

ASKHAM BRYAN PARISH COUNCIL

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

held on Thursday 21 May 2026 at 6pm in the Village Hall.

PRESENT: Kathryn Nolan (Chair)
Julie Barber Jo Fell Laura Hardie
Peter Christopherson

In Attendance: The Clerk.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Jan Bennett and Steve Bassford. In the absence of the Chair, it was agreed that Kathryn Nolan chair the meeting.
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 19th March 2026.**
A revised version of 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 19th March 2026 (62-63) having been circulated, be approved, and that Jo Fell (the acting Chair at that meeting) be authorised to sign.
5. **Recreational Area.**
In the absence of Steve, the action regarding alternatives for the willow tree was carried forward. The bug hotel had been built (as reported at the March meeting), and an article had been submitted for the village newsletter. Students from the college had installed four bat boxes they had made plus the one bought by the Committee. The Clerk would write a letter of thanks to the college. The grass around the saplings was being left when the grass is mowed to allow the bulbs in that area to die back naturally. A question was raised about data protection in public areas linked to the proposal to install a trail camera by the bug hotel to monitor wildlife, as the installation and use might require appropriate signage. Kathryn would look into this and it was agreed to ask Steve how the college manages this. An alternative would be the purchase of bat detectors to assess the impact of the bat boxes and help to identify species.

Actions:
 - The Clerk to write a letter of thanks to the college.
 - Kathryn to look at the use of trail cameras in public areas.
 - Jo to check with Steve how the college manages the use of trail cameras.
 - Kathryn to look at the options/costs for bat detectors.
 - Steve to suggest alternative planting for the copse.
6. **Pond Area.**
Laura had updated the leaflets about the areas the Committee is responsible for and the wildlife/birds identified around the pond. It was agreed to attach the laminated leaflets to the benches by the pond and add to the Parish Council Facebook page and website. An app had been used to identify twenty-two bird species either at the pond or the land immediately beyond it, but it was more difficult to identify what insects are in the pond. A student from the college had completed a survey a couple of years ago, but more accurate identification would require access to a microscope.

Actions:

- Laura to send the leaflets to the Clerk for inclusion on the Parish Council Facebook page and website.
- Kathryn to attach the leaflets to the benches by the pond.
- Jo to contact 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.

7. Village Green.

The grass was now being cut but a clump around the bulbs had been left to allow the bulbs to die back. The tree was doing well and it was agreed that there was no need for further bulb planting.

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

The hedgehog house agreed previously was still outstanding and Jo would ask Steve about this. The tree might need pruning next year, but this would be an agenda item for a Parish Council meeting as it was beyond the budget of the Committee.

Actions:

- Jo to follow up with Steve for an update on the hedgehog box.

9. Plans for 2026.

- a. The Committee work calendar had been included in the report being presented at the Annual Parish Meeting.
- b. Budget. There was £106 left in the 2025/26 budget. The Parish Council had not agreed to this being rolled over to the 2026/27 budget but did agree to increase the 2026/27 budget by the same amount. This took the 2026/27 budget from £250 to £356. This could be used for the purchase of a bat detector (see item 5 above). Kathryn would also research the cost of a camera to go inside the hedgehog box.
- c. The Committee had had a presence at the spring fair on 16th May 2026 which had been successful. However there were not as many children as expected, possibly as many clubs/societies that children are involved in happen on a Saturday morning. It was suggested that future spring fairs could be on an afternoon. Those children that were there seemed interested in the Committee's table. It was suggested that next time, there could be something which children could take home (materials for creating a shoe box bug hotel or knitted bees). It was agreed that having a presence at the fair was a good thing, as it provided an opportunity to engage with villagers and explain the Committee's work.
- d. The next event on the village calendar is the garden party on 20th June 2026. As Jo and Kathryn are unavailable on that date, it was agreed that it is something which could be considered in the future.

Actions:

- Kathryn to look at the options/costs for a hedgehog box camera.
- Peter to discuss the timing of future spring fairs with the Village Hall Committee.

10. Dates of meetings for 2026.

16th July, 17th September and 19th November 2026 all at 6:30pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 6:40pm.

Signed

16 July 2026