

ASKHAM BRYAN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of a meeting of the NATURAL ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (NEC)

held on Thursday 20th October 2022 at 6pm in the Village Hall

PRESENT: Jan Bennett (Chair)
Cllr. Julie Barber Jo Fell Kathryn Nolan

In attendance: Keith Langley (Parish Clerk)

1. To appoint someone to Chair the meeting

In the absence of the Chair, Jan Bennett agreed to chair the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence.

Lisa Marriott.

3. Declarations of interest.

None.

4. Public Participation.

There were no members of the public present.

5. Minutes of the last meeting.

The minutes of the meeting of 21st July 2022 were accepted as a true record and it was agreed that matters arising be dealt with under the appropriate agenda item headings.

6. Recreational Area

Members of the Committee had had a meeting at the beginning of August with Ian Jakulis, a representative of The Conservation Volunteers (TCV). This meeting also looked at the pond and the proposed wildflower area (see below). The advice was that the Committee were already doing the right things in most respects but there was a suggestion of increasing biodiversity, for example using bug boxes and nest boxes. It was noted that there were plans by the Parish Council (PC) to redevelop the Recreational Area and to improve the play equipment but definitive plans were unknown creating some uncertainty about what the Committee could do. A tree inspection report had been produced and circulated earlier that day. It was noted that the Terms of Reference did not put responsibility for tree maintenance on the Committee but provision of nest boxes was affected by any decisions taken by the PC in response to the report. There had been an offer of help from the representative of TCV. The role of TCV is to act as facilitators, i.e. to match people to the tasks which need doing. He could come before Spring 2023 and advise further. An email from a resident with an attached photograph of bottles and cans collected from the Recreation Area wooded area had been circulated to the Committee. It was noted that the nearest bin was on Askham Fields Lane. A bin could be provided within the Recreational Area but City of York Council would be unlikely to empty it and those who didn't use the bin on Askham Fields Lane would probably still leave litter even if the bins were nearer. The terms of Reference did not suggest that litter picking was a responsibility of the Committee and the PC were better positioned to address such concerns and to clarify the position.

7. Land Adjacent to 149 Main Street; Creation of wildflower area;

At the meeting with the representative of TCV (see above), he had suggested that the wildflower area be a swathe of flowers through the grassed area to make it easier to manage and that the turf be used to create a small mound. This would avoid a bare area being created. There were already lots of buttercups in this area. The grass was being cut by Jo. it was noted that the lady whose late husband had planted the horse chestnut trees had herself passed away, it was agreed that no action be taken regarding these trees until her property was put up for sale (it was also noted that other neighbours were favourably disposed to the removal of the trees). It was agreed that through an article in the

newsletter, residents would be given the opportunity to comment and to volunteer to help and Jo agreed to write this. There would also be an appeal via the village WhatsApp group, Jan or Lisa would post something appropriate. The previous newsletter article had appealed for volunteers to join working parties and there had been two positive responses to this (including one from the former chair of the PC). After this, seed would be obtained for the smaller area to be sown before the end of March. There would be a meeting before then to consider obtaining seeds.

8. Pond Area

The water level was still low and the ducks had not returned (last seen on 25th June and gone by July though some had been seen walking about). At the meeting with the representative of TCV (see above), he had confirmed that the Committee were doing the right thing (he was aware of the proposed tree work). The willow saplings previously removed from the front part of the pond had not returned. He had recommended that the level of readmace and other species which might encroach on the open water be monitored with a view to the occasional removal. The tree surgeon planned to carry out the work by the end of the month, and this would be considered at the November meeting if the work was still outstanding at that point. Ian Jakulis had suggested bat boxes once the tree work had been carried out.

9. Terms of Reference

It was noted that the Terms of Reference with the amendments suggested at the July Committee meeting had been presented to the PC and formally approved.

10. Budget Position

The cost of seeds and bug and bird boxes would be established in order to inform the PC of the Committee's budget requirements for 2023/24. Other costs would be wildlife friendly trees (e.g. those with berries) for the land near 149 Main Street – typically £60 for a tree one and a half times the average height of an adult, the species would be one whose full grown height was proportionate to the size of the plot (it was suggested that one of those planted in the Recreational Area could be transplanted before it became too established).

11. Date of next meeting

17th November 2022 at 6pm in the Village Hall to consider costs of seeds, bird boxes and bug houses and to consider an update on the pond area tree work. The meeting would be also consider a draft article for the newsletter if the deadline for submissions had not passed.

The meeting closed at 6:45pm.

Signed

Chair
17 November 2022