

ASKHAM BRYAN PARISH COUNCIL

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

held on Thursday 21st July 2022 at 6pm in the Village Hall

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

In attendance: Cllr. Smith and Keith Langley (Parish Clerk)

1. Apologies for absence.

None.

2. Declarations of interest.

None.

3. Minutes of the last meeting.

The minutes of the meeting of 19th May were accepted as a true record and it was agreed that matters arising be dealt with under the appropriate agenda item headings.

4. Recreation Area

- a) It was noted that the Parish Council (PC) had reconsidered its position regarding tree removal at its June 2022 meeting and were awaiting a tree inspection report. The tree inspector had quoted £120 for the Recreational Area and £5 for each tree outside the Recreational Area but where several trees were in close proximity, the additional cost would be £10 for each group of trees. The PC had agreed the quotation to a maximum of £200. In the meantime, more branches had come down, the inspector had been notified and was not unduly concerned.
- b) It was noted that the PC had recognised the need for a maintenance strategy regarding trees (including management of saplings) and had agreed to ask the Natural Environment Committee (NEC) to develop a plan. The next stage was to conduct a survey. Askham Bryan College had been approached but had been unable to help due to a backlog of learning in the curriculum timetable due to staff and student absence. Student education takes priority over community engagement and the scope of the work was not what they were originally led to believe. Instead, an approach would be made to The Conservation Volunteers (TCV). There was a need for someone to take the lead on this, the Chair would be unable to do so in September. She had had an email from TCV which contained contact information. TCV were a not-for-profit organisation who could undertake the survey and help the Committee come up with a management plan. Their remit regarding the Recreational Area would be to focus solely on the area where trees are located. They were only available for visits during the daytime but could attend a site visit starting at 5pm. Kathryn Nolan was happy to take the lead on this and would arrange a meeting in the next week or so. Jan was also interested in attending, Cllr. Julie Barber and Jan would liaise to agree a date. The Chair would email TCV and copy to Jan and Cllrs. Barber and Smith. It was noted that TCV provide advice free of charge.
- c) The recent fall of a branch was noted. The Chair had spoken to someone who would cut it up and use the wood for his wood burner.

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

- a) Work had been carried out on 2nd July. No volunteers had turned up other than a former member of the Committee. The grass had been strimmed and cut as short as possible, but turf had not been removed. Cllr. Walker would be asked if he could use his agricultural equipment to strip the turf off, his contact details would be passed to Jo. Jo would ask Cllr. Walker or the neighbour. It was possible to cut the grass short and plant through the turf, in which case the turf would need spiking and a strip left around the edge. This method would take several years to develop a wildflower area. It was agreed

that removal of turf be the preferred option with spiking as a fall back. Seeding needed to be done in September.

- b) In carrying out the work, it had been established that the horse chestnut trees were suffering from conker canker, a disease which is not fatal. The Committee wondered whether the family would therefore agree to the removal of one of the trees leaving the other in the corner, as the shade from the tree/s may reduce the ability of the plants to grow in the wildflower area. Advice on this would be sought from TCV and options explored.

6. Pond Area

- a. Originally, water levels in the pond were too high for tree management work to be done. The Chair would contact the tree surgeon to ensure he still had this job on his list of works to do. It was hoped that in October, the water level would be low enough for the work to be carried out.
- b. The Chair was happy to put together a management plan. The very low level of water was commented on. It was noted that the TCV had advised that this was a seasonal pond, and that wildlife would return when the water levels raised. The Chair would do an update for the next village newsletter informing them of this and advising people against refilling the pond with tap water (she would circulate this before submitting) the same information would be shared with the village WhatsApp group. It was also suggested that there be a notice telling people not to feed the ducks bread as it was harmful to them the Chair would look into this.

7. Terms of Reference

Suggested changes to The Terms of Reference were considered. The PC would be responsible for the tree assessment and the Committee for the management plan.

- a) Regarding paragraph 2.1, insurance cover was being provided.
- b) The word "practical" in paragraph 2.3b was queried and it was agreed that this be left unchanged.
- c) There was a query regarding paragraph 6 "The full Parish Council may amend the terms of reference with one month's written notice". It was agreed that the Committee could set its own Terms of Reference which would be subject to PC approval and the PC should formally contact the Chair and the Clerk should there be any changes in the interim period.

8. Budget Position

The budget position was noted. There had been no expenditure to date against the £800.00 PA budget. The funding for tree work on the pond has been carried forward from 2021/22.

Date of next meeting

The next scheduled meeting was 15th September 2022 at 6pm in the Village Hall but two or three members of the Committee would be unavailable. Consideration was given to having an interim meeting in August. It was agreed that Committee members keep in touch and email one another the outcomes of meetings. Future agendas would include opportunity for members of the public to attend the Committee.

It was noted that the Great Big Green Week 2022 runs from 24th September to 2nd October. The Chair would circulate an email with the information on this. Cllr. Peers would forward it to the Brownies. The work at the land near 149 Main Street and the pond work could be included as part of the September programme.

Cllr. Peers had had a telephone call from a resident wanting to do some volunteer work in the Recreation Area. The creation of a bug hotel was suggested.

The meeting closed at 6:55pm.

Signed

DRAFT