



**Annual Report
and
Statement of Community Interest Delivery
2023-24**



**Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company
Canal Wharf, Eshton Road, Gargrave, North Yorkshire BD23 3PN**

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 2023 two Saturday and fourteen Sunday and Bank Holiday public bus services into and around the Yorkshire Dales National Park and Nidderdale National Landscape. Two Saturday and five Sunday services continued through the winter period, including the first Winter Sunday bus service to Malham for many years.
- D&BCIC is a volunteer-run not-for-profit social enterprise owned by charity Friends of the Dales.
- 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, including West Yorkshire and the Tees Valley as well as North Yorkshire and the City of York. Although primarily designed to meet the needs of urban communities to access the Yorkshire Dales National Park and Nidderdale National Landscape, 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.
- 53,388 passenger journeys were made on bus services managed by D&BCIC in 2023-24, an increase of 28% over the 41,731 journeys made the previous year. This exceeds the objective set in our 2021-2024 Business Plan to facilitate at least 50,000 passenger journeys in 2023-24.
- The overall social benefit of services managed by D&BCIC in 2023-24 is estimated at around £5 per passenger trip, an overall total benefit of over £250,000, using the standard Department for Transport appraisal guidelines which factor in benefits such as reduced isolation, reduced congestion and environmental impacts.
- 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 welcome the substantial contribution offered via North Yorkshire Council from BSIP Phase 3 Network North funding, which will help the continuation and development of the DalesBus network during 2024-25. Nevertheless, a long-term funding commitment is urgently needed from the new Mayor of York and North Yorkshire to secure and develop public transport provision in the area, including the DalesBus network.
- We very much hope that North Yorkshire Council's new Local Transport Plan will recognise the importance of Sunday bus services to the physical and mental health of the residents of North Yorkshire and to the promotion of sustainable tourism, and include financial support for the DalesBus network.

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 bus operators and many other many organisations who support our activities, including those listed at Appendix 5 who provide vital funding.

The DalesBus Network

Sufficient funding and donations were raised to enable a broadly similar overall level of service to be provided in 2023-24 as in the previous year, although with some significant changes.

A greatly improved service was provided in the Washburn Valley on Summer Sundays and Bank Holidays with support from Yorkshire Water, and the minibuss service between Garsdale Station and Hawes was reinstated on Summer Sundays as the “Wensleydale Explorer Bus”, with some journeys extended down Wensleydale to Castle Bolton.

Wharfedale DalesBus 876, run with a double-decker bus, was introduced to provide additional capacity between Leeds, Ilkley and Grassington on Summer Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Sadly though, due to operational and funding challenges it was not possible to provide either of the traditional Summer Sunday DalesBus services from Lancaster in 2023 – i.e. Northern DalesBus 830 to Ribbleshead, Hawes and Swaledale, and Malham DalesBus 881 to Settle and Malham.

Eastern DalesBus 825 was reduced to operate on only a monthly basis, fully supported by Friends of DalesBus as “Anne’s Bus” in memory of a former member.

Winter services were introduced on Wharfedale DalesBus 74 between York, Harrogate, Ilkley, Bolton Abbey and Grassington on Saturdays, and on Cravenlink 864 between Bradford, Ilkley, Skipton and Malham on Sundays – providing the first Winter Sunday service to Malham for many years.

Saturday service 59 between Harrogate and Skipton was suspended from mid-March due to the closure of the A59 at Kex Gill.

A full list of the services managed by D&BCIC in 2023-24 is included at Appendix 2.

These services proved popular, boosted by the national £2 cap on single fares which applied throughout the year on all services. Overall, 53,388 passenger journeys were made on services managed by D&BCIC in 2023-24, an increase of 28% over the 41,731 journeys made the previous year. This is 76% higher (30% higher on a like-for-like basis) than the number made pre-Covid in 2019-20. This exceeds the objective set in our 2021-2024 Business Plan to facilitate at least 50,000 passenger journeys in 2023-24.

The overall cost of providing and marketing the DalesBus network was around £235,000 with fares income of approx. £105,000, leaving a net funding requirement of £130,000.

Community Benefits and Consultation

DalesBus was primarily established to provide people without their own transport affordable opportunities to access the National Park and neighbouring National Landscapes where other public bus services are not available. An important additional benefit is the availability of bus services for rural communities, allowing them to access local services, shops, jobs and leisure facilities, as well as enjoying the countryside itself.

D&BCIC conducted a passenger survey during summer 2022 to gain feedback on our services and to find out more about how they are used (see Appendix 6). It covered 987 passengers in 624 groups and found that around 44% of our users were going for a walk, with a similar number reporting a ride in the country as a purpose of their journey. The latter tended to be older passengers, and 41% of all passengers reported that the service provided companionship and reduced isolation. 59% 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 people. Healthy exercise is encouraged by a programme of free guided walks, all accessible by the DalesBus network, organised by the Friends of DalesBus.

The survey, in line with previous research, showed 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.

The overall benefit of services managed by D&BCIC is estimated at around £5 per passenger trip, an overall total benefit in 2023-24 of over £250,000, using the standard Department for Transport appraisal guidelines which factor in benefits such as reduced isolation, reduced congestion and environmental impacts (see Appendix 4). The average cost in terms of subsidy is of the order of £2.26 per journey, so we believe that our services provide good value for money for the subsidies they receive.

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), Friends of the Settle Carlisle Line 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, as well as through the passenger survey. DalesBus drivers provide operational feedback to improve the running of services, which reaches the company via direct face-to-face conversations or through their operating companies, with whom we 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.

Despite the lack of any funding from the public sector D&BCIC again managed the production of 30,000 copies of a Dales area timetable booklet in Summer 2023, covering most bus services in the Yorkshire Dales area. D&BCIC also produced a range of localised timetable leaflets aimed at local communities and visitors.

D&BCIC is active on social media, with over 3,250 followers on X and 2,900 on Facebook, which saw an increased focus during the year. We continue to provide the DalesBus website at ***www.dalesbus.org***, with information on all bus and train services in the area.

2024-25 – The Coming Year

Planning and fundraising for 2024-25 and beyond was an important part of the company's activity in 2023-24, against an uncertain background.

- Operating costs for 2024-25 will increase significantly with recent increases in wages, fuel and other operating costs being passed on in contract prices from the bus operators. Bus Recovery Grant ended in June 2023, so the full-year impact of this will also be felt in 2024-25.
- The lack of a long-term funding strategy for bus services from central government is a major concern, but we are very pleased that a substantial grant from the Department for Transport's BSIP Phase 3 Network North Fund via North Yorkshire Council will fund much of the DalesBus network in 2024-25, providing important continuity for the short-term and easing the pressure on unsustainable voluntary fundraising.
- West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) will also offer continued support, reflecting the Authority's previous view of the value of DalesBus to the health and well-being of the people of West Yorkshire in terms of access to the Yorkshire Dales National Park and Nidderdale National Landscape, and the regional economic and social importance of cross boundary services within the Leeds City Region.
- Funding from commercial sponsors, particularly Yorkshire Water, and charitable trusts, including Jack Brunton Charitable Trust, the Jaytee Foundation and Sovereign Healthcare, is important in helping to maintain the network. 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.
- Other funders and grant givers, including local transport user groups, the Friends of DalesBus and the Friends of the Settle Carlisle Line, as well as many individual donors, continue to make important contributions to the provision of the DalesBus network.
- It is however now vital that substantive funding is provided by the public sector on an ongoing basis from 2025 onwards.
- The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority has set out a clear statement of the public transport needs within its area, and it should now be an urgent priority for the newly-elected Mayor for York and North Yorkshire to ensure that this vision is realised.

The agreed funding will enable further development of the DalesBus network in 2024-25, with the enhanced services introduced in 2023-24 continuing and some additional changes as follows:

- Eastern DalesBus 825 will be increased to again run every Sunday and Bank Holiday throughout the summer.
- Northern DalesBus 830 will be reintroduced between Ribbleshead, Hawes and Richmond on Summer Sundays. Unfortunately, it has not proved possible to reinstate the section of route between Lancaster, Ingleton and Ribbleshead, but this has created the opportunity to trial a new Northern DalesBus service 858 between Darlington, Richmond, Hawes and Ribbleshead at the ends of the day.
- Sunday and Bank Holiday services between Skipton and Malham will be increased to hourly throughout most of the day for the peak summer season, with the introduction of Cravenlink service 866 running between Keighley, Skipton and Malham.

The Future of DalesBus

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

A new business plan is currently being developed to set out objectives for the next three years. In the meantime, D&BCIC continues 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.

The new North Yorkshire Council is in the course of preparing a new Local Transport Plan. We very much hope that this will recognise the importance of Sunday bus services to the physical and mental health of the residents of North Yorkshire and to the promotion of sustainable tourism, and therefore include financial support for the DalesBus network.

We welcome the National Park's Statement on Public Transport, but more than words are needed, and positive action is needed by the National Park Authority, York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, North Yorkshire Council and surrounding local authorities to ensure that long term funding is provided to secure and develop public transport provision in the area, including the DalesBus network.

Appendix 1

Directors as at 31st March 2024

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

Appendix 2

DalesBus Services managed by D&BCIC 2023-24

Nidderdale DalesBus	24: Harrogate - Pateley Bridge (<i>all year</i>) 820: Keighley - Otley - Fewston & Swinsty Reservoirs (<i>summer only</i>) 821: Keighley - Otley - Pateley Bridge - Scar House (<i>summer only</i>)
DalesBus	822: Pocklington - York - Ripon - Fountains Abbey - Pateley Bridge - Grassington (<i>summer only</i>)
Eastern DalesBus	825: York - Harrogate - Brimham Rocks - Fountains Abbey - Masham - Leyburn - Richmond (<i>monthly during summer only</i>)
Northern DalesBus	831: Middlesbrough - Darlington - Richmond - Reeth - Hawes (<i>summer only</i>) 832: Hawes - Ingleton - Kirkby Lonsdale (<i>summer only</i>)
Wensleydale	855: Garsdale - Hawes - Castle Bolton (<i>summer only</i>) 856: Northallerton - Bedale - Leyburn - Hawes (<i>all year</i>)
Cravenlink	864: Bradford - Ilkley - Skipton - Malham (<i>all year</i>) 873: Ilkley - Bolton Abbey – Skipton (<i>all year</i>)
Wharfedale DalesBus	74: York - Harrogate - Ilkley - Grassington (<i>Saturdays all year</i>) 874: Wetherby - Leeds - Ilkley - Grassington - Buckden (<i>all year</i>) 875: York - Leeds - Ilkley - Buckden - Hawes (<i>summer only</i>) 876: York - Leeds - Ilkley - Buckden - Hawes (<i>summer only</i>)
DalesBus 59	59: Harrogate - Skipton (<i>Saturdays all year</i>)

All services operated on Sundays and Bank Holidays, except where indicated otherwise.

Appendix 3

Passenger Journeys

	2019	2022	2023	23 vs 19	23 vs 22
Nidderdale 24	681	3,903	4,607	577%	18%
Nidderdale 820/821/822/825	3,417	3,267	5,135	50%	57%
Northern 831/832	988	1,382	1,476	49%	7%
Wensleydale 855/856	5,273	4,315	5,582	6%	29%
Cravenlink 864/873	7,455	7,203	10,238	37%	42%
Wharfedale 874/875/876	7,900	8,063	11,623	47%	44%
Northern 830	1,018	921	0	-100%	-100%
Malham 881	646	503	0	-100%	-100%
Saturday 59		9,682	9,969		3%
Saturday 74	2,992	2,492	4,758	59%	91%
Total	30,370	41,731	53,388	76%	28%

Appendix 4

Estimation of Social Value of DalesBus Services

The standard Department for Transport appraisal guidelines value additional trips made by bus, which would not otherwise be made, at around £4 per return journey for passholders and £8 for non-passholders (the value is lower for passholders because the fact that they travel free encourages them to make more, and less valuable, journeys) at 2010 prices: 2023 prices are double these. Around two thirds of our journeys would not be made in the absence of our services and around half of our passengers are passholders. This suggests that the social value of a one-way passenger journey on one of our buses is around £4. The other one third of our journeys would otherwise mainly be made by car. There will be benefits from reduced congestion and environmental impacts from removal of these car journeys. These vary very much with location and time of day, but according to the Transport Appraisal Guidelines average 17p per km in 2010 prices or 34p in 2023 prices. If the mean length of a car trip which would replace a DalesBus trip is 45km, that leads to an external cost of £15.

Assuming a car occupancy of 2, this leads to a benefit of £7.50 per DalesBus passenger trip replacing a car journey. Given that one third of Dalesbus journeys could have been made by car, this suggests a benefit of £2.50 per Dalesbus passenger trip. This is probably an overstatement given that congestion is the dominant cost and the largest share of congestion cost is in the urban peak. No DalesBus journeys would fall into that category. If DalesBus journeys were in the lowest congestion category of roads, the benefit would go down to 50p per journey. Given that congestion is a problem on some Dales roads, perhaps £1 per journey is a reasonable estimate.

This gives an overall average benefit of DalesBus services of around £5 per passenger trip, so an overall benefit of over £250,000. Longer trips are worth more, and there are additional benefits to sponsors of some services through additional revenue from rail trips or visits to their facilities. Our average cost in terms of subsidy is of the order of £2.26 with just two services above £5. So, we believe that our services provide good value for money for the subsidies they receive.

Appendix 5

Financial Support

D&BCIC would like to thank the following for financial support during 2023-24:

Bettys & Taylors
Bolton Castle
Dulverton Trust
Friends of DalesBus
Friends of the Dales
Friends of the Settle Carlisle Line
Harrogate Local Fund
Jack Brunton Charitable Trust
Jaytee Foundation
Kirkby Malhamdale Parish Council
Leeds City Council
LNER Customer & Community Investment Fund
National Trust
North Yorkshire Council Locality Fund
Personal Donations
Upper Dales Community Partnership
West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Wharfedale Charitable Trust
Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
Yorkshire Water

Appendix 6

SURVEY RESULTS 2022



An on-board survey of weekend DalesBus passengers was undertaken between July and October 2022, covering 987 passengers in 624 groups. Comparative data from a similar survey of 685 DalesBus passengers in 2018 is also shown.

	2022	2018
1. Purpose(s) of Journey *		
Walk	44%	56%
Average walk duration	3.3 hrs	3.7 hrs
Ride in the countryside	43%	40%
Shopping	17%	8%
Meal	17%	11%
Visit a specific attraction	16%	20%
Visit friends	11%	7%
Work / volunteering	5%	3%
Special event	4%	5%
2. Main Destinations		
1. Hawes	6. Ilkley	
2. Skipton	7. Kettlewell	
3. Grassington	8. Scar House	
4. Malham	9. Bolton Abbey	
5. Harrogate	10. Northallerton	
3. Starting Points		
1. Harrogate	6. Ilkley	
2. Northallerton	7. Otley	
3. Skipton	8. Grassington	
4. Leeds	9. Bradford	
5. Bedale	10. Keighley	
4. Frequency of Use		
Nearly every week	35%	34%
At least once a month	20%	15%
Several times a year	21%	20%
Less Often	25%	31%
5. Sources of information *		
Timetable/leaflet	47%	53%
Used it before	32%	36%
DalesBus website	27%	27%
Bus stop	25%	13%
Friends / family	13%	10%
Friends of DalesBus	11%	13%
Information centre	6%	11%
Social media	4%	3%
Other website	4%	5%
6. Surveyed passengers receiving information in the year prior to day of travel		
	54%	61%

	2022	2018
7. Quality Assessment		
Drivers	95%	92%
Value for money	92%	88%
Reliability	91%	88%
Comfort	90%	85%
Routes taken	89%	86%
Frequency of buses	77%	75%
Ave. quality assessment	89%	86%
8. Average spend per day per passenger		
Food and drink	£ 8.14	£ 6.01
Transport	£ 2.87	£ 3.06
Other spending	£ 1.34	£ 1.79
Total spend	£12.35	£10.86
These figures underestimate passenger spend: a blank response is presumed to indicate zero spend rather than a reluctance by respondents to disclose financial data.		
9. Average Size of Party		
	1.58	1.71
10. Age of passengers		
Under 25	11%	10%
25 – 40	9%	11%
41 – 59	17%	17%
60 – 69	30%	33%
Over 70	33%	29%
56% (51%) of passengers hold an ENCTS bus pass.		
11. Car ownership and accessibility		
46% (48%) of passengers were from a car-owning household.		
29% (31%) could have used it on the day of travel (making a positive choice to use the bus)		
65% (63%) could not get to the Dales without the DalesBus network		
12. Benefits gained from visiting the Dales		
85% (95%) Pleasure from enjoying countryside		
59% (68%) Improved physical health from exercise		
41% (40%) Companionship and reduced isolation		
13. Memberships		
Friends of DalesBus	12%	18%
Friends of Settle Carlisle Line	5%	11%
* Totals add to more than 100% due to multiple responses.		