

## **Public Transport Meeting 4 June 2015 7:30pm**

### **Kettlewell Village Hall**

Speakers: County Cllr Shelagh Marshall, Richard Owens (Assistant Director Integrated Passenger Transport NYCC) and Ann Wild (Grassington Hub).

In attendance: 93 members of the public.

Kettlewell with Starbottan Parish Cllr David Nelson welcomed speakers and attendees to the meeting.

Cllr Shelagh Marshall briefly outlined the background to the meeting with public transport discussions starting 18 months previously. There was an ongoing North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) consultation, that included drop-in sessions held at the end of May. It was intended that tonight's meeting would allow people to understand more of the options available and get answers to their questions.

Richard Owens confirmed that the consultation is available online and that he would make hard copies available. He explained that NYCC had already made £90 million of savings, including £2 million on bus transport. A further £70 million savings were still needed, this includes £1.5 million on bus transport. The bus contract spending for this area had been reduced from £300,000 last year to £200,000 this year but that the Upper Wharfedale service remained one of the highest costs.

One option for future bus services is that the Grassington – Skipton service is operated on a commercial basis. The services to Kettlewell and Buckden using Community bus services would then be by community transport – in the way Grassington Hub operates now on a 'demand responsive' service. While no one is going to be happy with the outcome of the consultation, NYCC would not fund a high cost service at the expense of cutting lower cost services.

Questions were posted from the meeting and answered by Richard Owens.

Q. How does the Wensleydale 'Little White Bus' work?

A As part of a fixed price tender, NYCC funded buses for Hawes Community Office who have a mixture of paid and volunteer drivers (the Community Office pays for their training). The initial bus routes have been expanded and since April 2015, 70-80 people a day use the service. The cost of services are half what they would have been and are no proposed cuts to them as part of this consultation.

In addition they have a voluntary car scheme like the Grassington Hub's 'Helping Hands'. The average cost for a 3 mile journey is £1.50.

Other approaches include Scarborough's dial-a-ride and Whitby's voluntary care scheme.

Government regulations do not allow part payment for a bus journey. A person with a bus pass can opt to pay full fare or use their free pass.

Q. How many here would volunteer to drive a bus or your own car (being able to collect £0.45 per mile and insurance is generally not an issue).

A. One person said they would drive a bus, several would drive cars.

Q. We live in a unique area:

- the cost to get to Skipton will be high 16 miles to Station from Starbotton, 20 miles from Buckden – each way;
- the Dalesway runs through the Dale and many walkers use the bus to allow them to get in and out;
- many residents don't drive and rely on buses for doctors and dentists
- young people as well as old use the buses; and
- the cuts to the service and the loss of some buses mean that it is more difficult/ impossible to use the service.

A. Acknowledged the points.

Q. Tourism is a big industry in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. These proposals seem to be going in the opposite direction from sustainable tourism.

A. Recognise that tourism is important but spending to bring tourists in will mean less money to provide services for local people.

Q. NYCC website lists two revenue bids for transport, why are we not hearing about them?

A. The bids were unsuccessful.

Q. It would be good to advertise that the bus service will stop next April at bus stops.

A. NYCC can supply posters for people to put up. There is already advertising on buses.

Q. One problem with the doctor's surgery is that to book on the day one must telephone before 8am. at present the bus timetable doesn't then allow you to get to the surgery and get home again.

A. Helping Hands has 45 volunteer drivers who can be called on. There are also two minibuses with 11 volunteer drivers and a shared car. An on-demand responsive service has transported 3-4 people between Bolton Abbey and Burnsall/ Barden Tower since April 2015.

In Bentham, the surgery contributes to community transport as it means the doctors don't have to do so many home visits.

Q. Skipton – Keighley buses run at seven minute intervals. Can that be reduced to 20 minute intervals and the funding diverted to buses for Upper Wharfedale?

- A. Those buses are run on a commercial basis and not funded by NYCC.
- Q. How does NYCC get bus usage figures for the upper dale?
- A. (i) Bus operator figures and (ii) NYCC survey
- Q. Buses in the upper dale make it possible to go one way but then not return. This means that they are not useable unless you can be collected by a car driver.
- Q. 13% of the population live in London. 36% of public transport costs are spent on Transport for London (TfL). This includes free travel for 22,000 TfL employees and their nominees, a total of £22 million last year. They levy £40 million from councils!
- A. Recognise that this needs to be addressed but that it is outwith anything that NYCC can do. It will be a long uphill battle but NYCC will try. Cllr Carl Les has agreed a strategy with other local authorities, recognising that the 'Northern Powerhouse' will drag money away.
- Q. Three times a week poor bus scheduling means that a student from Buckden has to be collected from Skipton. This means that there is no demand for the bus as you cannot use it to go to and from Skipton.
- Q. What is the strategy for post 16 students? Currently pay £450 per year and still have to collect the student on some return journeys.
- A. We need to look at scheduling. There will be a further consultation on costs later this year.
- Q. There are very few doctor's home visits made in the Dales.
- A. If you cannot get to the surgery, then the doctors will need to visit. In addition to the funding Bentham surgery give to community transport, Skipton's Fisher Medical Centre were keen to set up a scheme.
- Cllr Shelagh Marshall is planning to seek a meeting with a senior health service administrator to consider the booking system for doctors.
- Q. Are there checks on volunteer drivers – Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) etc?
- A. Helping Hands checks CRB, driving licences and insurance, MOT and service records.
- Q. There is a surge of school buses, they only run one way full and then run back empty – why?
- A. They could be used – indeed they are in Grassington. Agreed to look into this.
- Q. Is fuel subsidy still available on Public Service Vehicles?
- A. It still does exist, but it is anticipated to change.

Q. It is really tricky to get to work – even Grassington, especially for 9am when employers generally expect you. Then the last bus back home is at 16:20!

Q. If you run the [end of the day] school bus to Skipton, how do you get people back?

A. Acknowledged the point.

Q. Buckden to Skipton return would be £18 at a £0.45 per mile rate.

A. Recognise this, and may need to cap journey costs.

Q. How much does it cost to buy and run a bus?

A. £70,000 and £20 per hour.

Grassington Hub currently has a poor bus and that is getting replaced.

Q. Where there are more than 16 people, like a walking group, how do they travel?

A. There are two Grassington Hub buses and they would need to be pre-booked.

Q. This is a consultation meeting, but Grassington [drop-in session] felt it was a fait accompli.

A. Confirmed that this is a consultation. Responses can be on line or paper.

- 14 August consultation close
- 14 October report to NYCC (publicly available)
- 8 December final decision taken
- 17 February 2016 confirmed

NYCC are expecting to receive 4,000 to 6,000 responses.

Q. If there is a commercial service from Grassington to Skipton, does that mean we will have to change buses?

A. The details are still to be worked out, but yes.

Q. Can you give assurance that connections at Grassington will be made and not missed by buses arriving late, as happens now?

A. Agreed to speak to bus operator, but cannot promise that it will not happen.

Q. Currently the Yorkshire Dalesbus runs a service from Buckden to Hawes – a ‘leisure’ service costing £3.50, which seems good value. Bus passes are not accepted.

A. Agree it is good value. As this is a ‘leisure’ service they can change and don’t have to accept bus passes.

Q. How to do we find out what happens on the consultation?

- A. We will communicate out to parish councils.
- Q. If scheduling the current buses is part of the problem is rescheduling them on the cards?
- A. We had not planned to do so, but this is a consultation so will be considered.
- Q. Should we confirm what would be important?
- A. Acknowledged this
- Q. NYCC executive committee councillors are distributed across the County, but there is a strip in the centre where we are with no cover – we are in that strip.
- A. The new leader has just appointed a new executive with councillors for the next 12 months. He (RO) will do what he can, but the funding available from central Government is the issue. Do write to your MP.

Cllr Shelagh Marshall thanked all meeting attendees, Richard Owens and Ann Wild for attending; the village of Grassington for setting-up the Hub; and Sara Spillett (Kettlewell with Starbotton Parish Clerk) for taking a note of the meeting. Finally, she proposed we should have an Upper Dales conference – perhaps at Kilnsey Show.

Verina Bishop thanked Cllr Shelagh Marshall for arranging and running the meeting.

Sara Spillett

Kettlewell with Starbotton Parish Clerk

9 June 2015