

Updates by Tim:

Some points updated since last week (see last write-up):

Bookings: Bookings outside of the programmed events are going well and weekends are currently booked until the middle of December. We have found that many people coming on group events will then book to come on our programmed events.

Finance: We have a good surplus over this year and have been able to give ~£5000 in bursaries to enable less well-off families and individuals to come for a stay here. The policy with all our groups is that no family should be left behind because of financial limitations. This usually means a combination of the church/organisation running the weekend supplying some of the bursaries and we add the remainder.

Volunteers: We were fortunate to have 3 volunteers over the last year funded by the EVS scheme and have been awarded a similar grant for 2020. The next batch will start in January at the Isle of Wight and come here in February. The VAP camps have gone well this year and the current system of running three smaller camps works much better than two larger ones. This was reinforced by the addition of extra VAPs following the closure of a work camp elsewhere as the bigger group size was more difficult to manage. We have had some fantastic volunteers over the summer and would not be able to run without out all their valuable contributions.

Buildings: Work is progressing well on the hut in the Lower Field thanks mainly to the hard work of Pete and Trevor but with the assistance of many volunteers. It will have one art room and two study rooms and a classroom, which can be used as additional bedrooms in the summer season. Currently there are no plans for renovations of the old Nissan huts. The end gables of both will be altered to improve the security for storage and will be in keeping with the style.

Energy Audit: We have just had a complete audit done by an external professional and are currently waiting for all the costings to be completed. This will then be examined thoroughly by the committee and trustees to determine the best way forward for the site. This will take into account the environmental impact of the different proposals as well as the cost.

Programme: The programme for this year so far has been excellent and this is down to Nicholas and the programming committee. Suggestions are always welcome for future events from anyone. Nicholas is happy for his contact details to be given to out for those wanting to get in touch. We have a new mid-year programme printed taking us up to next summer and will do a complete new programme for 2020 at the end of the year.

Questions and statements by all present:

1. Should these meetings be called "Answer Back" as the idea of the original meetings held by Norman were for debate on theological/spiritual matters and to give people the chance to question all aspects of Faith?
2. What is it to be community? Two main points were addressed within this question, firstly that of being as environmentally responsible as possible in all that we do here and secondly in the participation of individuals in community life (washing up etc.)

3. It was felt that over the summer that had been very valued input from all staying here to help the community run smoothly particularly in the kitchen but perhaps we need to ensure that everyone feels valued and that they have an important contribution to make.
4. It was suggested that we have more theological discussions as these formed a key part of the community at the beginning but seemed to have dropped away.
5. It was also suggested there should be more planning and discussion about future building work.
6. Volunteers supply time which is considered equivalent to financial input and they are integral to the life of Othona.
7. We discussed the community life outside of our summer programme and the fact that this not only helps with the ongoing running costs here but equally importantly enables us to work with groups such as Survivors Together, the YMCA, school groups etc. All of these groups really appreciate the peace and space as well as the atmosphere of Othona and it is fantastic that we can share our facilities with them.
8. There was a discussion about whether the weeks in summer are just about being 'community' by doing jobs here or whether we consider the activity of the week as a community event, for example the concerts for Music week.
9. There was a suggestion of having a whole weekend set aside to discuss Othona, community life, where we are going and what are priorities are.