

Annual Report and Statement of Community Interest Delivery 2020-21



Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company
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www.dalesbus.org

Overview

- Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company (D&BCIC) provided a limited “DalesBus” service in 2020-21. This was greatly reduced compared to the usual network due to the coronavirus pandemic and associated restrictions on travel.
- Previously in 2019-20 D&BCIC provided a network of 14 Sunday and Bank Holiday public bus services into and around the Yorkshire Dales National Park and Nidderdale/ Forest of Bowland Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty throughout Summer 2019, plus one Summer Saturday service. Five services continued on Sundays all year.
- D&BCIC is a volunteer-run not-for-profit social enterprise whose single member is a charity, 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 normally serves a wide range of catchment communities across the North of England, from Preston to Middlesbrough, and Lancaster to York. 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 Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays, thereby further isolating those without access to their own transport.
- 3,547 passenger journeys were made on services provided by D&BCIC in 2020-21, compared with 30,370 the previous year.
- DalesBus provides access to the National Park for those without a car available, relieves social isolation, encourages healthy exercise, relieves congestion and pollution from excessive car transport and expands markets for local businesses. But for many years now it has survived hand to mouth with little long-term funding. The National Bus Strategy “Bus Back Better” provides an opportunity to put these services on a secure long-term footing. We note that the strategy states:

In popular tourist areas such as the West Country and the national parks, often blighted and congested by too many cars, we want Bus Service Improvement Plans to show how far more will be done to promote buses to visitors, with improved services, easily accessible information, park-and-ride sites and special tickets. Scenic railways, such as the Settle-Carlisle and West Highland lines, are now significant tourist attractions and wealth generators in their own right. We see no reason why several of Britain’s equally splendid bus routes should not be marketed in the same way.

We call on the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, North Yorkshire County Council and surrounding local authorities to build on the DalesBus experience to realise this vision for public transport to and within the Yorkshire Dales and adjacent AONBs.

Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company

D&BCIC is a social enterprise wholly owned by the charity 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.

We 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 offered vital financial support. In many cases this funding was not utilised in 2020-21, but donors have kindly agreed to roll forward their support to 2021-22.

The DalesBus Network

The company raised sufficient funding and donations to enable a slightly expanded network to be planned for 2020, compared to the previous year. However, the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic was such that only a greatly reduced service could be provided, with public transport only being available for essential journeys for much of the year during various lockdown measures implemented by the national government.

Wensleydale Flyer service 856 between Northallerton, Leyburn and Hawes and Garsdale Station Shuttle service 855 were the only services to operate throughout the year, running every Sunday and Bank Holiday to facilitate essential journeys.

Cravenlink services 873 and 884 between Ilkley and Skipton were suspended from March 2020 due to the national lockdown but were reintroduced from July 2020 onwards.

Wharfedale DalesBus services 874 and 875 operated for a brief period in Autumn 2020, but were suspended again for the remainder of the year following the reintroduction of lockdown measures in November 2020.

As a result of workload pressures arising from the pandemic long-standing DalesBus operator Arriva Yorkshire sadly decided in September 2020 to withdraw from the network. Alternative operators therefore needed to be sourced for several DalesBus services from West Yorkshire and York.

Average passenger loadings on the services that ran were greatly reduced as a result of the pandemic, particularly whilst the strictest lockdown restrictions were in place. The financial impact of this was mitigated on gross cost contracts by the payment of concessionary reimbursement at the same level as the prior year by local authorities, together with the payment of Coronavirus Bus Service Support Grant (CBSSG) funding by central government.

Overall, just 3,547 passenger journeys were made on services provided by D&BCIC in 2020-21.

The overall cost of providing the reduced network was around £21,000 with fares income of approx. £5,500, leaving a net cost funding requirement of £15,500.

A full list of the services originally planned by D&BCIC to operate in 2020-21 is included at Appendix 2.

Community Benefits and Consultation

DalesBus was primarily established to provide people without their own transport affordable opportunities to access the National Park and neighbouring AONBs where other public bus services are not available. An important 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 survey undertaken in 2018 found that a little more than half our users were going for a walk, with nearly half reporting a ride in the country as a purpose of their journey. Naturally the latter tended to be older passengers, and 40% of all passengers reported that the service provided companionship and reduced isolation. 68% of passengers reported improved physical health from the exercise use of the service provided. The physical and mental health benefits achieved from a bus ride in the countryside and activities such as walking, are significant, well documented and can be a huge antidote to isolation, loneliness and depression, suffered by many older people. Healthy exercise is normally encouraged by a programme of free guided walks, all accessible by the DalesBus network, organised by the Friends of DalesBus, although these have been suspended during the pandemic.

Research shows that bus passengers spend on average around £10 on the outing excluding transport, demonstrating the importance of bus users to shops, pubs, cafes, camp sites, hotels and leisure attractions. This spend on local goods and services has a multiplier effect in which spending is engendered through small businesses to other supporting businesses in the area. This importance is recognised by local businesses, many of whom strongly support DalesBus, displaying and even requesting timetables and posters to publicise bus services to their customers.

Many regular DalesBus users are members of Friends of the Dales and the Friends of DalesBus with whom D&BCIC has close working relationships. There is regular contact between our Board and their committees, and presentations are made to their annual general meetings on past performance and future plans for DalesBus services. Attendees are encouraged to provide feedback and suggestions for improving and expanding the services. D&BCIC also seeks input from other relevant groups, such as Lancaster District Bus Users Group, Hambleton and Richmondshire Bus Users Group and Action for Yorkshire Transport.

Passengers are encouraged to feedback their experiences, concerns, complaints and suggestions to D&BCIC directors face to face or via email, social media, 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.

Though primarily involved with managing the Sunday, Bank Holiday and limited Saturday 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 Northern, 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.

Marketing

Marketing of public transport in the Yorkshire Dales is usually a major activity of D&BCIC, covering not only DalesBus services managed by the company but also other public transport in the area. In 2020-21 this activity was greatly reduced, although information on services operating for essential journeys continued to be provided online and in roadside displays where possible.

In the absence of any funding from the public sector D&BCIC funded the printing of 40,000 copies of a network DalesBus timetable booklet in Summer 2019, which covered most bus services in the Yorkshire Dales area.

D&BCIC also usually produces a large range of localised timetable leaflets with promotional copy aimed at local communities and visitors. These include leaflets which focus 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.

The popular “Ingleborough Walks” booklet, produced as part of the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnerships Stories in Stone project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and managed by Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, was updated and reprinted again in 2020 ready for the 2021 season.

DalesBus is active on social media, with the DalesBus Twitter feed now having over 2,600 followers and a Facebook account having recently been created.

2021-22 – The Coming Year

Planning for 2021-22 and beyond was an important part of the company's activity in 2020-21, with public transport facing an uncertain future in the aftermath of the pandemic.

- The coronavirus pandemic will continue to have a major impact on travel in 2021-22, with a national lockdown and “stay at home” message still in force at the start of the financial year. These measures are expected to be gradually eased by June 2021, but social distancing rules may continue for a longer period. At the time of writing (April 2021) these still restrict the maximum capacity of buses and trains to around 50% of the usual level.
- Coronavirus Bus Service Support Grant (CBSSG) is expected to continue to be available until at least the end of June 2021, which is helpful in offsetting the revenue loss on some gross cost contracts from reduced passenger numbers.
- Following the warnings to avoid public transport during the early stages of the pandemic it will be a challenge to restore passenger numbers to previous levels.
- The West Yorkshire Combined Authority has offered continued support, 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.
- The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority will continue to provide annual support of £5,000, but declined a request to increase funding to £30,000.
- Continued support from the National Trust combined with other fundraising, including welcome new support from Yorkshire Water, will allow the continuation of the Summer Sunday and Bank Holiday services in and around the Nidderdale AONB area.
- Charitable Trusts continue to provide valuable support to the DalesBus network, with support offered from the Sovereign Health Care Trust, Bramall Foundation, Duke of Devonshire's Charitable Trust, the Jaytee Foundation and the Wharfedale Charitable Trust.
- Friends of the Dales has confirmed a significantly increased grant to D&BCIC, funded by a legacy from a former Director of D&BCIC, John Disney, to fund a Sunday service in Malhamdale as well as support the company's other activities.
- 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.
- Other funders and grant givers, including Northern's Seed Corn Fund and North Yorkshire County Council's Locality Fund, as well as many individual donations, continue to make important contributions to the provision of the DalesBus network.
- A grant from Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust will facilitate the printing of a DalesBus network timetable booklet for Summer 2021.
- A new three-year partnership agreed with Community Rail Lancashire has been deferred to now start in 2022-23. This will facilitate the continuation of Sunday DalesBus service 881 to Malham and the introduction of a new Sunday link between Lancaster, Kirkby Stephen and Richmond. Both services are planned to operate on the same dates as the Lancashire DalesRail trains, and connect with the train at Settle/Kirkby Stephen stations.

All this fundraising activity, combined with a number of donations received directly and via Friends of the Dales, has enabled the planning of a slightly increased network for Summer 2021. This includes the reintroduction of a Summer Saturday service between Skipton and Harrogate, in response to many requests. The introduction of summer services will however be delayed due to the ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Future of DalesBus

Whilst D&BCIC has achieved considerable success in securing numerous donations and grants to support the network in recent years, a substantial part of the funding is on a one-off or short-term basis. Moreover, with many organisations badly affected by the coronavirus crisis, fundraising may become even more difficult. There is therefore an urgent need to arrange more stable long-term funding for the DalesBus network.

A three-year business plan was created in early 2020, incorporating plans to increase passenger numbers to 50,000 by 2023-24, based on increased public sector funding. This plan will need to be revisited once the impact of the National Bus Strategy is clearer.

During the year D&BCIC has responded to several consultations to highlight the issues affecting rural transport, including:

- North Yorkshire Rural Commission
- UK Parliament Transport Committee investigation into Coronavirus: Implications for Transport
- Department for Transport: Future of Rural Transport
- DEFRA: Inclusive Access in the Natural Environment
- WYCA: Skipton Gateway Proposals

D&BCIC was one of several organisations which contributed to the drafting of study for Craven District Council entitled “Towards an Integrated, Sustainable Public Transport Network in Craven”.

D&BCIC has also been invited to participate in the new Richmondshire Climate Change Partnership Group.

The Department for Transport (DfT) published a national bus strategy document entitled “Bus Back Better” in March 2021, with a headline £3bn investment in buses over a five-year period. This represents a major change to the deregulated structure of the bus industry which has been in place since 1986. The emphasis is on “enhanced partnerships” between local authorities and bus operators, with the onus on local authorities to determine what services will operate, and on all parties to provide improved services, passenger information and simpler fares. By the end of October 2021, the DfT expects all Local Transport Authorities (including North Yorkshire County Council) to publish a local Bus Service Improvement Plan. These new plans must set out how they will use their Enhanced Partnership or franchising scheme to deliver an ambitious vision for travel by bus, meeting the goals and expectations in this strategy and driven by what passengers and would-be passengers want in their area.

We note that the strategy states the following:

In popular tourist areas such as the West Country and the national parks, often blighted and congested by too many cars, we want Bus Service Improvement Plans to show how far more will be done to promote buses to visitors, with improved services, easily accessible information, park-and-ride sites and special tickets. Scenic railways, such as the Settle-Carlisle and West Highland lines, are now significant tourist attractions and wealth generators in their own right. We see no reason why several of Britain’s equally splendid bus routes should not be marketed in the same way.

We call on the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, North Yorkshire County Council and surrounding local authorities to build on the Dalesbus experience to realise this vision for public transport to and within the Yorkshire Dales and adjacent AONBs.

In the meantime, D&BCIC will continue to work with key stakeholders, operators and user groups; to respond to consultations and inquiries to make the case for increased services and funding for

public transport into and around the Dales; and to press for improved marketing and timetable information for passengers.

D&BCIC can help the National Park and neighbouring protected landscapes achieve many of their aims and objectives, and in so doing deliver significant economic, social and environmental benefits. But we cannot do it alone, and **for DalesBus to survive and thrive, and the benefits realised, increased and more secure financial support is required.**

Appendix 1

Directors as at 31st March 2021

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

Appendix 2

DalesBus Services planned by D&BCIC for operation during 2020-21

Nidderdale DalesBus	821: Keighley - Otley - Pateley Bridge - Scar House (<i>summer only</i>)
DalesBus	822: Selby - York - Ripon - Fountains Abbey - Pateley Bridge - Grassington (<i>summer only</i>)
Eastern DalesBus	825: Selby - Wetherby - Harrogate - Brimham Rocks - Fountains Abbey - Masham (<i>summer only</i>)
Northern DalesBus	830: Middlesbrough - Darlington - Richmond - Reeth - Hawes (<i>summer only</i>)
Northern DalesBus	830: Preston - Lancaster - Settle - Ingleton - Ribbleshead - Hawes - Reeth - Richmond (<i>summer Sundays only</i>)
Ribbleshead DalesBus	831: Hawes - Ribbleshead - Settle (<i>summer only</i>)
Northern DalesBus	832: Lancaster - Kirkby Stephen - Reeth - Richmond (<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>) 857: Hawes - Castle Bolton - Leyburn - Richmond (<i>summer only</i>) 859: Richmond - Leyburn - Masham (<i>summer Sundays only</i>)
Cravenlink	873/884: Dewsbury - Bradford - Ilkley - Skipton - Malham (<i>all year - in winter Ilkley to Skipton only</i>)
Wharfedale DalesBus	74: Wakefield - Leeds - Grassington (<i>summer Saturdays only</i>) 874: Wakefield - Leeds - Grassington - Buckden (<i>all year</i>) 875: Wakefield - Leeds - Buckden - Hawes (<i>summer only</i>)
Malham DalesBus	881: Lancaster - Slaidburn - Settle - Malham (<i>summer only</i>)
DalesBus 59	59: Harrogate - Skipton (<i>summer Saturdays only</i>)

All services were planned to operate on Sundays and Bank Holidays, except where indicated otherwise.

Appendix 3

Passenger Journeys

Cravenlink (Ilkley - Skipton)	1,509
Wharfedale	805
Wensleydale	1,233
Total	3,547

Appendix 4

Financial Support

D&BCIC would like to thank the following for offers of financial support for 2020-21. Due to the pandemic much of this funding will now be utilised in 2021-22.

Bewerley Parish Council
Bolton Castle
County Durham Community Foundation's Darlington Grants Programme
Friends of DalesBus
Friends of the Settle Carlisle Line
Friends of the Dales
Fullers Foods
Jaytee Foundation
How Stean Gorge
Keighley Town Council
Kirkby Malhamdale Parish Council
Leeds City Council MICE Fund
National Trust
Northern
North Yorkshire County Council Locality Fund
Nidderdale Chamber of Trade
Oldest Sweet Shop
Otley Town Council
Otley Walkers are Welcome
Pateley Bridge Town Council
Personal Donations
Ripley Castle
Sovereign Health Care Trust
Tennants of Leyburn
TransPennine Express
Two Ridings Community Fund
West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Wharfedale Charitable Trust
Yorke Arms
Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust
Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
Yorkshire Water