

Updates by Tim:

We are in our 2nd year working with EVS (European Voluntary Service) which has been a success together with the VAPs (Volunteer Action for Peace, formerly CMP and YAP, since early 1970s). We hope for more EVS from Jan.2020 – political circumstances and our bid permitting.

A lot of our current work goes into the reconstruction of the old hut in the lower field. We are still hoping for donations from our membership. Some funding comes from the Bradwell wind farm. The building will be suitable for school, colleges, art and other groups – all the year round.

The current financial year will probably end with a slight surplus. The annual turnover was about £160,000 (more than what we had planned). That included ongoing maintenance over previous years, significant upgrades and bursaries, especially for families.

Othona is now made up of an overall trust with operational charitable non-profit companies within.

We have bookings for every weekend from February to December including our community times. Highlights were West London Buddhists, the Orthodox Youth Conference, and 70 members for half term.

We have a good working staff team and a good working relationship with OWD.

Questions and statements by all present:

1. Gardening has increased and helps the variety of food.
2. How do we advertise our events?
3. It would be great to inform our Program Committee (Jan M., Nicholas M., Sheila M., ...) about ideas for themes for our community events.
4. Who selects our VAPs? They are suggested by the central London VAP-Office and we accept them. The £80 they pay go towards VAP. – **correction by Paul Winter: there is no pre-selection by the VAPs – first come first served and rarely balancing for sex, country, ...**
5. Some would like to stroke Tim's beard ;-)
6. What about learning more about the differences in personal relationships of people in e.g. Middle America and Europe?
7. Why are our summer bookings quite low so far?
 - a. Money, hesitating to ask for bursary, which is confidential?
 - b. Why is half term better attended? – a greater sense of structure? (children under 16 are free for stay (but pay for extra activities), the daily rate is pretty much the same for all community weeks -> no difference)
 - c. How attractive are the weekly themes?
 - d. What about having two different kinds of activities like music, poetry or woodwork?
 - e. Are community times subsidised by other times or do some of the members "pay" differently via e.g. donations for buildings, helping on the helpers team, ...?
8. Learn about different cultures, learning new skills, ...

9. Do we need student rates?
(£6/week in 1973, when a pint of Guinness was 18p. Pint now about 20 fold -> would £120 a week now be "fair"?)
10. Can we make fees more attractive like when we made the under 16 year olds free?
11. Does our <https://www.othonaessex.org.uk/> contain enough pictures? Can we put more pictures in a gallery or blog? Facebook pictures might be more helpful (if you tolerate Facebook). But only the Staff-organized pages and "The Othona Community"-group are visible to the public. The "Othona" (pictures) and "Othona Forum" (discussions) groups are members only and therefor – for other reasons - less visible.
12. So <https://othona.org> (should really not just point to Bradwell !!!!!!!) is a better option than Facebook.
13. What about a cheap short trial stay with an extension option?
14. Give everyone on site more of a variety of chances to join in, like e.g. building bird boxes and insect hotels this week.
15. We had 3 meetings like this in 2018 – this summer we should have one every week - for better two way communication.
16. Communication with members got better since 2017 – but there is still room to improve it.
17. How do we replace officials on our governing bodies? Everyone works to her/his best and all do good work. But could we find other/better ways for renewing officials? – may be even a bit more democratic ;-) ?
18. Discussion on how to wash up ... pros and cons
19. Othona is bigger than our own personal experience. It's a great experience, no matter whether you stayed for 5 days, 2 years or a life time (words said by 3 members at the end)