

YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
ACCESS COMMITTEE

2nd February 2006

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
REVIEW OF SUPPORT FOR RURAL BUS SERVICES

Purpose of report

To formulate a response to consultation from North Yorkshire County Council on a review of support for rural bus services.

Strategic Planning Framework

The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:

- ***National Park Management Plan***

Economy & Employment

Develop transport infrastructure to support economic development (e.g. public transport for local "commuters", Dales Cyclists Routes to local businesses)

- ***Integrated Access Strategy***

AS10 Develop and promote an efficient, effective, integrated and accessible public transport network which provides access to the National Park and areas within it, to key facilities for both visitors and residents of the National Park - and in accordance with the public transport position statement:

AS12 Support measures which either reduce dependency on motor vehicles for movements to, and within, the National Park or remove unnecessary and inappropriate traffic from the National Park; and promote the management of traffic so that vehicles use appropriate routes both inside and outside the National Park:

Background

As a Passenger Transport Authority, North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) have responsibility, under the Transport Act 1985, to develop policies to provide for public transport needs not met by commercial bus operators or train services. Broadly this means that it only has to consider whether there are gaps in service provision that should be filled. Currently the council spends c£4.1 million a year supporting bus services across the county.

NYCC has recently written to the National Park Authority informing it that, due to the increasing costs of supporting bus services due to increased costs within the transport

industry, the need to introduce modern accessible vehicles onto key routes and to meet the costs associated with the withdrawal of commercial services, it is undertaking a review of contracted services across North Yorkshire and is inviting comments from the Authority. IT is asking for a response by the 3 February. The purpose of the review is to ascertain where there is potential to reallocate resources. The review includes all services where the subsidy per passenger journey is more than £5.00, all contracted Sunday and evening services, and services that operate every two hours or less. A similar letter has also been sent to all Parish Councils (**Annex A**) and the North York Moors National Park National Park Authorities explaining the situation and seeking their views. A response is requested by 3 February and it is expected that the consultation results will be presented in a detailed report for NYCC members by mid-February.

NYCC Criteria for supporting bus services

NYCC has identified the following criteria against which the review will be carried out:

In determining which socially necessary services to provide funding for the County Council will have regard to the following journey purpose:

- *Access to work.*
- *Access to education.*
- *Access to health services.*
- *Access to shopping facilities.*
- *Access to leisure services.*
- *The availability of alternative services for example rail services, community transport or other bus services.*
- *The extent to which the service represents value for money for the council.*

It is important that the County Council is able to strike an appropriate balance between the need to address social exclusion by improving access and the need to secure value for money overall.

Traditionally, we have had two measures of “cost effectiveness”. We do not fund journeys which carry fewer than three passengers on a regular basis. We calculate the amount of subsidy per passenger journey.

North Yorkshire County Council’s Position

The Authority should recognise that North Yorkshire County Council is in a difficult position. NYCC need to provide socially necessary services and increase bus patronage in line with Local Transport Plan targets. The recent Local Transport Plan Settlement letter was critical of its progress towards targets for bus patronage; so it will be concerned to make progress in this area.

Whilst taking account the above pressures, the council also needs to manage its budgets in a situation where costs are increasing in the transport sector at a rate greater than general inflation.

The greatest growth in passenger numbers can be achieved through investing in quality operations including low floor vehicles and improved infrastructure, including waiting facilities. North Yorkshire County Council have invested in contracts to provide this level of

service between Hawes Leyburn Bedale and Northallerton and Buckden to Grassington to Ilkley/Skipton

North Yorkshire is not the only Passenger Transport Authority in this position; with significant cuts occurring or being considered for subsidised services in other counties.

A significant proportion of the funding for North Yorkshire's rural bus support comes from the Rural Bus Grant that they receive from the Department for Transport. When North Yorkshire County Council first received this; £50,000 was allocated for supporting leisure services to each of the two National Parks in the county. Over the years this has been increased as costs have increased so that c£70,000 is now allocated to supporting leisure services to and within the Yorkshire Dales.

Situation in the Yorkshire Dales National Park

There are seventeen bus services which run to or within the National Park which are being considered by this review (**Annex B**). This includes a mixture of

- market day and shopping services low frequency services,
- evening services,
- services which link to the Settle and Carlisle rail line
- a number of Sunday and bank holiday services;

Consultation Response

It is considered that, in responding to the consultation, the Authority should make the following comments:

(1) Social Exclusion from within and to the Dales of people without access to a car

During Summer of 2005 some 64% of the main visitor origin areas within the peripheral urban catchments of the Yorkshire Dales had a public transport service which meant these areas were accessible to the main destination(s) in the Yorkshire Dales on a Sunday. (A number of these services were subsidised by the Authority during this period).

Without NYCC financial support for Summer Sunday services, only the National Trust minibus running between Settle and Malham and Settle Carlisle and Leeds Morecambe railway lines will provide access to the National Park on a Sunday, and the percentage figure for accessibility would drop to 16% by 2007 (**Annex C**).

Accessibility and access to the 'countryside' is important in enhancing 'quality of life' and should be available to all, particularly socially excluded groups who do not have access to a car. In essence some people would be denied the opportunity to access the National Park to enjoy its special qualities.

(2) Effect on the Economy

The loss of the spend by visitors who arrive by bus should not be underestimated, a recent survey organised by the University of Central Lancashire finding that the average spend per visitor that travelled by bus to the Dales was £16.70. A number of sustainable tourism initiatives such as guided walks by bus would be reduced.

(3) Social Well-being of Communities in the National Park

Although the majority of households in the Yorkshire Dales have access to a car (88%) a minority does not and in a significant number of households (over 50%) there is only one car which means many households are left immobile if one member of the family uses the car to commute to work.

If all the services being considered by the review were withdrawn it would only leave weekday services, to Embsay, Sedbergh, Wharfedale and Wensleydale which would retain the same level of service except Wensleydale, which could lose its evening service. The rest of the Dales could be left with no buses other than those provided to enable children to reach school or college.

The result of this would be a dramatic impact on the accessibility of the National Park for people without a car and local people would have to rely on community/voluntary transport or taxis to travel to essential services if they do not have access to a car themselves.

(4) NYCC's Criteria for Reviewing Services

NYCC's criteria for reviewing services means that many services in the Yorkshire Dales are included in the review, and most meet more than one criteria; especially those services provided to enable people to visit the Yorkshire Dales on a Sunday.

Besides the inherent bias towards keeping Monday to Saturday services, the criteria for subsidy 'per passenger trip', rather than say 'per passenger mile' (which is admittedly hard to measure), means that where passengers are travelling longer distances, out of necessity eg in rural areas such as the Yorkshire Dales, these services will inherently have a higher cost per passenger's trip, than shorter distance, high frequency, shuttle services, which will fall outside the scope of the review.

(5) Other Considerations

NYCC should also be asked to:

- continue to emphasis investment on quality in the core corridors of Wensleydale and Wharfedale, and within these corridors to retain a minimum of a seven day a week service due to the importance of these corridors to the local economy and the facilities they provide for people to access the National Park.
- 'ring fence' the current funding allocation used for supporting leisure services to the two National Parks, in line with the current proportion allocated out of the overall bus service revenue support budget committed, and that prioritising occurs within the remainder.

Conclusion

Whilst appreciating the difficult position North Yorkshire County Council is in, in attempting to increase bus passenger patronage, invest in quality on key routes and keeping within budget as costs have increased, this review will inevitably have an impact on the network

provided. However it is important to ensure that the impact on the Yorkshire Dales is not disproportionate because of the inherent nature of the area (low population density, and long distances to access services including the countryside) in terms of the needs of visitors to the National Park, and residents are concerned.

Authority officers will continue to work closely with officers of North Yorkshire County Council, through the Yorkshire Dales Sustainable Travel Partnership, to obtain the best possible network of services to provide for both visitors and people that live and work within the Yorkshire Dales.

As this review is symptomatic of a National issue, affecting rural areas in general, and National Parks in particular, the National Park Authority, through the Council for National Parks (CNP) and the Association of National Park Authorities (ANPA) should suggest to Government that a transport fund is established to enable passenger transport authorities to take account of the needs of visitors to the National Parks in bus network planning.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- (a) Subject to member comment, the consultation response within the report is send to North Yorkshire County Council.
- (b) The Authority seeks CNP/ANPA's views on approaching government to provide a transport fund to enable transport authorities to take account of the needs of visitors to the National Parks as part of local bus network planning.

ANDY RYLAND
TRANSPORT AND VISITOR MANAGEMENT OFFICER

Background documents:

Letter from NYCC to National Park Authority dated 28 December 2005,

Letter to Parish Councils from NYCC 22 December 2005

Dear Parish Clerk

REVIEW OF CONTRACTED BUS SERVICES

The Council spends over £4 million each year to support the provision of bus services which it considers to be socially necessary. In recent years we have increased our budget in order to reflect increased costs in the transport industry and the need to introduce modern accessible vehicles onto key routes.

The increased cost of providing services means that it is possible that the current network of services cannot be retained with the funds that are available.

We are therefore undertaking a review of contracted services across the county to ascertain where potential savings lie. This will include all services where the subsidy per passenger journey is more than £5.00, all contracted Sunday and evening services and services that operate every two hours or less.

In July 2005 the Council agreed a Bus Strategy as part of the Local Transport Plan. This sets out the Councils priorities for bus services and the circumstances in which we will provide funding. The review of services is being undertaken with regard to the priorities of the Bus Strategy.

The following is an extract from the Bus Strategy:

Criteria for supporting bus services

In determining which socially necessary services to provide funding for the County Council will have regard to the following journey purpose:

- *Access to work.*
- *Access to education.*
- *Access to health services.*
- *Access to shopping facilities.*
- *Access to leisure services.*
- *The availability of alternative services for example rail services, community transport or other bus services.*
- *The extent to which the service represents value for money for the council.*

It is important that the County Council is able to strike an appropriate balance between the need to address social exclusion by improving access and the need to secure value for money overall.

Traditionally, we have had two measures of "cost effectiveness". We do not fund journeys which carry fewer than three passengers on a regular basis. We calculate the amount of subsidy per passenger journey.

The following table summarises the current position:

<i>Subsidy per passenger Journey</i>	<i>% value of contracts</i>
<i>up to £1</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Between £1 and £ 2</i>	<i>74</i>
<i>Between £5 and £7.50</i>	<i>2</i>

<i>Between £7.50 and £10</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>over £10</i>	<i>2</i>

This shows that 95% of our contracts have a subsidy per passenger journey of less than £5.

In the next 3 years we will work towards a situation where the maximum amount of subsidy per passenger journey is £7.50.

I attach a summary of all services included in the review, where appropriate timetables for services within your parish are also included, these are marked to show those journeys under consideration for withdrawal in the review.

A report on the review of contracted bus services will be presented in February for consideration by the Executive Members for Environmental Services. In order for the comments of the parish council on this review to be included in this report we will require a response by 3 February 2006. If you are unable to meet this timescale please contact me straightaway.

If you wish to make comments after the 3 February about services not included in the review please send them for our consideration.

Yours sincerely

Mary Welch
Public Transport Manager

Services to or within the Yorkshire Dales National Park Under Review

There are seventeen services which run to or within the National Park which are being considered by this review these include:

Skipton/Malham Post Bus	Post Bus	Monday to Friday
Ingleton-Horton In Ribblesdale/Eldroth Area-Austwick C E Sch	581	All Monday to Saturday except school journeys
Skipton - Malham (Sat Only)	210.843	Saturday
Arncliffe - Kilnsey Feeder (Mon - Sat)	76	Mon to Saturdays
Leeds - Skipton - Malham (Sun & Bank Hol Mons)	804	Summer Sunday
West Yorkshire - Hawes	800	Summer Sunday
York - Ripon - Grassington	812	Summer Sunday
West Yorkshire - Hawes	805	Summer Sunday
Darlington - Swaledale - Hawes	830	Summer Sunday
Skipton - Hawes - Richmond	807	Summer Sunday
Skipton - Grassington (Sun & Bank Hol Mons)	67A	Sunday All Monday to Saturday journeys except School Journeys
Swaledale Services	30.30A.36	
Hawes - Garsdale	Shared Hire Car	Monday to Saturdays
Woodale - Leyburn	158	Friday Journeys
Bedale - Hawes	156.157	Sundays
Bedale - Hawes	156.157	Evenings Tuesday & Friday journeys
Sedbergh - Hawes - Thwaite	112.13	

Accessibility of main destinations within their Dales and their catchments

The following table defines the main tourist destinations within the Yorkshire Dales National Park, and the primary catchment area for that site.

It also identifies whether the destination is served by public transport during the peak summer season and throughout the year. To qualify as accessible by public transport the journey must involve no more than one change of bus/train. Any change made should be straight-forward and such that an ordinary member of the public would be happy to make.

Destination	Primary catchment/s	Accessible by public transport from primary catchment on Sundays and Bank holidays during June, July and August 2005	Anticipated will be accessible by public transport on Sundays in Summer 2007 with reduction in YDNPA funding	Anticipated will be accessible by public transport on Sundays in Summer 2007 without YDNPA and NYCC funding
Grassington	Keighley Ilkley Bradford Leeds	Yes Yes Yes Yes	Yes Yes Yes Yes	No No No No
Buckden	Keighley Ilkley Bradford Leeds	Yes Yes No Yes	Yes Yes No Yes	No No No No
Asygarth	Northallerton Darlington	Yes No	Yes No	No No
Hawes	Northallerton Darlington	Yes Yes	Yes No	No No
Reeth	Richmond (Catterick) Darlington	Yes Yes	No No	No No
Sedbergh	Kendal Lancaster	No No	No No	No No
Dent	Kendal Lancaster	No No	No No	No No
Horton-in-Ribblesdale	Lancaster Burnley Blackburn	No Yes Yes	No No No	No Yes Yes
Malham	Burnley Bradford	No Yes	No No	Yes Yes
Bolton Abbey	Leeds Harrogate	Yes No	Yes No	No No
TOTAL	25	16	10	4
Percentage	100%	64%	40%	16%