

Othona Bradwell Strategy Day 25th November 2017.

This was a Bradwell Centre Committee Meeting – our annual Strategy Weekend - with guests representing the strategy topics.

Morning session – at St Thomas’ Church Bradwell.

Present – Susanne Kelly, Simon Thompson, Tim Fox, Roo Bull (Chair/minutes) and Rev. Steven Poss, Anouke, Tosca, Dave Bull.

Apologies –Katie Miller, Nicholas Mannoukas, Colin Butcher, Angela Mutum, Andy Redfearn.

Opening Prayer – led by Tim fox.

Introduction – Roo: that we are one community with two Charities, “the Trust” which holds the assets and “the Company” which carries out the operations of Othona through its two Centres, Othona West Dorset and Othona Bradwell-on-Sea, Essex. Each of these Centres works within the vision and mission of Othona and has the autonomy to develop its own strategies. This meeting is to take forward the current Bradwell strategy which was set out in November 2016, and which has developed through consultation meetings with members, and through progress of the Strategy Topics; and with the approval of the Trustees/Directors of Othona. Brief discussion including emphasis on the importance to Othona of St Peter’s Chapel.

The day’s programme was first to consider each topic in turn, then to have a discussion on how the strategy is coming together, and finally to look at the topic of Resources as they are required to fulfil each aspect of our Strategy. Papers were distributed for some topics and are available if anyone in the Community wants copies.

1. Sustainability – led by Susanne.

This topics influences the whole Strategy. Susanne’s paper was inspired by Community members, through her summer week “Practical tree Hugger” and from observations made with a personal and professional view, as an architect. It is a vision of what can realistically be achieved. It cross-references with **communication** about people’s concerns, with proposed actions:

- We develop a policy about use of local food, with recipe ideas to make it easier for everyone to achieve more sustainability as a process of **education**.
- In the Energy **Resources** Review, Look at ground or air source heat pumps, which feed into the grid.
- Connect with **Local** concerns – litter picks etc.

Tim referred to the dilemma in catering: working to adapt to different types and demographics of groups, (to be “served”) versus Othona **spirituality**, Othona time with our

membership, and church groups. Simon spoke of Perceptions, Actuality, Expectations and Practicality – they may be mutually exclusive, but need to be as close as possible, to maximise what we can do.

2. Education – led by Dave Bull.

The content of Dave’s paper had been discussed with Susanne, re **sustainability**, and with Kevin Bruce, Anne Frogatt and Nicholas. Dave proposed actions:

- Keep up with the National Curriculum, particularly with the Othona Coastal Park opportunities.
- Look at Open University Practical Workshop Modules.
- Consider Modern Apprenticeships, noting our heat/power/green energy expertise we could pass on to younger people, also learning from them.
- If we are to put financial **resources** into the Coastal Park it would benefit from services, IT, electricity; and improved disability access.
- Residential courses could be offered to groups other than schools, if we had better buildings in the Coastal Park area, with a dormitory building with accessible toilet and washing facilities.
- Outside groups with special needs could build on Maldon’s basic education programmes.
- Community Payback with positive education would include people as part of the Othona Community, not just as punishment.

Simon’s wife Sarah has experience with excluded children, and he proposed:

- We should seek Othona-wide suggestions on how to include people with physical and sensory disabilities, excluded and troubled youngsters, to feed into our education strategy. There would be **cost and resource implications** but ++ benefits, including people at the local level, local schools, local troubled people. This links strategically to **Christian Spirituality**.
- We should have feed-in from people closer in age to the education system – and placements for students.

3. Christian Spirituality – led by Steven Poss.

Steven offers a fresh view of Othona, being new to the priesthood after 15 years working in City business. He focussed on Othona’s hospitality, reconciliation, and St Peter’s Chapel as central in worship and worship **resources**. He proposed three areas to explore:

- Belief in God.
- Experience with God.
- Relationship with God.

In spirituality, not just Christian spirituality, we explore within ourselves and in groups.

We observe that our representation of ordained people is mainly ageing and departing.

Susanne said she was brought up as a Catholic and is aware of the work that needs to be done between Catholics and a mainly protestant Othona community.

We have representatives of a whole spectrum of Christian worship, plus those who “believe in the Othona Community.” This is positive, we offer spirituality without being too tied up with different denominations or dogmatic “party line.” We include some denominational and some non-denominational groups.

We discussed Norman Motley’s original guidance that we are “not a church” and should worship in our own churches – but acknowledged this has changed over time. Tim pointed out Othona has developed from 4/6 weeks a year to 52 weeks a year., with the opportunity to enhance this “Church” direction of travel for Othona Bradwell. We have gained fellowship. We explore spirituality without inhibition, can ask questions and explore: we are inclusive, offering fellowship, spirituality and a place for worship. We do not cross the line from Christian spirituality but we are not bigoted. Roo said this puts a heavy demand on the Warden and Team, if they are expected to be the spiritual leaders with little spiritual or counselling input to support them and those staying at Othona.

Chaplain role: historically we had an ordained leader but recent wardens/managers are not ordained. Tim referred to a friend who is a hospital chaplain, with a supportive role which we need. Simon raised the need for a Chaplain that Othona can call on for support, and that we might go out to the broader community, we have our C of E support but could include Free Church, Catholic etc. as a network for spiritual support. Chaplaincy is a role needed throughout the year for all who live and work at Othona.

The role of the Warden and the Chaplain are separate. The Warden cannot take on the Chaplaincy/counselling role, it would lead to emotional, spiritual and practical burnout. There are other demands on his time, and a warden would have a different skill set to a Chaplain.

The Community should take responsibility to share the Warden’s role and relieve the pressures upon his time. This links to **education** of community people, and **local involvement**. We need to raise awareness for Othona people of the risk of overburdening the Warden and Team, and the need for a Chaplain who is trained in counselling and spiritual matters. Steven referred to 30 deacons who completed their training last month – where are they?

We spoke of the motivation to attend chapel services, and the transformative experience of some chapel services.

Othona offers a place to visit or stay which may benefit individuals or groups Steven meets in his parochial work.

Steven shared the discussion and summed up his thoughts on Othona's hospitality, being inclusive, and being a place of reconciliation – with **communication** evident in our symbolic logo Circle of Friends. He said that as our local priest he is happy to be called upon by Othona as spiritual Chaplain, which is much appreciated.

4. Reconciliation – led by Anouke, with Tosca.

Anouke from France and Tosca from Italy are with Othona for a year through the EVS (European Voluntary Service) programme linked to VAPS (Voluntary Action for Peace.) Reconciliation is the choice of Personal Project for Anouke; Tosca is also involved with this and other projects.

They propose:

- Invite one or two refugee families, Christmas and Easter, on a rolling programme.
- Long-term plan: each family to develop an Othona “friend” to learn about English culture etc. becoming aware of different cultures for refugees, very different in many ways including language and conversations.
- On 15th December Anouke is attending a meeting with Refugee Action, Colchester to represent Othona and hope to encourage families to come. She has concerns if several families want to come, because of transport and practical issues. Tim is planning to work within budget and seek other funding so to include all who want to come this Christmas. There is concern about our being a Christian Community due to some people's experience of religious persecution. Anouke has made a presentation about Othona to encourage understanding.
- There are long-term **resource implications**, as some religions/cultures need separate food/separate fridges.

The BCC appreciate Anouke and Tosca's understanding and interest in promoting Othona in the spirit of peace and reconciliation.

Cross-topic discussion points.

- We need assistance from the wider membership, being made aware of what is going on, and invited to be involved. Avoid “we are the Community and know how things should happen.” Things move on/change, for example the National Grid - we should not get blinkered, should be open to new ideas.
- How can we get people to “give back,” not just be consumers and offer opinions.
- The Community is whoever is there at the time; not “monastic” and we should facilitate and enable their experience of Work, Worship, Study & Play. (Tim.)

- We would benefit from a long-term project, a “year-in-the-life”, seeing Othona as a whole year. (Simon.)
- Our strategy should be fully inclusive of “outside groups” which are both a business element that supports the open community times, and an opportunity to integrate new people. We need to communicate with our membership about the value of what we are doing all-year-round.
- “Outside groups” are not there to support community holidays – they need integration; proposal that we build up the Othona Volunteer Bank, but bearing in mind some associated problems with skill matching etc., we need a register of abilities. Tosca referred to her project on “Time Banking” to share skills locally – Tim now offers free short-stays in exchange for skilled and necessary work.
- The Strategy is that Othona is somewhere that allows people to contribute to the best of their abilities in Work, Worship, Study and Play.
- People need to understand and share ideas on sustainability. Susanne is happy to work on a Green Guideline that would form the basis for a Green Policy.

5. Communication – led by Martin Riemer.

Martin, and Colin B, joined us for about 45 minutes on Skype in the session at Othona.

Martin had sent a paper on ECommunications, and he led us through this. He asked:

- What are the pros and cons of using Facebook?
- How do we include everyone?

We discussed the problems experienced due to having several different Facebook pages:

The Othona Community (set up by Gareth James); Othona (set up by Kaz Fox); Forum set up by Sue Fairweather, not a public outlet, intended for serious discussion; Tim’s page. None of these are “official.” Actions required:

- Review Facebook and get an approved site.
- Keep the Website up to date with Minutes from AGM, Trustees, BCC and approved articles.
- News-sheet in a written form that can be posted by request. Martin to design a page that does this.
- Some kind of feed to notify people when there is a new item on the Web page.

Final session at St Thomas’. Church.

6. Othona as a Local Resource – network currently through Roo.

This is a way of linking up with very local like-minded organisations – and groups and individuals/volunteers. It is 2-way, we may help or be helped. (We are not political, Othona does not take sides in debates although its members are free to do so as individuals.) It is

likely to be of interest to the people of Bradwell, St Lawrence, Tillingham and surrounding villages. In Bradwell we are aware of interest from St Thomas Church, Down Hall Care Home, Bradwell Guides, Bradwell Village Shop, Bradwell Outdoor Activity Centre, the three Bradwell pubs, St Cedd's School Bradwell, Bradwell Wind Farm, (Essex Community fund) with potential to link with Bradwell Power Station, Bradwell Youth Club, Bradwell Sailing Centre, and similar organisations in the other villages.

We considered developments, which link to **communication**:

- A "Free lunch" invitation for those who would be interested in seeing Othona as a Local resource.
- A Local Issues page on the Othona website.
- Links with other local websites.
- Good local publicity of our events and activities.

More cross-topic discussion.

Martin's contribution on **Communication** sparked a further discussion on communication, outreach and publicity. We made some flip-chart notes which Simon took to write up and circulate.

7. Resources.

Susanne led us through Andy's paper from his leadership of the Resources Strategy Group.

Buildings.

Ideally it was recommended we have an impartial person viewing the buildings, for their condition and potential.

Susanne has recently looked at the buildings with Simon, with a report in an email the history and condition of all the buildings, , and Susanne has also obtained all Maldon District Council papers relating to Othona Bradwell planning over recent years. No planning consents are currently being sought. She has also used her professional knowledge when observing the Norman Motley Building. From these we conclude:

- The old buildings in the old field are unfit for use other than rather insecure storage.
- The Bank: Solar Building regulations state under condition 4 the right to use the Bank was given up for the right to use the Solar Building.
- The Straw Bale shed is not an asset with regard to Planning. It is not needed as a work-shop. It is not safe to be entered, in its present state. In the short-term we could share up the roof and use it to store the apple press. If we decide to redevelop it the materials are good for re-use.
- The Bridge by the Wind generator needs to be renovated, this is in hand.
- The Norman Motley building needs a long-term programme of ongoing maintenance. It is nearly 24 years old, the roof material is of a kind that will need replacing in the

long-term. Tim will seek an estimate. The windows are deteriorating and the preferred option is to retain these window frames and replace the glazing. Quotes should be obtained.

- The Solar Building – there is current planning permission to extend in the direction of the yurts.

We had the expense of a fairly recent survey of all our buildings for insurance purposes, and in light of Susanne's work we did not feel it necessary to have a further survey at this stage.

Energy.

Considering the strategic advantages that may be offered by going on the grid, and the fact that overhead cable work is ongoing locally, it was agreed we get an estimate, action Dave/Tim.

Disabled Facilities.

Roo asked for views on whether, in light of our strategy, it was now time to act, in identifying options for at least two en-suite disabled people's rooms; it was agreed to take this forward, and ideas for options were considered.

Resources considered for taking forward the Strategy.

Sustainability – electricity to generate, save, feed back to grid.

Spirituality and local resourcing – increase in outreach and publicity/admin.

Education – Education Centre, disabled facilities in Park and for accommodation. Explore options for local Business Partners.

Reconciliation – bursaries, possible facilities to meet cultural needs.

The meetings concluded at 5pm, with thanks to St Thomas' for use of the Chapman Room.