

REPORT TO OWL RE. MATTERS ARISING FROM BO OWL.

I was made so warmly welcome yet again when I passed through Bo and then when I spent a couple of days there. My grateful thanks to all the Bo committee members.

The main issues for discussion were the legacy money, and communications especially between teachers. I also had a glimpse of the youth film making group rehearsing their film. |They are doing a music and drama performance which presents the culture of Sierra Leone in the past and present. They were very serious and impressive.

LEGACY AND LAND

The legacy money discussions were around the issue of buying land. It seems now that both Bo and Warwick OWLs are convinced that to buy land with some of the money would be prudent. Once here and able to hear in detail what Bo OWL aspire to, I was very excited about the prospect. It seems that there is a mounting trend to buy up land all over Bo and to develop it. The price is likely to start rocketing and if we buy now the prospect is that we will at least make a profit on our deal failing any development activities.

Maada explained to me that once we have the land, even if we do not have enough resources to develop it, we can go into partnership with NGOs or others who do not have the same local infrastructure as us.

THE SITES

The first site we visited was at Kandeh Town extension. This is where Wusu lives and the site is close to a new school being built by the City Council (primary and junior secondary). As there are few facilities there, OWL could maybe set up a day care centre.

There is a site consisting of about 20 town plots and OWL would like to buy 10. With legal and administrative fees this would cost 50 million Leones (under £9000 at Le5,700 to pound). The site was a bit sloping with nice views. Very attractive.



The second piece of land was on the old Matru Road. You all know Matru Rd. If you were to turn right out of the OWL centre and go straight through to the Highway at New London, cross the Highway and keep going a mile or 2 along the route of the railway land, you come to another 30 plot piece and of that we could have 10 lots for Le 45,000,000 all in. This land belongs to Theresa Bangali's family.

It was flatter than the other site and quite a long way out but there was evidence of development creeping up this road.

To be frank, I personally would buy both. However, there is an awful lot of research required now re. legalities and other criteria. The committee will I am sure be very cautious about this.



COMMUNICATIONS

This was a lively debate. David Ngombu has volunteered his free services to help with communications with schools.

Magnus was to be called in to sort out the current technical hitches (he has offered to do this for free as a member of OWL) – remember Danny spent some time working with him a while back.

From then on David will pick up and send messages and make sure schools get messages. I have sent a copy of Brian's e-mail re. the teacher's visit in February as a test and David has promised to reply. However I think it will take a little while for this to come into effect as David and Maada are busy with pressing family matters at present.



The committee also would like all matters re. teachers to be discussed direct with VV. Ideally this will be done through the e-mail process if it takes off. However phone calls would also be OK. VV is respected by head teachers being the chair person of the Head Teachers' Association. He would then

delegate the implementation of any action that may be agreed not only by VV but by OWL committee as a whole. An example of how this might be a better system will be the Day of the African Child. The committee only had a week's notice this year and would have liked longer to get organised...It is hoped this new arrangement will avoid any confusion and misunderstandings. It was suggested that all the Bo e-mail addresses we have be put on the OWL and the Teachers Google groups to keep them in the loop.

Meanwhile Michael Dennis of British Council will help with visit logistics and delivering packages to Bo from UK sent to his mail box (PO box 124 Freetown).

GENERAL

Maada presented his accounts very clearly and then reported the centre's progress.

It is doing well especially on bookings for the hall. The bedrooms are not fetching much despite efforts at publicity. Apparently some people refuse to come because all the rooms are not en suite.

We even had a discussion at one point about making the resource centre room into more en suite bedrooms.

Joe Taylor wants to retire by October. Kai Pratt has resigned and staff morale is not too good. This is being looked into with Johannes Mallah taking a keen interest on the days when he is feeling fit. On top of reviewing conditions of employment, the employees will be included in the NASSIT pension scheme.

It is still not centre policy to charge people to come in and watch football matches because of fear of vandalism. However people were invited in free during the World Cup as long as they bought some drinks.

Finally, I met Dr. Koroma who is a senior gynaecologist at Bo Hospital. He specialises in women's reproductive health and would be happy to have a health (women's) link with us.

The next visit to Bo is being anticipated with pleasure.

Jane Knight. July 16th, 2010.