

## Upper Wharfedale Venturer – the future

On 4<sup>th</sup> June 2015 a packed meeting in Kettlewell Village Hall listened to the Director of Passenger Transport for North Yorkshire County Council explain that, from April 2016, the Skipton-to-Buckden Pride of the Dales bus service would terminate at Grassington. This was because of cuts to the local transport subsidy. The key message was that, if the people of Upper Wharfedale wanted a bus service, we would have to set up our own.



It seemed an unlikely proposition, but we quickly realised that it was true, and also that it might just be possible, particularly as it became clear that NYCC would be prepared to support us financially. Over the following weeks, a small group of local people worked together to understand what would be involved and to develop an outline proposal and business plan. By September, we had submitted a bid to NYCC; in December we heard it had been successful. Three frantic months followed in which many people from Buckden, Kettlewell, and beyond got involved in all sorts of ways to help make the Upper Wharfedale Venturer a reality.

On Monday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2016, the Venturer set off from Buckden for the first time (complete with BBC camera crew), and the service was up and running. Since then, we have carried 70,000 passengers and covered 200,000 miles up and down the dale. By the end of 2022 passenger numbers had almost recovered to pre-Covid levels, and in 2023, helped by the £2 fare-cap scheme, we have carried more passengers than at this stage in any previous year.



In July this year, we finally managed to get our new bus into service; quieter, more comfortable, more economical, and greener, with low-floor access to help those with restricted mobility.

Meanwhile, we are fortunate to have a fantastic team of some 20 people who are involved in running the service in various ways, both employees and volunteers, driving of course, but also involved in planning the service, keeping the bus on the road, and running the business side.

So, with a great team, good passenger numbers, a brand-new bus, and a fare cap scheme in place until December 2024, the future of the service looks bright? Well – for the next couple of years....yes. However, in the long term, the challenge is that many of those involved in setting up and running the service from the start are in or are approaching their seventies. If Upper Wharfedale Bus is to have a long-term future, we need more people locally who would be up for driving or helping out in other ways. Essentially, we need new people to get involved, as those who have been there from the start step back over the coming years. Otherwise, it is hard to see how our bus service will survive through to the end of the decade. If you might be interested, please email us at [future@upperwharfedale.com](mailto:future@upperwharfedale.com); we can arrange to have a chat and explain what is involved.

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Upper Wharfedale Bus