ASKHAM BRYAN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of a meeting of the NATURAL ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (NEC)
held on Thursday 17 September 2026 at 6:30pm in the Village Hall.

PRESENT: Jan Bennett (Chair)
Julie Barber
Steve Bassford
Peter Christopherson
Laura Hardie
Shannon Lickers
Kathryn Nolan
Danny Whitehead

In Attendance: The Clerk.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Jo Fell.

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

3. **Public Participation**
There were two members of the public in attendance who were interested in joining the Committee. The Terms of Reference states that the Committee shall consist of "not more than eight voting members" and it was therefore agreed that Shannon Lickers join the Committee as a voting member with Danny Whitehead as a non-voting member.

4. **Minutes of the meeting of the Natural Environment Committee held on 16th July 2026.**

Matters arising.

Recreational Area.
- Bat boxes have been installed by the college.
- Regarding the additional planting in the copse, Steve may have some suitable plants in the glass houses at college.
- David Hartley has been given a message about cutting the long grass between the saplings.

Pond Area.
- The pond clearance had been done.
- North Yorkshire Bat group came and did a talk and left a bat detector next to the pond. They are working through the resulting data and will confirm the results in due course. Kathryn is looking into the possibility of the NY Bat Group leading a walk around the Village in the spring.
- There has been a very positive response to the pond-side information sheets.
- A longitudinal survey of insect life in the pond is being planned that will capture seasonal variations. Further equipment is needed and the college will be able to provide sweep nets and pots. Steve will put together a programme of seasonal surveys starting in the spring and is hoping to involve college students. Shannon has already carried out a survey and will share her key findings.

Land at junction of Main Street and Saint Nicholas' Croft.
- A predator-proof hedgehog house had been installed at the junction of Saint Nicholas Croft and Main Street and the owner of the adjacent property has been made aware The invoice for this had been sent to the Clerk.

Plans for 2026.
- The date for the next spring fair in the Village Hall is 15th of May at the same time of day as the 2025 spring fair.

- The trees that have been felled in the Park close to Westwood Lane are thought to be within the boundaries of Askham Richard Parish Council (PC) and therefore not part of the NEC's remit.

Having considered all matters arising, it was resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16th July 2026 (66-68) having been circulated, be approved, and that the Chair be authorised to sign.

5. Recreational Area.
See Matters Arising (item 4) above.

6. Pond Area.
See Matters Arising (item 4) above.

Additionally it was noted the PC has agreed a budget for an interpretation display board to go by the pond which would give information about the types of wildlife which could be found there. The PC has delegated this matter to NEC who think that an information board would be too static as once it had been read, people would not read it again. It would not keep up with any seasonal changes and consequently it was felt that a notice board, similar to those outside the village hall, would be more appropriate. The Clerk would investigate the cost of a notice board to include fitting within the budget.

7. Village Green.
It was agreed to continue with the arrangement where a villager cuts the grass.

8. Land at junction of Main Street and Saint Nicholas' Croft.
See Matters Arising (item 4) above.

9. Plans for 2026 and other matters.
The Clerk has agreed to set up a WhatsApp group for members of the Committee to communicate. Larger documents would need a shared drive, Shannon agreed to set this up.

10. To consider an email from a resident regarding the planning application by Askham Bryan College.
Askham Bryan College had submitted a planning application for the creation of a 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) with perimeter fencing, hardstanding areas, storage container, floodlights, an access footpath, and a huddle. This had led to several objections including an email from a resident who felt that under the first paragraph of the Terms of Reference, the Committee should submit a corporate response. The Clerk advised that Parish Councils are empowered to delegate some of their functions to committees but such delegation should not duplicate functions of the full PC and in this case, a response from the PC as a corporate entity (of which the NEC is a part) had already been submitted.

11. To note that the PC were considering an "adopt a tree" scheme where the PC provides a tree for planting by residents with sufficient garden space.

a. The Committee was supportive in principle of the proposal by the PC to have an "adopt a tree" scheme but felt that appropriate guidelines would be needed and the scheme should be restricted to particular species of tree. The Recreational Area could be used as a nursery to develop whips into saplings (some were already well enough established to be used for the scheme). The Woodand Trust copse pack of native species would be appropriate if on offer. Villagers could collect trees under supervision (to avoid people digging up trees not intended for the scheme).
b. The PC is introducing a scheme of 'talks' and it was felt that the NEC could collaborate with the PC on this programme. Soo Wong (a villager who works with a charity that rescues

hedgehogs) has already arranged a talk for the NEC that could be included in the PC's scheme. The talk, on 3rd December 2026, will be publicised in the next Village Newsletter as part of Jo's NEC report. Jan will contact Cllr Wiseman about the two committees (PC and NEC) working together on the scheme of 'talks'.

Actions

- KN: continue to follow up on 'bat data' and look into a possible 'bat walk' in the Spring
- SB: Explore ways to involve students and possible plantings in copse
- SL: Find a way to share findings from surveys - 'key findings' and 'detailed data'
- JBb :Liaise with PC re: trees for free
- JBk : Article for Village News (include invite to hedgehog talk - if SW agrees)
- JBe: liaise with David Wiseman on a joint programme of talks (including access to PowerPoint)
- Keith: investigate notice boards and set up a WhatsApp group for the Committee.

12 Date of next meeting.

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

The meeting closed at 7:25pm.

Signed

19 November 2026