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> July at Othona Bradwell.**

**2pm start.**

**1. Welcome and introductions** from the BCC - present, Angela Mutum, Tim Fox, Roo Bull (Chair/minutes) – apologies/not present Angie Smith, , Katie Miller, Simon Thompson, Nicholas Mannoukas. Trustee also present – Clare Gough, (West Dorset Centre Committee.) Apologies also from Ruth Gilman and Debbie Sanders.

**Joining the meeting** : Catharina Riemer, Martin Riemer, Al Fitzjohn and Kate Portal (via Skype) Dave Bull, Kaz Fox, Dani Sanchez, Teresa Hounsham, Alan Hounsham, Clare Stone, Jan Marshall, Richard Sanders, (Staff Team,) Nihal Paul, Jonney Aldridge, Jan Darley, Trev Darley, Ajok Athian, Isobel Bala.

**2. Opening Prayers** – led by Richard.

**3. 5-minute updates:**

**How Bradwell is going** - Tim reported that last year was a tough year for visitor numbers, with a better feel this year. Dave & Sandra Hodgson-Brown retired, (but we have owls named for them.) Richard and Debbie Sanders are welcome to the resident team. Tim spoke of our reliance on Volunteers, essential to his way of managing Bradwell. He spoke of the works now well underway to improve disability parking and access, thanks to a £10,000 grant from Essex Community Wind Farm Grant – with the additional £3,500 from our funds.

**Financial situation**, generated from Treasurer Angie Smith's report – Roo and Tim shared information that Angie has taken over from Colin Butcher as Bradwell treasurer/trustee and is working to finalise the budget from last financial year. The total variance currently appears to be around £22,000 over budget, but Angie is scrutinising information, including from accountants Alwaysns, for errors. We accept that there were some large additional expenses such as hiring a generator when the Bradwell one broke down. Roo said it would take around £50 per week extra payment per adult if we were to cover such a deficit – but there is no intention to do this. There is still some income due from Central investment funds – and most importantly we all need to encourage more people to visit.

**Update on Strategy** since the Bradwell Consultation Meetings – Roo spoke of the consultation meetings in London and at Othona, and how the BCC have drawn ideas together to form a long-term strategic plan for action. This includes **Education:** Dave Bull leading the group said there are several community members working with him to plan ways of bringing in more school groups, particularly the 11-18 year olds, through an updated leaflet, good use of the new Othona Coastal park area and proposals for a new Education Centre with equipment and facilities to benefit school groups and Othona members. More Volunteers needed for the School groups. **Christian Spirituality** – Rev Steven Poss and Richard are leading here, through the local villages and within Othona; **Bradwell as a Local Resource** – this is coming together through groups, shared activities and generally making Othona known as part of the local scene. **Reconciliation** is considered by members to be one of the most important aspects of Othona: action here is progressing.

**Communications:** Martin Riemer. Martin will put something on Facebook. The BCC minutes now go promptly onto the Website, then to Facebook. Martin has pushed for improvements to the Landing Page for Othona, linking to the two Centres. He has also been trying to correct the bad incidents on Facebook recently. He stressed the importance of 2-way communication, and regrets the loss of “Full Circle”, which needs a replacement. We noted that a replacement, written between OWD and Bradwell, is in preparation. There are improvements in the Virtual Stoep site, and spoken face-to-face feedback is still very important, e.g. from the Voluntary Action for Peace Groups (VAPS.) Martin recommends the use of WhatsApp on mobile phones. Kate and Al emphasised the importance of emails, to inform people of events and announcements.

**Sustainability:** Jonney Aldridge. Jonney spoke of the sustainability of people who come here, particularly young people with concerns about environment, equality – and cheapness of stay. He spoke of sustainability of food supplies, energy supplies; and notably the cost of gas, and the monitoring of the use of power in our buildings. He raised the issue of energy supplies, and whether the source matters; and of the need to work with the current regional climate in ways such as growing perennial plants which are more likely to survive with less water.

#### **4. Resource Development options.**

Trevor Darley introduced himself as a member of the BCC’s Resources sub-group, other members being Susanne Kelly, Jonney Aldridge, Roo Bull and the

group's project leader Andy Redfearn from the YMCA, with practical input from Peter Baird.

Planned maintenance of all our buildings is top priority. Inclusivity of people with disabilities is part of our future.

The group have considered all our building-

- i.) The "Martin Riemer" hut in the old field – Susanne has sketched an option to refurbish this without need for further Planning Permission consent. The proposal is to include bedrooms, toilets and shower.
- ii.) The other outbuildings and smaller huts are being considered.
- iii.) The Bank – we can keep the building but Planners have removed the option to use it as accommodation, in return for approval of the Solar Building. It may be used to produce an Education Centre, + the existing Common Room, + storage, + revamped toilets. This links education, particularly the requirements of 11-18 yr. old school children; and with sustainability, with Jonney's input.
- iv.) We already have Planning Permission for extensions to our existing buildings as agreed when plans were submitted for the main (Norman Motley) building to extend towards the Solar building, which could be modified internally to suit disabled people; an extension to the Solar Building; and a children's/art room near the quad area.
- v.) The group is actively considering options for our future energy requirements and supplies.

Trevor called on everyone to contact one of the Resource Group members (not Andy at this stage) to share their views and comments.

**There was a discussion.** Martin queried whether increased buildings would mean increased costs; and whether we should consider more primitive/cheaper accommodation. The response was that this should not happen: the more people we can accommodate the more money comes in. Buildings are the responsibility of the Othona Charity Trust; running costs/visitor pricing is a matter for the Othona Company that runs Bradwell and West Dorset. At Bradwell the open community time is subsidised by higher costs for private bookings/groups.

Tim said young people often come as Volunteers, sometimes subsidised.

Richard said that increasingly people want their own rooms, so people are turned away – with our ageing population we need a higher number of smaller rooms.

There was discussion on whether cheaper "primitive" accommodation, alongside single, possible-suite accommodation, would lead to a 2-tier community with "2<sup>nd</sup> class" accommodation for poorer people.

Ajok suggested young people should be encouraged to share their ideas on accommodation, which might be creative and unconventional.

Nihil said the concept of an open Committee Meeting might be off-putting to some people, and he suggested that people could be spontaneously asked their views on accommodation - he proposed they should be encouraged to talk, during the summer weeks.

## **5. Open forum:** News and Views and Q & A's from everyone.

There was explanation about the **Othona structure**. There is The Othona Community Trust, which is a Charity that holds the assets including all the Bradwell and Dorset buildings and the investments arising after the sale of East Hall Farm. The Trust has Trustees. There is also the Othona Community Charitable Company, which runs the Centres at Bradwell and west Dorset, and which has Directors. The two aspects of Othona are separated for legal and financial reasons, but the aims and objectives of Othona are the same for both Charities, so almost all Trustees are also Directors, and meet as one body known informally as "The Trustees."

There was comment that **no report is currently available from Trustees**. It was noted that most decisions are taken at local level and that trustees are mainly concerned with finances and policies. The Bradwell Report contains reference to trustees actions; and trustee minutes may be out up on our web Page once they are approved. Currently no summary is done – the request will go to trustees meeting in September.

It was agreed that **emails from each Centre** are really helpful in drawing people's attention to news such as Web or Facebook reports. These should come from each Centre.

There were questions on **Membership**. The current position is that Members pay £12/year. This entitles them to any printed information – but there is very little these days. Friends of Othona do not pay but access all information electronically. In discussion it was considered that membership is really important for a sense of belonging and supporting Othona; and to help cover the costs. Membership to be encouraged, and reviewed at next Trustees Meeting.

There **problems with booking on line, and in paying subscriptions** – It was suggested we need one entry point to join and collect the Direct Debit. Tim to look into this. It is crucial to build a committed membership base which is “easy to join, hard to leave!” We were reminded of the need for safeguards to avoid internet sabotage. It was mentioned that the YMCA offer a small discount for Members; and some organisations; and that some organisations offer a financial reward for introducing a friend. A new visitor asked what membership was for....the response was that it shows support and enjoyment of the place – it is no longer to ensure voting rights, it is a Partnership, even a sense of shared ownership of the Community.

**The Work Period** was discussed – historically everyone who was capable was expected to do practical work between morning coffee and lunch. Working together gives a sense of shared ownership, and the meeting was in support of shared, voluntary work [projects such as maintenance or assisting with cooking. But work must not be compulsory, members are welcome to have a much-needed break, support the ideals of Othona, and encourage others to come.

Tim was asked whether **information about the Community is available to VAPS** – it was confirmed they have introductory talks. There was a comment on Health and Safety and the Suing culture – it was confirmed that Simon Thompson is the BCC’s H&S representative.

A question was asked about the **cost of Volunteers**: it was confirmed that this is built into the budget. The Bursary Fund is available through Central funding, for anyone in need, through Tim and strictly confidential.

There was further discussion on the loss of **Full Circle**, and information from trustees, and we shared that the **trustee Chair Colin Hodgetts retires** in September so we seek a replacement – also seeking a new Central Treasurer as Roger Neville has retired.

**The meeting closed at 4.40pm.**