

ASKHAM BRYAN PARISH COUNCIL

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

held on Thursday 15 January 2026 at 6:30pm in the Village Hall.

PRESENT: Jan Bennett (Chair)
Julie Barber Peter Christopherson Laura Hardie
Steve Bassford Jo Fell Kathryn Nolan

In Attendance: The Clerk.

1. **Apologies for absence:** None.

2. **Declarations of interest:** None.

3. **Public Participation**

There were no members of the public in attendance.

4. **Minutes of the meeting of the Natural Environment Committee held on 20th November 2025.**

A revised version on the draft minutes had been circulated incorporating suggested changes. It was **resolved** that this version of the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20th November 2025 (58-59) having been circulated, be approved and that the Chair be authorised to sign.

5. **Recreational Area.**

David has removed the four ash trees that were suffering from 'ash dieback from the area near the mound. After consulting with Jan, he replaced these with three saplings that had been originally planted elsewhere in the Recreational Area in celebration of the Platinum Jubilee. The saplings chosen for transplanting were also moved to make mowing the area easier. The brambles in the area have been cut back but are being retained in order to support wildlife. They will need to be trimmed as part of the schedule of work. David is scheduled to prune the dogwoods in February.

The NEC agreed to meet on 7 March to carry out maintenance work in the Recreational Area. Volunteers will be invited to join including David. As well as maintenance work, the NEC will also build a bug house and will appeal for suitable materials.

Mowing around saplings along the fence close to the horses' field is an issue for the grass cutting team and the NEC need to work with David (their team leader) to agree a boundary between the 'wild conservation area' and the areas to be mown. The boundary could be staked out using canes.

Actions:

- Jo to include cutting back of brambles and pruning the dogwoods in the scheme of annual tasks.
- Jan to agree the boundary for grass cutting with David before the mowing season begins
- Kathryn and Jo to publicise the 'Recreation Area Tidy Up' in the parish magazine/village WhatsApp.
- Jan to Inform David about plans for the 'tidy up' in March

6. **Pond Area.**

The area at the back of the pond needs tidying up once the water level drops sufficiently. The remaining bat box and plus an owl and a bird box need to be sited appropriately.

Laura has produced an excellent first draft of the information board, with QR codes, to be displayed near the pond. However, following discussion it was agreed that a permanent board would be expensive and it would be difficult to amend the content to reflect the seasons, the sighting of new species and other changes. A suggested alternative was to produce a series of smaller laminated information sheets that could be attach to the benches and updated regularly. It was also agreed that the NEC would monitor wildlife in and around the pond for a few months to inform the early sheets.

We hope to involve more people over time perhaps by appealing for relevant photographs of wildlife to illustrate the sheets. Conservation students from the college could also be invited to help

Actions:

- Kathryn and Jo to publicise plans via the village newsletter
- Steve to investigate possible help from students
- Peter to look into laminating sheets and sourcing a plastic folder to hold the information sheets

(Note: There was a power outage at this point but the meeting continued with much reduced lighting).

7. Village Green

Little work is currently needed but the NEC must check if the person who cut the grass last year is happy to continue.

Action

- Julie to check

8. Land at junction of Main Street and Saint Nicholas' Croft.

Peter reported that there were no immediate tasks required but a 'tidy up' might be needed in the summer and work could be needed on the tree every couple of years. He also reported that there was a void below the choisya and it was agreed this might be a suitable place for a hedgehog house. Steve suggested that the College could build one.

Action

- Steve to follow up on the hedgehog house.

9. Plans for 2026.

- a. Jo agreed to produce a calendar of jobs for discussion at the next meeting.
- b. The Committee would have a stall at the Spring Fair with a view to educating people about pollinators. Peter would ask about booking a stall and Jo would source leaflets including information about bug hotels and bird boxes.
- c. Steve offered packets of sunflower seeds to give away to children and plants leftover from the College plant sale scheduled for the week before the Spring Fair
- d. Kathryn would ask the editor about the deadline for the next newsletter and do an appropriate article and the Village WhatsApp group will be also used to promote events.

Action

- Jo to prepare a draft calendar of jobs for discussion at the next meeting
- Peter to look into booking a stall at the Summer Fair
- Kathryn to publicise future events via the newsletter and/or WhatsApp
- All members of the team to collect leaflets/information sheets ahead of the March meeting

10. Dates of meetings for 2026.

19th March, 21st May (6pm), 16th July, 17th September and 19th November 2026 all at 6:30pm (unless stated otherwise) in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 7:19pm.

Signed

Chair
19 March 2026