



The Dales & Bowland
Community Interest Company

Annual Report and Statement of Community Interest Delivery 2017/18



Dales & Bowland Community Interest Company
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Overview

- Dales & Bowland Community Interest Company (D&BCIC) provided a network of 12 Sunday and Bank Holiday public DalesBus services to and within the Yorkshire Dales National Park and Nidderdale/ Forest of Bowland Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty throughout Summer 2017, plus a mid-week school holiday service between Bradford and the Dales. Four services operated on Sundays during the winter months.
- D&BCIC is a social enterprise whose single member is a charity, the Yorkshire Dales Society, which is also known as Friends of the Dales. D&BCIC has its own independent board of directors who are all unpaid volunteers working in partnership with commercial bus operators, community transport operators, user groups, local attractions and other businesses and local authorities.
- DalesBus is not just a local but also a regional transport network. It serves a wide range of catchment communities across the North of England, from Preston to Middlesbrough, and Kirkby Lonsdale to Selby. Although primarily designed to meet the needs of urban communities to access the Yorkshire Dales National Park and Nidderdale/Forest of Bowland AONBs, DalesBus also provides a much-valued service for local communities within the Dales who otherwise would have no transport on Sundays and Bank Holidays, thereby further isolating those without access to their own transport.
- 28,117 journeys were made on DalesBus services managed by D&BCIC during 2017-18. The net reduction from 31,373 journeys in 2016-17 was largely due to changes to the network, in particular the transfer of the Saturday Ilkley to Grassington service back to NYCC management and the withdrawal of the Eastern Dalesman service, partly offset by the takeover of management of Winter Sunday service 24 in Nidderdale.
- Net cost per passenger rose from £2.24 in 2016-17 to £2.38 in 2017-18, reflecting increased contract costs from some operators, and the relatively high cost of providing the new Bowland Explorer service. This continues to reflect good value for money in what are increasingly difficult times for rural bus operation in the UK.
- Whilst D&BCIC and its partners have continued to be remarkably successful once again in attracting sufficient funding for the summer 2018 network, it is clear that fundraising activity is becoming an unsustainable drain on the company's limited voluntary resources and that the securing of more stable longer-term funding is an urgent priority.
- DalesBus delivers many economic, social and environmental benefits, but D&BCIC cannot achieve these alone. **For DalesBus to survive and develop we urgently need increased political and financial support.**

The Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company

D&BCIC is a social enterprise wholly owned by the charity Yorkshire Dales Society, also known as Friends of the Dales. The company has its own independent board of directors who are all unpaid volunteers working in partnership with commercial bus operators, community transport operators, user groups, local attractions, businesses and local authorities.

During the year, two directors resigned from the Board, Alastair Ross and Colin Speakman, who was a founder director of the company. We are particularly grateful for Colin's hard work and enthusiasm over more than ten years to develop the company and the DalesBus network.

We were pleased to welcome Graham Yule, Treasurer and Trustee of our parent organisation, the Yorkshire Dales Society to the Board.

We also wish to thank the many volunteers who give up time to help with the running of the company, and the management and promotion of DalesBus services, as well as the many organisations, listed at Appendix 4, who have provided vital financial support.

The work of D&BCIC was highlighted in Parliament in December 2017 when John Grogan, MP for Keighley, tabled Early Day Motion 650:

That this House congratulates The Dales and Bowland Community Interest [Company], a subsidiary of the Yorkshire Dales Society, on its 10th anniversary; acknowledges the work that this not-for-profit company has undertaken with its DalesBus service to deliver affordable public passenger transport to the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the Forest of Bowland every Sunday and Bank Holiday throughout the year; notes that the continuation of the DalesBus service is essential so that less traffic enters the National Parks; further notes the mental and physical health benefits to West and North Yorkshire residents which the DalesBus offers by improving mobility and combatting isolation and loneliness, as well as the economic benefits it brings to pubs, cafes, shops and other businesses in the Yorkshire Dales National Park; notes that in [2018 D&BCIC] wants to reinstate the Summer Sunday Nidderdale Service which will give people from West Yorkshire direct access to Washburndale and Nidderdale and serve no less than seven reservoirs; welcomes the continuing financial support that West Yorkshire gives to DalesBus; and calls on the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and Yorkshire Water to consider doing likewise.

The DalesBus Network

The DalesBus network remained largely unchanged in 2017-18 from the previous year, with most services continuing on a similar basis to previous years. 28,117 passenger journeys were made on DalesBus services managed by D&BCIC during the year. The net reduction from 31,373 passenger journeys in 2016-17 was largely due to the impact of the network revisions mentioned below.

- A new partnership with the Leeds Morecambe Line Community Rail Partnership, utilising funding from Northern's Seedcorn Fund, enabled the reintroduction of a Sunday and Bank Holiday bus link into the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The new Bowland Explorer bus service linked Lancaster, Bentham, Ingleton, Gisburn Forest, Slaidburn and Clitheroe, using a 16-seater minicoach.
- Sadly, a shortage of funding in the Nidderdale area resulted in the withdrawal of the Eastern Dalesman service, which in previous years had linked West Yorkshire with Pateley Bridge, Fountains Abbey, Ripon, Leyburn and Richmond. The Fountains Flyer service from York was truncated at Fountains Abbey, with additional midday journeys to/from York added. The Nidderdale Rambler service was amended to operate from Ripon, in place of Selby/Harrogate, and run to Upper Nidderdale/Grassington on alternate operating days. This reduced level of provision did however enable links to those places to be maintained.
- Links from Dewsbury and Bradford were retained by rerouting the Cravenlink service to Skipton and Malham to start from Dewsbury in place of York. Preston was added to the DalesBus network, with the extension of the Northern Dalesman service to run between there and Richmond.
- During summer 2017, the Harrogate Bus Company announced their intention to withdraw the Winter Sunday service between Harrogate and Pateley Bridge on route 24. Intervention by D&BCIC, alongside Nidderdale Plus and Nidderdale Chamber of Trade, enabled sufficient funds to be raised for the service to continue, managed by D&BCIC for the next two winter seasons. Significant funding has been provided for this by the Harrogate Spring Water Company.
- Limited funding also meant that the "Dales Highwayman" service between West Yorkshire, Pateley Bridge, Grassington and Hawes on Summer Saturdays did not operate in 2017, despite a reasonably successful trial in 2016.
- D&BCIC were successful in handing the management of the Ilkley to Grassington Saturday service back to North Yorkshire County Council for Summer 2017, albeit at the expense of the withdrawal of NYCC's own Friday service on the route.
- School holiday buses from Bradford to the Dales were revamped in a trial pre-bookable format in conjunction with VAMOOZ and Girlington/Grange Interlink community centres.
- A full list of the services provided by D&BCIC in 2017-18 is included at Appendix 3

The gross cost of providing and marketing the network was around £124,000, with fares income of approx. £51,000, leaving a net cost funding requirement of £73,000. Net operating cost per passenger rose from £2.24 in 2016-17 to £2.38, reflecting increased contract costs from some operators, and the relatively high cost of providing the new Bowland Explorer service. However, this continues to represent good value for money compared with the cost of operating most rural bus networks in the UK.

Some simplification of the implementation of local authority policies regarding the use of English National Concessionary Travel Scheme passes was achieved in 2017-18, with most DalesBus services falling either entirely within or entirely outside the scheme. The apparent inconsistencies in the application of exclusions from the scheme relative to other services in the area however remain a concern. In addition, the continued low rates of reimbursement per passenger means that it is very difficult for rural bus services with a high percentage of retired people to be viable, even with full buses.

Marketing

Marketing of public transport in the Yorkshire Dales is a major activity of D&BCIC, covering not only DalesBus services managed by the company but also other bus and train services in the area.

D&BCIC continued to work with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) to help produce and distribute the popular twice-yearly Metro DalesBus timetable booklet, which is widely distributed throughout the DalesBus catchment areas and remains the prime source of bus service information.

D&BCIC also produced a large range of localised timetables with promotional copy aimed at local communities and visitors. These included leaflets which focussed on bus links from rail services, produced in partnership with Friends of the Settle Carlisle line, and timetable leaflets in partnership with local bus companies. Volunteers have distributed these leaflets to numerous outlets, maintained many bus stop timetable displays in the Dales and produced numerous press releases and public relations stories.

The www.dalesbus.org website was redesigned in January 2018, and now attracts over 300 visitors per day. D&BCIC has also worked with organisations such as the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and Welcome to Yorkshire to improve the quality of public transport information on their websites and in printed publications.

DalesBus is active on social media, with the DalesBus Twitter feed now having over 1,900 followers.

Key features of the DalesBus network are a range of multi operator tickets, discounts for young people (including the One Way £1 ticket), the elderly and disabled, and families (in addition to free travel for senior citizens with ENCT passes on some services) and, thanks to the support of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, availability of MCard train and bus commuter tickets on the weekend DalesBus network.

Community Benefits and Consultation

DalesBus is a means to an end. That end is primarily about allowing people without their own transport an affordable opportunity to access the National Park and neighbouring AONBs. A secondary benefit is the provision of bus services for rural communities, allowing them to access local services, shops, jobs and leisure facilities, as well as enjoying the countryside itself.

A further important benefit is the economic impact of the DalesBus network in rural communities. Independent surveys have estimated that around £10 per head is spent by Sunday bus users in local shops, cafes, pubs and overnight accommodation (the Sunday network facilitates weekend visits). This spend on local goods and services results in the usual multiplier effect in which spending is engendered through small businesses to other supporting businesses in the area. This is recognised by many businesses in the area – shops, pubs, B&Bs, camp sites, leisure attractions, many of whom now strongly support DalesBus, displaying and even requesting timetables and posters to publicise bus services to their customers.

DalesBus and the weekday services are now seen to be an essential part of the tourism infrastructure of the area. Services are also important in terms of bringing employees, for example catering staff, into the Dales from adjacent towns by bus.

The public health benefits achieved by encouraging active enjoyment of the countryside – principally in the case of DalesBus walking – are significant and have been well documented. The mental health benefits are as important as physical health benefits. A day out in the countryside - even just a bus ride – can be a huge antidote to isolation, loneliness and depression, suffered by many older people.

Many regular DalesBus users are members of the Friends of DalesBus, the Yorkshire Dales Public Transport Users' Group - and Friends of the Dales with whom D&BCIC has close working relationships. Input is sought each year at the annual general meetings of both organisations, where updates are presented, and attendees are encouraged to provide feedback. D&BCIC also seeks input from other relevant groups, such as Lancaster Bus Users Group and the Campaign for Better Transport.

Passengers are encouraged to feedback their experiences, concerns, complaints and suggestions to D&BCIC directors face to face or via email, Twitter, the DalesBus website or the Friends of DalesBus. Similarly, DalesBus drivers provide operational feedback to improve the running of the services, which reaches the company via direct face-to-face conversations or through their operating companies, with whom directors have close working relationships.

D&BCIC organised DalesBus publicity stalls in Leeds and Lancaster as part of Catch the Bus Week providing opportunities for the general public to talk about local bus services and any problems, issues and suggestions as well as learn about the available network of DalesBus services.

Though primarily involved with managing the Sunday, Bank Holiday and limited Saturday/School Holiday DalesBus network, D&BCIC also works to integrate its activities with the services of weekday bus and rail operators in the Dales such as Dales & District, Kirkby Lonsdale Coach Hire, Transdev and Arriva Rail North, as well as the four Dales-based community transport operators operating public scheduled bus services, for mutual benefit and support. Our aim is for Dales residents and visitors to be offered a seven day a week, all year high quality public transport network to meet their travel needs.

During the year, Amy Parsons, a University of Leeds Geography student, undertook a project looking at the demographics of DalesBus users and the mental and physical health impacts that DalesBus has on its users. The pilot survey result highlights included:

- 44% of DalesBus users acknowledged the DalesBus provides the only opportunity to leave their residence and partake in activities (including, walking, connecting with people and enjoying the countryside).
- 84% of DalesBus users stated that they would not be able to partake in the activities in the Yorkshire Dales or elsewhere if the DalesBus was no longer accessible to them.
- 4% of DalesBus users have a diagnosed mental health problem which included depression.
- 29% of DalesBus users have a diagnosed physical health problem - of the 29.0% the most common stated health problem was high blood pressure.
- 48% of DalesBus users live alone.
- The most common age range of DalesBus users is 65-74 years old.

The pilot study said “with caution, it is reasonable to conclude the DalesBus is a valuable asset in allowing people to access the natural environment. Consequently, DalesBus users are able to partake in a plethora of activities which are advantageous to their physical and mental health.”

2018-19 – The Coming Year

Planning for 2018-19 and beyond was an important part of the company's activity in 2017-18, with the main challenge again being to seek funding to facilitate the continuation and development of the network. The company's efforts have been quite successful, certainly on a short-term basis, with funding being agreed as follows:

- Continued support from the WYCA has been secured, reflecting the Authority's view of the value of DalesBus to the health and well-being of the people of West Yorkshire in terms of access to the National Park and AONB, and the regional economic and social importance of cross boundary services within the Leeds City Region.
- Following extensive lobbying, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority has committed £5,000 per annum for the next three years to support the DalesBus network. This is a very welcome development but represents a small proportion of the net operating cost of the network.
- North Yorkshire County Council has also made welcome small steps towards supporting DalesBus services with contributions from its Locality and Stronger Community Funds, together with funding for the Summer 2018 DalesBus timetable booklet.
- Continued support from the National Trust combined with the results of an intensive fundraising campaign in the Nidderdale area will allow a more comprehensive Summer Sunday and Bank Holiday service to be provided in and around the Nidderdale AONB area in 2018.
- Developing partnerships with the Leeds Lancaster Morecambe Community Rail Partnership and the Settle Carlisle Railway Development Company have again secured funding for services linking with those railway lines for Summer 2018, including a revised Bowland Explorer service. This funding is however on a short-term basis, so more longer-term funding is still required to secure these services in future years.
- Financial support from users via local transport user groups, the Friends of DalesBus and the Friends of the Settle Carlisle Line remains vital to the work of D&BCIC.
- Commercial sponsorship is an increasingly important source of funding, an increased contribution from Northern Powergrid has been agreed for 2018, and support from Acorn Stairlifts and Harrogate Spring Water will continue into the new financial year as well.
- The Friends of the Dales continues to provide an annual grant to D&BCIC, in addition to providing essential office and much appreciated administrative support to allow the company to function.
- Other smaller funders and grant givers, as well as a wide range of individual donations, have continued to make important contributions.

The result of this fund-raising activity, combined with a decision to budget the use of some of the company's reserves, is that an improved DalesBus network is planned to operate in 2018-19, with the summer season extended again on some services, and services once again operating every Summer Sunday to Upper Nidderdale, and between Pateley Bridge and Grassington. In addition, the West Yorkshire to Nidderdale Sunday link will be restored, with new Nidderdale Rambler service 821 linking Keighley and Otley with Pateley Bridge and Scar House. Service 825 will be rebranded as the Brimham Explorer, running between Ripon, Fountains Abbey, Brimham Rocks and Harrogate. Changes will be made to the midday journeys on some routes, replacing the Hawes to Ingleton service with a link from Hawes to Settle, providing a new link from Hawes to Castle Bolton and Masham, and increasing capacity on the Grassington to Buckden service.

The Future of DalesBus – 2019-20 and Beyond

Whilst D&BCIC has achieved considerable success in securing a series of donations and grants to support the network in recent years, some of the funding is on a short-term basis and will not be available in future years, and the 2018-19 network is also being partly supported by the company's limited reserves.

In the context of the overall National Park budget funding requirements are relatively small. To keep the DalesBus network at the present level with a budget of (say) £100,000 would represent less than 2% of the current total Yorkshire Dales National Park budget. Even just 1% or £50,000 of the current budget could, with match funding from other sources, enable the DalesBus network to not only be retained but developed. This would benefit the substantial number of less affluent people in the surrounding urban areas who live in households without access to a car and the many domestic and overseas visitors who expect to find high quality public transport access in their choice of National Park destination.

The cost to the health and well-being of people living in the urban catchment and rural host communities will be far higher, in terms of the impacts resulting from loss of preventive health support and increased social isolation, as will the economic loss to be suffered by small businesses in the Dales, if the DalesBus network has to be cut back. Added to this will be the environmental costs, including an ever-larger carbon footprint, resulting from increased car dependency in the National Park and AONBs.

The Government's 8-Point Plan for England's National Parks, published in March 2016, states:

“National Parks ... are special places for everyone to enjoy. We will ... work with National Park Authorities to scale up projects to reach visitors from a diverse range of social groups and to alleviate barriers that stop more people from enjoying National Parks.”

Lack of transport is often quoted in surveys as the main barrier to visiting National Parks by such diverse social groups – DalesBus provides a practical cost-effective way to deal with this problem. D&BCIC continues to engage with local MPs, the National Park Authority and other key stakeholders to inform them of the objectives and achievements of DalesBus, and to seek further support. The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority is expected to finalise its Management Plan for 2019–24 by the end of 2018. Of particular relevance to D&BCIC within the Plan is objective F7:

Determine the demand from local communities and visitors for bus services to and within the National Park, and use that information to work with operators and community transport providers to provide services that:

- a) meet the needs of local communities, with the 4 service hubs (Grassington, Hawes, Reeth, and Sedbergh) linked throughout the year to their nearest main service centre and railway station (Skipton, Leyburn, Richmond, and Kendal).*
- b) link the main visitor destinations to the main visitor catchments via Harrogate, Ilkley, Northallerton, Ingleton, Kendal, Leyburn, Richmond, Settle and Skipton.*

D&BCIC has been listed by the YDNPA as one of the supporting organisations in the delivery of this objective.

However, the provision and improvement of public transport to and from the National Park is a necessary key enabler to the delivery of many of the YDNPA objectives, not just F7. It is key to expanding the demographics, diversity and sustainability of communities and people living, working and visiting the Dales without having to depend on a car and key to supporting sustainable tourism and improving the environment in the Dales.

National Parks were created by Parliament for everyone to enjoy, not just the mobile, more affluent majority. We believe that the time has come for both Government agencies and local authorities to deliver on their own stated aims and objectives, in both the visionary 8-Point Plan for National Parks and in individual Parks' own Management Plans.

D&BCIC can help achieve many of these aims and objectives for National Parks and other protected landscapes, and in so doing deliver significant economic, social and environmental benefits. But we cannot do it alone, as previously stated, and **for DalesBus to survive and thrive, and the benefits realised, we need increased political and financial support.**

Appendix 1

Directors as at 31st March 2018

Prof. Christopher Nash (*Chairman*)
Mr John Carey
Mr Paul Chattwood
Dr John Disney
Mr Howard Handley
Mr Howard Robinson
Ms Janet Stallworthy
Dr Christopher Wright
Mr Graham Yule

Appendix 2

DalesBus Services managed by D&BCIC during 2017-18

Fountains Flyer	822: Easingwold - York - Ripon - Fountains Abbey (<i>summer only</i>)
Nidderdale Rambler	825: Ripon - Fountains Abbey - Brimham Rocks - Pateley Bridge - Upper Nidderdale/Grassington [alternate days] (<i>summer only</i>)
Northern Dalesman	830: Middlesbrough - Darlington - Richmond - Reeth - Hawes - Ingleton (<i>summer only</i>) 830: Preston - Lancaster - Settle - Ingleton - Ribbleshead - Hawes - Reeth - Richmond (<i>summer only</i>)
Bowland Explorer	833: Lancaster - Bentham - Ingleton - Gisburn Forest - Slaiburn - Clitheroe (<i>summer only</i>)
Wensleydale	855: Garsdale - Hawes - Gayle (<i>all year</i>) 856: Northallerton - Bedale - Leyburn - Hawes (<i>all year</i>) Upper Dales CONNECT (<i>all year</i>) 859: Richmond - Leyburn (<i>summer only</i>)
Cravenlink	873/884: Dewsbury - Bradford - Ilkley - Skipton - Malham (<i>all year - in winter Ilkley to Skipton only</i>)
Yorkshire Dalesman	874: Wakefield - Leeds - Grassington - Buckden (<i>all year</i>) 875: Wakefield - Leeds - Buckden - Hawes (<i>summer only</i>)
Malham Tarn Shuttle	881: Morecambe - Lancaster - Ingleton - Settle - Malham (<i>summer only</i>)
VAMOOZ Dales Experience	Bradford – Malham/Bolton Abbey/Buckden (<i>School holidays only</i>)
DalesBus 24	24: Harrogate - Pateley Bridge (<i>winter only</i>)

Appendix 3

Passenger Journeys

Sundays & Bank Holidays	
Cravenlink	7,104
Wharfedale	5,877
Yorkshire Dalesman	1,489
Northern Dalesman from West	1,473
Northern Dalesman from North East	1,064
Nidderdale Rambler	677
Fountains Flyer	1,116
Wensleydale	5,694
Malham Shuttle	893
Bowland Rambler/Explorer	322
Winter Nidderdale 24	1,691
Weekdays/Saturdays	
Dales Experience Bus	662
Saturday Wharfedale	55
Total	28,117

Net Cost Per Pax	2.38
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Appendix 4

Financial Support

D&BCIC would like to thank the following for financial support during 2017-18:

Acorn Stairlifts
Family Channel
First Bus UK
Forest of Bowland AONB
Friends of DalesBus
Friends of the Dales
Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line
Girlington Community Centre
Harrogate Spring Water
Individual donors and passengers
Leeds Lancaster Morecambe Line Community Rail Partnership
MyLahore British Asian Kitchen
National Trust
Nidderdale Chamber of Trade
Nidderdale Plus
Northern
Northern Powergrid
Pateley Bridge Town Council
Settle Carlisle Railway Development Company
West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Wharfedale Charitable Trust
Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust