



Business Plan 2024-26

JUNE 2024



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1. Aims and Objectives for 2024-26

The overall aim of Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company is to help improve people's lives by creating the Friends of the Dales' vision of a "Sustainable Future for the Dales".

We work with partner organisations to support and develop sustainable transport into and around the Yorkshire Dales area.

Specifically in the next three years we aim to:

- Grow passenger journeys on the weekend DalesBus network to over 65,000 per year, filling the significant gaps in the public transport network which would otherwise exist
- Secure public sector funding to enable the reliance on short-term charitable donations and fundraising to be reduced to less than 15% of gross operating costs
- Continue to promote and help drive increased awareness and usage of the wider public transport network in the area
- Support a move towards net zero carbon emissions by 2030

2. Background

Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company is a volunteer-run not-for-profit subsidiary of registered charity Friends of the Dales (FOTD). Our objectives are:

to carry on activities which benefit the community and, in particular (without limitation), to facilitate the provision and operation of public passenger transport services to from and within the Yorkshire Dales and the Forest of Bowland and to advance and promote, directly and indirectly, the objects of the sole member known as the Yorkshire Dales Society.

In turn the objectives of Friends of the Dales are:

1. To promote for the benefit of the public the conservation of the landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage of the Yorkshire Dales National Park and adjacent areas, and the social and economic well-being of its local communities; and to encourage others to engage with, understand, enjoy and protect these areas.

2. In pursuance of the above, to advance the education of the public.

We pursue those objectives by:

1. **Providing access to the Dales for visitors from all parts of society**, particularly those without access to a car, thereby facilitating and encouraging their enjoyment of the area help **to improve wellbeing and mental health**. According to our most recent survey in 2022 (see Appendix 1) 65% of our users could not have visited the Dales without our services.
2. **Helping to protect the environment of the Dales** from congestion and pollution (including greenhouse gases) by encouraging the use of more sustainable transport. Nearly half of our passengers have a car which could have been used for their journey to the Dales. Well loaded buses are more energy efficient and less polluting than the private car, and most of our services are provided by low emissions buses (Euro 5 and 6), with an aim to achieve net zero carbon emissions.
3. **Enhancing the social and economic wellbeing of its local communities**, by enabling them to travel on Sundays for work, social or leisure purposes and by bringing spending to them (according to the survey bus users are estimated to spend on average £10 per visit to the Dales or in total over £250k each year).

The economic, environmental and social benefits of local bus services have been well documented in recent years (for example *KPMG and University of Leeds, 2016, A study of the value of local bus services to society*), recognising their key role in tackling problems of physical and mental health and in reducing social isolation, as well as their long established economic and environmental benefits.

Over 53,000 passenger journeys were made in 2023-24 on services managed by D&BCIC (see Appendix 2), a growth of 28% over the previous year.

3. Business Model

We operate by planning a network of bus services to fulfil our objectives, raising money to finance them, contracting with commercial and community bus operators to operate them, and marketing and monitoring the services. The responsibility for the operational delivery of the network lies with the bus operators, who are responsible for all employment, training and legal compliance of the bus services. The timetabling, network planning and marketing activity is undertaken by D&BCIC directors and other volunteers.

The company has no fixed assets of our own and no ongoing fixed costs. This means that almost all of the money we raise is used to directly support the operation or marketing of bus services. It also means that we can adapt our services to the finance available; all our contracts have break clauses enabling our withdrawal from them should circumstances require this, and we have been able to build up sufficient reserves to ensure that, in a crisis, we could run down services in an orderly fashion without ever running out of money. Reserves are available to cover a minimum of the higher of 50% of fare revenue and 33% of gross operating costs.

4. Organisation

Our activities are managed by a voluntary Board of Directors which includes members with experience in finance and accountancy, bus operations, administration, transport economics, plus a former chair of Friends of the Dales. It also includes a representative from Friends of DalesBus and two FOTD Trustees. FOTD has the power to give formal directions in writing to D&BCIC, but has never yet found it necessary to do so.

The Board generally meets around three times per year and reviews detailed information on operations, patronage, finance and marketing. On the basis of this information it makes plans for services and marketing activity.

5. Development of the DalesBus Network

The DalesBus brand for bus services operating into the Yorkshire Dales was first established in the 1970's by West Yorkshire Road Car and United Automobile Services, which were both part of the nationalised National Bus Company at the time.

In the late 1980's bus services were privatised and deregulated, with the onus to fund socially necessary services passing to local authorities. Into the 2000's the DalesBus network was managed by North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA), with the Park Authority employing a dedicated Public Transport Officer.

From around 2005 onwards public transport suffered an ongoing succession of budget cuts, with both funding and staff resources being reduced at NYCC and YDNPA.

Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company was formed in 2007, initially using funding from the National Park's Sustainable Development Fund to provide a revised Sunday bus service between Ilkley and Skipton. This link would otherwise have been lost as a result of NYCC funding cuts. This "Cravenlink" service is still managed by D&BCIC, running on Sundays and Bank Holidays all year round.

This was a pioneering approach, with D&BCIC being unique in managing the provision of such a service in a National Park. With start-up assistance from D&BCIC a similar structure now provides the Moorsbus network in the North York Moors National Park. We are aware of no other similar organisations. Several National Parks in the UK directly commission bus services targeted at visitors themselves, whilst some National Parks with many more visitors than ours (such as the Lake District) support a much larger

commercial network. Elsewhere in Europe (such as in Germany and the Czech Republic) comprehensive bus services for visitors to National Parks are provided by the local Public Transport Authority.

In the early years of D&BCIC significant grants were provided to the company by both NYCC and YDNPA to provide the DalesBus network. The low-cost base of the company and dedicated focus on the Dales area enabled the services to be managed and marketed more efficiently and effectively than they could achieve themselves, and patronage was raised substantially. Substantial funding was also provided by the Dales Integrated Transport Alliance, a Department for Transport Local Sustainable Transport Fund initiative, between 2011 and 2014, which initially compensated for the withdrawal of all funding by NYCC for Sunday bus services in the county from April 2011.

Between 2014 and 2023 there was a significant drop in public sector support for the DalesBus network, other than from West Yorkshire Combined Authority (previously West Yorkshire PTE) which continued to recognise the importance of bus links to the Dales and provides grants to cover part of the net cost of the cross-boundary services from West Yorkshire. In order to maintain the DalesBus network D&BCIC, alongside the Friends of DalesBus (FoDB), had to devote an increasing amount of time and effort to seek funding from a variety of disparate sources including commercial sponsors, charitable trusts, local charities, local businesses and individual donations as well as organising fundraising events. This enabled most of the network to be maintained but much of the resulting funding is only short-term and on a one-off basis, so does not provide any security for the future.

Services were expanded to a position where in summer buses linked most of the surrounding urban areas to the Dales, with services to Malham, Upper Wharfedale, Wensleydale, Swaledale and Nidderdale. These included services scheduled to connect with other bus and train services, in particular on the Leeds - Settle - Carlisle line.

The Coronavirus pandemic had a major impact on DalesBus, with services severely curtailed during 2020 when the public was advised not to use public transport. Services were reinstated as soon as possible thereafter, with additional financial support provided by various central government initiatives, including Coronavirus Bus Service Support Grant (CBSSG) and Bus Recovery Grant (BRG). The latter helped to subsidise the operating cost of services up until July 2023.

A national cap of £2 on single bus fares was introduced in January 2023, which has helped to further increase passenger numbers on DalesBus services, to the extent that additional capacity has had to be provided on Summer Sunday services from West Yorkshire. Passenger numbers on a like for like basis were around 20% higher on a like for like basis (55% overall) in Summer 2023 than in 2019, the year before the pandemic.

In response to demand DalesBus services continued through winter 2023-24 on Saturday service 74 between York, Harrogate, Ilkley and Grassington and on Sunday service 864 between Bradford, Ilkley, Skipton and Malham.

The 2024-25 financial year is the first year in which the full impact of post-Covid operating cost increases will be felt, as all DalesBus services have been retendered. In addition, the full year impact of the ending of Bus Recovery Grant will also be felt. Fortunately however a substantial grant has been provided by North Yorkshire Council using BSIP3 Network North Funding, to facilitate the continuation and further development of the DalesBus network in 2024-25.

In 2023, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority issued a statement highlighting the importance of improved public transport into and around the National Park, including provision of Sunday bus services such as those provided by D&BCIC. It is now essential that North Yorkshire Council together with the new York & North Yorkshire Combined Authority, as the local transport authorities, provide funding to achieve this.

6. OBJECTIVE 1:

Grow passenger journeys on the weekend DalesBus network to over 65,000 per year

There are still some significant gaps in the coverage and capacity of the public transport network that is provided by commercial and tendered bus services in the Yorkshire Dales area. This plan proposes to make further progress in filling these gaps in the weekend services, in addition to maintaining the current network with some optimisation to better match passenger demand, enabling an increase to at least 65,000 passenger journeys on the weekend DalesBus network by 2026-27.

A recent review by the Friends of the Settle Carlisle Line identified several opportunities for the introduction or improvement of bus services connecting with trains on the line, which D&BCIC is supportive of helping to develop. Another priority is to re-establish links from Lancaster to the Yorkshire Dales area on Summer Sundays and Bank Holidays.

The network will be kept under ongoing review over the plan period dependent on service performance, user/community feedback and funding partner interests.

In addition, D&BCIC plans to seek a further review of North Yorkshire Council's exclusion of certain DalesBus services from the English National Concessionary Fare Scheme on the grounds that they are "tourist services". We believe this to be a wrong interpretation of the regulations governing ENCTS; the vast majority of our passengers are local bus users from North and West Yorkshire and should be covered by the scheme. Inclusion of all D&BCIC services within the scheme would not materially change the financial projections but would increase passenger journeys.

A projection of the passenger numbers, costs and revenues to achieve the target of 65,000 passenger journeys is shown at Appendix 6.

It is important to note that this is just one possible scenario, and there is scope for many other service developments to improve the sustainable transport network in the area, such as development of the Northallerton - Bedale - Leyburn service to provide a daily all-year service (current services are a mix of NYC and D&BCIC provision, with no service whatsoever on Saturdays between Bedale and Leyburn). We will encourage the relevant authorities to take these forward.

In some cases it may well be appropriate for services to be contracted by a third party, with D&BCIC just providing marketing support and ensuring appropriate integration with other parts of the network. For example, North Yorkshire Council could contract the Wensleydale service on a daily basis, absorbing the Wensleydale Flyer Sunday and Bank Holiday service currently managed by D&BCIC.

7. OBJECTIVE 2:

Secure Public Sector Funding

The net-funding requirement for 2024-25 is forecast at around £240,000, following significant increases in bus operating costs post-Covid and the ending of Bus Recovery Grant during 2023-24.

Whilst D&BCIC has achieved considerable success in securing numerous donations and grants to support the network in recent years, most of the funding is on a one-off or short-term basis, and falls well short of what is needed to maintain and develop the network from Summer 2025 onwards.

There is therefore an urgent need to secure more public sector funding for the DalesBus network on an ongoing basis, to provide continuity after the BSIP3 Network North grant which only covers 2024-25.

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

To facilitate the proposed network for 2025 onwards it is important that, with active support from Friends of the Dales, budgetary commitments are secured from both NYC/Y&NYCA and WYCA at the earliest opportunity.

8. OBJECTIVE 3:

Continue to promote and help drive increased awareness and usage of the wider public transport network in the area

Marketing of public transport in the Yorkshire Dales is another important role performed by D&BCIC, covering not only services managed by the company but also other public transport in the area. BSIP3 Network North funding via NYC has enabled the printing of 30,000 copies of a bus timetable booklet for Summer 2024, covering all bus services in the Yorkshire Dales area. This plan proposes that our public sector partners continue to support this important publication in future years.

D&BCIC also produces a large range of localised timetable leaflets with promotional copy aimed at local communities and visitors. Volunteers distribute these publications to numerous outlets, maintain many bus stop timetable displays in the Dales and provide the www.dalesbus.org website. This plan proposes to continue this activity.

9. OBJECTIVE 4:

Progress the DalesBus network towards net zero carbon emissions by 2030

D&BCIC is pleased to see that the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority has declared a climate emergency and adopted an ambitious Carbon Reduction Plan, which requires the Authority to practically eliminate carbon dioxide emissions from its operations over the course of this decade. DalesBus already provides a relatively low-carbon form of transport into and around the Yorkshire Dales, with most vehicles operating on the DalesBus network meeting Euro V or Euro VI specifications for reduced emissions. From 2025 all new buses will be ultra-low emission or zero-emissions vehicles, but the technology is not yet sufficiently advanced for zero emission buses to be used on many rural routes.

10. Risks to Delivery

This is an ambitious plan, which is not without some significant risks to delivery.

(a) Finance

In recent years fundraising has become an increasingly difficult and time-consuming activity for the company, as the funding provided by the public sector reduced significantly prior to the provision of BSIP3 Network North funding in 2024-25.

It is hoped that the recent government recognition of the importance of bus services will lead to increased funding being made available on an ongoing basis, but if such funding is not secured from public authorities (in particular North Yorkshire Council/ York & North Yorkshire Combined Authority and West Yorkshire Combined Authority) as shown in this plan, major service reductions will be required.

A funding committee (joint with FoDB and FOTD) identifies and pursues possible sources of finance and monitors progress. The D&BCIC Board has agreed some principles for this; that we should seek to pursue longer term funding rather than funding for single years, and that we will not normally introduce new services without good prospects for funding for at least three years.

If we are unable to secure sufficient funding we will be forced to make cuts. The Board has agreed that in general our aim will be to maximise the number of passenger trips carried, as we believe that this is the clearest indication of the level of benefit we are achieving. However, the Board does take other factors, such as geographic coverage, into account when taking detailed decisions on which services should continue, and of course funding is often tied to a particular service which may not otherwise be our highest priority.

(b) Human Resources

The second important risk is lack of adequate human resources. Currently the work of the CIC rests very heavily on a small number of volunteers and loss of any of them would be a severe blow. We have prepared a list of key tasks and identified substitutes for each of these. Task owners have been asked to ensure access to all necessary information and documentation (via One Drive) and substitutes to familiarise themselves with the tasks so as to be ready to take over in an emergency. However, we recognise that in this situation some individuals would be very overloaded, and it is likely that we could not carry on in the longer run at our present level of activity without further help, especially if we were still having to put a lot of effort into fundraising. Of course, in our vision for the future, the position would be greatly eased by the security of funding from public bodies; moreover in some cases they may contract for the operation of the services directly as part of their tendered networks, with our role shrinking to just co-ordination and marketing.

Particular risks attach to the wide geographical spread of the services, which requires assistance of partner organisations (such as FOSCL and HarBus) in marketing and service monitoring.

There are various possible ways of seeking to mitigate this risk. The first would be to recruit at least one additional director, particularly but not exclusively someone to take the lead on marketing. Two new directors have been appointed in recent years, but the key role of Marketing Director remains vacant.

A second approach would be to buy in more assistance. We are aware, for instance, of people with appropriate experience on leaflet design and production, so that would be our top priority for contracting out if insufficient voluntary resources were available. Obviously, this would increase the amount of fundraising necessary for any given level of services to operate.

A third possibility would be to employ a member of staff, to take responsibility for key tasks such as fundraising or marketing. Again, this has obvious cost implications. Also, the Board has expressed its reluctance to take on responsibility for becoming an employer, but it may be possible to agree that FOTD would be the employer and provide accommodation in their office. Certainly, if FOTD were recruiting staff for their own needs, who might have time to contribute to the work of D&BCIC, we would be interested in exploring the possibilities. However, both fundraising and marketing are functions which require detailed knowledge of the particular markets we operate in, and it would not be easy to recruit someone with the right skills and experience, or to train them up to do it. Feedback from other organisations is that employment of dedicated fund-raising staff has unfortunately not proved successful. However, we will keep the need for such staff under review.

11. Conclusion

This is an ambitious, but with the appropriate focus feasible, plan to help achieve FOTD's vision of a "Sustainable Future for the Dales", providing environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for communities in and around the Yorkshire Dales.

It is based on securing, with support from FOTD, long-term public sector funding and sufficient volunteer resources to enable the benefits provided by the existing DalesBus network to be maintained and grown.

Appendix 1 – DalesBus Passenger Survey 2022


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 (<i>making a positive choice to use the bus</i>)		
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.		
<p>Dales and Bowland </p> <p>Community Enterprise Company dalesandbowland.com</p>		

Appendix 2 – Passenger Journeys on DalesBus Services managed by D&BCIC 2023-24

Sundays & Bank Holidays

Nidderdale DalesBus	9,742
Northern DalesBus	1,476
Wensleydale DalesBus	5,582
Cravenlink	10,238
Wharfedale DalesBus	11,623

Saturdays

Wharfedale DalesBus	4,758
Harrogate-Skipton DalesBus 59	9,969

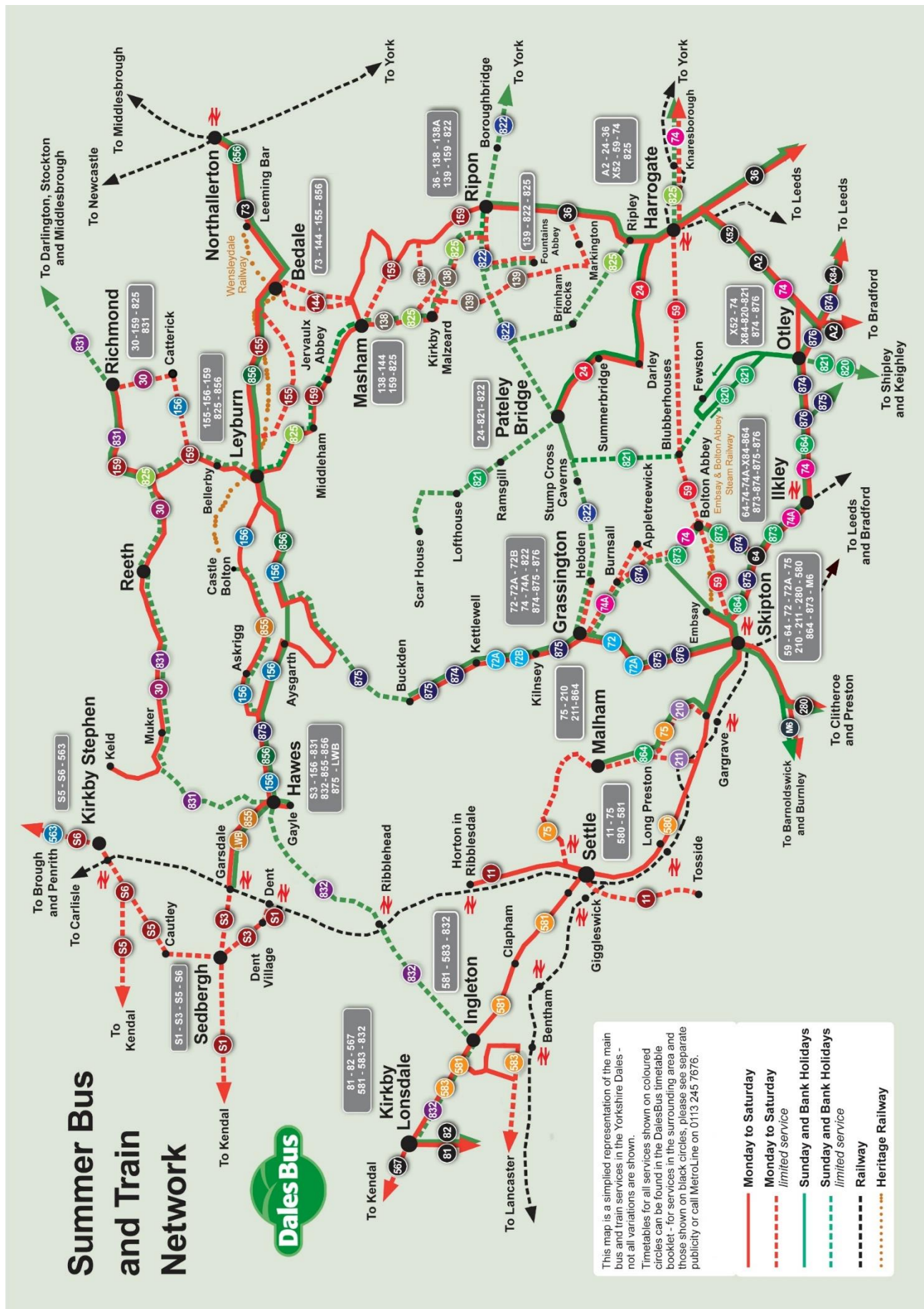
Total **53,388**

Appendix 3 – DalesBus Services managed by D&BCIC 2023-24

All services operated on Sundays & Bank Holidays all year, except where indicated otherwise.

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

Appendix 4 – Bus and Train Services in the Yorkshire Dales
 Showing 2024 DalesBus network, plus commercial and tendered services.



Appendix 5 – Passenger, Income and Funding Projection

	2023	2024	2025	2026
PASSENGERS				
Passenger Journeys	53,400	54,700	61,100	65,600
COSTS				
Gross Operating Cost	224,000	329,600	393,900	450,800
Publicity & Marketing	10,300	10,800	11,300	11,800
Overheads	1,400	1,500	1,600	1,700
GROSS OPERATING COSTS	235,700	341,900	406,800	464,300
INCOME				
Fares Income inc Concessions	104,700	104,600	139,700	159,900
Public Sector	45,100	172,100	212,000	243,600
Commercial Partners	34,900	27,000	29,100	33,200
Community/Charitable Funders	44,050	38,200	26,000	27,600
Reserves	6,950	-	-	-
TOTAL FUNDING	235,700	341,900	406,800	464,300
SHARE OF FUNDING:				
Fares	44%	31%	34%	34%
Public Sector	19%	50%	52%	52%
Commercial Partners	15%	8%	7%	7%
Community/Charitable Funders	19%	11%	6%	6%
Reserves	3%	0%	0%	0%
	100%	100%	100%	100%