

Chairmans Report 2025

It's the task of a Chairman, when preparing an Annual Report, to select what have been the most important and significant events to have taken place during that previous year.

The year 2024-25 has been a year of immense success for the Dales Way Association, and it is difficult to choose or summarise what has been the most important development.

But maybe it's best to take our successes in chronological order as they have occurred.

First and maybe foremost perhaps has been the wonderful rebirth of the Dales Way Association within what we still think of as Cumbria – nowadays Westmorland & Furness, and of course the Lake District National Park. Following the retirement of our great Friend Don Holliday before Covid, this the most complicated and demanding section of the Dales Way used by few other walkers has struggled to be clear of obstruction and from poor waymarking. But during the last year we have been so lucky to have found an energetic new colleague, Cath Williams, from Kendal Ramblers, who has proved quite amazing in transforming our fortunes in the north west. She has built up excellent working relationships with footpath officers in Westmorland & Furness and also the Lake District National Park, but also with individual landowners and farmers. This has over a few short months transformed the physical presentation and maintenance of the Dales Way north and west of the Yorkshire Dales National Park

Thank you, Cath, for all you are doing.

The next extraordinary development, after years of campaigning was the welcome breakthrough at what are known as the Chipping Staithes, just south of Bolton Bridge, where thanks to the generosity the Chatsworth Estate at Bolton Abbey we have been granted use of a couple of hundred metres of riverside permissive path through the woodland alongside the busy B6160. Thanks to wonderful work by the footpath team from Burley Walkers are Welcome and also the Lower Wharfedale Ramblers, a new extremely attractive section of footpath has been created which crucially takes walkers away from the dangerous B6160 road onto a lovely section of riverside path. This adds huge value to the Dales Way as well as offering greater safety and security.

And to add to everything, on January 31st of this year, I had the rare privilege of being able to officially open another wonderful new 600 metres section of extremely beautiful riverside path on National Trust land, just south of Hubberholme, which again takes walkers off an unpleasant stretch of tarmac onto a path of eyewatering loveliness. We are so grateful to the National Trust, especially Peter Katic the Area Ranger and his colleagues and also the National Park Authority for making this happen. It is currently only a permissive path, but we can have every confidence that in the fullness of time it will become a right of way available for future generations of Dales Way walkers to enjoy.

And waiting in the wings is another good news story – some radical improvements to the Leeds Link of the Dales Way designed to take our route away from the tarmac of rapidly expanding suburban streets of Bramhope, to a fascinating if undulating new route leading over the watershed of the River Wharfe and onto Pool Bank and Otley Chevin. Thanks to our extraordinary Leeds City Councillor, Ultra Marathon Runner and Force of Nature Ryk Downes for making this happen.

Watch this space.

All this has been achieved through the work and commitment of a very small but dedicated committee. Let us thank and celebrate the formidable team of Chris and Tony Grogan. Tony as we all know has been coping with serious and debilitating illness over the last two years, but has continued to do brilliant work for us both as Footpath Officer for the Dales Way within the Yorkshire Dales National Park and also as our amazing webmaster. But I think we all recognise this could not have happened without the energy and support of our Secretary Chris who has not only been so supportive of Tony, but also as our General Secretary the highly efficient manager of our affairs. Thank you so much Tony and Chris for all that you are doing for us which includes a very lively and social media and Facebook presence.

But we are equally fortunate in having a very efficient Treasurer Gordon Tasker who also has another key role as Footpath Officer for the very busy southern section of the Dales Way between Ilkley and Bolton Bridge, dealing with both Bradford and North Yorkshire Councils. As you will see from our accounts, not only does Gordon ensure that we are doing well financially, but he enables and even encourages us to use our limited funds to enable so many good things to happen along the Dales Way, especially when we are able to use modest sums from our own resources as "match funding" thereby encouraging money to come from other public and private bodies to support improvement of the Dales Way.

And finally, by no means least is the energetic Kath Doyle our very efficient Minutes and Agenda Secretary and also Newsletter Editor who again does such a brilliant job producing a lively and fascinating online journal, always an excellent read. Kath also doubles in being our Accommodation Providers Secretary, co-ordinating and keeping in touch with those many small businesses who provide such a vital service to Dales Way walkers.

Once a year we have our meeting with the National Park Authority in Grassington usually also attended by officers from the Lake District National Park, Westmorland & Furness and also Bradford. This is always a pleasant and cordial occasion, but I cannot help reflecting how these are well-paid professional on hopefully good salaries, whereas our small team gives so of

their free time, purely because they care. The excellent relationships we have forged with these officers – all of whom we now regard as friends – is a real tribute to the very real success of the Dales Way Association over the last four or so decades.

Thank you, our small committee, and also you our ordinary members for your generous support, subscriptions, donations and lovely feedback, and for all that you have given to the Dales Way Association in 2024/5. Thank you for enabling all the physical, mental and spiritual benefits, but above all the sheer pleasure enjoyed by the many thousands of walkers who have enjoyed the Dales Way, in the year that has passed, and for the year, and indeed years, that lie ahead.

So here we are in 2025, which as we are all aware is a strange and volatile time. Whatever the future holds let's stay optimistic, as politicians for all their blustering and irrationality, are mere mortals. One thing we can be certain of is that when they have disappeared, the Dales Way will be there for the people of Yorkshire, but also for the rest of the UK and indeed the world, to inspire, motivate and offer true insight into the enduring beauty of the Yorkshire Dales and the Lake District, hopefully for generations to come.

Coilin Speakman April 2025

Dales Way Association AGM

Footpath Report: Old Bridge, Ilkley to Bolton Bridge

Overview

A heavily trod section from Dales Way walkers, day trippers, holidaymakers and local residents from Ilkley, Addingham, Olicana Park (cabins and static caravans) and surrounding area. I reviewed in September 2024 and February 2025. The path stands up reasonably well.

2022 and 2023 were years when a range of repairs and maintenance to broken bridges, wooden hand rails, stiles replaced by kissing gates and worn, damaged Dales Way waymarkers replaced. 2024 saw a number of different issues along this section.

Bradford County Council

Reported September 2024: Aftermath of Storm Lilian in August, fallen tree, very low to ground with big branches overhanging large wooden gate/kissing gate dropping downhill from the upgraded footbridge beyond the Pump House opposite Ilkley Golf Club.

- **Action taken:**
 - Ilkley Golf Club, who own this land cut back the low hanging branches

Reported September 2024, Observation from a walker of a path collapse, half a mile from Olicana, down the 40 steps to walk beside the River Wharfe. My review suggested field drainage had impacted the path. Not a collapse just very muddy and a big depression in the path. An area frequented by cattle drinking at that stretch of the river and churning wet ground ... many hooves make a muddy worn mess.

- **Action taken:**
 - Bradford Council were aware in early 2024 but didn't deem a major issue. Council Works Team to review and improve where appropriate.

Reported January 2025: Observation from a walker. Flooding at the large dip of the path and kissing gate by Ilkley Tennis Club. Walkers had to divert further up to a drier area and climb under/over the fence. The same issue happened in 2024 after heavy rain

- **Action taken:**

- The Countryside Team reviewed and scraped off the mud exposing the stone flags in the kissing gate, cleared back all the vegetation and installed two new waymarker posts.
- Discussions included my suggestion of moving the kissing gate to the right, beyond the large tree requiring a footpath diversion. Time consuming and costly process so not likely to be pursued unless it was considered totally necessary.
- The Countryside Officers view was the path flooding was rare and in extreme wet weather with the water eventually dispersing. They agreed to keep an eye on this to consider if anything else may be required.
- Agreed flooding more likely in extreme wet weather, Autumn, Winter times January, February as has happened in the last couple of years. I will monitor with Countryside Team after wet weather

This is at the same point as the ongoing issue identified in Sept 2018. The very well-worn path and dip formed to the left of the kissing gate and over the field's boundary fence which is non-existent at that point. The Council are aware. The landowner is aware and although agreed to mend has not been done. Although the landowner over many years has chosen not to re-fence his field, Bradford Council can't force the farmer if he doesn't wish to. There is no safety issue at the present time and the path is clear and usable.

North Yorkshire Council

Reported January 2025 Observation from a walker of a continual stream of water flowing across and down the hill on the B6160 towards Bolton Bridge, from a culvert under the road causing an ice risk in cold weather and a splashing risk to pedestrians at other times.

- **Action Taken:**

- NYC met a representative from Bolton Abbey on site w/c 10th February.
- Culvert under the B6160 was flowing well and there was no flooding problem at that time
- Bolton Abbey will do work on their land to ensure that the culvert stays clear and NYC will get the roadside gullies emptied.

Reported January 2025 Observation from a walker that nothing has been done to trim the overgrowth obstructing what little verge there is on the left-hand side uphill from Bolton Bridge and may only get worse once the growing season starts

- **Action Taken:**

- NYC didn't notice any major problem with overgrown vegetation but will arrange for the worst to be cut back as necessary.

Permissive Footpath maintaining Off Road Walking at Bolton Bridge Staithes.

In late Spring, early Summer 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 worked with Chatsworth Estate during 2023 to continue the off-road walking through a plantation and a small section of Permissive path of perhaps 150 metres in length. This was approved in January 2024. Burley Walkers are Welcome to take the work forward.

- **Action Taken:**

- A site visit between Burley Walkers and Chatsworth Estate took place on Friday 19th April 2024 at which strimming the initial route and removing dead branches, stone for the path, pedestrian gates, Permissive path and Dales Way waymarkers, timescales and logistics were all discussed.
- *Burley Walkers are Welcome Group* completed the Permissive path which was up and running in August 2024 continuing the off road walking from behind the Chatsworth Estate Chipping Staithe.

Kath Doyle and Gordon Tasker

Footpath Officers

26th April 2025

Footpath Report – Yorkshire Dales National Park

New footpath at Hubberholme

The major news this year has been the creation of a new length of riverside footpath on the approach to Hubberholme which takes walkers off the road.

The work has been undertaken by the National Trust under the lead of Peter Katic and his team of rangers who cover the top of Wharfedale. The new path will eliminate a quarter of a mile of road walking to take the Dales Way by the riverside. There are gates at either end of the section and the path has been surfaced, with a flagged area where prone to flooding.



The new path was formally opened by Peter Katic and Colin Speakman at an event at the end of January. Initially the new path will be “permissive”, though it is expected that the route will become a right-of-way eventually. The existing route remains for those who might prefer it.



The DWA committee discussed what contribution the DWA should make towards the cost of this work and agreed the sum of £1000. This project meets one of the clear aims of the Dales Way, that is to take the walker along the riverside wherever feasible to do so.

Grassington Campsite

We received a request from Jason at Grassington campsite to support their application submitted to the YDNP.

"The application seeks permission to build a permanent facilities block, including showers, toilets, and a reception area, as well as to extend the site's operational period from the current 60 days to a full camping season, from spring through autumn. This would give your members the opportunity to enjoy Grassington Campsite and a stop point near Grassington for longer each year."

The site is just off Hebden Road, close to Grassington, with the Dales Way crossing just beneath. The DWA cttee decied to support this application as camping at Grassington is much needed.

Denthead road closure

A landslide near Denthead has led to the road being closed, and likely to remain so for a long time (over a year). The road is officially closed to ALL traffic (including walkers). We have put up an alternative route (part of the watershed alternative) on the website and the authority has placed copies at ether end of the affected route.



- Tony Grogan

DALES WAY AGM. Saturday 26 April 2025

Footpath Report for section from Crook of Lune Bridge to Bowness.
(Approx 21 miles/33km)

Firstly, I must apologise for not being at the meeting to deliver this report in person.

A lot of progress has been made over the last year. My partner Ric and myself have put up 140 waymarkers in total (over the past two years). I hope that people will now be able to find their way more easily especially through the farms, where it is sometimes quite complicated. I have also noticed that in general the paths are not as overgrown as they were last year.

I am happy to say that the slippery bridge between Holme Park Farm and the M6, which I reported last year has now been greatly improved by the addition of non-slip strips.

This time last year Linda Skelton, who is a walk leader for Holiday Fellowship contacted the Dales Way Committee to report various broken stiles and gates. This led to Helen Brown (Countryside Access Officer for W&F) to submit an application for funding to HF (Sarah Davis). This has now been approved for "replacing faulty gates and stiles and improving the drainage for a section of The Dales Way".

Helen has sent me a list of the gates and stiles which will be repaired/replaced. The work was due to be done in Autumn 2024, but due to the poor weather it hasn't happened yet. I have just heard from Helen Brown that they hope to get started with the work before the first HF walk in May 2025.

Helen also let me know that they (HF) are also going to fund some way-marking and have asked Helen to put in an application to replace the bridge at Black Moss Tarn, which is reduced to one plank.

Helen has also let me know that W&F are waiting for a working window to start work on the area at Cowen Head where the path is frequently flooded, because it is so close to the river. As the work required is right next to the river, the Environment Agency has restricted the time when the work can be done to between July and October. The work will be started as soon as possible within that time frame. The plan was to install some willow or hazel revetement to secure the remaining banking and then possibly a boardwalk across the section that floods.

Regarding the Lake District National Park section of The Dales Way, it's all good news. The new ranger Matt Croney has employed a volunteer to improve the signage and the volunteer has put up about 30 new signs, which look very smart.

So, to summarise, lots of things have been done. The paths are looking good and there is the prospect of quite a lot of work about to happen in the Spring/Summer.

Cath Williams

Dales Way Association AGM Treasurers Report 2024/2025

It is important to note the Dales Way Association (DWA) Accounts 2024/25 have not been audited at the time of the AGM on Saturday 26th April 2025. The March 2025 DWA Bank Statement has been received and I will be working with Martin Bairstow, Streets Spencer Wilson, Chartered Accountants to audit the DWA Accounts 2024/25.

Summary

- **Capital**

- DWA hold one Virgin Money Account. The balance at March 2025 was £14,075.55

- **Income**

- Two sources are Subscriptions and Donations
- Donations are down compared with previous years, whilst subscriptions remain constant if not better than last year. Table 1 overleaf refers
- Annual claim to HMRC Charities for Gift Aid

- **Expenditure**

- Standard annual outgoings include Footpath repairs, Accountants Fees, Committee Travel Expenses, Annual Web Hosting and AGM costs.
- Compared with 2024, Accountant fees, Travel expenses, donations and footpath repairs increased whilst Website costs were down. Table 2 overleaf refers
- Largest spends.
 1. £1,282.92 Funding materials to complete Permissive path near Chatsworth Estate Chipping Staithe, more off road footpath on the busy B6160 completed by Burley Walkers are Welcome Group
 - DWA donated £100 to Burley Walkers are Welcome Group for their work
 2. £1,000.00 donation to National Trust to support development of a vital new section of Permissive footpath at Hubberholme, more off road alongside the River Wharfe through National Trust land.

- **Anticipated expenditure items in 2025/26**

- The usual Accountants Fees, Travel Expenses, Annual Web Hosting, AGM costs. There is no significant anticipated spend DWA are aware of for 2025/26 at the time of the AGM

£14k in the bank is healthy enough but may not get us very far, for example, future expensive path work repair or loss of bridges affected by the wetter autumn and winter 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, Dales Way Association
26th April 2025

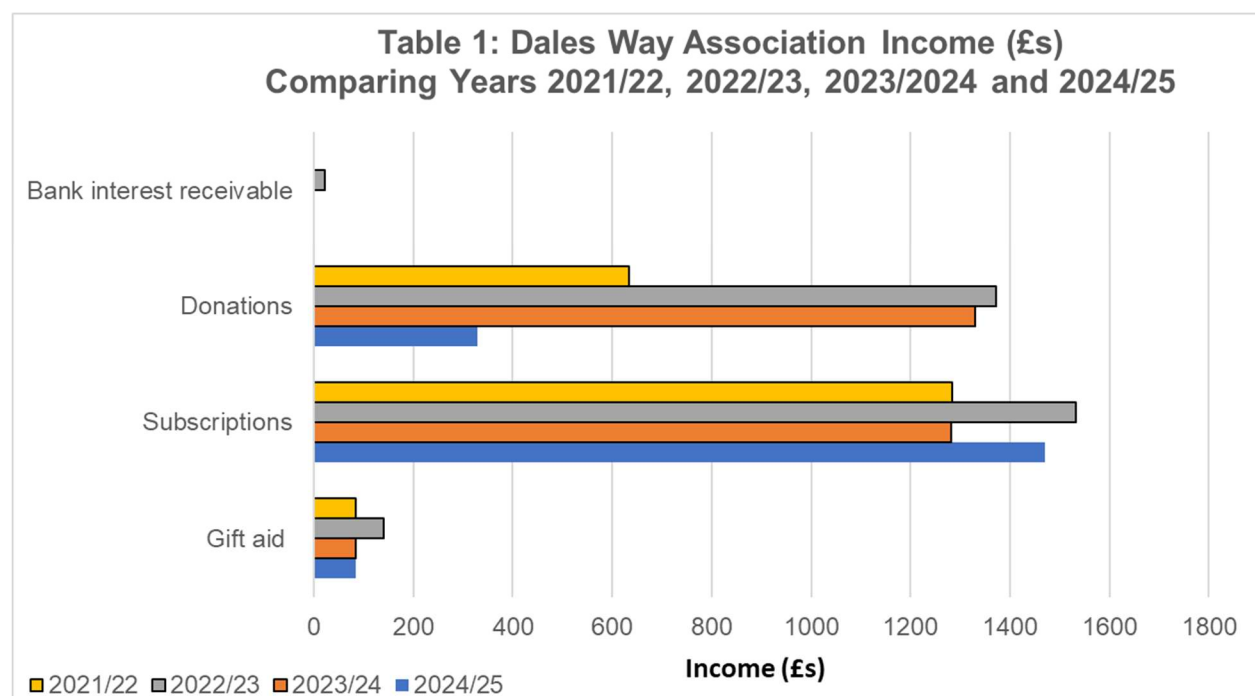
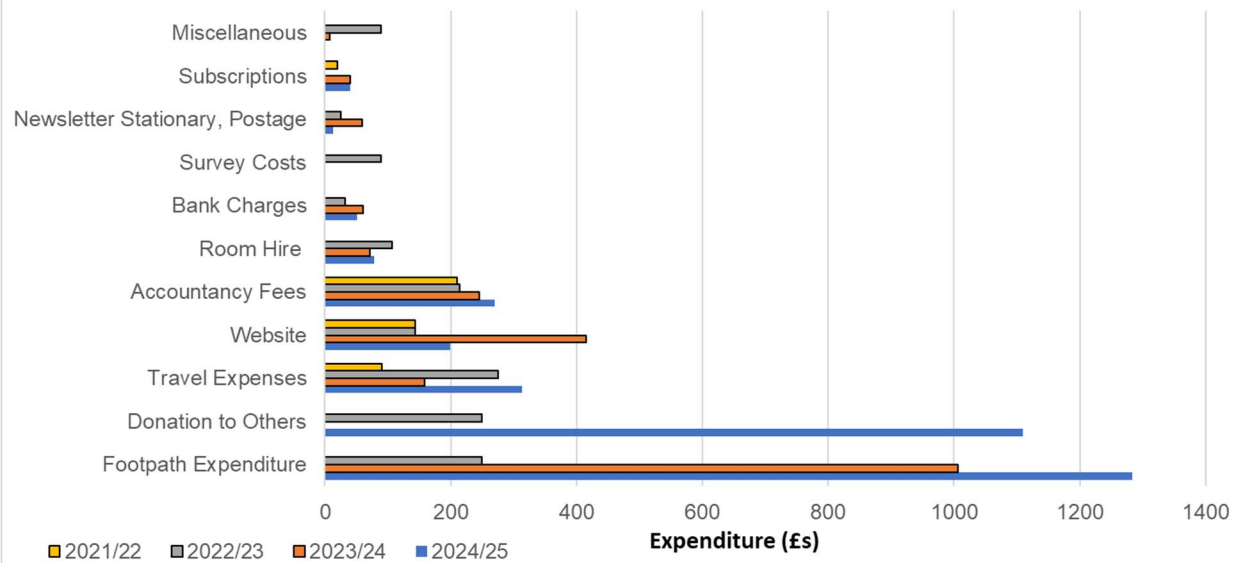


Table 2: Dales Way Association Expenditure (£s)
Comparing Years 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25



Membership

We currently have 212 members including 5 x Life Members and a member who has paid for 5 years. As we found last year formal membership is gradually declining however enquiries from walkers to our email address and interest in social media remains vibrant. We have 3,800 followers to our Facebook page and Terry Marsh's Dales Way Facebook group has 5,000 members.

Website

The Dales Way website is running fine, with plenty of interest. The figure below shows usage over the last 12 months – the main point of interest is the **Visits** numbers, as this shows the number of unique visitors at any time. It's fairly even, with a slight dip over the winter months.

Subdomain

Summary by Month
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Summary by Month										
Month	Daily Avg				Monthly Totals					
	Hits	Files	Pages	Visits	Sites	KBytes	Visits	Pages	Files	Hits
Apr 2025	2897	1923	840	439	2149	1289659	2637	5044	11538	17384
Mar 2025	3055	1910	1127	451	8950	6140585	14001	34958	59239	94733
Feb 2025	3128	2131	922	428	8716	5612849	11986	25836	59674	87589
Jan 2025	2978	2041	886	409	9262	6465656	12689	27476	63288	92346
Dec 2024	2185	1300	819	343	7400	5420428	10649	25405	40323	67758
Nov 2024	2584	1362	980	375	7635	4626890	11277	29416	40880	77539
Oct 2024	2863	1668	1116	377	8318	5755851	11708	34622	51708	88760
Sep 2024	3758	2130	1501	468	9190	6245350	14043	45036	63907	112763
Aug 2024	3576	2290	1196	463	9437	7606478	14380	37102	71018	110864
Jul 2024	3581	2193	1257	477	9793	7642475	14793	38981	68000	111016
Jun 2024	3970	2261	1588	511	9803	8217498	15346	47649	67836	119114
May 2024	3805	2475	1243	490	10526	8482072	15209	38539	76728	117955
Totals						73505791	148718	390064	674139	1097821

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DWA Accommodation Liaison Report to AGM 2025.

I have continued to update details of accommodation providers over the period.

New providers

Pool House B and B Lowgill has been added to our website as Chris observed they had received very favourable comments from walkers via Facebook. So, I made contact with them and they were happy to be added to our listings.

New entry added for Kate at **Lambrigg Camping**

Amended details:

I was able to establish a new mobile telephone number for **Grayrigg Campsite** when a walker reported to us that they had been unable to make contact with them.

Howeston Barn Lambrigg has provided a new phone number and email address.

A new proprietor at the **New Inn Appletreewick** -called Alexa added to the site. Doubles from £120 per night

Closure:

Daleslea in Sedbergh has ceased trading and we have removed the details from the website

Future potential

Cath passed on information that Charles Stock at **Holme Park Farm** west of the M6 is considering placing camping pods on the farm. Watch this space!

General

I received a query re Sherpa Van booking dates, as a walker had attempted to book dates in early March 25 and site had not deterred them until after imputing all their details. I checked the website and was able to reassure them that the website clearly states that their season covers 31/3 to 19/10/25 with earlier days greyed out.

The cost of B and B accommodation continues to steadily increase to circa £120 per night in most instances for a double room and as reported before several accommodation providers only accept a 2-night stay as its not economical/ environmentally friendly for their business to do otherwise.

A DW walking holiday booked through a walking company has increased to an average of £950 for 7 days and up to £1350 for 10 days per person, this usually includes baggage

transfer and breakfast. As ever accommodation is block booked by the holiday walking companies so independent travellers need to continue to book early to avoid disappointment!

As a committee we are still keen to see the expansion of campsites and glamping pods etc

Masons Campsite in Appletreewick recently featured in the TV series “Tales From the Riverbank” on Channel 5 with Clare Balding , so expect it to attract many visitors this year.

The Dales Way Pub on the corner opposite the church in Ilkley which I reported on last year as being for sale was displaying an Under Offer sign recently but I haven’t been able to establish what is planned or if that offer has progressed. It still shows as for sale on Right Move site.

Kath Doyle

Accommodation Provider Liaison