



The Case for Integrated Transport on the Leeds-Settle-Carlisle Line Corridor



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1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 There is a significant need and opportunity for the development of an integrated transport solution for the Yorkshire Dales and Eden areas based around the Leeds-Settle-Carlisle railway line, which could provide many economic, social and environmental benefits.
- 1.2 The Leeds-Settle-Carlisle (LSC) line is a nationally important rail corridor which has gained increased ridership since reprivatisation in 1989. However, despite passing through one of the most scenic areas of Britain the line fails to fulfil its true potential for communities and tourism due to the lack of integrated travel opportunities to and from the intermediate stations along the line.
- 1.3 Buses already provide a valuable part of the amenity of the line without which onward travel would be difficult. However, services such as they exist are fragmented and fragile, often dependent upon short-term funding.
- 1.4 Following the Covid pandemic an increased value was placed on our countryside and National Parks, but limited attention has been given as to how visitors actually arrive. As a consequence, the countryside has suffered from congestion and pollution, damaging the very aspects visitors come to enjoy. There is an urgent need for modal shift away from the private car.
- 1.5 An integrated transport network centred on the LSC corridor would:
 - benefit local communities providing access to the outside world for leisure, education, health and employment
 - provide sustainable access to the National Park and Eden Valley to support the visitor economy
 - encourage modal shift towards public transport helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and congestion
- 1.6 Key recommendations are to:
 - Secure long-term funding for the existing bus network together with new services
 - Establish a Stakeholder Group, co-ordinated by the Community Rail Partnership
 - Involve and support communities to access the LSC
 - Develop rural transport hubs at LSC stations, with improved integration of bus and rail services to better suit local residents and visitors
 - Optimise the rail timetable, with more regular clockface timings
 - Develop integrated ticketing
 - Expand and refocus marketing and promotional activity

2 Introduction

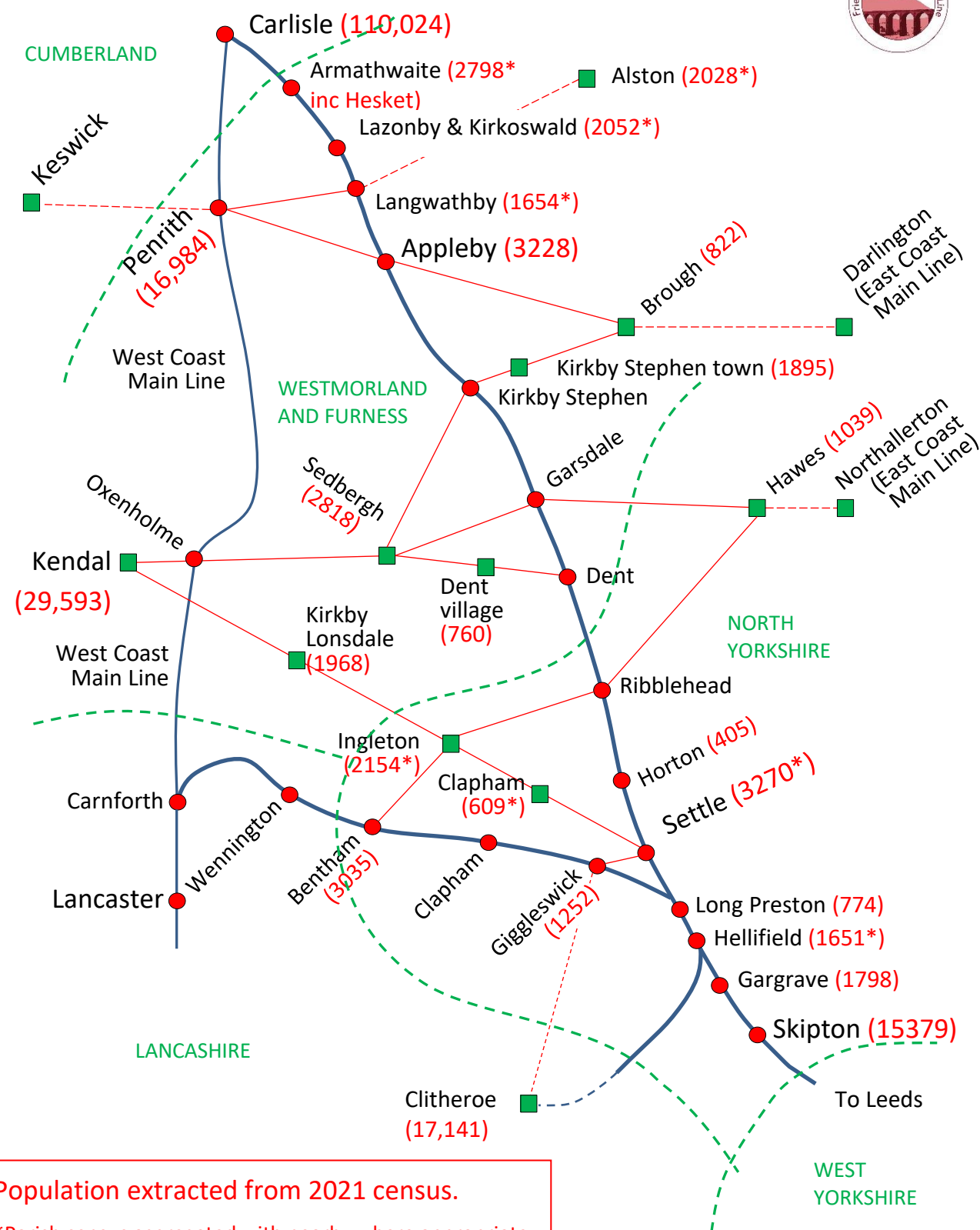
- 2.1 It is now some five years since we first undertook a study of public transport along the Leeds-Settle-Carlisle railway corridor. In that intervening period several events have significantly changed the transport landscape: a worldwide pandemic and subsequent change of working patterns, a general election with a change of government, changes to legislation, transfer of the train operating company to public ownership and, not least, increased awareness that we are in the midst of a climate emergency. Whilst transport opportunities have improved slightly in the intervening period, we remain distant from effective integration of bus and rail services on the LSC whereas there are excellent examples in other areas. Re-evaluation of the subject is therefore warranted, including the relationship between the railway, its communities and surrounding countryside.
- 2.2 The Leeds-Settle-Carlisle rail line is a nationally important, strategic transport link which has gained increased ridership since reprieve in 1989, both for leisure and local traffic and for longer distance travellers between Yorkshire and Scotland. However, despite passing through one of the most scenic areas of Britain (see Map 1 – page 6) the line fails to fulfil its potential because of the lack of adequate integrated travel to and from the line.
- 2.3 In this paper the Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line (FoSCL), a rail support group of some 2,700 members, advocate a reappraisal of the transport network along the LSC corridor and highlight the opportunities integrated services could bring both in economic and environmental terms. Integrated transport, of course, relates to all modes of transport but in this context, we look at how the railway integrates with other public transport services and some of the challenges. We are largely talking here about bus connectivity.
- 2.4 Whilst several important bus services were withdrawn post 2010 due to austerity, we have recently seen an attempt to reinstate some of these key routes, albeit on a limited basis in the Eden Valley area. However, the bus services which currently exist are fragmented and fragile, comprising a mixture of voluntary sector provision combined with some subsidised and commercial operations. Some Sunday and seasonal services are provided by the DalesBus network (see later). Bus services in the rural areas north of Skipton are quite sparse, in contrast to the Aire Valley section of the line within the West Yorkshire Combined Authority which is generally well provided for.
- 2.5 Bus services (see Map 2 – page 37) are nevertheless a valuable part of the amenity and economy of the LSC allowing travel to and from some of the intermediate stations which, whilst located in outstanding scenery, can be somewhat isolated from any nearby habitation. Without these services onward travel from such stations would be impossible for visitors and local users alike. Whilst the line will always attract visitors it would be unfortunate if its purpose was merely as an ‘end to end’ ‘heritage’ journey. Indeed, the railway is and should always remain a vital part of the national rail network both for long distance and local travel.

It is heavily subsidised, as with other services in the Northern network, and would not be sustainable were it simply a heritage journey.

- 2.6 Our National Parks and outdoor spaces have deservedly acquired increased significance since the Covid pandemic, but travel remains dominated by the motor car, as amply illustrated by the sea of cars at visitor hotspots such as Ribbleshead or Malham on any fine day. Indeed, the most recent Yorkshire Dales National Park survey¹, carried out in 2022 found that 85% of visitors arrived by private motor vehicle whilst only 4% by public bus and, even worse, 2% by rail. We might reasonably conclude that most of the 2% rail was via the LSC, it being the only railway line within the Dales area.
- 2.7 Meanwhile, the 2023-24 Office of Rail and Road (ORR) estimates of station use indicate that passengers travelling to and from the intermediate stations along the LSC (from Settle to Armathwaite) were approximately 3% below their pre-Covid levels. This may be partly due to the reduction in commuting but, either way, we are failing to encourage visitors towards using public transport.
- 2.8 Most people now accept that we are in the midst of a climate emergency and that there is an urgent need to curb the emission of greenhouse gases. In addition, traffic congestion and pollution are effectively destroying the very aspects of the countryside that the visitors have come to enjoy. This is simply not sustainable, and we must encourage a modal shift away from the private car.
- 2.9 Effective public transport can also help the rural economy to thrive. The visitor economy is vital to support employment and livelihoods if these communities are not simply to become 'museums' of the countryside. We must therefore consider how visitors might reach such destinations by public transport. To this end, the LSC can play a significant role in bringing visitors in a more sustainable way. The potential for connection to tourist destinations is illustrated in Map 3 (page 61).
- 2.10 Equally, we should consider the transport needs of the local communities along the LSC corridor, many of which have been disenfranchised by the gradual deterioration of rural transport over the years. Indeed, ownership of a car is often regarded as a necessity in rural areas. But for those without their own means of transport, isolation can present a very real problem. Whilst stations such as Settle and Appleby are situated proximate to the communities they serve; this is not the case for most other stations on the line. Indeed, the lack of integrated transport is, without doubt, a significant restriction on the ability of local residents to be able to access the rail services to seek wider economic opportunities, hospital visits or simply to use for leisure. The potential for connection to communities is illustrated in Map 1 (page 6). We mention Sedburgh as a particular example.

¹ https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2023/01/P1231-YDNPA-Visitor-Survey-2022-Report-Final-14_12_22-PDF.pdf (p17 2.25 82% car plus 3% motorcycle)

Map 1: Leeds-Settle-Carlisle Strategic Location Map with Population



Drawn John Carey

3 Rural Bus Services - Some Context

3.1 How Buses are Funded

- 3.1.1 Rural bus services are particularly difficult to sustain on the basis of fare income alone. A full-sized bus typically costs in the region of £500-600 a day to run. In urban areas fare income can be generated from high volumes of relatively short journeys. Away from urban areas services become less viable. However, there are some exceptions such as the central Lake District where tourist numbers are sufficient to sustain numerous commercial services such as the well-known 555 service from Lancaster to Keswick which are able to pay their way. But even that route has poor evening and Sunday provision.
- 3.1.2 Most rural bus services therefore require some level of subsidy in order to be sustainable. This is in common with rail passenger services which receive considerably greater public funding from the national purse. Indeed, the government support for bus services in England is currently circa £1.1bn (2025-26) as compared with the last available ORR figures for rail of £10.3bn (2023-24)²
- 3.1.3 Since the deregulation of bus services in 1986 the responsibility for funding socially-necessary local bus services where commercially-sustainable services are not provided by commercial operators lies with the local transport authorities. The main types of bus operation are:
- Gross cost contract: where the cost of the service is paid outright by the local authority and the fare income returned to the authority.
 - Net cost contract: where a set amount is paid in order to make the service viable, and the operator retains the fare income. An example of a net contract is the 581 which runs between Settle and Kirkby Lonsdale, support being provided by NYC.
 - Commercial: services run without subsidy, in other words, the service is sustainable based on the fare income. An example of a commercial service is the 580 which runs between Skipton and Settle.
- 3.1.4 Most local authorities reduced the level of subsidy offered for public services alongside other fiscal cut backs post 2010 and some (e.g. the erstwhile Cumbria County Council) took the drastic measure of removing subsidies altogether resulting in decimation of local services. Appleby and Kirkby Stephen were particularly badly affected by this policy. Further south, the former North Yorkshire County Council withdrew support from all Sunday services.
- 3.1.5 Commercial operators will naturally tend to focus on those services which are the most viable, such as those in urban areas and popular tourist areas such as the central Lakes. Few commercial operators will seek to provide an integrated service with other operators or

² <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/finance/rail-industry-finance/>

indeed other modes of transport such as rail unless there is some commercial incentive to do so. Moreover, competition law can make such co-operation difficult.

- 3.1.6 We shall mention later the deregulation of bus services in 1986 which followed the Transport Act (1985) and allowed commercial operators to compete along the most profitable routes at the expense of the less commercially attractive, usually rural, routes. This situation has now existed for nearly 40 years.
- 3.1.7 Rural buses, by their very nature, tend to be used significantly by the elderly and disabled using their bus pass. The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) is administered by the local authority and operators are then compensated for pass use. This is a vital component of the fare revenue received by the bus operators, without which many services would not run. We will discuss this in greater detail later.
- 3.1.8 In some rural areas bus operators have attempted to run services commercially for a short while after withdrawal of a local authority subsidy (from a previously subsidised service) often finding it too challenging. One notable example was the 563 between Kirkby Stephen and Penrith withdrawn in 2016 but now thankfully reinstated albeit with a much-reduced service.
- 3.1.9 Also, some operators have managed to sustain a limited service in between school contracts where their vehicles and staff can be utilised at marginal cost. However, this means that useful work journeys may no longer be provided and there may not even be a Saturday service, a situation which existed for some while in Kirkby Stephen and Appleby.
- 3.1.10 The withdrawal of a schools contract can have the unintended consequence of losing the off-peak service which, as we have said, some operators are able to run in between. Such examples in the erstwhile Cumbria were the 552 service from Arnside to Kendal via Milnthorpe and Hincaster, and also the 530 from Cartmel to Kendal via Levens in 2019³. Meanwhile, the opportunity is not sufficiently taken to link contracted schools services and public services; encouraging operators to provide some level of public service in between their education commitments. Some joined up thinking is required.
- 3.1.11 Faced with loss of subsidy and in the absence of a willing commercial operator, bus services will inevitably be withdrawn. However, this has led to innovations within the voluntary sector and the use of Section 22 and Section 19 community-run services which we will explore later.
- 3.1.12 As part of their revenue, operators of scheduled bus services are also able to claim Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG). This is a grant paid to operators of eligible bus services and community transport organisations to help them recover some of their fuel costs and is reimbursed on a basis calculated per litre. BSOG also aims to benefit passengers by helping operators keep fares down and enabling operators to run services that might otherwise be unprofitable and therefore cancelled.

³ <https://www.thewestmorlandgazette.co.uk/news/17908490.anger-axeing-bus-services-south-cumbria/>

3.2 Covid Pandemic

- 3.2.1 As we entered 2020, bus services were already on a decline, particularly in rural areas, but the effects of the Covid pandemic were unprecedented in recent times and have had a long lasting effect. Whilst the majority of the public were instructed to 'stay at home' as from March of that year, and social distancing became the order of the day, it was necessary that key workers were able to access employment. There followed a 90% drop in bus use and operators suffered an immediate downturn in revenue. It was necessary for the government step in with revenue support, without which, bus companies would have failed. Meanwhile railways were protected through significant support from the public purse.
- 3.2.2 Ironically, the 'key worker' service on the LSC provided a minimal service of four trains each way in the middle of the day, which was hardly suitable for anybody to reach employment or education. It was quite a while before rail services regained their normal timetable but as the domestic travel restrictions were relaxed and with foreign travel still not an option, UK destinations including the Yorkshire Dales experienced a tourism boom including also the LSC even with the limited timetable. Bizarrely, whilst barely out of the requirement for social distancing, trains were running 'full and standing'.
- 3.2.3 However, the longer lasting effect has been a re-evaluation of the vital need for bus services as a public transport resource. As we emerged from the periods of lockdown older people who constituted many of the rural bus users were reluctant to travel.
- 3.2.4 Also, there were many office workers who having been told to stay at home, decided that working from home was, in fact, a better option going forward. As a consequence, the government introduced the innovative £2 fare cap in January 2023 to encourage bus use across a wider demographic, initially for a 3-month period. This together with other measures helped keep many rural bus operations afloat.

3.3 Statutory Background

- 3.3.1 We have already mentioned The Transport Act 1985⁴ which was one of the more significant post-war statutory instruments affecting bus services, the intention of which was to reduce dependency of bus services on the public purse. Thus, local authorities and nationalised entities were caused to divest themselves of their transport undertakings and bus services were deregulated, that is, opened up to competition by commercial operators. Local authorities were only permitted to step in with support where the commercial sector could not provide. The truth was that bus usage (as with rail) had been in decline anyway with increased dependency on the private car.
- 3.3.2 The Act caused a significant change in bus operation. In rural areas served by the LSC, bus services had been very much the domain of once familiar companies such as Ribble,

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/67/contents>

Cumberland, United and West Yorkshire Road Car which had been incorporated into the state-owned National Bus Company. However, following the 1985 Act, these companies were again privatised, mostly by means of management buy-outs. These undertakings were largely short-lived, quickly being absorbed by larger operators, those within Cumbria being taken over by Stagecoach.

- 3.3.3 The Transport Act 2000⁵ was perhaps relevant in that it represented the first step towards allowing some control by local authorities; this had been removed in the 1985 Act. It recognised and defined the duties of local transport authorities and included provision for a statutory form of 'Quality Partnership' scheme between bus operators and local transport authorities in the interests of promoting quality public transport, helping limit traffic congestion, and improving air quality. It also enabled local transport authorities (LTAs) to require bus operators to co-operate in the provision of joint ticketing and, meanwhile, placed a duty on LTAs to secure the provision of bus passenger information in their area. Crucially, it also brought in the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (the bus pass).
- 3.3.4 Arguably, the Bus Services Act 2017⁶ represented the next most significant statutory change. The Act was introduced with the intention of arresting the decline in bus usage and further reversing some of the consequences of the 1985 Act, permitting in some circumstances control of bus services by local authorities. Of relevance, it further developed the concepts of Franchising and Enhanced Partnerships. Only relatively few local authorities have actually made wide use of these powers.
- 3.3.5 Franchising is essentially where the local authority elects to take control of all bus routes in their area, setting out the routes, timetables and fares. Agreement is made with one or more operators to provide the services, and the bus operator acts as a contractor. The local authority meets the gross cost whilst in receipt of the fare income. Until recently, there were no franchised operations outside London (which had its own powers). However, Franchising is the model which has now been adopted by Greater Manchester with others including West Yorkshire to follow shortly.
- 3.3.6 It is a means by which true integration of public transport can be fulfilled; services can be bundled up, the profitable with the less so. Buses can be required to connect with other modes. But the major disadvantage is that Franchising is costly and less attractive to local authorities containing more rural areas. Naturally, it has met with some opposition from the bus operators who have developed their businesses particularly since deregulation.
- 3.3.7 Meanwhile, the concept of Enhanced Partnership preserves the autonomy of the existing bus operator but provides a more formalised and improved relationship with the local authority. The local authority takes on a coordination role as well as the provision of infrastructure (bus stops, bus lanes etc) and the provision of timetable information. Improved services would be

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/38/notes>

⁶ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f6240efd3bf7f7239aa13e0/bus-services-act-2017-new-powers-and-opportunities.pdf>

achieved by discussion and, where necessary, subsidy. Of course, this arrangement is less costly and therefore more likely to be adopted by the majority of authorities containing significantly rural areas. However, a downside is that the operators are less likely to undertake the less profitable routes without significant financial incentive. Cornwall has a seemingly successful example of an Enhanced Partnership.

- 3.3.8 Over the years there had been a natural decline in bus routes and in 2019 the Conservative government sought to address this in the policy paper 'A Better Deal For Bus Users'⁷. A somewhat derisory sum of £220m was initially allocated in the 2020-21 spending round and as part of the better deal for bus users, local authorities would receive additional funding to improve current services and restore lost services where most needed. Crucially this amount included £30m for the restoration of lost services. We believe that Cumbria made such an application and received a small allocation however it is not certain as to how this was utilised although we believe that a pilot Kirkby Stephen Station connection was one of two schemes originally envisaged from this funding.
- 3.3.9 This was quickly followed in February 2020 when the Johnson government announced an ambitious £5 billion of new funding to overhaul bus and cycle links for every region outside London over a period of 5 years. Of this amount, £3bn was allocated to actual bus services, the remainder to sustainable transport and infrastructure improvements.
- 3.3.10 As we have mentioned earlier, the Covid pandemic had a major effect on our public transport systems; buses were in serious decline, and it was against this backdrop in March 2021 that the Johnson government launched the 'Bus Back Better' initiative incorporating a National Bus Strategy. The Strategy invited the local authorities to submit proposals under a new concept of 'Bus Service Improvement Plans' (BSIPs) for a share of the previously announced funding and elect for either the Franchising or Enhanced Partnership models.
- 3.3.11 In the event, only 34 authorities were successful in this round of funding and, notably, the former Cumbria and North Yorkshire County Councils were both unsuccessful. The figure of £3bn was subsequently scaled back, with £1.04bn actually allocated to successful local authorities. Much of the balance was redirected to support for bus services during the Covid pandemic.
- 3.3.12 In May 2023, the DfT moved on from a series of short term Covid support and recovery bus funding packages, with the announcement of a £300m⁸ funding package to LTAs for the delivery of their BSIPs over the periods 2023/24 and 2024/25, now referred to as BSIP+ (or BSIP Phase 2). This was in addition to the £1.04bn first round of BSIP funding awarded to 34 LTAs and meant that all LTAs now had dedicated funding for delivery of their BSIPs. NYC

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-boost-for-bus-services-as-pm-outlines-new-vision-for-local-transport>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-extends-2-bus-fare-cap-and-protects-vital-services>

benefited with an allocation⁹ of £1.46m in 2023/24 and 2024/25 whilst Westmorland and Furness received £412,130 for each of the two periods.

- 3.3.13 In October 2023, the Network North Plan¹⁰ announced further amounts totalling £150m revenue funding allocated to LTAs located in the Midlands and North of England to assist in the delivery of their bus service improvement plans (in addition to BSIP+). This was money essentially reallocated from the truncated HS2 project. Of this amount the new York and North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority was allocated £3.50m and Westmorland and Furness £1.289m.
- 3.3.14 The £2 fare cap introduced in January 2023 as a short-term (3 month) post Covid measure to encourage bus ridership was subsequently extended in various stages. Compensation was paid to the operators for the lost revenue on a formula loosely based upon the pre-Covid revenue as in 2019. In 2024 the Labour government announced that the scheme would increase to a £3 fare cap as from January 2025 and cease at the end of that year. Without doubt, the scheme has increased bus ridership but arguably benefited those areas which already had reasonable services, less so in the more rural areas with fewer services.
- 3.3.15 In September 2024, proposals were set out by the newly elected Labour government for a further overhaul of bus services by a new Bus Services Act¹¹ which, at the time of writing, is subject to detailed consideration in parliament. In essence, the Act would place control over bus routes firmly back with the local authorities. Control would be by either Franchise or Enhanced Partnerships. But local authorities would again be able to establish their own bus companies, something outlawed by the 1985 Act.
- 3.3.16 This was followed by the October 2024 budget which outlined a £1.1bn support package¹² for bus services in 2025/26. The figure is made up of £670m towards bus routes, £285m towards Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) and £151m in support for the £3 single fare cap. Crucially, local authorities were no longer required to compete for funding as under the previous BSIP schemes and instead received an allocation based upon population and other factors. Of this funding the newly established York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority received an allocation¹³ of £6,401,022 and Westmorland and Furness £1,275,848 to support local bus services, together with additional capital and capacity funding.
- 3.3.17 It is possible that the change of allocation method in the later 2025/26 round of funding was partly in response to the fact that allocations up to that point had not evenly benefited all

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-service-improvement-plans-local-transport-authority-allocations/bus-service-improvement-plans-local-transport-authority-final-allocations>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-service-improvement-plans-local-transport-authority-allocations/bus-service-improvement-plans-local-transport-authority-indicative-allocations-202425>

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/transport-secretary-sets-the-wheels-in-motion-on-biggest-overhaul-to-buses-in-a-generation>

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-service-improvement-plans-local-transport-authority-allocations>

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-service-improvement-plans-local-transport-authority-allocations/bus-service-improvement-plans-local-transport-authority-final-allocations-2025-to-2026>

areas of the country. Indeed, the Campaign for Better Transport¹⁴ calculated that up until 2024/25 North Yorkshire had received BSIP funding to the equivalent of £10.74 per head whilst Westmorland and Furness had received £9.38 per head. This compared with £35.83 per head for Lancashire and £41.42 per head for Greater Manchester. We surmise that the differences were in all likelihood due to the quality of BSIPs submitted, and that generally favoured more urban areas.

3.4 English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS)

- 3.4.1 The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) provided for free bus travel initially for the over 60's however the age threshold has been gradually increased to state pension age. It came into existence with the Transport Act (2000)¹⁵ prior to which most authorities had their own schemes within a limited geographical boundary.
- 3.4.2 The operators of all scheduled bus services in England are legally obliged to offer concessionary travel to pass-holders and reimbursement is provided at a reduced rate (usually a % of the single ticket price or a flat rate per journey irrespective of length) via the local authority based on the place of boarding. Concessionary (free) travel usually only applies to services after 0930, although this is 0900 for North Yorkshire residents. The original intention behind ENCTS was that it should be revenue-neutral as regards the operators of the services and the local authority would, in turn, receive an adequate grant from central government which was intended to cover the whole cost.
- 3.4.3 In practice local authorities do not receive a specific grant from central government to fund ENCTS reimbursements to bus operators. Indeed, reimbursement is effectively met from the Revenue Support Grant provided by central government to all local authorities to help fund their diverse activities. Given the intense pressure on local authority finances, most councils have reduced the rate of reimbursement paid to bus operators where they can. Importantly, the ENCTS support is treated outside any funding provided for buses which we have discussed earlier.
- 3.4.4 The bus pass plays a vital role in providing mobility to the elderly and disabled, however, inadequate government funding over the years has increased the burden on local authorities to meet ENCTS payments. They have sometimes met this cost by removing subsidies for non-commercial services. In rural areas many users will typically be bus pass holders – those without access to a car. Therefore, an unintended consequence of reduced government support for the bus pass use can ultimately be the withdrawal of services in rural areas and few or no services on which to use the pass. This might be construed as removal of the bus pass by stealth, a point well-articulated by the late FoSCL bus advisor, Dr John Disney.

¹⁴ <https://bettertransport.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Local-Authority-bus-funding-per-head.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/38/notes>

- 3.4.5 ENCTS reimbursement is inevitably a critical component towards the funding of rural bus services without which many services could not operate. Therefore, any future reduction or removal could be critical to the viability of services connecting with the LSC.
- 3.4.6 However, a controversial decision was taken by the former North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) to classify certain bus routes as a 'tourist services' thereby ineligible for ENCTS reimbursement. Notably, this has affected the Sunday DalesBus 830 and 881 services (see later) both of which connect with the LSC. It is strongly contended that this is a misinterpretation of the legislation and the intentions of Parliament. The consequence is that everybody pays on these services. In contrast, services on the predominately tourist areas of the North Yorkshire Coast have not suffered such restriction. Hopefully, the decision will be reversed.

3.5 Notice Periods

- 3.5.1 Whilst bus services are generally more flexible than railways in their routes and timetables, bus operators are nevertheless subject to onerous registration processes in respect of proposed new routes together with any variations to existing services which must be notified to the Traffic Commissioner and relevant local authority. Since 2018, notice periods¹⁶ have been increased to 70 days for large buses and 42 days for smaller community buses (16 seats or less).
- 3.5.2 It is vital, therefore, that consultation as to rail timetables should take place with stakeholders in a timely manner with adequate notice of changes provided to bus operators but, unfortunately, this has not always been the case; the railway often fails to recognise the impact of changes on connecting services.
- 3.5.3 Indeed, there have been several historic examples the most notable following the ill-fated May 2018 timetable change on the LSC. This affected the Saturday S1 service which was obliged to depart Dent Station 30 minutes before the train arrival for a number of weeks until the registration change was effected. This was followed in 2019 when a change to the Sunday timetable meant that the train no longer connected with a dedicated DalesBus 884 connection from Skipton Station to Ilkley. On occasions the notice periods can be shortened with cooperation of the local authority who may elect to waive their consultation period.

3.6 Section 22 Community Services

- 3.6.1 Section 22 of the 1985 Transport Act¹⁷ provides for community groups to set up and operate their own bus services using up to 16-seater vehicles. Derogation is offered from the normal PCV driver licensing requirement and permits operation by drivers with a D1 licence. Drivers usually undergo the more basic MIDAS (minibus driver awareness) training although this is not compulsory. All other stringent regulations apply such as driver hours as for large buses

¹⁶ Public Service Vehicles (Registration of Local Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2018

¹⁷ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/67/section/22>

although, as mentioned, some relaxation is provided on registration periods. Closely related, Section 19 of the 1985 Act allows for on-demand or private hire for individuals or community groups.

3.6.2 However, the number of operators using the Section 22 (S.22) facility remains comparatively small. There are three S.22 operators wholly within Westmorland and Furness (WaF) together with several in North Yorkshire, including the council itself. Little White Bus operates for a very short distance within the WaF area. Very recently, WaF have proposed to undertake a number of services directly on a Section 22 basis.

3.6.3 Section 22 operators Western Dales Community Bus (WDB) and Little White Bus (LWB) provide dedicated connections to the Leeds-Settle-Carlisle line. LWB also operates a useful on-demand Section 19 service. However, whilst Fellrunner, another S.22 operator, and one of the largest, have their base at Langwathby Station and run services adjacent to the line they do not offer any actual rail connections at this time.

3.6.4 Section 22 might initially appear to be the solution to the rural transport dilemma however the main constraints are the limited size of the buses (16 seated passengers is the maximum allowable capacity), the cost of the vehicles which are disproportionately high (per passenger) and the limited supply of volunteers willing to give up their time on a regular basis. It is said that it takes approximately 20 volunteers to cover the shifts of two paid drivers. Another issue is the diminishing number of volunteers holding a D1 driving licence having passed a car driving test before 1997. After this date, a specific D1 test is required which is a prohibitive cost to such organisations with no surety that the volunteer would continue.



S4 Western Dales Community Bus in Brough

3.6.5 Section 19 and 22 services are constantly under review and potentially subject to legislative changes in the future. These are more likely to be more restrictive than the reverse, despite various initiatives to encourage the voluntary sector in the past and even the issue of a limited number of 'free' vehicles to suitable groups.

3.7 On Demand v Scheduled Services

3.7.1 An innovation trialled by some local authorities in recent years has been demand responsive transport (DRT), where passengers can book any journey within a predefined boundary. These schemes have been driven largely by the tech industry in response to low-use routes and often require use of an app on a smartphone, possibly with a phone option, to arrange a booking. However, there are considerable disadvantages. The journey demands some

advance planning and there is no certainty as to arrival time which would be a major problem for appointments, work, or onward connections, say to rail or another bus.

- 3.7.2 Inevitably, such DRT schemes prove to be very expensive to provide and require a high subsidy per passenger. They end up typically carrying very few passengers, but with a large vehicle, a function that could be perhaps better performed by a taxi. Despite the shortcomings, such schemes are often hailed as successes before they are ultimately withdrawn. Such an example was YorBus, operated by NYCC on a trial basis from 2021 until 2023 and based around the Ripon area. The cost of operation over the period 2022/23 was reported as £224,000¹⁸. During this time, the service carried 14,208 passengers at an average cost per passenger of £15.57 across the year.
- 3.7.3 Scheduled buses serve the public better when they follow a known route at a set timetable in which the passenger can have confidence. Scheduled bus services also provide some economy of scale in carrying more passengers in the same vehicle, and therefore inevitably requiring less subsidy per passenger. Generally speaking, DRT is unsuitable for rail connectivity particularly in rural areas.
- 3.7.4 However, there are some circumstances where on demand services can possibly serve a useful purpose where the service is in addition to scheduled journeys. Such an example is the Garsdale Shuttle operated by Little White Bus which will extend its service to outlying villages on demand and also offer 'on demand' journeys in between service runs.

3.8 Accessibility

- 3.8.1 A further material development in recent years has been the implementation of the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000¹⁹ (PSVAR). This requires vehicles used for local or scheduled services with a capacity of 22 seats or more to be fully accessible to disabled users.
- 3.8.2 This brought buses into line with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. Essentially, public service vehicles were required to be low floor; to be accessible to disabled people, including those who need to remain in wheelchairs. Although a necessary development, it has nevertheless presented rural bus operators with a further challenge in having to acquire suitable but more costly replacement vehicles. Whilst this might be more easily achievable in urban areas where operators can cover such costs with fare revenue it has imposed yet another cost burden on the smaller rural bus operator.
- 3.8.3 Many small rural bus operators were, historically, also coach operators, but the regulations effectively prevented coaches being used as spare resource for their bus routes. In effect they

¹⁸ <https://edemocracy.northyorks.gov.uk/documents/s19396/Item%2010%20-%20Report%20-%20YorBus%20End%20of%20Pilot%20Project.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accessible-buses-and-coaches/bus-and-coach-accessibility-and-the-public-service-vehicle-accessibility-regulations-2000>

would always need spare capacity to cover maintenance or breakdown, far easier to achieve for a larger bus company covering several routes.

3.8.4 We have mentioned Section 22 services which, by their nature, are limited to 16 passengers and therefore not subject to the PSVAR regulations (22 seats or more). Whilst not subject to the statutory requirements there is nevertheless a moral obligation of such operators which are usually founded of the community anyway and most will make efforts in this direction.

3.8.5 In contrast with bus services, which face onerous compliance with accessibility requirements, railways lag somewhat behind both in terms of stations and trains. Indeed, access for the mobility impaired to and from many of the unstaffed stations on the LSC would be challenging although Northern do provide a Travel Assist App for assistance from the platform to the train. Meanwhile, facilities at the stations would appear to be lacking in several cases, issues including station access roads/paths and footbridges. We strongly suggest that an audit is undertaken, and any necessary interventions carried out.



Showing the operation of the wheelchair bridge on DalesBus 874

3.8.6 At Settle and Appleby, the stations are supervised within working hours and platform interchange can be achieved by means of the barrow crossings under supervision of the station staff and with co-operation of the signalman.

3.8.7 Meanwhile, Horton Station has recently seen the introduction of a footbridge and, ultimately, passenger lifts to be installed all at a reputed cost of £4.2m²⁰. In fact, rather bizarrely, Dent and Ribbleshead Stations are two of the few stations where it would be theoretically possible to self-propel a wheelchair from a train and directly on to a low floor bus.

3.8.8 Whilst there are a number of taxi operators in the vicinity of the stations along the line, we suspect that few of these are equipped to accommodate wheelchair users and operators are likely to be occupied with other work at key times. We suggest that this is a shortcoming which needs to be explored with the taxi licensing authorities.

²⁰ <https://www.networkrailmediacentre.co.uk/news/major-accessibility-and-safety-upgrade-at-horton-in-ribblesdale-station-1>

4 The Role of the Public Sector

4.1 Local Government and the Leeds Settle Carlisle

- 4.1.1 The LSC passes through several local authorities along its route. However, several of the county councils were subject to reorganisation in April 2023 at which time they absorbed the functions of the former district councils to become unitary authorities. Having commenced in West Yorkshire the railway passes into North Yorkshire just south of Skipton. At Blea Moor the line passes into Westmorland and Furness where it stays until Armathwaite, after which it enters into Cumberland for the final stretch into Carlisle. It is therefore North Yorkshire and Westmorland and Furness unitary authorities which are most relevant in the context of this paper. Meanwhile, the Yorkshire Dales National Park boundary extends from just north of Settle to slightly north of Kirkby Stephen, a significant portion of the line.

4.2 North Yorkshire Council

- 4.2.1 North Yorkshire Council (NYC)²¹ is a new unitary authority formed in April 2023 as the successor to North Yorkshire County Council and seven district councils. Until the changes the line ran through Craven District area as far as Blea Moor Tunnel. The NYC area contains the stations at Cononley, Skipton, Gargrave, Hellifield, Long Preston, Settle, Horton in Ribblesdale and Ribbleshead. It also contains the larger part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park.
- 4.2.2 City of York and North Yorkshire councils have negotiated a devolution deal with central government for York and North Yorkshire. A new mayoral combined authority was established in February 2024 which will receive devolved funding for transport, education, and business support, alongside a Mayoral Investment Fund. The early indications are that this will include a broad pattern of support for buses and bus-rail integration.
- 4.2.3 The area is comparatively rural, encompassing much of the Yorkshire Dales and North Yorkshire Moors National Parks and has, in the past, provided support to bus services under its previous guise as NYCC albeit it has not historically seen visitor services as being within its remit. Consequently, until recently, no support was provided for Sunday bus services in the Dales, most of which are provided by the DalesBus network. Controversially, some of the DalesBus Sunday services have been excluded from ENCTS reimbursement as these are, incorrectly in our view, regarded as ‘tourist’.
- 4.2.4 In response to the National Bus Strategy, NYC opted for the Enhanced Partnership model of bus operation and submitted their bus service improvement plan (BSIP) in 2022. However, they were unsuccessful in achieving an allocation from the first round of government funding as with many other contenders.
- 4.2.5 Whilst unsuccessful in the initial round of BSIP funding (2022) the council were successful in

²¹ <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/>

subsequent rounds, receiving £1.39m (2022/23)²², £1.46m (2023/24) and £1.46m (2024/25). In addition, a further amount of £3.5m was allocated in respect of BSIP3 Network North funding for the period (2024/25)²³. A further allocation of £6,401,022²⁴ has been included in the October 2024 government budget to cover the period 2025/26. This includes the City of York.

- 4.2.6 During 2024/25 NYC have used BSIP3 funding to make some improvements to local bus services, including reinstatement of the Settle to Clitheroe service, and provided support to the DalesBus network.

4.3 Westmorland and Furness Council

- 4.3.1 Westmorland and Furness (WaF)²⁵ is a recent unitary authority formed on 1 April 2023, following the abolition of Cumbria County Council. The new WaF council absorbed the districts of Barrow-in-Furness, Eden and South Lakeland, which then ceased to exist. The railway provides a transport link along the eastern extremity of the new council area from Dent Station northwards including Garsdale, Kirkby Stephen, Appleby, Langwathby, Lazonby & Kirkoswald and Armathwaite stations, with only Carlisle being located in Cumberland.
- 4.3.2 At first glance it might seem a strange amalgamation of the district councils with vastly different identities and relative prosperities; in the north east, the former Eden district is relatively rural and of low population density unlike the more heavily populated and industrial Barrow with regular bus services. The more affluent South Lakes area lies in the middle. Unlike the other districts, the Eden area to the east of Penrith was almost devoid of regular bus services, a product of the Cumbria County Council decision to withdraw council subsidy from all bus services in 2014.
- 4.3.3 In an attempt to redress the previous withdrawal of bus routes, the new authority elected to adopt the Enhanced Partnership model for their bus services. However, due to the cut backs over the years the council were placed in a difficult position with only one dominant operator remaining. Many smaller operators had simply ceased to exist or had withdrawn from scheduled work. This undoubtedly made any tendering process difficult.
- 4.3.4 Study of the 2013 supported services in the area showed that this once included Robinsons of Appleby, Grand Prix, Woofs and Apollo, operators who have either withdrawn from stage work or closed completely. Only Wrights and Kirkby Lonsdale Coach Hire remain as smaller operators but with only Wrights still running the limited 888 service within the region.

²² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-service-improvement-plans-local-transport-authority-allocations/bus-service-improvement-plans-local-transport-authority-final-allocations>

²³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-service-improvement-plans-local-transport-authority-allocations/bus-service-improvement-plans-local-transport-authority-indicative-allocations-202425>

²⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-service-improvement-plans-local-transport-authority-allocations/bus-service-improvement-plans-local-transport-authority-final-allocations-2025-to-2026>

²⁵ <https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/>

- 4.3.5 As with NYC, Cumbria County Council were unsuccessful in their application for the first round of BSIP funding (2022/23). Whilst a BSIP had been submitted, it fell short of the ambitions required by the DfT. The council were naturally cautious with concerns towards the short-term nature of the funding and the risk of a reinstated or new service subsequently having to be withdrawn. The application was thus declined.
- 4.3.6 However, the following year, the newly created WaF council made successful application resulting in BSIP+ allocations of £412,130 (2023/24) and £412,130 (2024/25) and followed by an additional allocation of £1.289m BSIP 3 Network North funding (2024/25). A further allocation of £1,275,848 has been included in the central government October 2024 budget to cover bus service support in 2025/26, with additional amounts for capital and capacity.
- 4.3.7 The WaF Enhanced Partnership Plan adopted that of the Cumbria predecessor and notably included provision for bus/rail ticketing to make sustainable travel more attractive to visitors. To this end the *'council and bus operators would (a) work with rail operators to provide simple integrated ticketing (b) promote new and existing fares to attract more visitors to use sustainable travel (c) work with Cumbria Tourism to raise awareness'*.
- 4.3.8 Despite the above intentions, we feel that there has been insufficient progress towards integration. Indeed, FoSCL raised the issue at the Enhanced Partnership consultation meeting in October 2024 highlighting that that the railway provided a transport corridor up the eastern flank of the county; it was already there and paid for and should be incorporated as part of any rural transport strategy for the area. In addition, it was felt that the visitor economy was being impacted in some areas through the lack of public transport.
- 4.3.9 The stated intention of WaF is to support routes which have been withdrawn or reduced in the previous five years in areas where they are most needed to ensure communities are reconnected and access to public transport services restored²⁶. Notably these included the 564 Sedbergh to Kendal service which was reinstated as from April 2024 as part of a through 563 route from Penrith. However, we understand that a decision has recently been taken to revert to the historical split of the 564 and 563 routes at Kirkby Stephen. The 563 route will be enhanced to provide earlier and later journeys suitable for work and education.
- 4.3.10 In January 2025 both WaF and Cumberland Councils agreed to join the Government's Devolution Priority Programme²⁷. Crucially this would create a mayoral authority for Cumbria with powers and decision-making over matters such as economic development, transport, employment support, planning, and housing.
- 4.3.11 Challenges remain due to the lack of smaller operators in the region. Indeed, it remains the case that one operator runs the majority of the bus network.

²⁶ <https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/news/2023/commitment-made-restore-and-improve-bus-services-westmorland-and-furness>

²⁷ <https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/news/2025/councils-agree-join-governments-devolution-journey>

4.4 Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

4.4.1 The LSC is perhaps most closely identified with the Yorkshire Dales National Park²⁸ as a geographical area; the line skirts the southern boundary of the Park from Skipton to Settle and then lies within the boundary as far as Kirkby Stephen, running along the western flank. It therefore offers one of the principal means of accessing the southern and western areas of the Park with limited other public transport alternatives available. As a result of their location, stations such as Settle and Ribbleshead naturally receive considerably higher visitor footfall.



Malham – a visitor hotspot

4.4.2 In 2016 there was a significant development in that the National Park was extended to include the Westmorland Dales, an area of some 77 square miles (200 sq. km) from the M6 in the west to Maulds Meaburn in the north and Ravenstonedale in the south-east. Critically, it included a section of the LSC north of Garsdale Station, along the Mallerstang Valley and making Kirkby Stephen the nearest railhead to the expanded area.

4.4.3 The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA) came into being with the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. This was subsequently updated with the Environment Act 1995 section 61²⁹. The original aims of the 1949 Act included:

- *to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the national parks;*
- *to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities [of the national parks] by the public.*

4.4.4 The original 1949 Act was created at a time when issues such as public transport to access the countryside were not a priority. The LSC was in decline with few stopping services and most local journeys were made by bus of which there were many local services. Having said that, visitor numbers were much smaller before the advent of the private motor vehicle. At this time, climate change was far from contemplation.

4.4.5 By the time of the Environment Act (1995), circumstances had changed considerably, and certainly, the awakenings as to climate change and the dependency on the private car. It may therefore seem strange that limited attention has been paid to how the increasing numbers of visitors actually reach the Park. This may be partly due to the interpretation of the terms

²⁸ <https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/>

²⁹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/25/part/III>

of reference which do not specifically include transport within the remit, but also lack of funding from central government. But, for whatever reasons, public transport has not been seen as a priority for the YDNPA, but rather left to the local transport authorities and the voluntary sector to provide. And yet, in the meantime, traffic congestion and climate change are both damaging the characteristics of the Dales which visitors come to enjoy.

4.4.6 The latest YDNP visitor survey³⁰ carried out in 2022 reported that of the approximately 5 million visitors to the National Park each year 85% arrived by private motor vehicle but only 4% by public bus and 2% by train. As the LSC is effectively the only rail line directly serving the National Park, it must be concluded that the numbers using the railway as part of their journey into the Park are relatively small. This is somewhat disappointing.



A Swaledale landscape

4.4.7 However, in March 2023, YDNPA issued a landmark Statement on Public Transport³¹ which sets out a number of bold aspirations:

- 1. An acceleration of the reduction in use of carbon-emitting vehicles by visitors to, and residents of, the National Park.*
- 2. A rail and bus network that provides a viable alternative to the private car for visitors and residents alike, and for all who do not have access to a car. Such a network needs to be attractive in terms of route network, accessibility, hours of operation, frequency, capacity and fare levels.*
- 3. Increased use of rail travel, particularly by visitors. The Leeds-Settle-Carlisle and Bentham railway lines should form the backbone of the public transport network in the west of the National Park, with appropriate integrated bus and demand responsive transport, including to/from the intermediate stations, with through ticketing. More evenly spaced train services and an increased capacity for cycles is desirable. Bus services should also provide links from/to other key railheads near the National Park.*
- 4. A significant increase in bus service coverage and frequency. This should be based on the population level of rural settlements.*

³⁰ https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2023/01/P1231-YDNPA-Visitor-Survey-2022-Report-Final-14_12_22-PDF.pdf (p17 82% car plus 3% motorcycle)

³¹ <https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2023/03/Item-8-YDNPA-Public-Transport-Statement.pdf>

5. *All key visitor destinations in the National Park, for example Bolton Abbey and Malham, accessible by public transport seven days a week.*
6. *Provision of Sunday services. It is inconsistent with the objective of promoting the area as a tourism/well-being destination to not provide bus services on a weekend or for leisure purposes.*
7. *Improved coordination between bus and rail operators to enable synchronised bus and train timetables and integrated ticketing.*
8. *Development of a demand responsive approach to transport provision for more remote parts of the National Park, using, e.g., pre-bookable shared taxis.*
9. *Improved coordination between the LTAs. Given that the National Park straddles three LTAs, with many visitors travelling from at least three more LTAs, issues of cross border coordination and integration arise.*
10. *Widespread promotion of public transport use for visitors and residents.*

4.4.8 Success in delivering these aspirations is dependent upon working with other authorities and transport providers. Both of the principal unitary authorities (NYC and WaF) now recognise the needs of the visitor and importance of the visitor economy to their areas, but have much more to do to help develop integrated transport solutions to facilitate sustainable tourism.

4.4.9 A further material development occurred with the implementation of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act in December 2023 (s245³²) which, in turn, followed publication of the Glover Report³³ in 2019. The National Parks were seen as being a vital part of the nation's health and wellbeing particularly as we emerged from the Covid pandemic, but there was concern that they were suffering a decline due to the effects of climate change and through lack of adequate management; they required further protection with a focus on environmental matters and the planning system.



Semer Water

4.4.10 The Act, therefore, conferred new duties³⁴ upon National Park authorities to help tackle the effects of climate change, and crucially required the collaboration of other public bodies to assist the National Park purposes in this regard. Public bodies, of course, includes the local authorities and, it might be argued to extend to the newly nationalised rail operators.

³² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/55/section/245>

³³ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d8a19a3e5274a083d3b78bd/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf>

³⁴ <https://www.cnp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Reinvigorating-National-Parks-through-the-Levelling-Up-Bill-Amendments.pdf>

- 4.4.11 In December 2024, a draft version of the objectives for the new YDNPA management plan 2025-30³⁵ was issued for consultation which will supersede the 2019 version. However, we question whether the draft objective, as it stands, truly fulfils the aspirations of the March 2023 statement on public transport (see earlier). Nevertheless, it does recognise the importance of the LSC and the need for bus services.

D5. Support more services along the Settle-Carlisle Railway and the reinstatement of other rail lines, increase bus and community transport links to surrounding towns, and improve infrastructure to support electric vehicles, so as to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from travel in the National Park by 50% by 2030 (compared to 2019 levels).

- 4.4.12 The accompanying rationale behind the objective highlights the need for reduction in greenhouse gases caused by private cars and the very limited provision of public transport services at present. It identifies that public transport would support objectives including further education, hospital visits, recreation, and retail. The LSC is a key link, but bus services need to be better integrated. The rationale looks towards increasing services such as the Yorkshire Dales Explorer and ultimate reinstatement of the Colne-Skipton line.
- 4.4.13 Meanwhile, ambitions to reconnect the Wensleydale Railway to Garsdale Station have been superseded by a more recent flagship proposal of YDNPA to create a multi user path along the former railway trackbed, much of which has been in private hands since closure. We feel that this will have significant benefits for Garsdale Station, provided always that the trackbed can be protected should railway use ever become viable in the future. The principal benefit will be as a walking route to Hawes together with a complementary bus service which, we believe, will have wide appeal.
- 4.4.14 We cannot talk about the National Park without also mentioning the DalesRail service. In 1975 the National Park engaged in an innovative integrated public transport experiment which ultimately led to the saving of the Settle-Carlisle Line. This had its origins in the previous year when the West Riding Ramblers Association had chartered a train from British Rail to run up the line and this had proved to be immensely popular, indeed oversubscribed.
- 4.4.15 Persuaded that there was a need for public transport to relieve the already congested roads, the then Yorkshire Dales National Park Committee decided to create the 'DalesRail' service with three years' funding from The Countryside Commission. Minimal works were carried out to the smaller stations which had closed in 1970 such that these were safe

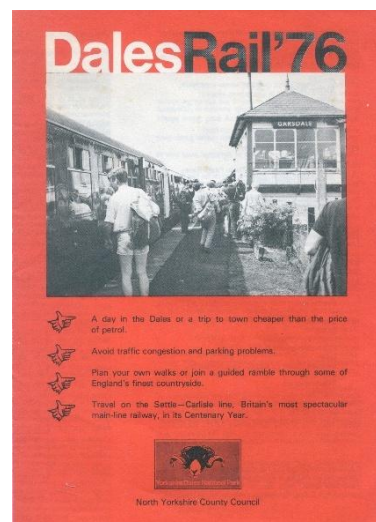


Connecting buses at Garsdale Station in the late 1970s – courtesy Colin Speakman

³⁵ <https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/about/national-park-management-plan/partnership/the-new-management-plan-2025-2030/>

for passengers to alight. Arrangements were made with the National Bus Company to operate connecting bus services, crucially with through tickets to various destinations which included Richmond, Leyburn and Sedbergh; Garsdale Station chosen as being the main interchange point. These services, running Saturday and Sunday one weekend a month in season quickly gained success and it was also found that local residents were using the services to access the major towns, an opportunity which had not been afforded to them for some while. It is recounted that some of the trains were of up to 10 carriages, formed of diesel multiple units.

- 4.4.16 Despite the apparent success of the three-year project, it seems that there was a change of direction within the National Park, instead focusing on conservation rather than public transport. Faced with possible withdrawal, the DalesRail services were taken over by West Yorkshire PTE and Cumbria County Council, continuing until 1986, by which time British Rail had reinstated a regular service, prior to the ultimate reprieve of the line in 1989. We should also mention that the services from West Yorkshire were augmented by a service from Manchester over the Clitheroe branch, some of these terminating at Hellifield, but latterly running through to Carlisle. This service continues to this day as the Yorkshire Dales Explorer.



DalesRail promotional leaflet

4.5 West Yorkshire Combined Authority

- 4.5.1 Whilst this paper is essentially considering the areas north of Skipton mention should be made of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) which has oversight of public transport including the Aire Valley which includes Leeds and Bradford. It does not currently run services directly but provides support and investment towards the bus and rail services. WYCA has however announced the adoption of the franchising model so within the next few years bus services will fall under the direct control of the combined authority.
- 4.5.2 Of note, WYCA currently supports a number of bus services running from West Yorkshire into the Dales, including the Sunday 864 which provides a cross-boundary link from Ilkley Station to connect with the morning and late afternoon LSC service at Skipton Station (see later).
- 4.5.3 Meanwhile, the Aire Valley is currently well served by bus services mostly those of First Leeds, First Bradford and Transdev.

5 Transport Providers along the Leeds-Settle-Carlisle Corridor

5.1 Northern Trains

5.1.1 The scheduled rail service along the LSC route is currently provided by Northern Trains³⁶, a subsidiary of DfT Operator, having taken over the Northern franchise from Arriva Rail North in March 2020. As such it is a state-owned company alongside LNER, Southeastern and TransPennine Express. It is the second largest train operating company in the UK with 2500 services every day and 500 stations.

5.1.2 Whilst the majority of the services operated by Northern provide for local connectivity into the major towns across the north of England there are a limited number of longer distance services of which the LSC is somewhat unique in that it is a route of some 113 miles passing for much of its way through remote territory with stations often distant from habitations. Northern does not generally provide longer distance express services which are the remit of others such as LNER, Avanti, TPE and Cross Country. In recent years, the possibility of a longer distance operator such as TPE or Cross Country meshing with the Northern services along the LSC has been considered and indeed this is something which has long since been advocated by FoSCL and supported by industry experts.



Northern class 158 train on a northbound service at Settle

5.1.3 The present LSC timetable follows the minimum DfT train service requirement established at the time the franchise was awarded to Arriva Rail North (ARN) in April 2016. It includes for 8 full line trains each way plus an additional return to Ribbleshead on weekdays and Saturdays with 6 on Sundays. However, the timetable, originating from May 2018, was implemented with minimal consultation with stakeholders and has, ever since, been suboptimal for the passenger and even harder for any intending connecting bus operator as we shall mention later. FoSCL, as the user group, have lobbied hard for timetable changes with only minor concessions being achieved in the intervening period. We believe that the passenger timetable was established only after the freight operator paths were allocated. The line is also shared with the Morecambe line services as far as Long Preston giving 17 trains per day each way to this point.

5.1.4 Whilst some small timetable improvements have been achieved, a major issue is the long gaps caused by some services running semi-fast and missing out the minor intermediate stations. This has had the effect of creating a near 4-hour timetable gap for some of the stations and even worse when there is a cancellation of a preceding or following service. Whilst the timetable is not ideal it does, however, deliver a roughly 2-hour interval service in

³⁶ <https://www.northernrailway.co.uk/about-us>

an area which might otherwise be devoid of public transport.

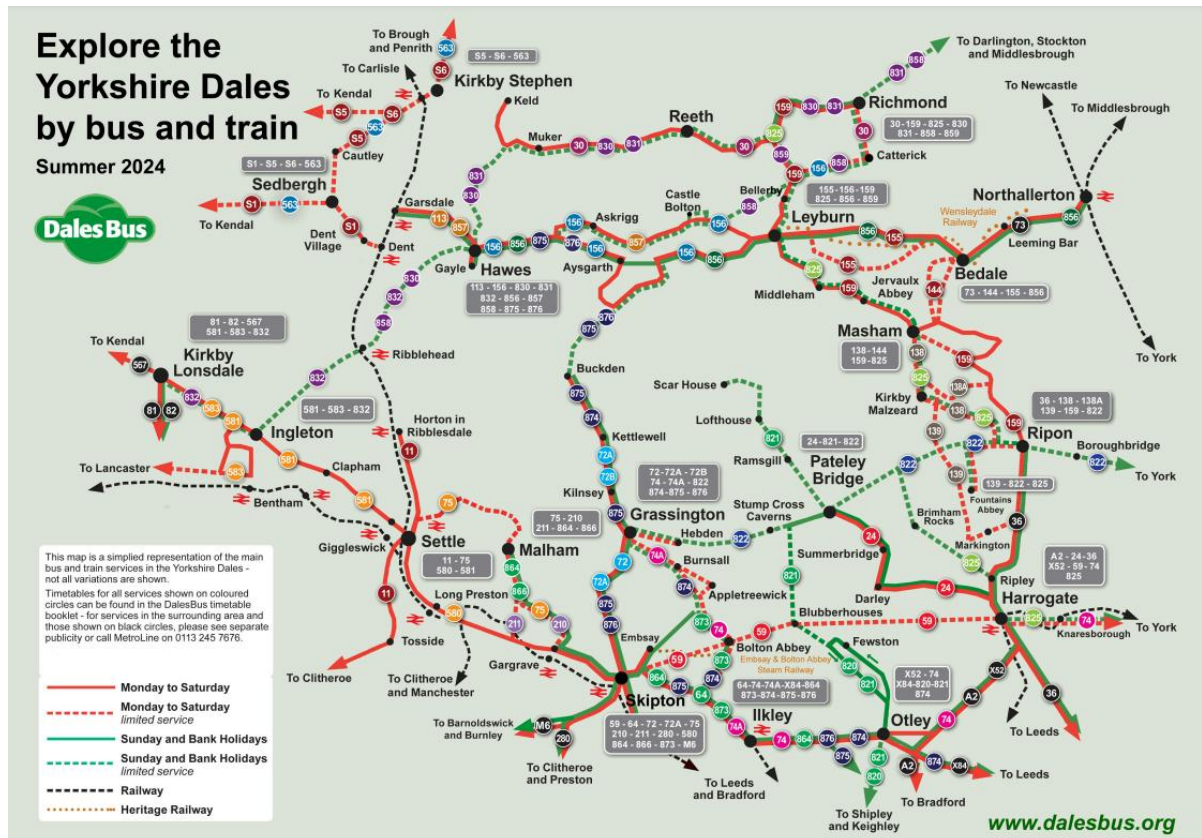
- 5.1.5 The Northern services are heavily subsidised from central government. Indeed, from their 2023-24 accounts, Northern received £648m in support. Fares are generally below what would be necessary to achieve an economically viable return. However, the 'subsidy' is considered to be worthwhile investment in that it generates over £1.2bn in socio economic value across the areas served by the rail network³⁷. Some authorities quote this as higher.
- 5.1.6 Services on the LSC are typically provided by aged Class 158 diesel multiple unit stock, much of which is approaching 40 years old and usually operated in 2, 3 or 4 car formations. There has been little recent investment, and the replacement of the 158 stock is not anticipated to start roll out until 2030 at the earliest with multi-mode trains. In the meantime, the fleet is increasingly subject to maintenance and, occasionally, failure. Consequently, passenger experience is poor, and cycle storage is limited to 2 per train, a significant shortcoming in a major leisure area.
- 5.1.7 Whilst integrated transport was a tender requirement of the ARN franchise in 2016 it is probably fair to say that this does not feature in the current Northern Trains priorities although the company does invest heavily in its community programmes and its commitment to Community Rail Partnerships. However, we should mention that in 2025 Northern have awarded a grant from their Community Project Fund towards bus operation from the line.
- 5.1.8 In June 2024, a Saturdays-only Yorkshire Dales Explorer³⁸ service was launched, providing two return services between Rochdale, Manchester Victoria, Clitheroe and Ribbleshead, operating all year, replacing the previous Summer Sunday 'DalesRail' service from Blackpool and Preston. Promoted by Community Rail Lancashire, it brings passengers from the Manchester conurbations into the Dales by public transport and it also provides a transport option for residents in Hellifield and Settle to access Manchester. Initial indications are that the service has proved to be a success as well as the significant benefit of bringing the Clitheroe branch back into regular passenger use and with the possibility of services on additional days. This is seen as a major development and a stepping stone to further services from the north west.
- 5.1.9 In January 2022, a pre-0815 exclusion was placed on the Dales Railcard used by local residents within the qualifying area, which provides a one third discount on tickets on the LSC and Morecambe lines. We believe that this has had a detrimental effect on local ridership, particularly for travel to work journeys. FoSCL advocate that the restriction is removed.
- 5.1.10 Marketing and promotion are largely undertaken by Settle Carlisle Railway Development Company ('DevCo') on behalf of Northern Trains. The DevCo is the accredited Community Rail Partnership for the line and undertakes other functions including the provision of ticket office staff, catering trolleys and the group booking service.

³⁷ <https://www.northernrailway.co.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/Social%20value%20report%202024.pdf>

³⁸ <https://communityraillancashire.co.uk/lines/yorkshire-dales-explorer/>

5.2 The Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company

- 5.2.1 The Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company (D&BCIC)³⁹ is a not-for-profit company run entirely by 8 unpaid volunteer directors and is a subsidiary of the charity the Friends of the Dales⁴⁰. The bus services managed the company are generically branded ‘DalesBus’.



Dales area bus and train route map summer 2024

- 5.2.2 Whilst D&BCIC incorporated in 2007, the seeds of the DalesBus network were sown with the saving of the Settle–Carlisle line at which time the then promoters engaged local bus operators to provide connections with the early ‘DalesRail’ services at Garsdale Station with integrated through ticketing, enabling journeys from rail stations to Hawes, Sedbergh and points beyond as we have mentioned earlier. Since inception, D&BCIC has worked in partnership with the train operating company, the Settle Carlisle Railway Development Co and FoSCL. Mention should also be made of Friends of DalesBus⁴¹ who are the campaigning and support group for public transport in the Dales.
- 5.2.3 Currently, D&BCIC manages most of the Sunday and Bank Holiday bus services within the Yorkshire Dales with passenger numbers on the managed services totalling 53,388⁴² over the period 2023-24, an increase of 28% over the previous year. This includes several services

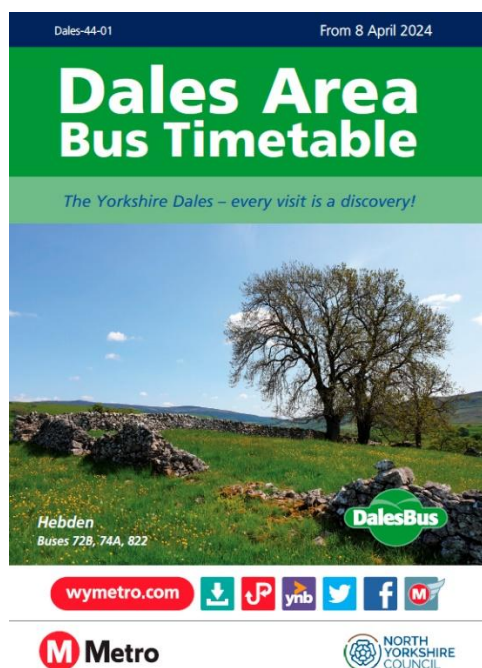
³⁹ www.dalesandbowland.com

⁴⁰ www.friendsofthedales.org.uk

⁴¹ <https://www.dalesbus.org/friendsofdalesbus.html>

⁴² https://www.dalesbus.org/uploads/1/1/3/9/113919127/dales_and_bowland_cic_annual_report_2023-24.pdf

which connect directly with the LSC, including at Skipton (864/866/873), Settle (881 until 2022), Ribbleshead (830/858) and Garsdale (857). In the period 2024-25 this is expected to increase to nearer 60,000. In addition, D&BCIC supports a number of commercial services of others with marketing. D&BCIC also provides the recognised primary portal for access to information for transport in the Yorkshire Dales via its website: www.dalesbus.org



Dales Area Summer 2024 Timetable booklet

Examples of volunteer produced leaflets (2024)

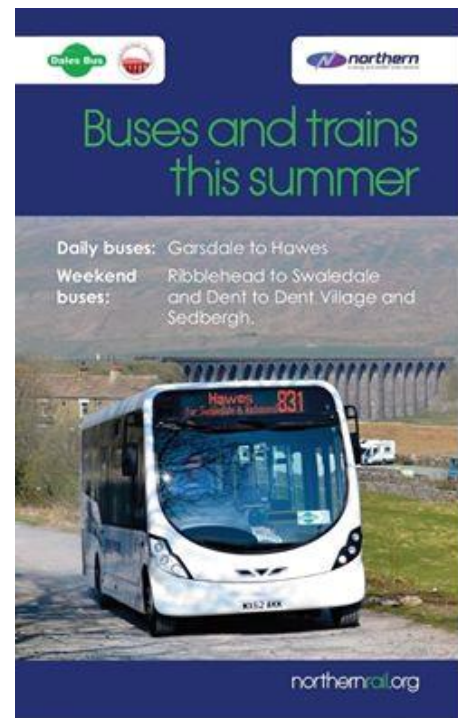
- 5.2.4 The primary focus of D&BCIC is to promote access for all users by public transport into and around the Yorkshire Dales National Park however some of the services are equally used by local residents as a means of transport, the 856/857 services between Northallerton and Garsdale Station being a notable example. To this end, D&BCIC contract with a range of bus companies such as Arriva North East, Dales & District, First, Little White Bus, Transdev and York Pullman, effectively buying into spare capacity available at weekends. Ridership across the network passed the 500,000 passenger milestone in 2023.
- 5.2.5 The overall cost of providing and marketing the network in 2023-24⁴³ was around £235,000, with fares income of approx. £105,000, leaving a net cost funding requirement of £130,000. D&BCIC is therefore highly dependent on fundraising as the fare income accounts for only part of the cost of operation. Funding tends to be provided on a year-to-year basis which restricts effective long-term planning/marketing and creates an over-reliance on a small number of volunteer directors for annual fundraising activities.

⁴³ https://www.dalesbus.org/uploads/1/1/3/9/113919127/dales_and_bowland_cic_annual_report_2023-24.pdf

5.2.6 The lack of a long-term funding strategy for bus services from central government is a major concern, however, D&BCIC were in receipt of a substantial grant from the Department for Transport's BSIP Phase 3 Network North Fund via North Yorkshire Council which has assisted in funding a significant proportion of the DalesBus network in 2024-25, providing important continuity for the short-term and easing the pressure on unsustainable voluntary fundraising

5.2.7 D&BCIC is a rare example within the UK of a volunteer management company focused on providing the services that passengers want, with interconnecting routes and through ticketing. D&BCIC is able to engage in effective marketing usually producing its own marketing materials in-house at low cost. The organisation maintains a high public profile including contributions to BBC1 'Countryfile', BBC Radio 4 'You and Yours' and a 2 hour-long BBC4 television programme 'All Aboard the Country Bus' in 2017⁴⁴.

5.2.8 It is worth noting that D&BCIC, in conjunction with North Yorkshire Council, has negotiated a train+bus Dales Rambler ticket with Northern allowing return rail travel from Leeds or Bradford to Skipton or Ilkley and unlimited bus travel with most local bus operators within a defined zone in the Wharfedale and Malham area. This is similar to the PlusBus scheme operated within the major conurbations. Furthermore, through ticketing arrangements have been agreed with the main local bus operators including First, Transdev and Lonsdale Buses. It is hoped that such schemes can be expanded.



Large format station poster produced by Northern (2015)

5.3 North Yorkshire Council

5.3.1 North Yorkshire Council operates a number of bus services directly under Section 22 provisions and currently operates 46 such routes across the county⁴⁵, which have the limitation of only having a maximum of 16 seats and no room for standees, a significant problem in walking areas.

5.3.2 These include a number of local services which emanate from Skipton including those serving Malham on weekdays, but the only other significant interface with the LSC is at Settle and Horton with the number 11 service, which has recently been extended with BSIP funding to Clitheroe.

⁴⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07r2s1r>

⁴⁵ <https://northyorkstravel.info/operators/n/north-yorkshire-council/>

5.4 Little White Bus

- 5.4.1 Little White Bus (LWB)⁴⁶ was inaugurated in 2011 as a Section 19 and 22 community transport operator, under the auspices of the Upper Wensleydale Community Partnership (since 2017 the Upper Dales Community Partnership), the brainchild of the late Cllr John Blackie, an enigmatic and forward thinking local councillor. This was in response to the withdrawal of the 113 Hawes Village Bus operated by Little Red Bus which had, until that time, run between Gayle/Hawes and Garsdale Station under a direct contract with North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC). At that time, the move from the previous council contract to the community operator was said to have resulted in a reduction to less than one third of the previous cost to the local authority.
- 5.4.2 The ensuing period saw the withdrawal of the main council subsidised bus services into Wensleydale and Swaledale from Leyburn and Richmond respectively with NYCC instead awarding contracts to LWB for more limited services using 16 seater vehicles. LWB now operates 4 routes on a Monday to Saturday basis. In addition, the seasonal Sunday 857 from Garsdale station operates under arrangement with D&BCIC. LWB also provides an 'on-demand' service in between the 113 Garsdale Station Shuttle commitments which can be called upon by arrangement with the community office in Hawes or the driver.
- 5.4.3 LWB maintains a high public profile with frequent television appearances on Dales-related programmes and now has a team of circa 20 volunteers plus 10 paid staff together with a fleet of six 16-seater buses. UDCP has also taken over other essential local services including the local petrol station, post office, cashpoint machine and library.
- 5.4.4 LWB has been used as a model for other services and, as we have mentioned, NYC have embraced section 22 community transport as part of their rural transport strategy in other areas of the county, some of these services being run directly by the council.
- 5.4.5 Currently, LWB is funded with subsidy from NYC under the various contracts as well as fare income.



LWB Garsdale Shuttle at Garsdale Station

⁴⁶ www.littlewhitebus.co.uk

5.5 Western Dales Community Bus

- 5.5.1 Western Dales Community Bus (WDB)⁴⁷ was inaugurated in 2011 following the withdrawal of the council funded 564A service from Dent to Kendal. Faced with removal of their bus service, a group was quickly formed led by Dent Parish Council to address the situation and thus, in 2011 the service was taken over by WDB with financial assistance from FoSCL and the Dales Integrated Transport Alliance, the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust and the National Lottery amongst others.
- 5.5.2 WDB, a registered charity, is a Section 19 and 22 community operator, currently having a team of circa 30 volunteers covering the various activities including driving, marketing and admin. Critically, nobody is paid with the exception of a part time operations manager.
- 5.5.3 The routes have developed over a period of time following the withdrawal of various council subsidised services from 2010 onwards. The Saturday services between Sedbergh and Kendal were increased in November 2014 following withdrawal the 564 service between Brough and Kendal and the final withdrawal of all subsidies by the local authority. Subsequently routes from Kirkby Stephen to Kendal and Penrith were added in response to requests for services from Kirkby Stephen Town Council, the town having lost most of its regular bus services in 2016.
- 5.5.4 WDB currently operates three routes which interface to varying degrees with the LSC at Dent and Kirkby Stephen stations. However, the principal dedicated connection remains the Saturday S1 (formerly the 564A) from Dent Station to Dent, Sedbergh and Kendal which provides a morning and late afternoon connection with the trains from and to Leeds
- 5.5.5 WDB currently has a fleet of two 16-seat Mercedes buses, the most recent of which was purchased in 2019. Unusually for a community operator the buses are low-floor and fully accessible for wheelchairs without the need for a tail lift. This is an expensive but worthwhile provision.
- 5.5.6 WDB receive no subsidy from Westmorland and Furness Council and the running costs are funded out of ticket revenue including concessionary reimbursement (currently at a baseline of 58% of single ticket price in WaF). Capital expenditure is met by fund raising and



S1 descending the Coal Road from Dent Station

⁴⁷ www.westerndalesbus.co.uk

applications to grant funding bodies e.g. National Lottery and Garfield Weston Foundation. ENCTS bus passes are accepted on all routes.

- 5.5.7 In 2018 the bus was featured in a BBC News item dealing with cuts to bus services throughout the UK and how local residents were addressing the problem. A short film can be viewed at BBC online entitled 'Why we drive our own buses'⁴⁸. The film presented a compelling case for rural bus services and was widely thought to be a factor in achieving a substantial grant from the Garfield Weston Foundation which financed the purchase of the most recent vehicle.

5.6 Cumbria Classic Coaches

- 5.6.1 Cumbria Classic Coaches⁴⁹ (CCC) is a commercial operator based at Ravenstonedale near Kirkby Stephen, unusually operating heritage buses on scheduled services and enjoys a loyal following mainly from the residents of Kirkby Stephen. In recent years CCC have acquired an accessible compliant vehicle to operate on their contracted 106 route between Penrith and Kendal.
- 5.6.2 CCC currently operate the 571 from Brough to Kendal (Mondays) and the 572 route from Kirkby Stephen to Barnard Castle (Wednesdays), the latter unusually using heritage vehicles during the summer months, which can be accessed from the LSC although the connections are not ideal. These are typically single day out-and-back services and have proved extremely popular with mostly the elderly community and visitors, some of the services running with near full loads. ENCTS bus passes are accepted and are essential to the revenue. Meanwhile, Tuesday services from Kirkby Stephen to Penrith and to Hawes (seasonal) have both been withdrawn in recent years.
- 5.6.3 Interface with the LSC is made at Kirkby Stephen Station for two of the services, however, the operator experienced extreme challenges following the ill-fated May 2018 Northern timetable changes in common with other operators, such that it proved difficult to maintain a dedicated rail connection on any of the services. Nevertheless, the services offered by CCC do provide some limited connectivity with the line.
- 5.6.4 CCC receive no council subsidy for the services out of Kirkby Stephen. Given the nature of the services (midweek and off peak) income is derived mainly through ENCTS reimbursement. However, as CCC are engaged in their primary business of private hire (weddings etc) at weekends, there is unlikely to be any appetite in operating a commercial service at these times.

⁴⁸ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-43059692/why-we-drive-our-own-buses>

⁴⁹ <https://www.cumbriaclassiccoaches.co.uk/>

5.7 Lonsdale Buses

- 5.7.1 Lonsdale Buses⁵⁰ (formerly known as Kirkby Lonsdale Coach Hire) based at Morecambe, is another commercial bus operator, now under the ownership of Travellers Choice. It is a significant regional operator in Lancashire with services, at one time, extending to Penrith (106) and Kirkby Stephen (564) in Cumbria.



Bus 580 in Settle Market Place

- 5.7.2 It currently provides an important strategic link from Settle to Ingleton, Kirkby Lonsdale and Skipton with the 580/581 service and also the seasonal Saturday 75 service from Settle to Malham.

5.8 Stagecoach

- 5.8.1 Stagecoach⁵¹ are one of the major bus companies in the UK and, crucially, operate 95% of the scheduled services in the former Cumbria. The routes were largely the province of the former Ribble Motor Services and Cumberland Motor Services which it absorbed into its Stagecoach Cumbria and North Lancashire subsidiary following denationalisation. Perhaps not unsurprisingly for a commercial operator, services are focused on the major centres of Carlisle, Barrow in Furness, Kendal and the tourist areas of the Lake District managed from their regional headquarters based in Carlisle. Stagecoach has depots in Carlisle, Kendal, Barrow and Lancaster as well as smaller depots in Penrith and elsewhere.
- 5.8.2 Stagecoach will naturally only take on routes which are commercially viable, and this means that they will not operate services in the more rural areas which are less attractive without subsidy. As a commercial operator, fares tend to be high although more reasonably priced zoned day tickets are available. As the dominant provider of bus services, they are able to provide timetable and travel information through their web portal for most of the services in the area.
- 5.8.3 Whilst many of the communities along the LSC route would have been served by Ribble and Cumberland services these have been cut back particularly in the 1980s with the reduction in bus use and deregulation. Once familiar services disappeared although Stagecoach services remain prolific in Carlisle. Only in recent times have services again interacted with the LSC at other locations, with Stagecoach buses once again appearing on the much truncated 563 route from Appleby to Penrith in 2017 and on the full route to Kendal in 2023, albeit on a limited service in between school times.

⁵⁰ <https://klch.co.uk/>

⁵¹ <https://www.stagecoachbus.com/about/national>

6 The Stations

This study concentrates on the stations and their localities northwards from Skipton. Station footfalls quoted are based on the estimated footfall (entries and exits) provided by Office of Rail and Road⁵² for the period April 2023-March 2024. Population data is taken from the 2021 Census and also shown on the strategic connection Map 1 (page 6). A full table showing current bus service provision as in 2024 is appended and also illustrated in Map 2 (page 37) .

6.1 Intermediate Stations between Leeds and Skipton

- 6.1.1 Generally, the stations within the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) area south of Skipton are well provided for by bus service provision and onward travel is possible to many destinations and need not concern this paper.

6.2 Skipton

- 6.2.1 Skipton with a population⁵³ of 15,379 and a sizeable market town was, until recently, the administration centre for the Craven District. It is well served from the bus station, onward travel being possible to several destinations in Lancashire and West Yorkshire as well as North Yorkshire. It is generally acknowledged as being the gateway to the Dales from the West Yorkshire conurbations
- 6.2.2 Unfortunately, the rail station is 600m distant from the bus station with a stepped footbridge across the Leeds Liverpool Canal to negotiate. Access between the two is, therefore, not ideal. The railway station provides a primary transport hub for the area with an annual footfall of 1,178,096 passengers⁵⁴, many of these commuting to Leeds. Whilst for the majority of bus services this will involve a walk to the bus station, those services passing or serving the railway station include:

Service	Route	Operator	Days	Frequency (each way)
72	Skipton-Grassington	Keighley Bus Company	Daily (from bus station on Sun)	10 journeys Mon-Sat 6 on Sundays
75	Skipton-Gargrave-Malham (- Settle in summer)	Lonsdale Buses	Saturdays	3 journeys Ski-Mal in winter and 2 journeys Ski-Mal-Set in summer

⁵² <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage>

⁵³ 2021 Census

⁵⁴ ORR Estimates of Station Usage April 2023-24

Service	Route	Operator	Days	Frequency (each way)
*210/211	Skipton-Gargrave-Malham	North Yorkshire Council	Mon to Fri	2 journeys
280	Skipton-Clitheroe-Preston	Stagecoach	Daily	10 journeys: hourly (4 on Sundays)
864/873	Ilkley-Bolton Abbey-Skipton-Gargrave-Malham	Keighley Bus Company	Sundays and BH	5 journeys to Ilkley 3 to Malham
866	Keighley- Skipton-Gargrave-Malham	Keighley Bus Company	Sundays and BH (summer only)	
M6	Skipton-Barnoldswick-Colne- Burnley	Burnley Bus Company	Daily	16 journeys weekdays, 10 on Sundays

*16 seat NYC vehicle

6.2.3 In addition, the Sunday 864 DalesBus service from Ilkley provides an important feeder link into the LSC at Skipton Station meeting the 0909 train from Leeds and the return train from Carlisle at 1724.

6.2.4 Currently there is little coordination between bus and rail. With the possible redevelopment of the station, concerns have been expressed towards the limited provision for buses. Few buses actually serve the station forecourt which is often congested. This might seem to be a significant oversight. We have mentioned the distance to the bus station and integration could be achieved if the majority of services ran via the rail station thus serving both locations.



DalesBus at Skipton Station in 2017

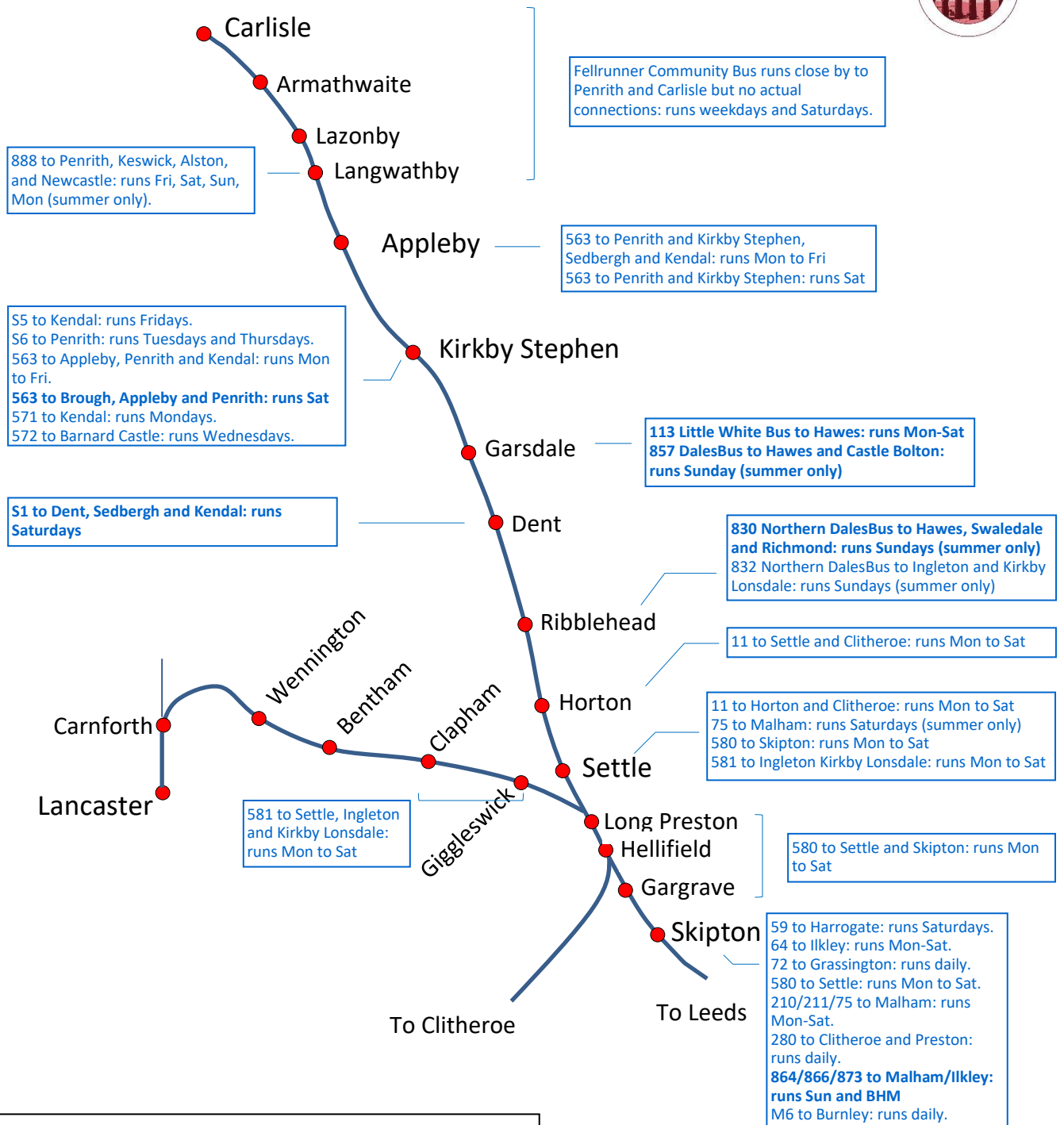
This might seem to be a significant oversight. We have mentioned the distance to the bus station and integration could be achieved if the majority of services ran via the rail station thus serving both locations.

6.2.5 A longstanding issue has been the Sunday 72 to Grassington operated by Keighley Bus Company which departs the bus station just as the first Aire Valley rail service from Bradford arrives. A slight adjustment in the bus route would accommodate this and allow rail passengers from Bradford to access the DalesBus network into Wharfedale.

6.2.6 A Dales Rambler Day Ranger⁵⁵ ticket (currently £14.40) permits a journey from Leeds or Bradford via Skipton or Ilkley and then onward bus travel into the Dales as far as Buckden or Malham. However, this lacks adequate promotion and consequently take up is low. One other short-term reason might be the bus single fare cap.

⁵⁵ <https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/tickets-railcards-offers/promotions/dales-rambler-day-ranger/>

Map 2: Bus Connections to the Leeds-Settle-Carlisle Line



Drawn John Carey

- 6.2.7 In 2021 the Friends of the Settle Carlisle Line participated in the preparation of a study and report for the erstwhile Craven District Council 'Towards an Integrated, Sustainable Transport Network in Craven'⁵⁶ together with colleagues in Dales and Bowland CIC, Action for Yorkshire Transport and Friends of DalesBus. This provided recommendations in respect of the rail timetable and a range of options for an integrated network of bus services in the Craven area. It also supported the use of fixed fare taxis on lesser used routes and evenings. However, as we have related, Craven District Council has since been absorbed into the new North Yorkshire Council, but many of the ideas remain relevant.
- 6.2.8 In March 2021 proposals were submitted by North Yorkshire County Council in conjunction with WYCA for a Skipton Gateway, using Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) at a projected cost of £7.8m. It presented an ambitious plan to transform the front of the railway station together with cycling and walking routes from the railway station to the bus station. Along with others, FoSCL were invited to take part in the initial consultation, but it was disappointing that there appeared to be little provision for bus interchange, a major omission given that that the station is widely acknowledged as being the gateway to the Dales. Construction work is due to begin in March 2025, but changes to the station car park area have been descoped⁵⁷. The project will however now include replacement of the canal footbridge which currently has stepped access, and improvement of the walking route to the bus station some 600m distant. Rather surprisingly, it is believed that the current plan is to replace with a stepped bridge.

6.3 Gargrave, Hellifield and Long Preston

- 6.3.1 The villages of Gargrave (population 1,798), Hellifield (population 1,478) and Long Preston (population 774) have expanded in recent years with housebuilding. These communities are fortunate in having the benefit of rail services on both the LSC and Morecambe routes and the railway parallels the A65 for most of the way to Settle. Whilst the stations are located close to the villages, these are also served by the slightly more convenient 580 Craven Connection bus service which runs from Skipton to Settle providing an almost hourly frequency on weekdays, but only two-hourly on Saturdays with no Sunday service.
- 6.3.2 The 580 service is operated commercially by Lonsdale Buses (without subsidy) following the withdrawal and closure of Pennine Motors who had operated the route for many years. However, this critical service is dependent on the same operator also receiving a contract to operate the 581 (Settle to Kirkby Lonsdale) without which the 580 service is unlikely to be commercially viable, the depot being based in Morecambe.
- 6.3.3 Whilst the bus service provides limited competition with the railway it also serves the intermediate locations between stations and acts as a feeder as well as filling some of the gaps in the rail timetable. Therefore, if anything, it provides a complementary service. Fares

⁵⁶ https://www.dalesbus.org/uploads/1/1/3/9/113919127/craven_integrated_transport_study.pdf

⁵⁷ <https://www.cravenherald.co.uk/news/24199263.skipton-7-2m-gateway-project-snicket-gate/>

on this route were generally high (compared with the rail fare) prior to the introduction of the fare cap, this being due to the lack of subsidy.

- 6.3.4 The Yorkshire Dales Explorer rail service between Rochdale and Ribbleshead via Manchester Victoria, Clitheroe, Settle and Hellifield on Saturdays provides additional journey opportunities.

6.4 Settle

- 6.4.1 Settle with a population of 2,714⁵⁸ is one of the larger towns along the LSC route located just outside the Yorkshire Dales National Park. It benefits from the proximity of the station to the town and nearby outstanding local scenery. It is often used as the transfer point by coach operators as it is mistakenly seen as being the starting point of the route. Possibly for these reasons, there is a large annual footfall through the station of circa 134,060⁵⁹ including both locals and visitors and the highest footfall of the intermediate stations. Interestingly, the year ending March 2024 showed a 10% reduction on the similar period to March 2020, immediately pre-Covid, possibly reflecting the change commuting patterns.



Service 580 in Settle (2024)

- 6.4.2 Settle is often regarded as a gateway to the Three Peaks area of the Dales. The town is primarily served by bus services from the nearby Market Place (500m distant from the station and 5 minutes' walk) with no services currently calling at the station itself. The key services are provided by Lonsdale Buses, commercially to Skipton and to Kirkby Lonsdale, the latter with support from NYC under a net contract. As we have mentioned earlier, the commercial 580 to Skipton is dependent upon the existence of the subsidised 581 to Kirkby Lonsdale. Access to the Morecambe line can be gained at Giggleswick Station, only 1 mile distant.

- 6.4.3 The town is also served by the No 11 service which runs between Horton and reinstated to Clitheroe via Slaidburn since April 2024. However, this has had a chequered history. Originally part of the award-winning Bowland Transit service, the route was controversially truncated abruptly at Tosside, the border between North



Service 11 at Settle Market Place in 2024

⁵⁸ 2021 Census

⁵⁹ ORR Estimates of Station Usage April 2023-24

Yorkshire and Lancashire, due to the lack of agreement between authorities. It highlights a particular issue of cross boundary services. Indeed, it was only in April 2024 that a service was reinstated with BSIP funding, contracted to 21 Transport. However, the service was subsequently taken back in-house by North Yorkshire Council using their own 15-seat vehicles (with no capacity for standing), operating under the section 22 provision. This might seem to be a retrograde step, particularly in an area frequently used by walking groups.

6.4.4 Current services are thus:-

Route	Destination	Operator	Days	Frequency (each way)
*11	Horton, Slaidburn and Clitheroe	North Yorkshire Council	Mon to Sat	4 journeys to Horton, 5 to Clitheroe
75	Skipton via Malham	Lonsdale Buses	Sat (summer only)	2 journeys
580	Skipton	Lonsdale Buses	Mon to Sat	8 journeys
581	Clapham, Ingleton and Kirkby Lonsdale	Lonsdale Buses	Mon to Sat	7 journeys

*15 seat NYC vehicle

6.4.5 In addition, a seasonal 881 Malham Tarn Shuttle service was operated between Settle Station and Malham by D&BCIC up until 2022 with a lapse during Covid. However, it was not possible to maintain the service due to challenges in locating an operator and funding. In recent years passenger numbers had been disappointing despite the considerable congestion and car parking problems in Malham, a tourist hotspot. There are various possible reasons including the lack of promotion, reluctance towards modal change, absence of a combined ticket, and finally, a controversial decision of the erstwhile North Yorkshire County Council to exclude the service from the ENCTS scheme (the bus pass). Despite these set-backs there is a desperate need to encourage modal shift, and Settle would provide a natural rail head for such a service supported by marketing and a combined ticket.

6.4.6 Settle is also the natural railhead for accessing the tourist destinations of Clapham, Ingleton and Kirkby Lonsdale on the A65 by bus. Whilst Clapham is served by a station on the



DalesBus 881 ascending the hill at Langcliffe enroute to Malham

Morecambe line it is not very convenient being one mile distant from the village on the opposite side of the busy A65 road. The line then diverges away from the A65 and the former Ingleton branch was a victim of the Beeching cuts in 1965. Whilst, as we have mentioned, a Monday to Saturday service is provided by Lonsdale Bus 581 there is currently no Sunday service on this prime route. However, in summer 2019 a seasonal 581 Sunday service was

provided on a trial basis with support from D&BCIC. This demonstrated that there is a significant demand for such a service, but also that external funding will be required. In addition, any modal change at Settle would need to be seamless and supported by a combined bus rail ticket.

- 6.4.7 Given the strategic importance of Settle both in terms of population and tourism the station should be further developed as a transport hub. Consideration should be given to see whether existing bus services could be routed past the station bus stop as well as seasonal services into the station yard. It is, however, recognised that there may be difficulties with full sized buses and the comparatively narrow street (with parked cars) and, if this cannot be achieved, the Market Place is not too far distant and only a short walk. Consideration should be given to the better integration of bus and rail timetables where practicable and particularly as regards the 581 service to Ingleton and Kirkby Lonsdale. Combined bus/rail ticketing should be considered perhaps with a Craven Area Rambler ticket on a similar basis to the previously mentioned Dales Rambler. As we have said, Settle would be an ideal railhead for reaching Malham, as well as prime destinations such as Clapham, Ingleton, Kirkby Lonsdale and the Forest of Bowland. Map 3 on page 61 illustrates.

6.5 Horton in Ribblesdale

- 6.5.1 Horton in Ribblesdale station is located close to the small village (population 405⁶⁰) and the main usage is undoubtedly leisure with walkers accessing the popular Three Peaks paths to Pen-y-ghent and Ingleborough. For this reason, the estimated annual footfall⁶¹ is relatively high at 20,570.
- 6.5.2 The village is served by service 11 operated by NYC, running Horton - Settle - Clitheroe (Mon-Sat) using 15-seat minibuses. Unfortunately, the service has been slightly reduced in recent years following closure of the local primary school. However, there is no significant need for any other onward connections from the station.

6.6 Ribblehead

- 6.6.1 Ribblehead is a place rather than a community, situated in a remote location yet is used by some local residents particularly from Ingleton as their railhead despite the closer proximity of Bentham Station. Leisure represents by far the greatest usage of the station which is convenient for two of the Three Peaks and accounts for the majority of the annual footfall⁶² of 26,374 together with visitors to the viaduct which has gained some notoriety. The Station Inn is located within five minutes' walk. The station is also located close to the B6255 between Ingleton and Hawes and the junction with the B6497 to Settle.

⁶⁰ 2021 census

⁶¹ ORR Estimates of Station Usage April 2023-24

⁶² ORR Estimates of Station Usage April 2023-24

- 6.6.2 Ribbleshead has no regular bus services except for the seasonal Sunday 830 Northern DalesBus to Swaledale and Richmond via Hawes which provides a dedicated rail connection to and from the station. In addition, the limited service DalesBus 832 between Hawes and Kirkby Lonsdale calls at the road junction below the station. The 830 from Ribbleshead has been financially supported by FoSCL and the Settle Carlisle Railway Development Co for some years now.



*830 Northern DalesBus on Buttertubs Pass
enroute from Ribbleshead to Swaledale*



830 Northern DalesBus at Ribbleshead

- 6.6.3 These services have been adversely impacted by the decision of the former NYCC to exclude some services from the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme.
- 6.6.4 For several years, the 830 service started from either Lancaster or Preston as there are few suitable operators of public service buses within the Yorkshire Dales with accessible-compliant vehicles and, secondly, operating from a larger centre of population provides a regular pool of users when combined with the rail users to contribute towards the operating costs. However, in 2024, due to difficulties in locating a willing operator, the service was provided from the north east, with Ribbleshead as the starting point. This does mean that the service is now entirely dependent on transfer of rail passengers. It also provides the opportunity of a new DalesBus 858 feeder service from the north-east enabling visitors from this direction to access the line at Ribbleshead.
- 6.6.5 The 830 Northern DalesBus has justifiably received high profile media attention due to the outstanding nature of the scenery through which it passes and in 2016 was featured on the BBC4 programme 'All Aboard the Country Bus'⁶³. Together with the separately funded DalesBus 831/832 from Middlesbrough to Hawes these, until recently, provide a unique cross-Dales service over Buttertubs Pass. The service has twice featured on a Northern large format station poster advertising travel by rail and bus into the Dales.
- 6.6.6 Whilst the service has proved to be popular, few bus services can pay their way out of fare income alone and the service is therefore entirely dependent on achieving funding sought on a year-to-year basis. In the absence of support the service would not run.
- 6.6.7 The Yorkshire Dales Explorer Saturday service from Rochdale and Manchester Victoria

⁶³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p044g8yx>

terminates at Ribbleshead. The possibility of a Saturday bus service to Hawes is currently being explored in conjunction with the train.

- 6.6.8 Ribbleshead continues to be an important interchange point for the Swaledale service and should be maintained as a seasonal mini-transport hub. Whilst access to nearby Ingleton by public transport would most likely be best achieved by using the existing 581 bus services to and from Giggleswick and/or Settle, the concept of a triangle of services around Ingleborough has some attraction, combined with a suitable ticket, and might be explored in the future.

6.7 Dent

- 6.7.1 Dent Station holds the accolade of being the highest mainline station in England at 1150ft above sea level but, critically, it is located some five miles from Dent (population⁶⁴ 760), the village it purports to serve, and situated in a very isolated location, indeed, part of its charm. Nevertheless, this still comes as a shock to the occasional uninformed traveller having alighted the train! Dentdale, whilst sparsely populated, is an area of considerable scenic beauty and also connects with more sizeable town of Sedbergh, 10 miles distant from the station. The location of the station is undoubtedly a factor in the much lower estimated footfall⁶⁵ of 9,152.



Dent Station

- 6.7.2 For many years, the valley was served by a bus service on Saturdays and Wednesdays (as well as the schools services), these originally being provided by Ribble Motors. However, the buses never served the station, instead terminating at Lea Yeat, ½ mile distant, downhill; stopping trains were infrequent and in later years the station was closed to passengers anyway in 1970. Subsequently, the Saturday service was provided by Cumbria County Council as 564A, effectively serving the whole of the valley whilst the Wednesday 564B (later W2) was provided commercially by Woofs of Sedbergh (until around 2018). Neither service served the station.
- 6.7.3 However, as a result of representation from the Yorkshire Dales National Park the Saturday 564A service was extended up to Dent Station in the 1990s and has since made a dedicated connection with the mid-morning train arrival from Leeds. An additional late afternoon seasonal service between Sedbergh and the station was added in around 2008 with financial support from D&BCIC giving significant extra journey flexibility. The 564A supplemented the more frequent 564 service between Sedbergh and Kendal. However, notice of withdrawal of

⁶⁴ 2021 Census

⁶⁵ ORR estimate of station usage 2023-24

the council support for the service was issued in 2010 as part of the first tranche of cut backs. Despite many objections the long-established service 564A bus link from Dent Station was lost when Council support was terminated in 2011.

- 6.7.4 The service was then taken over by Western Dales Community Bus (WDB) with financial assistance from FoSCL and the Dales Integrated Transport Alliance amongst others. WDB continued the service on much the same pattern with one outward bus meeting the 1016 (later 1047) train arrival at Dent and 2 afternoon return trips to the station on Saturdays throughout the year, the latter return being seasonal.



S1 approaching Dent Station

- 6.7.5 The Saturday bus timetable was modified in November 2014 in response to the loss of the Monday to Saturday 564 Saturday service running between Brough, Sedbergh and Kendal and the need to accommodate additional journeys between Sedbergh and Kendal whilst still retaining the morning and late afternoon trips to Dent Station. The service was then labelled S1, the 'S' reflecting the Sedbergh operating base.

- 6.7.6 The S1 service continues to provide the only means of travelling into Dentdale and Sedbergh from the LSC although this was impacted badly by the Northern timetable changes in May 2018, the 38 minute later arrival of the main morning train conflicting with the main shopping service to Kendal.

- 6.7.7 The current S1 service connects with the 1047 train from Leeds to Carlisle running to Kendal and returning for the 1732 southbound departure. Thus, there is potential for local residents to access Carlisle on Saturdays throughout the year. However, until 2023 WDB operated a later seasonal return service between Sedbergh and Dent Station. This provided flexibility for visitors; the opportunity for local residents to avail themselves of a trip to Leeds as the bus met both northbound and southbound services; and, vitally, provided additional capacity required for the return afternoon journey. As the bus is limited to 16 seats there is a serious risk of demand exceeding capacity and thus it is vital that there is an additional journey to the station.



The highest bus rail interchange in the country

- 6.7.8 However, in 2024 a decision was made to discontinue the additional seasonal S1 return service to the station (1845 from Sedbergh). We understand that this was primarily due to volunteer resource. We are concerned that in 2024 there were a number of occasions where intending passengers were left at bus stops and so it is vital that more capacity is provided and also that local residents are afforded the opportunity to make a return trip to Leeds.
- 6.7.9 Dent Station is almost unique as regards the intermediate stations in that it is theoretically possible for disabled users to leave and return to the platform (using the barrow crossing) as well as getting straight on to an accessible low-floor bus which runs every Saturday.
- 6.7.10 Until 2017 WDB also ran the S2 Sunday service providing a link between Dent Station and Cross Keys, Cautley, a well-known local beauty spot with Cautley Spout not too far distant, as well as serving Farfield Mill and Heritage Centre. Sadly, it was not possible to maintain this service due to limited volunteer resource. We believe it would be beneficial to try to reinstate this once popular facility.
- 6.7.11 The S3 service from Dent village to Hawes via Sedbergh was withdrawn in 2022 as was the S4 service from Dent village to Brough via Sedbergh in 2023.
- 6.7.12 Whilst WDB provides a critical function in maintaining the S1 service its focus as a community transport operator is on local needs and it is further constrained by the volunteer resource. Thus, there are very real issues in meeting the potential demand.
- 6.7.13 We cannot talk about Dentdale without also mentioning the nearby market town of [Sedbergh](#) (population⁶⁶ 2,818), thus making it one of the largest communities in the Yorkshire Dales. Since withdrawal of regular train services in 1954 (followed by complete closure in 1965) Sedbergh generally looks towards Oxenholme Station for its rail connection.
- 6.7.14 The population increases considerably due to Sedbergh School and also tourism. However, there is a potential untapped market for passengers wishing to access the LSC (at Dent or Garsdale) to reach Leeds as well as visitors arriving by public transport. This has been difficult with the present bus services due to conflicting requirements but an ideal would be to take local residents to the train and pick up visitors usually travelling to and from the West Yorkshire conurbations. Current bus services in Sedbergh are thus:

Service	Route	Operator	Days	Frequency (each way)
563#	Penrith-Kirkby Stephen - Sedbergh -Kendal	Stagecoach	Mon-Friday	3 journeys Kendal 2 Penrith
*S1	Dent Station – Dent – Sedbergh - Kendal	Western Dales Bus	Sat	4 journeys Kendal 2 journeys Dent station

⁶⁶ 2021 Census

Service	Route	Operator	Days	Frequency (each way)
*S1W	Dent village– Sedbergh - Kendal	Western Dales Bus	Wed	3 journeys Kendal 2 journeys Dent village
*S5	Sedbergh - K Stephen - Kendal	Western Dales Bus	Friday	1 journey
*S6#	Sedbergh - K Stephen - Penrith	Western Dales Bus	Tuesday and Thursday	1 journey

*16 seat vehicle #due to change 31 March 2025

- 6.7.15 Sedbergh lost its regular Monday to Saturday 564 service from Brough to Kendal in 2014 followed by the Monday to Friday Woofs W1 in late 2023. This was briefly replaced by a Monday to Friday Stagecoach 563 service running from Penrith to Kendal via Kirkby Stephen as from April 2024, the Sedbergh to Kendal section being supported by WaF. The 563 provided two services to Penrith and 3 to Kendal, being an effective use of two schools buses. The down side was the limited service and stay times at either end. However, we now understand that this will be withdrawn at the end of March 2025 leaving only the existing Western Dales Bus services augmented with a council 16 seater mini bus. Clearly this is of concern with the full-sized bus regularly carrying loads in excess of the 16 passengers afforded by a mini bus. We contrast with similar-sized community of Settle which has considerably greater transport links, bus and rail. We believe that the issue is likely to be related to be a restricted budget and difficulties in obtaining a tender.
- 6.7.16 The leisure potential from Dent Station to Dentdale and Sedbergh can only be effectively realised with a connecting bus service. The Dales Way through Dentdale is a popular walk⁶⁷ and indeed this has often been included in the FoSCL guided walks programme in the past. In addition, there are attractive hills to each side of Dent not to forget the Howgills, accessible from Sedbergh. Indeed, the buses often run full in holiday periods with no potential for standing. The single day of operation and with only one return journey back to the station (as from 2024) is insufficient for the potential market.
- 6.7.17 It is therefore advocated that bus services in Dentdale should be increased to allow greater flexibility on Saturdays and provide local residents with opportunities make day visits to both Leeds and Carlisle. The existing Wednesday service between Kendal, Sedbergh and Dent village should be extended to the station in the summer months and a Sunday service reinstated. This would help to support the visitor economy in the area plus providing travel opportunities for local residents. The services should be supported by additional promotion which we feel has been sadly lacking for some time. Also, it is vital that a trunk route from Kirkby Stephen to Kendal via Sedbergh is maintained with a full-sized bus.

⁶⁷ <https://www.walkingintheyorkshiredales.co.uk/Dalesway.htm>

6.8 Garsdale

- 6.8.1 Garsdale Station is an important interchange point on the LSC having at one time been the junction for the Hawes branch and onward connection to Northallerton, now sadly a distant memory. The station, however, remains the main railhead for the nearby town of Hawes, six miles distant, and its environs having a resident population⁶⁸ of 1,039 although this increases considerably with visitors in the summer months. Hawes is an important transport hub within the Dales. Meanwhile Sedbergh, as we have already mentioned, is a sizeable Dales town, 10 miles distant to the west, and Garsdale is often the preferred railhead on the LSC for those approaching by car due to better parking when compared with the narrow roads in Dentdale. The estimated footfall at the station is circa 15,112⁶⁹.
- 6.8.2 The principal service from Garsdale Station to Hawes/Gayle is the 113 Garsdale Shuttle provided by the Little White Bus (LWB), a community operator under contract from NYC (Mon-Sat). On seasonal Sundays, the service operates under the management of D&BCIC as the DalesBus 857 this being part of a strategic route into Wensleydale and on to Northallerton for the East Coast Main Line, a connection being made with the 856 DalesBus service in Hawes.
- 6.8.3 The weekday and Saturday service pattern between Garsdale Station and Hawes has improved significantly recently with 6 journeys each way now meeting the principal morning trains and afternoon trains in each direction. However, the useful early evening connection has been discontinued. In addition, there is a valuable on-demand service available between scheduled services which can be booked in advance with Upper Dales Community Partnership office in Hawes.
- 6.8.4 Whilst LWB is reliant upon continued support by NYC and subject to a periodic re-tender process there is no reason to think that the connection would be discontinued. This is a valuable service and critical to the visitor economy of the area, providing travel possibilities for local residents and visitors alike on a 6 day basis (7 day in summer). The bus service users account for a significant proportion of the usage of Garsdale Station, however, there is undoubtedly spare capacity within the existing services which could be better utilised with improved destination marketing and passenger awareness which we feel has been lacking.



857 DalesBus at Castle Bolton

⁶⁸ 2021 Census

⁶⁹ ORR estimates of station usage 2023-34

6.8.5 The visitor potential from Garsdale Station is considerable. There are several attractions in Hawes including the Dales Countryside Museum, Wensleydale Creamery, Gayle Mill and the nearby Hardraw Falls. Various local walks from the bus are available on the website Walking in the Yorkshire Dales⁷⁰. Slightly further afield with travel possible by connecting buses are the major attractions of Aysgarth Falls, Bolton Castle and the Wensleydale Railway for which connection can be made at Leyburn. Sadly, the Moorcock Inn closed as a public house in late 2023 thus removing the only amenity proximate to the station.

6.8.6 **Hawes** is a significant transport hub for the area, particularly in the summer months with several routes converging including those provided by LWB (Mon-Sat) supplemented by DalesBus services on Sundays and Bank Holidays, many of the latter being seasonal summarised as follows (as at summer 2024).

Route	Route	Operator	Days	Frequency (each way)
*113	Garsdale Station - Hardraw-Hawes	Little White Bus	Mon-Sat	6 journeys
*156	Hawes- Askrigg - Aysgarth-Leyburn	Little White Bus	Mon-Sat	6 journeys
830 DalesBus	Ribblehead – Hawes- Richmond	Arriva North East	Sunday (summer only)	Single journey
831/832 DalesBus	Middlesbrough - Richmond - Hawes Ingleton - Kirkby Lonsdale	Arriva North East	Sunday and BHM (summer only)	Single journey
856 DalesBus	Hawes- Northallerton	Dales and District	Sunday and BHM	3 journeys
*857 DalesBus	Garsdale Station- Hawes-Castle Bolton	Little White Bus	Sunday (summer only)	6 journeys to Hawes, with two continuing to Castle Bolton
858 DalesBus	Darlington- Hawes- Ribbleshead	Arriva North East	Sunday (summer only)	Single journey
875/876 DalesBus	York–Leeds– Grassington- Hawes	Reliance/First Leeds	Sunday and BHM (summer only)	2 journeys

*16 seat vehicle

⁷⁰ <http://www.walkingintheyorkshiredales.co.uk/Wensleydale.htm>

- 6.8.7 Unfortunately, the Western Dales Bus S3 service to Sedbergh ceased to run in 2022 and consequently there is no other regular service to the west of Garsdale Station apart from the LWB schools service.
- 6.8.8 A significant recent development, the Yorkshire Dales National Park are proposing a multi user path⁷¹ along the former Hawes-Garsdale branch which, once constructed, would be a major boost to the station. Whilst initially considered by Arup, the consultants, to encourage sustainable transport to the area (cycling), we point out that most cyclists would inevitably drive to the area and cycles are currently limited to 2 per train. Thus, the sustainability credentials for this purpose might be limited. We, therefore, advocate that a more significant (and environmentally sustainable) use would be walking from the train to Hawes which is 6 miles distant. However, this would only work in conjunction with a complementary bus service i.e. walk one way and bus back.
- 6.8.9 Although the service frequency to Hawes has improved significantly with the current LWB 113 timetable, Garsdale Station is probably some way off achieving its true potential as a local transport hub. It would probably require increased promotion; reduced fares (in the absence of the fare cap), probably with combined bus/rail ticketing to encourage a modal shift; and a 7-day service.
- 6.8.10 It is unfortunate that the NYC contract does not include Sundays. But there is an excellent opportunity to attract visitors and also local residents who may wish to access the railway. Meanwhile with the possibility of the Garsdale-Hawes multi user path coming into being there is likely to be increased demand. Furthermore, it is possible that a potential link to Sedbergh (possibly as part of a longer route to Kendal) could benefit the local community there, providing a convenient link to Leeds.



830 Northern DalesBus in Hawes enroute to Ribbleshead

6.9 Kirkby Stephen

- 6.9.1 The market town of Kirkby Stephen has a population⁷² of 1,895 and lies 1.65 miles downhill from the railway station. The smaller community of Brough with a population⁷³ of 822 lies a further 5 miles distant. Meanwhile, the wider Upper Eden community is estimated to have a population of circa 5,000. In the recent past this has been one of the more economically disadvantaged communities when compared with the more affluent neighbours in the Lake District part of Cumbria but now beginning to see increased prosperity. The area has seen

⁷¹ <https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2022/03/Item-8-Hawes-to-Garsdale-Multi-User-Route.pdf>

⁷² 2021 Census

⁷³ 2021 Census

increased housing development in recent years and, with this, an expanding population.

6.9.2 However, the station has suffered through lack of ease of access from the town which necessitates a 1.65 mile walk or a taxi journey. This may go some way to explaining why the estimated footfall of circa 33,666⁷⁴, is almost half of its near neighbour, Appleby. It is nevertheless an important railhead for the area. The more convenient station of Kirkby Stephen East on the Stainmore line (Darlington to Tebay and Penrith) was closed to passengers in 1962.

6.9.3 The recent history of bus services is complex but worthy of explanation. Until November 2014 the town had a regular 564 bus service to Kendal passing the station although not ideally timed to integrate with the rail services. However, this fell victim to county council cut-backs and the decision not to subsidise bus services. Meanwhile, whilst it did not connect with the station, the 563 service to Appleby and Penrith continued without subsidy as a commercial operation until December 2016. Despite a valiant campaign assisted by members of FoSCL to avoid withdrawal, this also succumbed. The operator simply could not make it pay when faced with the cost of vehicle renewal.



563 in Kirkby Stephen Market Place during final few weeks of operation (Nov 2016)

6.9.4 We should also mention the PlusBus experiment. In 1999, University College London in collaboration with Cumbria Council instigated a rural transport project based on Kirkby Stephen known as 'PlusBus', providing a Section 22 service connecting communities in the area and the station. However, this was ultimately wound up by the local authority in around 2010 having failed to engage with rail users and effectively integrate with the rail timetable and with costs mounting. The service had effectively moved from a Section 22 type community service to a gross cost contract with a bus operator albeit with a volunteer management team. It was the county council recommendation that the alternatives offered by the scheduled services available at that time were adequate⁷⁵. Of course, the service provision subsequently deteriorated with the withdrawal of both the 563 and 564 routes shortly thereafter.

6.9.5 Whilst there is an absence of detailed information, due to the passage of time, the indications are that the PlusBus service did not run at times convenient to rail users or visitors and was poorly marketed and so the take up was consequently small. It is likely that given the passage

⁷⁴ ORR estimates of station usage 2023-24

⁷⁵ County Council Local Committee For Eden Passenger Transport – Plus Bus Service Replacement July 2010

of some 15 years the situation would now be entirely different, and this would have been a vital service were it still to exist, and with an integrated timetable.

6.9.6 Thus, Kirkby Stephen was left with few scheduled services as from 2016. Three of these were operated by Cumbria Classic Coaches (CCC) as out-and-back trips with heritage vehicles; on Mondays to Kendal, Tuesdays to Hawes (seasonal) and Wednesdays to Barnard Castle. The Tuesday seasonal service to Hawes was then replaced with an all-year Tuesday service to Penrith before even that was withdrawn. This was then augmented by Western Dales Bus (WDB) Friday S4 link between Brough, Kirkby Stephen and Sedbergh (withdrawn in 2023), a Thursday (later Friday) S5 service from Kirkby Stephen to Kendal and a twice weekly service from Kirkby Stephen to Penrith on Tuesday and Thursdays. The 502 Kendal College bus ran weekdays in term time only with an early and late back service, however, this was withdrawn from use by the general public in July 2020 to be replaced by a student-only service.

6.9.7 For several years, there was no bus service from the town on Saturdays. However, in April 2023 Kirkby Stephen Town Council took the bold decision to engage with Stagecoach to provide a Saturday 563 service to Penrith on a gross contract basis with support from a number of parish councils and indeed the Friends of the Settle Carlisle Line. This provided 4 departures from Kirkby Stephen to Penrith, crucially, all starting from Kirkby Stephen Station. Whilst only creating one dedicated rail connection on the first service of the day, it did nevertheless give some connectivity with the station but, importantly, the bus ran the full length of the town.

6.9.8 The passenger ridership exceeded expectations from the start with many of the villages in the Eden Valley and Appleby taking advantage of the new service. Local businesses reported an increase in trade in Kirkby Stephen as the bus was also bringing visitors to the town from the Penrith direction demonstrating the economic benefits of a bus service. Prior to this, several out-and-back services had effectively taken local residents out of the town without a reciprocal flow. At the time the town council support was wound up in November 2024, the service was averaging 92 passengers per day. The scheme was judged to be a success and the service transferred to commercial operation.



563 in Kirkby Stephen Market Place (2024)

6.9.9 In April 2024 there was a further significant development. The nearby town of Sedbergh had lost its weekday service to Kendal and after a hiatus of a few months Westmorland and Furness Council agreed to step in and subsidise a service between Sedbergh and Kendal, we assume at lowest possible cost. This was achieved by extending the existing Stagecoach commercial service between Penrith and Appleby using two school buses running from each end of the route, an imaginative solution these also serving Kirkby Stephen and Sedbergh in

between school commitments. This arrangement was due to end in October 2024 with new tenders issued, however, at the time of writing has been extended to the end of March 2025.

6.9.10 It appears that, as from 31 March 2025, Kirkby Stephen will get an improved 563 service of 4 journeys to Penrith including early morning and with an early evening return to facilitate work and further education. Crucially, journeys will start from Kirkby Stephen Station and run the full length of the town. It is widely thought that the success of the Saturday service was a significant factor leading to the decision to enhance the service. Meanwhile, the services south to Sedbergh will be provided by Western Dales Bus or a Westmorland and Furness community vehicle. Obviously, this is a retrograde step as regards services to the south and it is hoped that this will be reconsidered, and a full-sized bus utilised with a 6 day service.

6.9.11 However, as matters stand, the current overall picture of services from the town is much improved on the position five years ago and summarised as follows:

Service	Route	Operator	Days	Frequency (each way)
*S5	Sedbergh - Kirkby Stephen - Kendal	Western Dales Bus	Friday	3 journeys (KS-Ken)
*S6#	Sedbergh - Kirkby Stephen - Brough - Appleby – Penrith#	Western Dales Bus	Tuesday and Thursday	1 journey connection from station possible. 3 journeys from KS town-Penrith
563 (Sat)	Kirkby Stephen Station-KS town-Brough-Appleby-Penrith	Stagecoach	Saturday	4 journeys, only 1 dedicated connection to train
563 (Mon-Fri)#	Kendal - Sedbergh-Kirkby Stephen town Appleby - Brough-Penrith#	Stagecoach	Mon-Fri	2 journeys
571	Kirkby Stephen-Kendal	Cumbria Classic Coaches	Monday	1 journey
572	Kirkby Stephen-Barnard Castle	Cumbria Classic Coaches	Wednesday	1 journey

*16 seat vehicle

subject to change at the end of March 2025

6.9.12 Whilst all services pass the station at some point in their journey, only the Saturday 563 actually provides a connection and that for one service only. Intending rail passengers generally arrive by car, walk or book one of the few available taxis in the area. However, taxis are often engaged in lucrative home to school transport work at critical times.

6.9.13 The area has considerable tourism potential yet to be realised, the town being an attractive destination with a historic market place, church, Stainmore Railway centre⁷⁶, the viaduct walk⁷⁷, River Eden and nearby Brough Castle. Also, the Eden Valley Railway⁷⁸ is located at Warcop, a short distance away. The town has a very proactive Walkers Are Welcome⁷⁹ group.

6.9.14 In August 2016, the area immediately to the west of Kirkby Stephen town became part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park extension now branded as the Westmorland Dales, the area extending towards the M6 motorway and including Great Asby limestone plateau with the villages of Orton, Great Asby and Crosby Ravensworth. In addition, the Smardale Nature Reserve⁸⁰ operated by Cumbria Wildlife Trust is located close by with a car park often full to capacity. The Northern Howgills are within reach from the villages of Newbiggin and Ravenstonedale. Cautley Spout is located midway between Ravenstonedale and Sedburgh. There is now an imperative to be able to reach the area for which there are only limited public transport options serving the outlying areas. There are no services connecting into the Westmorland Dales.

6.9.15 Whilst a connection between the station and town has been contemplated for some time and we believe that funding for a pilot service was initially available in 2020 this has not come to fruition. However, we believe that a dedicated station connection perhaps running as far as Brough would be of considerable economic benefit to the area. This could be best addressed by a community type operation with the possibility of extension to some of the adjacent communities on a dial and ride basis. The opportunity of a taxi bus might be explored however it is accepted that there might be limited appetite from taxi operators with more lucrative education and airport runs available to them. A radical thought would be a free bus to the town or even include the town as a 'virtual' station with through rail/bus tickets available.



563 in Warcop (2023)

6.9.16 We believe that Kirkby Stephen station should be developed as a key transport hub for the area with considerable benefit to the LSC. Increased public usage of the station buildings such as a café, information centre, exhibition, cycle hire or such like would greatly assist but for the fact that part of the facility has been turned into holiday accommodation. A café and bookshop was located within the station building for a short while but closed some years ago with commercial viability being cited as a reason. The station should serve as a gateway to Kirkby Stephen and the Westmorland Dales.

⁷⁶ <https://www.kirkbystepheneast.co.uk/>

⁷⁷ <https://edenviaducts.org.uk/>

⁷⁸ <https://www.evr-cumbria.org.uk/>

⁷⁹ <https://walkersarewelcome.org.uk/kirkby-stephen/>

⁸⁰ www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/smardale

6.9.17 With the increased housebuilding in the Eden Valley area and the necessity for more sustainable transport the opportunities for Section 106 or community infrastructure levy (CIL) agreements with developers might be explored which could be then directed into public transport.

6.10 Appleby

6.10.1 Appleby is one of the larger communities situated along the route and at one time the county town of Westmorland. The market town is located close to the busy A66 trunk route with a population of 3,228⁸¹. The town has seen increased housebuilding and population in recent years.

6.10.2 The station is situated relatively close to the town centre albeit up a steep hill. The estimated annual footfall at the station is circa 56,512⁸², a large part of which will be local residents as the railway is their primary means of public transport. It also allows access to the important centre of Carlisle for work, education, and hospital. Interestingly, the March 2024 footfall figures indicated a 6.3% reduction on the footfall in the pre Covid period up to March 2020, possibly accounted for by the reduction in commuting. There are several reasons for this; increase in home working, poor reliability of the train services, industrial action, extended closures due to the Pettril Bridge and Eden Brows incidents and introduction of a pre-0815 exclusion on the use of the Dales Railcard.

6.10.3 Until December 2016 the town was served by the commercial 563 bus providing a regular Monday to Saturday service to Penrith and Kirkby Stephen but, as previously related, this was withdrawn as the operator could not make it commercially viable. However, ensuing discussions with Stagecoach (being the only interested operator) resulted in the part resurrection of the route in 2017 with three journeys from the town to Penrith running Monday to Friday only, in between their school transport commitments on a commercial basis (without subsidy).

6.10.4 There was no weekend provision. Critically, there was no commercial interest at that time in extending the route back to Kirkby Stephen or providing a weekend service. There was, however, an early morning Stagecoach 506 service provided by Kendal College with an early evening return, this being during college term-time only. However, this was withdrawn from general public use in 2020 and now operates on a student-only basis with another operator.



563 in Appleby (2023)

⁸¹ 2021 Census

⁸² ORR estimates of station usage 2023-24

- 6.10.5 However, as from April 2023, Appleby has benefited from the locally promoted Saturday 563, supported by Kirkby Stephen and Appleby town councils along with others including the Friends of the Settle Carlisle Line. This provides 4 journeys each way to Kirkby Stephen and Penrith and, as we have mentioned earlier, has exceeded expectations opening up journey possibilities for local residents and visitors.
- 6.10.6 The 563 weekday service was further augmented in April 2024 with the through service to Kendal via Kirkby Stephen and Sedbergh albeit we understand that this will change again from end of March 2025, the service terminating at Kirkby Stephen Station.
- 6.10.7 Current services to the town can be summarised as:

Service	Route	Operator	Days	Frequency (each way)
*561	Appleby-Orton-Tebay-Kendal	Westmorland and Furness Council	Wednesday	1 journey
563 (Sat)	Kirkby Stephen-Brough-Appleby-Penrith	Stagecoach	Saturday	4 journeys
563 (Mon-Fri)#	Kendal –Sedbergh - Kirkby Stephen-Appleby – Brough – Penrith#	Stagecoach	Mon-Fri	2 journeys (Kendal) 3 journeys (Penrith)
*S6#	Sedbergh-K Stephen - Appleby-Penrith#	Western Dales Bus	Tues and Thurs	3 journeys Pen 3 journeys K Stephen

* 16 seat vehicle # to change at the end of March 2025

- 6.10.8 Currently the 563 service does not serve Appleby Station despite the fact that there is a reasonable fit with the rail timetable were it to do so. This misses a significant potential for onward travel as this would be a useful connection to Penrith from where interchange could easily be made with the X5 and 508 services to Keswick and Ullswater. It is understood that there may be some reluctance on the part of the operator to detour to the station however there would be considerable merit in a jointly marketed and connecting service as a trunk route to Penrith (as a virtual rail connection). Also, it would better connect the station end of the town which is on a steep hill.
- 6.10.9 Whilst the S6 currently serves Appleby on Tuesdays and Thursdays this is only to set down on the northbound journeys and pick up southbound.
- 6.10.10 The 561 service from Appleby to Kendal via Orton and Tebay was reinstated from January 2025 with a single journey each direction operated by WaF themselves. However, it is noted that this is now using a council 16 seater vehicle and the current £3 fare cap does not apply.

- 6.10.11 We now understand that, as from April 2025, the weekday 563 will be increased to provide early morning and early evening journeys in each direction suitable for work; providing a total of 6 journeys to Penrith and 4 through to Kirkby Stephen rail station. This is an improvement and will provide the nearby villages with opportunities to travel by rail in either direction.
- 6.10.12 Connections to the outlying villages such as Dufton were once provided by a single day operation service until around 2016, but these never provided any potential for connectivity with the railway. These areas tend to rely on a residents-only rural wheels scheme which provides their only public transport. To avail themselves of the service, residents must sign up and create an account.
- 6.10.13 The area to the north east of Appleby is popular with walkers wishing to access the Northern Pennines including High Cup Nick, Great Dun Fell and Cross Fell. Indeed, there are a number of FoSCL guided walks in this area. However, the potential to visit and walk in this area is limited by the lack of any onward transport to locations such as Dufton and Kirkland which are normally accessed by a long walk or a taxi. Whilst there was a local bus service operating one day a week until some years ago, connection with the train was not possible.
- 6.10.14 We believe that Appleby Station could be developed as a local transport hub with improved integration of the existing 563 and additional local services providing visitor access to the North Pennines as well as local access to the town from the surrounding villages. Arrangements for turning buses would need to be considered although it is noted that the occasional rail replacement buses manage this without major problems. However, the possibility of a rail-bus connection to Penrith must be a priority ideally with an integrated ticket. Such a ticket is already available from the rail network to Keswick (KWK) via Penrith.
- 6.10.15 Appleby is also the junction the Eden Valley Railway still in situ as far as Flitholme, just south of Warcop and, in theory, remains part of the national rail network. Whilst an isolated 2.5 mile section at Warcop has been maintained in use as a heritage railway by the Eden Valley Railway Trust (EVRT)⁸³ the 2 mile section into the former Appleby East Station, some 100m east of the LSC Appleby (West) Station, is currently the subject of a dispute with Railway Paths Limited, a charity, who have control over the asset. However, it would be a significant benefit to the Appleby community and the LSC if the heritage operation could be brought into the town. This remains the stated object of EVRT.

6.11 Langwathby

- 6.11.1 The station is located in reasonable proximity to the village (population⁸⁴ 797) and can be accessed by walking. The annual estimated footfall is circa 19,066⁸⁵ which would suggest that it is also used as a railhead for the wider area.

⁸³ <https://www.evr-cumbria.org.uk/>

⁸⁴ 2021 census

⁸⁵ ORR estimated station usage 2023-24

- 6.11.2 The 888 seasonal service (July –Sept) is provided by Wright Brothers of Alston⁸⁶ running Newcastle to Keswick on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays. This connects well with the current 1132 weekday train arrival at Langwathby Station departing 1145 and allowing travel to Penrith and Keswick although the return at 1715 would involve a wait for the 1852 southbound train.
- 6.11.3 Otherwise Langwathby village is served by Fellrunner Village Bus⁸⁷ with services 105, 111, 132, 134, 135, 137, 138, 139, 562 to Penrith on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays by a variety of routes and service 130 to Carlisle on Wednesday. However, these services do not connect directly with the LSC although some ad-hoc connection is theoretically possible. Services are provided under Section 22 with volunteer driven 16 seater vehicles, generally with low floor access.
- 6.11.4 Often regarded as a flagship of successful community operators, it is important to recognise that the primary focus of the Fellrunner service is the provision of transport from the outlying small villages into the major towns. Indeed, these services represent the only public transport provision for most of these villages. The reality is that there would be little or limited appetite for transferring to train and incurring a further fare to reach Carlisle. However, there might be some attraction in the option to travel by train in the Leeds direction were that possible. Also, there might be potential for the transfer of passengers from the train to the bus if connection to the north Pennines could be afforded. It is suggested that opportunities might be explored with the operator to see if connections are viable to allow travel via the LSC.
- 6.11.5 The proximity of Langwathby to Penrith with a distance of only 6 miles would suggest that there may be some merit in a bus link to afford connection both for local residents and visitors. This could enable the LSC to provide an easy link to the northern Lakes via the Stagecoach 508 and X5 services plus the opportunity for Penrith residents to gain easy access to Leeds. This may present an opportunity for a community operator. However, it is noted that there have been issues with the parking area in the station which is in private ownership which may present difficulties for turning a bus or waiting. Whilst a possible hurdle to overcome, the lack of free parking at the station may also make bus travel attractive. We suggest a single day pilot service to Penrith, perhaps on a Saturday to be socially inclusive.
- 6.11.6 The concept of a connection to the North Lakes from Langwathby is not a new idea. Indeed, Langwathby Station was used from 1976 onwards as part of the early DalesRail experiment and a through ‘Lakes Link’ ticket offered. Buses were chartered from the National Bus Company and for several weekends ran onwards to Borrowdale and Patterdale, the cost of the trial service being underwritten by the Lake District Special Planning Board. Arrangements also were made to carry passengers with Ullswater Steamers.

⁸⁶ <https://wrightscoaches.co.uk/routes/>

⁸⁷ <https://www.fellrunnerbus.co.uk/timetable.html>

6.11.7 We note that the WaF 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plan⁸⁸ initially included a proposal to explore extending service 106 (Kendal-Penrith) to Langwathby and also increasing the 888 Alston to Penrith to run twice daily, we assume all year. However, both of these proposals would appear to be missing in later iterations. However, we believe that there is a compelling case for some connectivity to both Penrith and Alston in the north Pennines.

6.12 Lazonby and Kirkoswald

6.12.1 Lazonby and Kirkoswald Station is, in fact, located in the village of Lazonby, with Kirkoswald situated approximately ½ mile distant on the other side of the River Eden. The villages have current populations⁸⁹ of 1,140 and 912 respectively, with the station having an estimated annual footfall⁹⁰ of a respectable 17,956.

6.12.2 Both Lazonby and Kirkoswald are served by Fellrunner Village Bus⁹¹ services 130 and 134 with destinations including Penrith and Carlisle, these running on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Whilst these do not provide a direct connection with the LSC rail services, some connectivity would be theoretically possible if not entirely convenient. However, opportunities should perhaps be explored with the community operator to see if connections from and to the LSC are viable to allow travel, potentially in the Leeds direction.

6.13 Armathwaite

6.13.1 The smaller village of Armathwaite is part of the wider parish of Hesket also including the villages of High Hesket, Low Hesket, Calthwaite, Plumpton, Southwaite, Ivegill and Wreay with a combined population of 2,798⁹². Armathwaite has a respectable station footfall of 11,432⁹³, no doubt many passengers using the service as their means of reaching Carlisle.

6.13.2 There are currently no dedicated bus connections to the station however, the daily 104 bus between Center Parcs and Carlisle runs some 2 miles distant and it is believed that this is used by some local residents as an alternative to the train.

6.13.3 The village is served by Fellrunner Village Bus⁹⁴ services 130 and 134 on Wednesdays and Fridays with destinations including Penrith and Carlisle. Whilst these do not provide a direct connection with the LSC rail services, some connectivity would be theoretically possible if not entirely convenient. However, opportunities should perhaps be explored with the community operator to see if connections from and to the LSC are viable to allow travel, potentially in the Leeds direction.

⁸⁸ <https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/news/2024/ps17-million-plan-set-boost-30-bus-routes>

⁸⁹ 2021 census

⁹⁰ ORR estimates of station usage 2023-24

⁹¹ <https://www.fellrunnerbus.co.uk/timetable.html>

⁹² 2021 census

⁹³ ORR estimates of station usage 2023-24

⁹⁴ <https://www.fellrunnerbus.co.uk/timetable.html>

7 A Vision for the Future

7.1 An Integrated Network

- 7.1.1 Despite passing through one of the most scenic areas of Britain the LSC fails to fulfil its potential because of the lack of adequate integrated travel to and from the line.
- 7.1.2 An integrated transport network centred on the LSC corridor would:
 - benefit local communities providing access to the outside world for leisure, education, health and employment
 - provide sustainable access to the National Park and Eden Valley to support the visitor economy
 - encourage a modal shift towards public transport in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and congestion
- 7.1.3 Adequate long-term funding from central government will be crucial whether Franchising or a tightly framed Enhanced Partnership models are ultimately adopted.

7.2 Securing the Existing Network

- 7.2.1 A major concern is that funding for many services, in particular services supported by Bus Service Improvement Plan funding from the Department for Transport, including the weekend DalesBus network, is only on a short-term ad-hoc basis. The immediate priority should be to secure longer-term funding arrangements and stability for the existing network.
- 7.2.2 Whilst rural services have seen some benefit from the recent BSIP funding, concern must be that this is currently only allocated up to March 2026 with no certainty of funding going forward. Security of funding by central government and the LTAs is therefore vital to any long term planning and continuation of services.

7.3 Stakeholder Group

- 7.3.1 To fulfil this vision of integrated services a coordinated approach by the various stakeholders is needed. Due to the geography of the LSC passing through two main unitary authorities as well as the National Park, we suggest that a stakeholder group should be established by the Community Rail Partnership as the accredited body for the line.
- 7.3.2 We suggest that this should include Westmorland and Furness and North Yorkshire councils, York & North Yorkshire Combined Authority, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Northern Trains (as the current rail franchise operator), Friends of the Settle Carlisle Line and Dales and Bowland CIC, amongst others. Friends of the Settle Carlisle line, the principal support group for the line of some 2,700 members and a track record of supporting local bus services, can play a significant role.

7.4 The Climate Emergency

- 7.4.1 The Glover Report followed by the subsequent Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023) recognised that our countryside was under threat of decline from the consequences of climate change. Indeed, it is now widely acknowledged that we are in the midst of a climate emergency with a need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, also to reduce pollution and congestion. There is an urgent need for a modal shift away from the private car.
- 7.4.2 The LSC together with efficient integrated transport can provide part of the solution. Indeed, a fully laden 4 coach train could potentially alleviate approximately 93 car journeys⁹⁵. In addition, we understand that the new generation of multi-mode trains will come on stream post 2030 with facility to ultimately eliminate diesel traction on the line.

7.5 Community Involvement

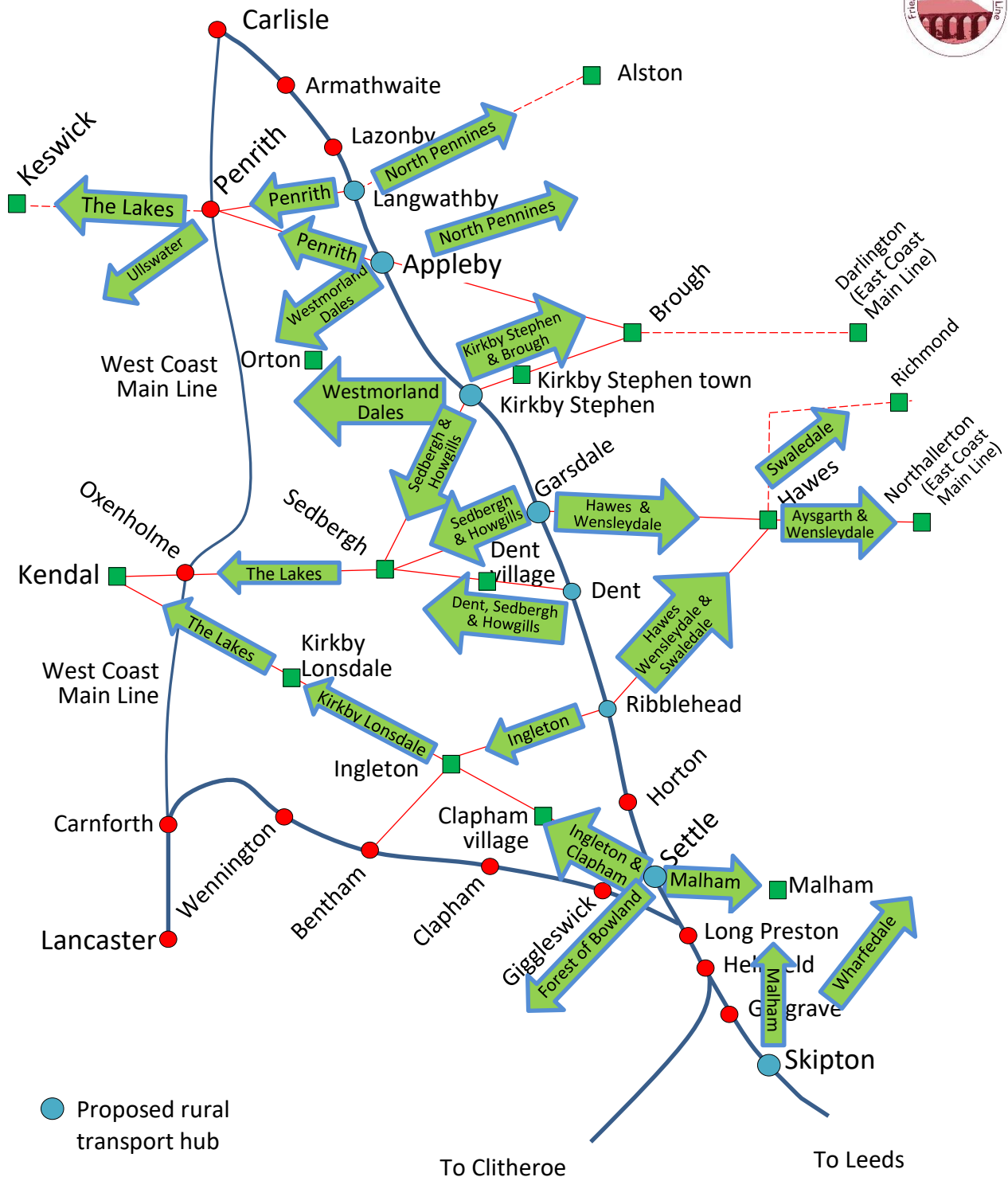
- 7.5.1 Urgent consideration should be given as to how the LSC can be better utilised to benefit the communities within proximity of the line as identified in Map 1 (p6) with connecting public transport. Indeed, this was contemplated in the DfT invitation to tender document for the ARN franchise in 2016. With the exception of Garsdale Station, there is an absence of provision for local residents to connect with the line by regular and integrated public transport. Future provision should be a matter of discussion with local stakeholders. All services should be socially inclusive and open to all users - residents and visitors alike. We urge that the LSC is included as part of any rural transport strategy for the region – it is already there and paid for.

7.6 Rural Transport Hubs

- 7.6.1 The concept of rural transport ‘hubs’ at Skipton, Settle, Ribbleshead, Dent, Garsdale, Kirkby Stephen, Appleby and Langwathby Stations would be an obvious move forward, including improved information and signage but above all, integrated services and ticketing. Potential hubs are illustrated on Map 3 (page 61)
- 7.6.2 **Skipton:** Skipton is a natural transport hub. Attention needs to be given as to how the rail station connects with the bus station, but we suggest that that majority of bus services should pass through the railway station and particularly those which provide access the National Park such as service 72 from Skipton to Grassington.
- 7.6.3 Key recommendations:
- Improved provision to better facilitate public service vehicles calling at the station.
 - Improved walking access between the bus and rail station.
 - Bus services should be encouraged to run via station where feasible.
 - Improved integration of service 72 to Grassington on Sundays to connect with rail.

⁹⁵ 280 passengers per train and average 3 per car

Map 3: Leeds-Settle-Carlisle Line Potential Tourism Map



Drawn John Carey

- 7.6.4 **Settle:** The existing bus routes should be supported and, if possible, operators encouraged to better integrate and improve timetables particular to Ingleton, Kirkby Lonsdale and Slaidburn/Clitheroe (including the Forest of Bowland). The seasonal services to Malham (75 and 881) should be maintained and developed to include mid-week services also.
- 7.6.5 Key recommendations:
- 580/581 service to better integrate with rail timetable and run via station.
 - Introduction of later evening bus services on 581 route.
 - Reinstatement of a seasonal Sunday and BHM 881 service to Malham plus midweek.
 - Introduction of Sunday 581 service to Kirkby Lonsdale.
- 7.6.6 **Ribblehead** remains as a seasonal hub for the Northern DalesBus and, of course, accommodates the Ribblehead Visitor Centre, a popular visitor attraction in itself. There may be limited potential for a connection to Ingleton. The recent advent of the Yorkshire Dales Explorer creates an opportunity for a Saturday bus connection to Hawes in addition to the seasonal Sunday Northern DalesBus.
- 7.6.7 Key recommendations:
- To secure and maintain the seasonal 830 Northern DalesBus.
 - Introduction of Saturday service to Hawes to connect with the Yorkshire Dales Explorer service from Manchester.
 - Sunday rail timetable to be optimised for bus connections.
 - Consider bus route to serve Ingleton and form triangular route around Ingleborough.
- 7.6.8 **Dent** will continue to be the connection point for the Western Dales Bus serving Dentdale and Sedbergh (the Howgills). However, we feel that the present service is suboptimal and inadequately marketed away from the line. We recommend that consideration is given to increasing the basic service provision that currently exists on Saturdays and to include seasonal mid-week and Sunday services to support the visitor economy and allow local connectivity from Dentdale and Sedbergh to reach Leeds and Carlisle for a day out.
- 7.6.9 Key recommendations:
- Reinstatement of early evening journeys on Saturdays to allow create additional reserve capacity and facilitate local resident journeys to Leeds (seasonal).
 - Consider extending Wednesday service from Dent Station during summer months.
 - Reinstatement of the S2 service on Sundays (seasonal).
 - Increased promotion of services from the station.
- 7.6.10 **Garsdale:** The provision of additional services to the west of the station (Sedbergh area) would allow better access for local residents and visitors to reach the trains, predominantly to Leeds and beyond. We recommend that Hawes is included as a virtual station on the rail network.

7.6.11 Key recommendations:

- To secure and maintain the Sunday Garsdale Shuttle service to Hawes on an all-year basis with a seasonal extension to Castle Bolton and beyond.
- Reinstatement of additional daily early evening service to better facilitate journeys to and from train for residents and visitors.
- Consider a service to Sedbergh, possibly as a longer distance through route to Kendal.
- Inclusion of Hawes on the rail network with through ticketing.
- Increased promotion of services, particularly to tie in with proposed multi user trail on the former railway trackbed.

7.6.12 **Kirkby Stephen:** Whilst bus services serving Kirkby Stephen have improved significantly, a station link serving Kirkby Stephen and Brough remains a high priority. Ideally this should be a frequent community type service or taxi bus. possibly including a dial a ride service serving outlying communities within the Upper Eden area. Given the commercial benefit to the railway, consideration might be given to a rail supported 'free' bus.

7.6.13 The absence of effective public transport allowing visitor access to the **Westmorland Dales** part of the extended Yorkshire Dales National Park would appear to be a significant shortcoming despite the proximity to the LSC. A connection from the line via Kirkby Stephen Station would seem an obvious answer probably initially as a single day service bus also linking Kirkby Stephen Town, Ravenstonedale, Smardale Nature Reserve and village of Orton. Consultation should take place involving YDNPA, Friends of the Dales and Cumbria Wildlife Trust.

7.6.14 Allied to this, it is strongly suggested that the development of Kirkby Stephen as a rural transport hub might also incorporate better use of the existing vacant space within the station as a café/visitor centre.

7.6.15 Key recommendations:

- Introduction of a station to town shuttle service.
- Include Kirkby Stephen town as a virtual station with through ticketing.
- Earlier and later services from Kirkby Stephen and Penrith to run to the station.
- An improved service to Sedbergh and Kendal.
- Better use of the station facility to act as a gateway to Kirkby Stephen and the Westmorland Dales.

7.6.16 **Appleby:** An immediate and low-cost proposition would be an integrated service between the LSC and the 563 bus to Penrith at Appleby station thus creating a virtual rail link. In addition, the creation of a link from Appleby or Langwathby stations would allow visitor access to the north Pennines and the nearby villages probably utilising a mini-bus. Ideally, this might be accomplished in conjunction with a community operation, so a single day per week operation, probably on a Saturday should be trialled.

7.6.17 Key recommendations:

- Services to connect with the station and create a connecting route to Penrith and the North Lakes together with a through ticket.
- Earlier and later services to Penrith; all services to run via the station.
- Consider a connection to the Dufton area to allow visitor access to the North Pennines and local access to Appleby.

7.6.18 **Langwathby:** The proximity of Langwathby to Penrith, some 6 miles distant, cannot be ignored and the possibility of a shuttle connection to Penrith providing connectivity from the line to the north Lakes and from Penrith to Langwathby for onward travel to Leeds would be an obvious way forward. Indeed, a connection to Ullswater and also Borrowdale was exactly what happened with the 'Lakes Link' in the late 1970's as part of the Dales Rail services.



Ullswater – a possible destination? Photo courtesy of Ullswater Steamers

7.6.19 Key recommendations:

- A pilot service from Langwathby to Penrith to connect with the Stagecoach 508 (Ullswater) and X5 (Keswick) services together with a reciprocal connection from Penrith to the railway should be provided, possibly utilising a community bus.
- A connection to Alston and the north Pennines should be explored.

7.7 Accessibility

7.7.1 Whilst the operators of full-sized bus services (more than 22 seats) are legally required to comply with the PSVAR regulations for disabled access, railways lag some way behind. Indeed, there are particular issues on the LSC with access to the intermediate stations and platforms sometimes difficult. Thus, interchange from bus to train could be problematic for the mobility impaired. It is therefore recommended that a review of all of the intermediate stations along the line should be undertaken and any required interventions carried out.

7.8 Rail Timetable Optimisation

7.8.1 We believe that the rail timetable could be better aligned with passengers' needs and that the operator should liaise more effectively with other transport providers along the route. The 2018 timetable was introduced without adequate consultation with stakeholders. Much

has changed in the intervening period with leisure journeys representing a much larger proportion of rail travel. We therefore urge overhaul of the existing timetable.

7.8.2 Key recommendations:

- A more clock face approach to achieve a consistent 2 hour frequency enhanced at key times.
- The realignment of the current semi fast services to run all stops and close the extended gaps in services (of up to 4 hours) which occur at some of the smaller intermediate stations.
- The facility for northbound and southbound trains to cross at a key intermediate station (such as Garsdale) with a bus link in the morning and late afternoon would be advantageous and allow for greater connectivity. This currently happens by accident rather than design.

7.8.3 Future changes to the rail timetable should be notified to all stakeholders well in advance in order for the necessary consultation to take place and ensure compliance with notice periods for bus operators.

7.9 Integrated Ticketing

7.9.1 Passengers wishing to use multiple buses or trains should not be disadvantaged with several single fares, a point articulated by Dr John Disney in his evidence to the HOC select committee hearing in 2016. It is important that all bus and rail services are socially inclusive.

7.9.2 Consideration should therefore be given to integrated ticketing such as PlusBus and the existing Dales Rambler where a supplement is paid on top of the rail ticket to include the bus fare, provided that an equitable revenue sharing system can be organised and administered.

7.9.3 A combined bus and rail ticket such as the Derbyshire Wayfarer which covers all rail and bus journeys within Derbyshire and extending to nearby towns and cities, would be attractive. Interestingly, there was a West Yorkshire Wayfarer ticket in the early 1980s with allowed travel from West Yorkshire as far as Hawes. This was discontinued at the time of deregulation.

7.9.4 Realistically priced zoned Day Ranger leisure rail tickets would considerably simplify the complexity of tickets currently available on the LSC and adjoining Bentham Line, and allow flexibility of travel even if this cannot be worked to also include bus travel. Often visitors are dissuaded from undertaking more complex journeys by the unrealistically high single ticket prices e.g. for triangular routes. A priority for such a ticket might include a Craven Rambler based on Settle, permitting travel to Clapham, Ingleton, Bentham, Kirkby



Derbyshire Wayfarer ticket

Lonsdale, Ribbleshead and Malham. Whilst the Yorkshire Dales does not sit neatly within the county of North Yorkshire (unlike the Peak District and Derbyshire), we should perhaps move towards a Yorkshire Dales ‘Wayfarer’ ticket covering that geographical area.

7.9.5 Through tickets from anywhere on the national rail network should be offered LSC to key destinations such as Hawes, Kirkby Stephen town, Ingleton and Penrith. We note that Keswick, whilst bereft of its rail service since the 1970s, is still included on the *virtual* rail network (KWK). Also, a regular bus service operates from York to Whitby as part of the ‘rail’ network.

7.9.6 Key recommendations include:

- a simplification of the complex ticket system and removal of the need for passengers to always book to a set station.
- a Craven Dales Rambler ticket permitting travel on either of the LSC (as far as Ribbleshead) or the Bentham line (as far as Bentham) and local bus travel as far as Kirkby Lonsdale and Malham.
- the availability of through tickets to Hawes, Ingleton and Kirkby Stephen town as virtual stations.
- through ticketing to Penrith as a virtual rail route.
- ideally, a Yorkshire Dales ‘Wayfarer’ ticket covering all public transport in the area.

7.10 English National Concessionary Travel Scheme

7.10.1 We believe that all scheduled local bus services should be included within the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS), and therefore that North Yorkshire Council’s short-sighted policy of excluding some weekend DalesBus services should be reversed.

7.11 Promotion and Marketing

7.11.1 The primary marketing focus has often been on the LSC as a heritage journey between Settle and Carlisle which, for most, will only be an occasional or one-off event. Whilst it will always be the case that visitors will wish to come and experience what is arguably one of the most scenic lines in the UK, we feel that there is significant untapped potential for visits to destinations away from the intermediate stations on the line as illustrated in Map 3 (page 61).

7.11.2 The comparatively remote nature of the line means that some form of onward transport is vital, particularly in the cases of Dent, Garsdale and Kirkby Stephen. However, the latest YDNP visitor survey gives cause for concern if only 2% of visitors use the railway to reach the National Park and we can assume that this is likely to be no better in the Eden Valley. This indicates that the railway is not achieving its potential and that there are some challenges.

- 7.11.3 We feel that increased effort needs to be applied to destination marketing of the potential of the intermediate stations and the surrounding areas. Such destination marketing could incorporate active travel such as walking and cycling.

7.12 Conclusion

- 7.12.1 Integrated transport is not a new concept. Indeed, it was recognised and used to great effect by the early pioneering campaigners in their efforts to save the Settle-Carlisle railway in the 1970s. However, over-reliance on the commercial and community sectors to provide services has resulted in the fragmented public transport system we have today. A new approach is therefore required which will demand joined up thinking and, crucially, adequate ongoing funding.
- 7.12.2 The Leeds-Settle-Carlisle railway can fulfil a vital role as part of an integrated transport solution for the region. This will not only benefit local communities providing access to the outside world for leisure, college, health, welfare, and employment but also allow sustainable tourism to develop, thus benefiting the local economy, the environment and, ultimately, the economy of the railway.

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The author: John Carey is a retired Chartered Loss Adjuster with a keen interest in rural transport matters. John is currently a volunteer board member of both the Friends of the Settle Carlisle Line and Dales and Bowland CIC.

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9 Appendices

9.1 Table Detailing Bus Service Provision Proximate to Line



Appendix 1: Leeds-Settle-Carlisle Line: Table Detailing Bus Service Provision Proximate to Line

Dedicated connections in **red**. Includes seasonal services as at summer 2024

Station	Service	Destination	Operator	Day of operation	Frequency /dedicated rail connection	Proximity of stop to rail station	Notes
Skipton	59	To Harrogate via Bolton Bridge	Harrogate Bus Company	Saturday	4 journeys	Runs from bus station 600m distant	Managed by Dales and Bowland CIC
	64	To Ilkley	Keighley Bus Company	Mon-Sat	10 journeys (Mon to Fri) 9 journeys (Sat)	Runs from bus station 600m distant	NYC subsidised
	72	To Grassington	Keighley Bus Company	Daily	10 journeys Mon-Sat 6 on Sundays	Calls outside rail station on some journeys Mon-Sat <u>but</u> bus station 600m distant on Sundays	NYC subsidised except Sundays. It would be preferable for the 72 to also call at the station on Sundays and provide connectivity with Airedale train services to the DalesBus network.
	75	To Malham (and Settle in summer)	Lonsdale Buses	Saturday	3 journeys (Ski-Mal in winter and 2 journeys Ski-Mal-Set in summer)	Calls at or near rail station for some journeys	Subsidised by NYC: operates via Malham Tarn to Settle in summer
	210/211	To Malham	NYC	Mon to Fri	2 journeys	Calls at or near rail station	NYC operated 16-seater
	280	To Clitheroe and Preston	Stagecoach	Daily	10 journeys: hourly (4 on Sundays)	Calls at or near rail station	Subsidised
	580	To Settle	Lonsdale Buses	Mon to Sat	10 return journeys (almost hourly)	Runs from bus station 500m distant	Commercial (Sunday service supported by D&BCIC temporarily withdrawn)
	864/866 (Malham)	To Malham	Keighley Bus Company	Sundays and BH	7 journeys	Runs from bus station 500m distant	Managed by Dales and Bowland CIC
	873/864	To Ilkley and Bolton Abbey	Keighley Bus Company	Sundays and BH	5 return journeys to Ilkley: meets key rail services:	Calls at or near rail station for some journeys	Managed by Dales and Bowland CIC
	M6	To Colne and Burnley	Mainline - Burnley Bus Company	Daily	16 journeys (weekdays), (10 on Sundays)	Calls at or near rail station	Commercial
Gargrave	580	To Skipton and Settle	Lonsdale Buses	Mon to Sat	10 journeys each direction (hourly)	Calls in village 500m from rail station	Commercial

Station	Service	Destination	Operator	Day of operation	Frequency /dedicated rail connection	Proximity of stop to rail station	Notes
Hellifield	580	To Skipton and Settle	Lonsdale Buses	Mon to Sat	10 journeys (hourly)	Calls in village 500m from rail station	Commercial
Long Preston	580	To Skipton and Settle	Lonsdale Buses	Mon to Sat	10 journeys (hourly)	Calls in village 500m from rail station	Commercial
Settle	11	To Horton and Clitheroe	NYC	Mon to Sat	4 journeys to Horton, 5 to Clitheroe	Calls in Market Place 300m from station	NYC operated 15-seater
	75	To Skipton via Malham	Lonsdale Buses	Sat (summer only)	3 journeys	Calls in Market Place 300m from station	Commercial
	580	To Skipton	Lonsdale Buses	Mon to Sat	8 journeys	Calls in Market Place 300m from station	Commercial (Sunday service supported by D&BCIC temporarily withdrawn)
	581	To Kirkby Lonsdale via Clapham and Ingleton	Lonsdale Buses	Mon to Sat	7 journeys	Calls in Market Place 300m from station	Subsidised by NYC (Sunday service supported by D&BCIC temporarily withdrawn)
	881	To Malham via Malham Tarn	Kirkby Lonsdale Coach Hire	Sunday and BH seasonal	4 journeys	Calls at or near rail station	Managed by Dales and Bowland CIC. ENCTS not accepted Withdrawn in 2023 due to funding/ lack of operator
Horton	11	To Settle and Clitheroe	NYC	Mon to Sat	4 journeys to Settle	Calls 400m from rail station	NYC operated 15-seater
Ribblehead	830	To Hawes, Swaledale and Richmond	Arriva North East	Sundays (summer only)	1 journey (summer only)	Calls at station	Managed by Dales and Bowland CIC. ENCTS not accepted.
	831/832	To Ingleton and Kirkby Lonsdale and Hawes	Arriva North East	Sundays (summer only)	1 journey (summer only)	Calls on main road 300m from station	Managed by Dales and Bowland CIC. ENCTS not accepted.
Dent	S1	To Dent village, Sedbergh and Kendal	Western Dales Bus	Saturdays only	2 journeys from train (3 in summer) and 4 from Sedbergh to Kendal: meets key rail services	Calls at Dent station	16 seat community bus. Extra Summer return bus withdrawn for 2024

Station	Service	Destination	Operator	Day of operation	Frequency /dedicated rail connection	Proximity of stop to rail station	Notes
Garsdale	Little White Bus 113	To Hawes and Gayle	Upper Dales Community Partnership	Mon - Sat	2 journeys in morning and 2 in late afternoon /early evening: meets key rail services	Calls at Garsdale Station	16 seat community bus - supported by NYC.
	857	To Hawes Gayle Aysgarth and Castle Bolton	Upper Dales Community Partnership	Sunday (summer only)	4 journeys, 2 onward journeys to Castle Bolton	Calls at Garsdale Station	16 seat community bus managed by Dales and Bowland CIC. (summer only)
Kirkby Stephen	S5	To Kendal	Western Dales Bus	Friday only	3 journeys	Main road outside station 75m	16 seat community bus. Moved from Wednesday to Friday in 2024
	S6	To Kirkby Stephen, Brough, Appleby and Penrith	Western Dales Bus	Tuesday and Thursday only	1 journey connection from station possible. 3 journeys from KS town	Main road outside station 75m	16 seat community bus: introduced in 2021 to replace 574 KS to Penrith and daily 563 before it. Additional Thursday service added April 2023. Changes expected March 2025
	563 (Sat)	To Kirkby Stephen, Brough, Appleby and Penrith	Stagecoach	Saturday	4 journeys: connection first bus in morning and ad-hoc connections possible remainder of day	Calls at rail station	Kirkby Stephen town council supported pilot (with FoSCL support) started April 2023 and commercial as from Nov 2024
	563 (Mon-Fri)	To Kirkby Stephen town, Brough, Appleby, Penrith <u>and</u> Sedbergh, Kendal	Stagecoach	Mon-Fri	2 journeys	Main road outside station 75m	Commenced March 2024 (Changes expected from April 2025)
	571	To Kendal	Cumbria Classic Coaches	Monday	1 journey	Calls at rail station: ad-hoc connection only	Commercial
	572	To Barnard Castle	Cumbria Classic Coaches	Wednesday	1 journey	Calls at rail station: ad-hoc connection only	Commercial
Appleby	561	To Kendal via Orton and Tebay	Westmorland and Furness	Wednesday	1 journey	Calls in town 500m distant	Council operated 16 seat community bus (as from 15/1/25)

Station	Service	Destination	Operator	Day of operation	Frequency /dedicated rail connection	Proximity of stop to rail station	Notes
	563 (Mon-Fri)	To Brough, Penrith, Kirkby Stephen, Sedbergh and Kendal	Stagecoach	Mon to Fri	3 journeys to Penrith and 2 journeys to Kendal	Calls in town 400m from rail station	Commercial with 2 services to Kendal added in March 24 (between schools services) Changes expected from April 2025
	563 (Sat)	To Brough, Penrith and Kirkby Stephen	Stagecoach	Saturday	4 journeys to Penrith and K Stephen	Calls in town 400m from rail station	Saturday service supported by Kirkby Stephen and Appleby town councils, parish councils and FoSCL started in April 2023; commercial from Nov 2024
Langwathby	Fellrunner	To Penrith and Carlisle	Fellrunner Village Bus	Runs on set weekdays/Sat only	1 journey: ad-hoc connection possible but difficult	Calls near rail station	16 seat community bus
	888	To Penrith, Keswick, Alston, and Newcastle	Wrights of Alston	Runs Fri, Sat, Sun Mon (summer only)	1 journey	Calls near rail station	Commercial Runs from 19 July until 29 Sept 2024
Lazonby	Fellrunner	To Penrith and Carlisle	Fellrunner Village Bus	Runs on set weekdays/Sat only	1 journey: ad-hoc connection possible but difficult	Calls near rail station	16 seat community bus
Armathwaite	Fellrunner	To Penrith and Carlisle	Fellrunner Village Bus	Runs on set weekdays/Sat only	1 journey: ad-hoc connection possible but difficult	Calls near rail station	16 seat community bus
	S71	To Dalston (school)	Stagecoach	Runs Mon-Fri term time only	1 journey: connection difficult	Calls near rail station	WaF supported school service available to public

Notes:

- 502 Kendal college service from Kirkby Stephen and 506 from Appleby withdrawn from public service in September 2020 (replaced with college bus excluding public)
- S6 Sedbergh to Penrith introduced 2021 as replacement for Classic 574 KS to Penrith
- X43 from Skipton /Manchester replaced with Pendle Wizz to Burnley and 72 between Skipton and Grassington (2018). Pendle Wizz then replaced with M6 April 2023
- 855 Little White Bus withdrawn on Sundays (Nov 2022) and replaced with seasonal 857 DalesBus 2023/2024
- S4 (Friday) from Brough, Kirkby Stephen to Sedbergh withdrawn in April 2023
- S2 (Sunday - seasonal) from Dent Station to Cautley withdrawn 2018
- S3 (Friday -seasonal) from Hawes to Sedbergh withdrawn Sept 2023
- Cumbria Classic Wednesday Kirkby Stephen to Hawes withdrawn circa 2017