

ASKHAM BRYAN PARISH COUNCIL

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

held on Thursday 16 July 2026 at 6:30pm in the Village Hall.

PRESENT: Jan Bennett (Chair)
Julie Barber Jo Fell Kathryn Nolan
Peter Christopherson

In Attendance: The Clerk.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Laura Hardie and Steve Bassford.
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 21st May 2026.**

Matters arising.

Recreational Area.

- The Clerk had written a letter of thanks to the college.
- Kathryn had looked at the use of trail cameras in public areas. Consent of the land owner would be needed and appropriate signage would need to be put up. There are potential issues with data protection and rules about using audio, the latter relating to protected species and habitats particularly during breeding or nesting seasons, as cameras placed incorrectly could cause disturbance. There was also a risk that the camera itself could be stolen (particularly given the requirement regarding signage). There are two broad categories of trail cameras; those requiring a wi-fi signal (which clearly wasn't an option for the suggested locations) and those which used an SD card. Given all the above, it was felt that on balance, the legal requirements and the risk of theft outweighed any advantage to be gained from buying and using such equipment on parish council land.
- Kathryn had looked at the options/costs for bat detectors. Costs varied with the beginners' kit being the affordable one for the Committee's budget. There were two models, a basic one and one with a Liquid-crystal display (LCD). The cost of a beginner's kit would be in the region of £90 to £125. The Committee were made aware of the North Yorkshire Bat Group. Kathryn had a link (<https://nybats.org.uk/wp/>). They organise bat walks and the meeting was made aware of those before the end of August. These two-hour walks take place at dusk (subject to the weather). A suggestion was made that a member of the Committee joins them on one of their walks (if possible) in order to get advice.
- There was no update on Steve suggesting an alternative planting for the copse. Jan agreed to text him.

Pond Area.

- Laura had sent the leaflets to the Clerk for inclusion on the Parish Council Facebook page and website and both sites now had been updated accordingly. The Clerk reported that someone had been so impressed with the leaflet posted on Facebook that they had asked to join the Committee. The Clerk would private-message this person back with details of the next meeting.
- Kathryn had attached the leaflets to the benches by the pond.

- Jo had contacted Steve to ask if the college have any equipment that could be used – either at the college or near the pond – to identify insect life. This action was ongoing.

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

- Jo had written to Steve on 4th June 2026 requesting an update on the hedgehog box and a reply was awaited. Putting a trail camera inside the box to watch the hedgehogs would be problematic for the reasons given above and any signage would probably invite theft.

Plans for 2026.

- Kathryn had looked at the options/costs for a hedgehog box camera – see above. An approach would be made to Soo Wong - a villager who releases rescued hedgehogs - and she would be invited to the next meeting. Jo agreed to contact Soo.
- Peter was still to discuss the timing of future spring fairs with the Village Hall Committee whose next meeting would be on 6th August 2026. This action would be carried over to the September Committee meeting as a work in progress.

Having considered all matters arising, it was **resolved** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21st May 2026 (64-65) having been circulated, be approved, and that Kathryn Nolan (the acting Chair at that meeting) be authorised to sign.

5. Recreational Area.

The saplings in the 'wildlife area' were looking healthy. Jan would ask David Hartley, who coordinates the mowing rota, to cut the grass between them in the autumn. It was suggested that a sign be put up to advise people that the area was being left as a wildlife area. It was noted that the strip of mown grass, close to the boundary with an adjacent field, is cut regularly to prevent horses leaning over and eating any plants detrimental to their health.

6. Pond Area.

After discussion, it was agreed that the annual pond clearance should be carried out earlier than in previous years as the low water level at the end of summer allows maximum access to the pond area. The 5th September 2026 was set for this year's pond clearance. One of the main jobs would be to clear away loose strife whilst the water level was relatively low. This would be reported in the next newsletter, and the article would also remind people not to be concerned about the welfare of the resident ducks and moorhens when the water level is very low. A nearby resident provides them with water and food.

The problem of the unauthorised planting of a small yew tree on the grass verge in front of the pond has been resolved and the tree has been removed. It was suggested that the installation of a sign might help to prevent this happening again.

7. Village Green.

This area is low maintenance as a villager cuts the grass.

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

The tree was looking good but some trimming would be needed in the future. It was agreed that Kathryn would source a hedgehog box for this area.

9. Plans for 2026.

- a. There was a discussion regarding recent tree work on Westwood Lane. A large ash tree has been significantly reduced and four or five other trees, heading towards the park, have been felled. The NEC are concerned about the loss of habitats, for birds in particular, and the negative impact on the landscape. It was agreed that Julie would raise the issue with the Parish Council.

- b. Moth catchers were discussed, a permanent one would be £200, the cheapest was a portable one at £70. This would be considered at a future meeting.
- c. Steve would be asked if students on the 2026/27 Conservation course could build and install an owl box as part of the curriculum.
- d. The deadline for the next newsletter was 14th August 2026. Jo would write a piece advising readers what things to do in the garden at this time of year to support wildlife.

10. Dates of meetings for 2026.

17th September and 19th November 2026 both at 6:30pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 7:25pm.

Signed

17 September 2026