

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 on whose land the cameras were to be situated would be needed. Appropriate signage would need to be put up. There were potential issues with data protection and rules about audio. Some species and habitats were legally protected, particularly during breeding or nesting seasons and cameras placed incorrectly could cause disturbance. There was also a risk that the camera itself could be stolen (particularly given the requirement regarding signage). Kathryn had discovered that there were 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.
- 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 with the meeting been made aware of those before the end of August at Ricall, Escrick, Selby, Boston Spa, Tadcaster and Knaresborough. These two-hour walks take place at dusk (subject to the weather). There was a suggestion of a member of the Committee joining them on one of their walks (membership was not a requirement for participation) 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 regarding for an update on the hedgehog box and a reply was awaited. Putting a trail camera inside to watch the hedgehogs would be problematic for the reasons given above and any signage would invite theft. Steve had attended the plant sale but was not present at the Spring Fayre.

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 and she would be invited to talk at the next meeting. Appropriate articles had appeared in previous newsletters.
- 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 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 were looking healthy. Jan would tell David later in the Autumn to cut the grass round them. It was suggested that a sign be put up to advise people that the area was being left as a wildlife area. There was a strip of mown grass close to the boundary with an adjacent field which had been mown to protect horses leaning over and eating plants detrimental to their health. The cutting rota ran to October, Jan would contact David at the end of August.

6. Pond Area.

A date was set for the 2026 pond clearance, this being 5th September 2026. One of the main jobs would be to clear away loosestrife whilst the water level was relatively low. This would be reported in the next newsletter, the article would also remind people not to be unduly concerned about the low water level. The ducklings were being looked after by a nearby resident. At the Annual Parish Meeting in May, the leader of Askham Bryan 1st Brownies had suggested take-away packs.

There had been unauthorised planting of a small, sickly yew tree on the grass verge in front of pond. Jan had emailed Helen about this to see if there had been any response to her email. This had now been removed as had an old Christmas Tree. A sign was needed to prevent this happening again.

7. Village Green.

This area looked after itself with someone cutting the grass.

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

The tree was looking good but some trimming would be needed. Kathryn would get a hedgehog box from her usual supplier.

9. Plans for 2026.

- Concern was expressed regarding tree cutting down Westwood Lane, a big Ash tree had been felled as had four or five other trees heading towards the park. These had been the habitat for jackdaws and a Tawny Owl. This was outside the conservation area and Kathryn had a map showing trees with Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) on them. It wasn't clear if the Tree Officer of the Local Planning Authority had been made aware (no formal planning application had been received). This would be raised as a concern at the Parish Council meeting which followed the Committee meeting.

- 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 to consider the Conservation Group regarding an owl box.
- 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.

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