



Dales Way Association

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River Wharfe on the Dales Way in full spate.

Courtesy of Gordon Tasker

The Dales Way Association

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Dales Way Chairman's Report 2024

It's only a few months since our last AGM in October so in many ways this is a half year, not an Annual Report. But nevertheless, quite a lot of positive things have happened to share with members.



The first bit of good news is that we have now found a very excellent replacement for our long-serving colleague Donald Holliday as our Cumbria representative on the Dales Way Committee. She is Cath Williams from Kendal, who now represents the Kendal Ramblers on the Dales Way Committee.

Cath is responsible for a hugely important northern section of the Dales Way, stretching from Crook of Lune Bridge to Bowness, a distance of around 18 miles, including some of the trickiest sections of the Dales Way in terms of

waymarking and route finding. The part between Staveley and Bowness is in the Lake District National Park and between Crook of Lune and Staveley is in the new Unitary Authority of Westmorland & Furness. Cath has therefore to liaise with two authorities and is already working closely with Helen Brown Footpath Officer of W&F and Marion Jones of LDNPA.

Cath has already surveyed her section of the Dales Way in each direction, so thank you Cath for making a great contribution already to the work of the Association.

The second bit of wonderful news is confirmation from the Chatworth Estate at Bolton Abbey of their agreement to allow us to construct a new section of off-road footpath through the little woodland immediately to the north of the Chipping Staithes on the busy B6160 near Bolton Bridge.



This section of the Dales Way has long been a nightmare for walkers. We now have an agreement with Burley in Wharfedale Walkers are Welcome Footpath Maintenance and Improvement team to do the necessary work on our behalf in collaboration with the Bolton Abbey Estate as soon as the weather permits.

Our third good news story also involves this time of around a quarter of a mile of road walking at Hubberholme. The National Trust has now got agreement with their tenant farmer to offer a vital new section of permissive footpath off the road alongside a lovely bit of riverside. It will take some months, perhaps not before autumn or even winter to get all the paperwork sorted and the path constructed, but it will be one of the best and most welcome improvements for the Dales Way in its 55 years of existence. The new route has also been warmly welcomed by local people who will have new circular walk opportunities as well as a nice route to the George Inn or Hubberholme Church.

In November we also had our annual meeting with the Rangers and other staff of the National Park, also attended by people from the Lake District and Westmorland & Furness. Again it was a cordial meeting which much excellent maintenance and improvement work on the Way was reported on. But we also pointed out how ageing infrastructure along the Way needs replacement, and how climate change with heavy rainfall was causing many sections of path to become heavily waterlogged and eroded. This in turn reflects funding issues as both National Parks and other authorities now have fewer financial resources. Increasingly the Association may be asked to help match fund, for example, signpost replacements or stile repairs. This is an issue which will increasingly pre-occupy your committee as I am sure Gordon will be commenting on in his Financial Report.

It is also my pleasant duty to warmly thank our small team of dedicated volunteers that have formed our dedicated Dales Way Committee over the last half year. But we only survive because amazing individuals have coped with not only one but sometimes two jobs.

Kath has been both our excellent and highly efficient Minutes and Meetings secretary but also has represented our Accommodation Providers on an interim basis. Gordon doubles as both our very efficient Honorary Treasurer and Footpath Officer for the extremely important sections of the Dales Way between Ilkley and Bolton Bridge, again dealing with two authorities – Bradford and North Yorkshire. He has also taken on responsibility for looking after our Dales Way Boards and you will read more about our new one at that critical point at the start of the Dales Way at Ilkley Bridge, erected a few weeks ago. Ryk as well as representing the interests of the many runners who now enjoy the Dales Way, has now also taken on new responsibility for overlooking the key Dales Way Links and is currently examining how the route from Leeds could be radically improved through the commuter village of Bramhope.

And finally to the amazing duo whose work and commitment lie at the heart of the Dales Way. Tony is the Footpath Officer for the crucial central section of the path through the Yorkshire Dales National Park, with whom he has developed a close working relationship and from whom we get such great support. But he is also our Webmaster and maintains and updates our excellent website. However as we reported last year, Tony has also had to cope with ill health, including frequent hospital visits and treatments. The fact that he has served us so well over the last few months is little short of miraculous and an amazing tribute to his fighting spirit. We are all desperately hoping that he is winning the battle with his illness and is able to continue not only his work for us but also to enjoy precious time to walk the Dales Way. Tony's condition has also been a huge challenge for Chris, who again doubles as our General and our Membership Secretary, the lynch-pin of the whole organisation. She also has had to prioritise her time to care for and support Tony. It has been just astonishing how she and Tony have coped in the most difficult circumstances. We can only say thank you from the bottom of our hearts and hope that the year ahead will bring better times to you both.

But this brings home the urgent need at the AGM for us to recruit more people onto the Dales Way Committee to share the tasks ahead, and take the strain from our small overworked team.

Finally to thank you, our members, for your constant support, and generous donations to help us do what we can. I can only speak personally when I suggest that of all the many things I have been lucky enough to be involved with during my life, nothing has given more people more pleasure than the Dales Way. Let's hope and pray on behalf of the Association that we can all continue to be involved and able to enjoy and share the Dales Way for as many years ahead as we can.

- Colin Speakman

Two Big Anniversaries in 2024

Every Dales Way walker and all members of The Dales Way Association should be celebrating two major anniversaries of events that took place exactly 75 and 70 years ago. 1949 saw the passing of the great National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act which also allowed for the registration of all public rights of way in England and Wales, and in 1954 the foundation of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Without this Act of Parliament and our National Park, we would not have a Dales Way.

A good time to remember the immense hard work and devoted campaigning of all the many individuals and voluntary organisations, over many decades, that made these great achievements possible.



The Dales Way Association presents...

The Dales Way – 55 Years of the People's Path

An Illustrated talk by Colin Speakman.

Saturday 27th April 2024. Starts 2.00 pm prompt.



Colin Speakman, joint initiator of the 80-mile Dales Way, one of Britain's most popular long-distance walking routes that links West Yorkshire, the Yorkshire Dales and Lake District National Parks, will tell the fascinating story of the creation of the Dales Way by a small group of enthusiasts to its present day success.

Octagon Room, Devonshire Institute, Grassington. FREE. All welcome.

After the talk there will be a short break before the Dales Way Association holds its Annual General Meeting, 3 p.m. *Book Sale - cash only please. Assistance dogs only.*

You are also invited to join Colin Speakman for a **short led morning walk** above Grassington. Note: ***Steep climb with stiles!***

Edge Lane and Spring House: Not on the Dales Way but great views of the route through Upper Wharfedale. 4km - 2½ miles. *Moderate-Strenuous.* **Route** Grassington village centre, High Lane- Edge Lane, Spring House, Intake Laith, Bank Lane. *A steep climb with several stiles approximately 100 metres (300 feet) of ascent. Return (estimate) by 1245.*

Meet at Grassington National Park Centre 11:15

(connecting DalesBus 74 leaves York 08:35, Harrogate 09:25, Otley 09:50, Ilkley 10:15 a. Grassington 11:01). Bus returns at 17:00 after AGM.

The New Dales Way Information Board at the start of the Dales Way, Ilkley



The Information Board at the start
That gives you the Dales Way route
to chart

From Ilkley to Bowness that's the
way

Disappeared in 2023 to our dismay.

The Autumn 2023 Newsletter broke
the news

What had happened we had no clues
A replacement was needed big and
bright

To tell all walkers of the paths delight

Supplier quote reviewed and approved
Board dispatched and ready to move
Bradford Council reframed and erected
Thanks for their efforts which must be
applauded.

The Information Board at the start
That gives you the Dales Way route to
chart
From Ilkley to Bowness that's the way
Is once again on display



New Dales Way
Information Board, Jan 2024

As I stated in the Autumn 2023 Newsletter we are not sure what happened to the Information Board at the start of The Dales Way, but it disappeared. I would suggest that was no bad thing looking at the two images, a replacement was probably due after 15 years in situ.

My thanks go firstly to Pryorsign, Rotherham who manufactured the board from artwork they had amazingly retained from 2008/2009. Thanks also go to Richard Perham and his Countryside and Rights of Way Team from Bradford Council who have done a great job making a new frame and erecting the new Board at the existing location.

Finally, a big thank you and shout out to Eileen King, who loved to walk the Dales Way with her partner Roy Docherty. Eileen made a generous donation at the Dales Way Association AGM, Friday 6th October 2023 towards this Information Board and two spares we now have available for future use along the route. Thank you Eileen.

A new Board for the start of the new year to welcome walkers onto the Dales Way whether walking the full length or short sections. A good photo opportunity.

- Gordon Tasker



YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK

New footpath at Hubberholme

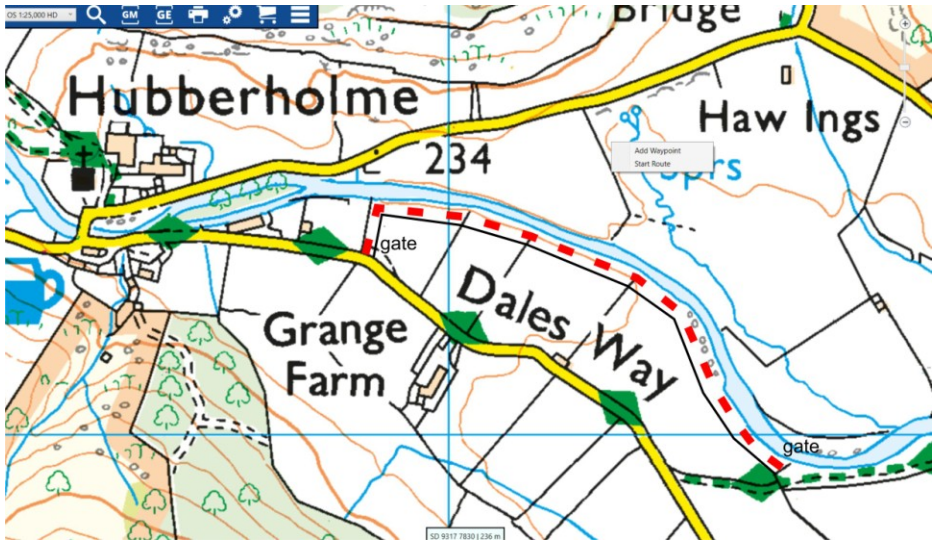
A brand new section of riverside footpath is planned near Hubberholme at the head of the Wharfe valley, taking the Dales Way off a quarter-mile length of potentially dangerous road walking.



The plans have been drawn up by National Trust Area Ranger Peter Katic and the intention is to have the footpath up and running by late 2024/early 2025. The land is owned by the National Trust and Peter has reached agreement with the tenant farmer to construct the footpath.

The Dales Way currently follows a fine surfaced riverside path from Buckden Bridge north alongside the river Wharfe for half a mile, before cutting east to join the narrow Dubb's Lane and a further 1/4 mile road walk to Hubberholme.

The new path will start from the point where the current path heads for the road, through a gate and continue northwest alongside the river, finally rejoining the road just north of Grange Farm. The new path will be fenced off from adjacent fields and follow a surfaced track, probably flagged at one point where flooding is known to occur. A new gate will finally lead back onto the road.



Members of the Dales Way Association joined Peter and two of his rangers in February to walk the proposed route and discuss the work required.

Before work can begin environmental surveys and a planning application need approval, as well as securing the necessary finance. The DWA committee has agreed to a modest



contribution. From its inception in 1991 the Association has had "the ongoing aim of improving the route where desirable, in particular it seeks to minimise any road walking where feasible." This new section of footpath is seen as a major success.

- Tony Grogan

Dales Way Association Investing in the future

As an Association one of the key aims is ... to improve the route where desirable, and in particular it seeks to minimise any road walking where feasible.

We strive to be ready with supporting investment in maintaining the Dales Way to ensure a better pathway, making sections safer and easier to access for all walkers. This can be replacing fingerposts, signs and furniture such as stiles and gates or bigger projects of re-routing the path away from the road.

The following are three examples of how Dales Way Association (DWA) are investing in 2024/25

New Off Road Section, north of the Chipping Staithe B6160 near Bolton Bridge

Colin mentioned in his Chairman's report confirmation from the Chatworth Estate at Bolton Abbey of their agreement to allow us to construct a new section of off-road footpath through a little woodland. This section will join the existing path behind the Chipping Staithe, created in the Spring 2020 COVID lockdown and keep walkers away from the very busy B6160 for a longer period.

The DWA Committee agreed to contribute a £1,000.00 to Burley in Wharfedale Walkers are Welcome to support the necessary work.

Hubberholme

You will have read Tony Grogan's article regarding The National Trust gaining agreement with their tenant farmer to offer a vital new section of permissive footpath off the road and alongside the beautiful River Wharfe.

The DWA Committee agreed to contribute a £1,000.00 to support the necessary work and path construction.

Lake District National Park Authority

The Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) raised the issue of availability of DWA funding to support landowner costs towards repairs for gates, stiles etc. In the past, LDNPA would have repaired or replaced but following budget and resource cuts in recent years this is no longer done unless the item is along one of their own promoted routes or it can be replaced with a more accessible item. Please note, LDNPA continue to replace fingerposts and waymarks, path surface repair and bridges as this is all part of their statutory duties.



The DWA Committee agreed maximum funding of £1,000.00 for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 to support landowners on the Dales Way with furniture repairs to a limit of £200 per furniture item. LDNPA will cover 25% of the cost, the Landowners the rest.

A different kind of funding but important in its own right. Although landowners are responsible for maintaining stiles and gates in a safe condition, this funding will help ensure repairs are timely. In addition, well maintained stiles and gates at the correct location help prevent walkers becoming lost.

- Gordon Tasker (Treasurer)

Could wind turbines impact on the Dales Way?



With the relaxation of the Government's ban on on-shore wind generation, there is deep concern in the South Pennines about a proposed massive wind farm, to be situated on the summit of Wadsworth Moor, above Haworth, where it would be highly visible from Haworth, Top Withens, the Pennine Way and even the moors above Hardcastle Crag. There would be 65 mega turbines rising to between 150 and 200 metres above the moorland (by comparison Blackpool Tower is about 158 metres high).

Proponents of the scheme point to the huge savings in carbon emissions for household electricity production, but opponents point out that by damaging deep peat on these open moorlands - much of it public access land and important for birdlife - an almost equal amount of precious carbon capture and storage would be lost. Equally large concrete bases and access roads, plus underground cables for transmission systems, would severely increase flood risk in already flood-vulnerable Calderdale.

It is unlikely the plans will come to fruition given huge local opposition including the local authority. However, this could merely pave the way for equally damaging if smaller schemes.

At the present time, wind turbines might not seem an immediate threat to the Dales Way, at least not in the two National Parks, and probably not in the Nidderdale National Landscape crossed by the Harrogate link. But for our Bradford link that crosses Bingley Moor, it could be a different story.

Wind turbines draw mixed opinions, and the Dales Way Association whilst supporting anything to safeguard the environment and reduce global warming, has a neutral position. Each and every case should be decided on its own merit. But in reality, there are ample low grade, degraded, and in some cases featureless post-industrial

landscapes in Britain, sites dominated by industry, distribution warehouses, motorways and agro-prairies, where large turbines, even in significant numbers, could actually become enhancing features. Because of their size and efficiency, it is no longer necessary to put turbines on hill tops where, as in the case of the Wadsworth Moor proposals, they could even be a threat to incoming aircraft heading for Manchester or Leeds-Bradford Airports.

We need a positive strategic Regional Plan to determine sites where wind farms might be built, where there is no risk of destruction of sites of ecological or scientific importance, including peatland, or areas of cultural significance to be compromised. And that could be important in order to protect not only the landscape corridors used by the Dales Way or the Dales High Way, but for all our finest and most cherished landscapes.



The DWA committee at work

It's a tough job running the Dales Way Association - but someone's got to do it. Here we all are, hard at work, in the boardroom of the Red Lion Inn on the 15th Feb this year.



From the left we have Gordon Tasker, Kath Doyle, chairman Colin Speakman, Ryk Downes and Tony Grogan, with Chris Grogan behind the camera. Our newest recruit, Cath Williams (right) from Kendal Ramblers, couldn't make this meeting.

We meet like this 3 or 4 times a year, keeping in touch by email for the rest of the time. It's not too onerous, so why don't you consider joining us? You can start as a committee member without portfolio until you're confident enough to take on any of the roles that need filling.

If you're interested, have a word at the April AGM, or email us at info@dalesway.org and we'll get back to you.

