

Annual General Meeting of the Dales Way Association
held at 2pm on Saturday 27th April in the Octagon Room, Grassington Devonshire Institute.

Minutes

Present:

Members: Eileen King (Great Dunmow), Ros Langdon (Sunbury on Thames), Julia Jardine (Ellesmere Shropshire), Barbara Macbeth (Leeds), Richard Hayes (Skipton), Elaine Gibson (Cottingham)

Committee members: Colin Speakman (Burley-in-Wharfedale) Chris Grogan (Saltaire), Tony Grogan (Saltaire), Cath Williams (Kendal) Ryk Downes (Otley) Gordon Tasker (Yeadon), Kath Doyle (Yeadon)

Guests: Barrie Allman (Leeds), Ric Williams (Kendal)

Welcome and Introduction:

Colin welcomed everyone to the meeting. He stressed how valuable it was to have Cath Williams as our representative in Cumbria & Westmorland and Furness. He reflected on the importance of the DWA's close relationship with all the Local Authorities, Land Owners and National Parks. He emphasised the importance of these relationships with the challenges of climate change impacting the Dales Way.

He also noted that the Dales Way and its walkers support a myriad of small local businesses in the Dales, Cumbria and Westmorland & Furness. Colin also mentioned briefly the work with the Chatsworth Estate to improve the safety for walkers with a permissive path away from the B6160.

Colin asked if there were any members who would be willing to join the committee to support their work.

Apologies for Absence: Terry Coombes, Terry Marsh, Linda Skelton, Malcolm Wray, Charles Hobson, Kate Ashbrook, Rowan Brockhurst, Alan Jukes, Kate Jukes, Marian Jones, Judith Smith, Helen Brown, Rosemary Hoare.

Ratification of the report of the 2023 AGM held on Friday 6th October 2023

This was accepted as an accurate report.

Proposed -Chris Grogan, Seconded -Eileen King Unanimous.

There were no matters arising.

Chairman's Annual Report. See AGM Reports below.

Footpath Reports. See AGM Reports below. Gordon, Tony & Cath presented the Footpath Reports. Tony additionally mentioned work which had taken place to repair a broken cable on Hebden Suspension Bridge which had resulted in a temporary closure in the winter and had reopened in February 2024.

Treasurer's Report. See AGM Reports below. Gordon presented the Treasurer's Report.

Colin recommended the re-appointment of our accountants Spencer Wilson, Chartered Accountants. Proposed Chris Grogan -Seconded: Ryk Downes. Unanimous.

Membership Secretary's Report. Chris presented the Membership Report. See AGM Reports below. Eileen King asked if we should increase membership costs. Chris stated that most were legacy members and it may prove too difficult administratively to change. Mention was made that going forward we could consider looking at specific appeals such as via Just Giving and it was agreed to discuss this at the next committee meeting in September.

Website Report. Tony Grogan presented the report. See AGM Reports below.

Accommodation Providers' Report. Kath presented the Accommodation Providers' Report. See AGM reports below.

Eileen King proposed and Julia Jardine seconded all Committee reports and Election of Officers and Committee en bloc. Unanimous.

DWA Committee therefore is:

Chair– Colin Speakman

Footpaths Officers:

Start to Bolton Bridge – Gordon Tasker & Kath Doyle

YDNPA- Tony and Chris Grogan

Cumbria and Westmorland and Furness - Cath Williams

Treasurer - Gordon Tasker

Secretary – Chris Grogan

Web Administrator- Tony Grogan

Newsletter/Minutes Secretary -Kath Doyle

Accommodation Provider Liaison – Kath Doyle

Archivist -Gordon Tasker

Committee Member- Ryk Downes

Any other Business

Date of the next AGM is yet to be agreed. Members attending preferred a Spring AGM (after the clocks have gone back and avoiding bank holidays). Date and location will be discussed and agreed at the next DWA Committee meeting to be held in September.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 16:30pm

Dales Way Association 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 find a very excellent replacement for our long-serving colleague Don Halliday 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 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.

In November we 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 path to become heavily waterlogged and eroded. This turn reflects funding issues as both National Parks and other authorities now have less 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 had developed close working relationship and from who 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 a most debilitating illness 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 affliction has also made 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

Footpath Report: Old Bridge, Ilkley to Bolton Bridge

This is a heavily trod section from Dales Way walkers, day trippers, holidaymakers as well as local residents from Ilkley, Addingham, Olicana Park (luxury cabins and static caravans) and surrounding area. The path stands up pretty well.

A generally quiet 12 months and no major work as in recent years there has been a range of path and furniture maintenance including

- Repairs to the wooden steps and a hand rail after Olicana Park
- Repairs to a number of wooden stiles.
- Some of the wooden stiles have been replaced with metal kissing gates and
- a couple of fingerposts have also been replaced.

These have been completed in conjunction with both Bradford and North Yorkshire County Councils.

In August 2023 a number of worn, bleached and broken circular Dales Way way markers were replaced.

Bradford County Council Area

1. The main issue of 2023 was the missing Dales Way Information Board at the Ilkley Old Bridge start
 - New one manufactured by Pryorsign, Rotherham
 - New frame built and included a brass plaque recognising DWA member Eileen King's generous donation
 - New framed Dales Way Information Board was installed by Richard Perham and his Countryside Team on 17th January 2024

2. Broken bridge with missing handrails to the rear of a property called The Hollins on Footpath Ilkley 4 near to the junction with Footpath Ilkley 6 in May 2023. The work was completed in October 2023
3. Ongoing and identified in Sept 2018, at the metal kissing gate by Ilkley Tennis Club. A well-worn path has formed to the left of the gate and over the field's boundary fence which is now non-existent at that point. The Council is aware. The landowner is aware and although agreed to mend has not been done. There is no safety issue and the path is clear and usable.

North Yorkshire County Council Area

During summer 2023 a number of walkers who contacted us to say they had taken a wrong turn at a stone stile which continues the route down a short track approach to the B6160 towards Bolton Bridge. This followed field edge walking from Farfield Hall.

We could clearly see how walkers may take a wrong turn at the stone stile as there is a definite well-worn and trodden path veering to the left of the gate leading into Lob Wood and with no signage, it would be possible for people who have no guidebook or map to continue left of the gate, rather than right over the stile.

To illustrate the problem on 23rd August when walking the route, we encountered two ladies from Germany who were taking a day walk from Ilkley to Bolton Abbey. They did not have a map or guidebook and were relying on a phone with Google Maps. They told us they turned left by the gate into Lob Wood, got lost and had to retrace their steps using their phone. To help with direction we added a waymarker to a cut down pole at wall height to guide walkers over the stone stile and the down short track approach to the B6160.

Permissive Footpath maintaining Off Road Walking at Bolton Bridge Staithes.

In late Spring, early Summer of 2020 Chatsworth Estate added piles of earth onto their Chipping Staithe near Bolton Bridge and after allowing it to settle during 2021 developed a path beyond the earth taking walkers away from the busy B6160 road

DWA have been working with the Chatsworth Estate during 2023 to continue the off-road walking through a plantation and agree to a small section of Permissive path of perhaps 150 metres in length.

We are pleased to say Chatsworth Estate approved this stretch of Permissive path in January 2024 and Colin Speakman has agreed with Burley Walkers are Welcome to take the work forward.

A site visit between Burley Walkers and Chatsworth Estate took place on Friday 19th April at which strimming the initial route and removing dead branches, required stone for the path, pedestrian gates, Permissive path and Dales Way waymarkers, timescales and logistics for the work were all discussed. The majority of work is likely to be completed in June 2024.

Kath Doyle and Gordon Tasker

Footpath Report YDNPA

Dales Way path between Buckden and Hubberholme

We were contacted by Peter Katic who is the National Trust Area Ranger for the Yorkshire Dales National Park who said that they wished to reroute the DW path approaching Hubberholme to follow the riverside rather than the road. This is possible because the 4 fields by the river are National Trust property and the tenant farmer had given his consent. The committee agreed that this was really great news and would fully support the proposal.

Tony, Chris and Colin then met with Peter Katic and two of the YDNP National Trust rangers to walk through the proposed path diversion between Buckden and Hubberholme. This will eliminate a quarter of a mile of road walking to take the DW by the riverside. There will be gates at either end of the section and the path will be surfaced, with a flagged area where prone to flooding. The necessary permissions and surveys are to be conducted with the hope this work will be completed late 2024 early 2025. The committee discussed what contribution the DWA should make towards the cost of this work and agreed the sum of up to £1000. This project meets one of the clear aims of the DWA, that is to take the walker off road and along the riverside wherever feasible to do so.

Tony Grogan

Crook of Lune Bridge to Bowness. (Approx 21 miles/33km)

Since joining the Dales Way Committee my partner Ric and I have walked my section at least once in both directions. We have surveyed about 50% of the path in depth. Our first impression was that a lot of signs were missing or worn out, making it more challenging to follow the path correctly. There are also various broken stiles and signposts.

The areas that we have covered in depth so far are: Crook of Lune Bridge to Shaw End (Westmoreland and Furness) Staveley to near Crag House (Lake District National Park) For those stretches we have put up over 70 waymarkers in total. We have cut back foliage to reveal hidden waymarkers and cleaned up mossy steps. I have reported issues first raised by Helen Skelton from HF including a dangerous slippery bridge and several broken stiles, as well as similar issues that we have seen for ourselves. I have made contact with Marian Jones, Area Ranger for LDNP. Marian kindly supplied me with our first batch of waymarkers, which was a huge help. I have just learned that Marian will be leaving her present post to start a new job with Cumbria Wildlife Trust. Her colleague Matt Croney will be our contact for The Dales Way for immediate future.

I met with Helen Brown, Countryside Access Officer for Westmorland and Furness on 9th April 2024. This was a hugely useful meeting as we covered a wide range of issues concerning The Dales Way: Firstly we discussed Cowan head near Burneside where the Dales Way path is flooded and impassable right now. Helen has been trying to contact South Cumbria Rivers Trust for almost a year now, but they have not responded. This was only a temporary fix for the winter, now no longer required. Permanent solution for this summer is hopefully some willow or hazel revetment work to secure the remaining banking then ideally a boardwalk across the section that floods. Helen wondered if we could look in to help with funding for this project? The Rivers Trust may be able to provide some funding to fence this section as the sheep are currently making the erosion worse as they travel up and down from the river for water. Helen didn't think that the path could go the other side of the river, as there are at least two ladder stiles that side, which are difficult for some people and impossible for dogs.

Helen has been to visit the slippery bridge at Holme Park Farm and spoken to the farmer (who had also had the misfortune to slip over on the bridge while chasing cows!). Some nail down sticky strips have been ordered, which will make the bridge safer. I was able to discuss some other stiles and signs needing repair, which W&F Highways team have added to their list of jobs. I have reported

them on the W&F Council website, which is the best way for Helen and her team to become aware of them (if they don't know about them already). There was also an off-putting sign at Tenement Farm near Burneside, saying Private Access only - Helen told me that this was not acceptable on a public footpath and she will be sorting that out.

Helen has also provided me with some waymarkers, so that we can continue to replace signs as needed. A member of the public had reported a missing sign at Staveley so that walkers kept getting lost on a housing estate. We have put up a couple of signs to rectify this and visited the woman who had reported the problem. There are certainly some further challenging sections, notably Shaw End to Staveley, where signage is missing and there are a couple of broken stiles. This is still a work in progress, but the weather is improving and the work gets easier!

Cath Williams

DWA Treasurers Report 2023/2024

It is important to note the Dales Way Association (DWA) Accounts for 2023/24 have not been audited at the time of the AGM on Saturday 27th April 2024. The March 2024 DWA Bank Statement is due. Following receipt, I will work with Martin Bairstow, Spencer Wilson, Chartered Accountants to audit the DWA Accounts to 31 March 2024.

Summary

- **Capital**
 - We hold one Virgin Money Account. The balance is £15.2k
 - In April 2023 an old/unused Yorkshire Bank Three Month Premium Deposit Account was closed transferring £2,644 to the Virgin Money Account
- **Income**
 - Predominantly Subscriptions and Donations
 - Both figures slightly down compared to 2023. Table 1 overleaf refers
 - Largest donation. £1,000 at the DWA AGM, October 2023 towards three Dales Way Information Boards, replacing one at the start in Ilkley and two in reserve.
 - Annual claim for Gift Aid from HMRC Charities
- **Expenditure**
 - Standard outgoings year on year include Footpath repairs, Accountants Fees, Committee Travel Expenses, Annual Web Hosting and AGM costs.
 - Compared with 2023, Accountant fees and website costs increased. Equally, less travel claims and room hire cost. Table 2 overleaf refers
 - Largest spend. £1,000 for Three Dales Way Information Boards
- **Anticipated expenditure items in 2024/25**
 - Fees = £250 estimate. Spencer Wilson, Chartered Accountant (2022/23 = £246)
 - Donation = £1,000. To Burley Walkers are Welcome Group to fund work on a Permissive path near Chatsworth Estate Chipping Staithe, more off road footpath on the busy B6160
 - Donation = £1,000. To National Trust for a vital new section of Permissive footpath at Hubberholme, off road alongside the River Wharfe through National Trust land.
 - Funding = £1,000. 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. Lake District National Park Authority will cover 25% of the cost, the Landowners the rest.

The £3,250 expenditure due in 2024/25, leaves approx £12k in the bank. £12k alone may not get us very far, for example, contributions to expensive path work repair or loss of a bridge affected by the wetter weather meaning it is difficult to predict when or what this maybe.

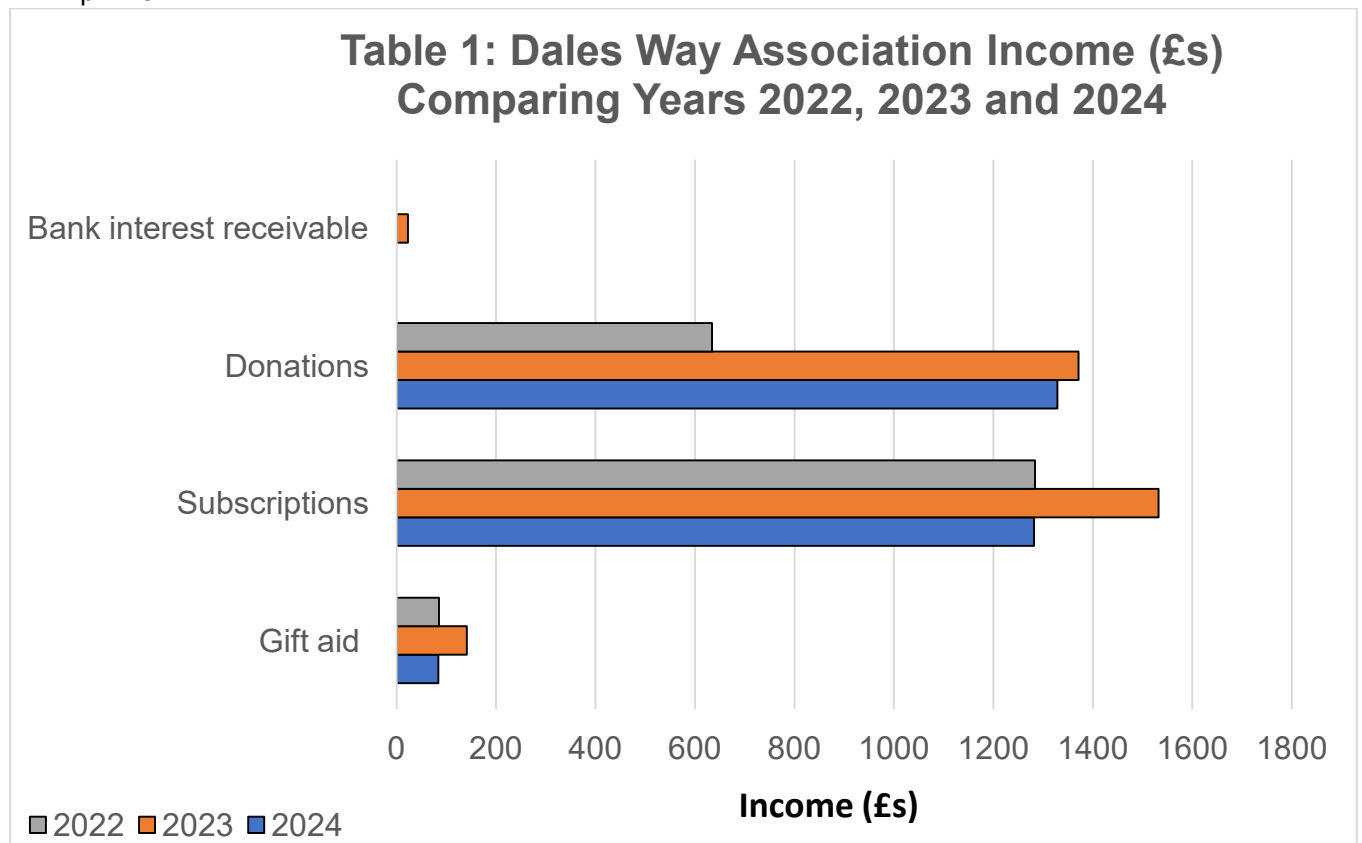
Our monies can go much further of course when applied to projects which other organisations may also contribute. We are in a much stronger position to argue for improvements to the Dales Way if we can offer match funding or a smaller financial contribution.

The DWA Committee review how we can better use our monies at our quarterly meetings. 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.

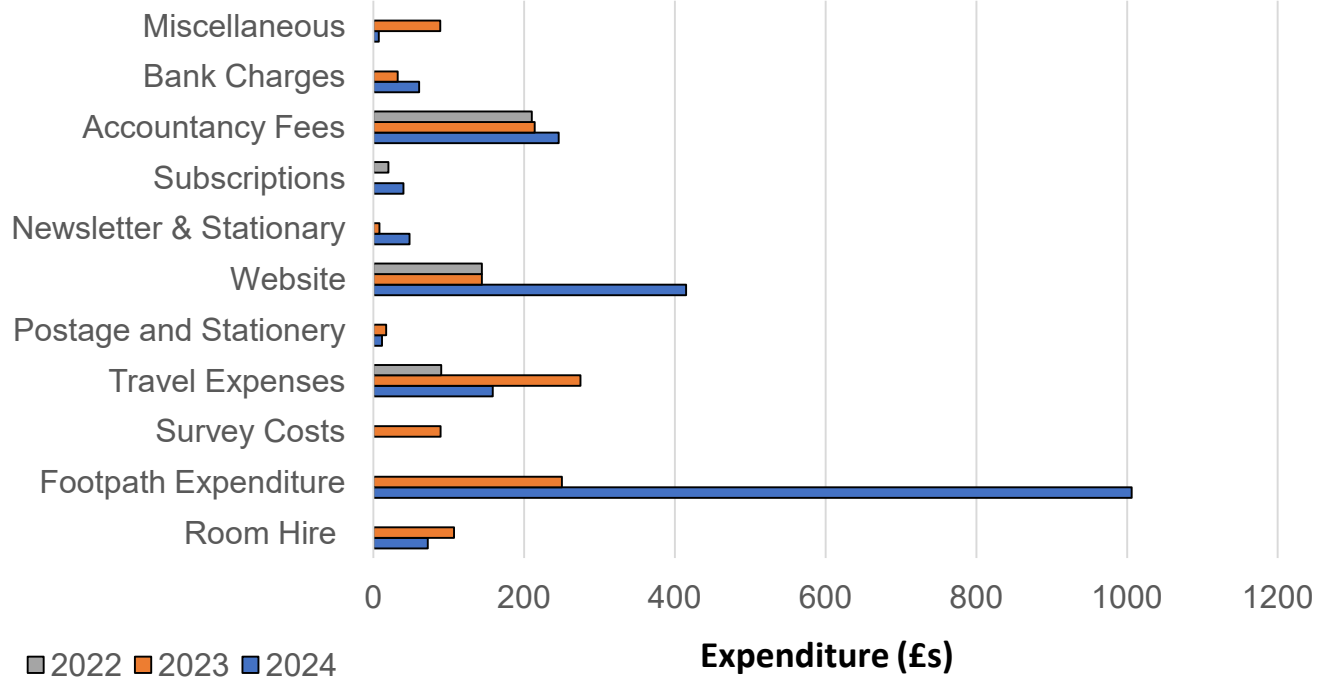
Overall, our account shows the DWA Committee continue to use due care and diligence on how monies are spent.

Gordon Tasker, Treasurer

27th April 2024



**Table 2: Dales Way Association Expenditure (£s)
Comparing Years 2022, 2023 and 2024**



Membership

After a pause in membership last year we are now accepting new members and have had 3 recently. We currently have 236 members including 2 x Life Members. Although formal membership is gradually declining interest in our social media remains vibrant. We have 3,700 followers to our Facebook page and the Dales Way Facebook group has over 4,000 members.

Chris Grogan

Website Report

There has been some disruption to the website this year due to ill health, but hopefully no-one noticed. Membership applications online were dropped for a while, but have now been restored in part via bankers orders.

The website account has been adjusted so that it can easily be passed on to another web administrator when required, or to a local company who can manage the website on our behalf if this is needed.

We have also obtained an **SSL certificate** that gives you a secure connection (https:) with a reassuring little lock icon to the side of website address bar.

Tony Grogan

DWA Accommodation Liaison Report

Removing the tariffs has proved tricky as some of the providers are keen to have their rates publicized. We have tried to be flexible on this.

It has been a quiet period over the winter months and I will be picking up where I left off to contact those who are still on my to do list.

We had a closure due to retirement from Colin and Janet Howlett who have offered B and B accommodation on the Dales Way at North Barn in Hebden for over ten years. They concluded their season in 2023 and I wrote to them on behalf of the association wishing them a very happy retirement.

The cost of B and B accommodation remain over £100 per night in most instances for a double room and a number of accommodation providers only accept a 2night stay. A DW walking holiday booked through a walking company with baggage handling averages £830- £1200 depending on the number of days walked. As ever accommodation is block booked by the holiday walking companies so independent travellers need to continue to book early to avoid disappointment!

It is still important that we look to encourage alternative types of affordable accommodation on the route particularly to encourage young people to take up long distance walking. We raised the issue at our meeting with Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority on November 10th to see what can be done to promote increased availability of camp sites, yurts, glamping pods pop ups etc. on the DW route.

I still need to contact the camp sites and ensure our info is up to date. We hope we will see some more pop -up sites this season.

There is an interesting opportunity in Ilkley at the start of the DW where the aptly named Dales Way Pub on the corner opposite the church has closed and is for sale. It has 9 rooms for visitors and would make a great walkers pub/B and B for anyone with vision and £795,000 to invest.

If there is someone who would like to join our committee and take on this role it would be welcomed.

Kath Doyle