

Annual Report and Statement of Community Interest Delivery 2021-22



Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company
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www.dalesandbowland.com

www.dalesbus.org

Overview

- Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company (D&BCIC) manages much of the weekend DalesBus network, comprising during Summer 2021 two Saturday and thirteen Sunday and Bank Holiday public bus services into and around the Yorkshire Dales National Park and Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. One Saturday and five Sunday services continued through the winter period as well.
- 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 alongside 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 Lancaster to York. Although primarily designed to meet the needs of urban communities to access the Yorkshire Dales National Park and Nidderdale AONB, 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.
- 28,797 passenger journeys were made on services managed by D&BCIC in 2021-22, compared with just 3,547 the previous year when services were severely curtailed due to the Coronavirus pandemic.
- DalesBus provides access to the Dales 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.
- We urge the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, North Yorkshire County Council and surrounding local authorities to provide much greater support for the DalesBus network to help secure and increase the delivery of these many benefits.

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 alongside 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 provide vital funding.

The DalesBus Network

Sufficient funding and donations were raised to enable most of the pre-Covid DalesBus network to be reinstated in 2021-22, albeit with a later start date on some summer services due to the ongoing impact of Coronavirus restrictions towards the beginning of the year.

Restrictions on passenger capacity were eased from 17th May 2021 to allow the use of all forward-facing seats once again, although the legal requirement to wear a face covering on public transport remained in place until 27th January 2022.

A much-requested direct bus link between Harrogate and Skipton was re-introduced from May 2021, with double-decker service 59 running on Saturdays throughout the year. The service quickly proved popular, with over 200 passenger journeys being made on some days.

Elsewhere, minor changes were made on the network in the light of operating experience in 2019, combined with changes in Wharfedale to consolidate resources onto the key journeys to maintain space for sufficient passengers whilst capacity restrictions remained in place.

Overall, 28,797 passenger journeys were made on services provided by D&BCIC in 2021-22, compared with just 3,547 the previous year at the height of the pandemic. This is only 5% lower than the number carried in 2019-20, albeit around 34% lower on a like-for-like basis.

The overall cost of providing and marketing the DalesBus network was around £130,600 (after accounting for the benefit of Coronavirus Bus Service Support Grant and Bus Recovery Grant) with fares income of approx. £61,000, leaving a net funding requirement of £69,600.

A full list of the services managed by D&BCIC in 2021-22 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 encouraged by a programme of free guided walks, all accessible by the DalesBus network, organised by the Friends of DalesBus.

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, HarBus (the 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 a major activity of D&BCIC, covering not only DalesBus services managed by the company but also other public transport in the area

In the absence of any funding from the public sector D&BCIC secured sponsorship from the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust to enable the printing of 30,000 copies of a network DalesBus timetable booklet in Summer 2021, which covered most bus services in the Yorkshire Dales area.

D&BCIC also produced a range of localised timetable leaflets with promotional copy aimed at local communities and visitors. These include 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.

D&BCIC is active on social media, with over 2,900 followers on Twitter and over 800 on Facebook, and continues to provide the DalesBus website at **www.dalesbus.org**.

2022-23 – The Coming Year

Planning for 2022-23 and beyond was an important part of the company's activity in 2021-22, 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 2022-23 and beyond, with general public transport usage still significantly below pre-Covid levels. Passenger numbers have however recovered more strongly for leisure travel.
- Bus Recovery Grant will cease in October 2022. This has been helpful in offsetting the revenue loss on some gross cost contracts from reduced passenger numbers.
- The future position is more uncertain, particularly as North Yorkshire County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) did not find favour with the Department for Transport, and has not been awarded any funding.
- The West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) 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. In line with government requirements WYCA are however currently reviewing the bus network in their area and assessing options for future funding.
- The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority will continue to provide annual support of £5,000, but previously declined a request to increase funding to £30,000.
- Increased support from the National Trust combined with other fundraising, including welcome 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 funding offered by the Jack Brunton Charitable Trust, the Jaytee Foundation and the Wharfedale Charitable Trust.
- Friends of the Dales continue to make a significant annual grant to D&BCIC, partly 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 Darlington Community Grants, 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.
- The three-year partnership previously agreed with Community Rail Lancashire has had to be deferred again, due to uncertainty about the reliable operation of the Lancashire DalesRail service during Summer 2022.

All this fundraising activity, combined with donations received directly and via Friends of the Dales, has enabled a similar network to that provided in 2021-22 to be planned for Summer 2022. However due to increased operating costs and some unsuccessful funding bids the position for the winter 2022-23 season is less certain, with funding not yet in place to continue all the usual services over the winter period.

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 coronavirus and the subsequent cost of living crisis, fundraising will 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 is now being reviewed to take account of changed circumstances, in particular the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic and the absence of funding for North Yorkshire County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan.

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 2022

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

Appendix 2

DalesBus Services managed by D&BCIC 2021-22

Nidderdale DalesBus	821: Keighley - Otley - Pateley Bridge - Scar House (<i>summer only</i>)
DalesBus	822: York - Ripon - Fountains Abbey - Pateley Bridge - Grassington (<i>summer only</i>)
Eastern DalesBus	825: York - Harrogate - Brimham Rocks - Fountains Abbey - Masham - Leyburn - Richmond (<i>summer only</i>)
Eastern DalesBus	829: Richmond - Bedale (<i>summer only</i>)
Northern DalesBus	830: Preston - Lancaster - Settle - Ingleton - Ribbleshead - Hawes - Reeth - Richmond (<i>summer Sundays only</i>)
Northern DalesBus	831: Middlesbrough - Darlington - Richmond - Reeth - Hawes - Ingleton - Kirkby Lonsdale (<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>)
Cravenlink	873/884: Bradford - Ilkley - Skipton - Malham (<i>all year - in winter Ilkley to Skipton only</i>)
Wharfedale DalesBus	74: Bradford - Ilkley - Grassington (<i>summer Saturdays only</i>) 874: Leeds - Ilkley - Grassington - Buckden (<i>all year</i>) 875: Leeds - Ilkley - Buckden - Hawes (<i>summer only</i>)
Malham DalesBus	881: Lancaster - Settle - Malham (<i>summer only</i>)
DalesBus 59	59: Harrogate - Skipton (<i>Saturdays only</i>)

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

Appendix 3

Passenger Journeys

Sundays & Bank Holidays

Cravenlink	5,014
Wharfedale	5,751
Northern DalesBus from North West	752
Northern DalesBus from North East	824
Nidderdale DalesBus	1,090
DalesBus 822	879
Eastern DalesBus	567
Wensleydale	3,129
Malham DalesBus	563
Nidderdale 24	2,373
Craven Connection	610

Saturdays

Wharfedale	1,143
Harrogate-Skipton	6,102

Total **28,797**

Appendix 4

Financial Support

D&BCIC would like to thank the following for financial support during 2021-22:

Bramall Foundation
County Durham Community Foundation's Darlington Grants Programme
Duke of Devonshire's Charitable Trust
Friends of DalesBus
Friends of the Settle Carlisle Line
Friends of the Dales
Jack Brunton Charitable Trust
Jaytee Foundation
Keighley Town Council
Kirkby Malhamdale Parish Council
Leeds City Council
LNER Customer and Community Investment Fund
National Trust
North Yorkshire County Council Locality Fund
Northern
Otley Walkers are Welcome
Pateley Bridge Town Council
Personal Donations
Settle Carlisle Railway Development Company
West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Wharfedale Charitable Trust
Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust
Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
Yorkshire Water