

It is wonderful to be able to speak to you all, thank you for making the time and taking the interest to join the AGM.

Some of you will know that I had a major operation in the spring and it is good to be able to report that I am making an excellent recovery.

Andrew and I have attended events at both centres again this year. It is very gratifying to see new people alongside the much loved familiar faces. Both centres have had many happy and successful gatherings.

I want to thank the core staff teams for their resilience and the centre managers for their leadership, it is their drive and energy that makes stuff happen. There has been significant input from volunteers, who bring fresh energy, enthusiasm and commitment, which is very much appreciated.

There has been a small amount of capital development at both sites.

An air source heat pump for the Chapel at West Dorset, 40% grant funded, and new glazing for the windows at Bradwell, funded from trading income.

Bradwell are fundraising for the complete refurbishment of the accessible bathroom in the Motley building. Work has started. It is a complex and expensive project because of the underfloor heating and drainage. There is £10K yet to find for this important project.

Bradwell are also fundraising for a septic tank, our excellent reed bed system, after many years of diligent tending is unfortunately broken beyond repair. The cost for this is in the region of £70-80K. We are searching for grant funding but have not found a suitable funder yet.

Some of you have asked about the wind turbine. In spite of being awarded £27,500 to have professional help with our submission we were refused planning permission. We will probably resubmit in the future, but this will not be anytime soon.

We will be writing to everyone who made a donation to the wind turbine fund asking you if you wish to have the money returned or if you wish to support an alternative project.

You will receive a letter by the end of November.

Grants

OWD

The Inlight Trust which funds Maurits Fontein, our groundsman,

Two air source heat pumps and an energy diverter were installed shortly before Christmas.

£7,330 (40% of the cost) was covered by a grant from Low Carbon Dorset.

Bradwell

£2K from Wind Farm Community Fund for Green weekend

£10,000 from the Essex County Council Climate Action Challenge Fund for the Green Weekend

Phil Martin has conducted a survey of everyone on our customer database asking about people's views and feelings about membership. Thank you to Phil for your energy and to Eleanor Farley and Rachel Tocknell who helped with the questionnaire design. Phil is currently analysing the data and will present the findings to Trustees in November. A summary of findings

will be put up on the websites. If you have further feedback that you want to submit please send it to Phil membership@othona.org

One challenge for the community is the need to commission new websites. The current websites are built on Drupal 7, support for this will end in January 2025. Our current providers were going to charge us many tens of thousands to rebuild new websites in the current version of Drupal. We decided to take this opportunity to change supplier and to change to websites built in Wordpress, which is a more widely used product and apparently more straightforward to use. Tom Farley who has been the job share caterer at West Dorset, together with Warren Douglas, Trustee at West Dorset, found a new provider and Tom has done much of the early work specifying what it is that we want and need. Tom and Ellie have moved on from Othona, they are expecting a second child soon. We are recruiting people with expertise to join a small working group to finish the work with the provider to get the new websites designed and delivered.

Please get in touch if you know anyone who can help us with this.

We also need someone who can help us with data security and data management - mainly to do a data audit and make some recommendations.

On the core teams, Bradwell are looking for additional people to join the resident community. The old huts are being upgraded with additional facilities. Please contact Richard and Debbie directly if you are interested. Many of our community have really benefited by spending a gap year or two living full time in community. Is God calling you to this, or anyone you know.

Janet Webster has been a link Trustee at West Dorset, and is moving on at the end of the calendar year. Janet has been a real asset to the team, firstly on the Four Season Studio project team and then giving very good leadership and training on all things HR. Helping Liz and Tony with recruitment and staff reviews and schooling them in good employment practice.

Janet's wise words and attention to detail will be missed - thank you for all that you have contributed Janet.

We will have a vacancy at both centres for a link Trustee. Please get in touch with either the wardens or myself if you want to find out more. Mostly you need a love of the centres, have a desire to see them thrive and a bit of spare time and energy. You will get help and support from other Trustees who know the ropes while you find your feet.

We will put role descriptions on the websites together with the Annual Report next week.

I want to touch on the question of in person vs virtual AGMs.

Before Covid our AGMs were held in central London. In my time about 40 people attended. No one came over from the west unless they were an officer of the charity. Transport links are poor, slow and expensive. During Covid we had no option but to meet online. The AGM was attended by more people and by people who had not previously been able to attend. This was gratifying to see.

A Zoom AGM is a good vehicle for giving information, but not a great vehicle for discussion and it doesn't have the same sense of gathering.

For the past 2 years Richard and Debbie have held open Bradwell Committee Meetings on a Saturday during August, as one summer event ends and another is beginning. There is the opportunity to stay overnight especially if camping. These have been very well attended, there has been a really good free flow of discussion, ideas and information, as well as the opportunity to meet and to have lunch together afterwards.

I think that these open committee meetings deliver at least as much as the in person AGMs used to. They don't facilitate a mixing of East and West, but that didn't happen at the in person London AGMs anyway.

So for now I think this arrangement is good.

If things change or a situation arose where a gathering of the whole community in person was felt to be important then we will do this.

I give advance notice that next year's AGM will again be by Zoom and will be 21st September 2024

Next year's open Committee meeting at Bradwell will be in August date to be advised on the website.

The past year has gone well. I feel that we have the capacity to think more about what it means to be a Community and how we express our Mission and charitable objects.

We thank God for all the blessings that we have received and shared with one another.