

Title: Cleveland Way Tales

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Here is Dave Greenwood's latest Tale, where he look at the origins of Moorsbus and charts it's revival.

"I'm beginning this 'Tale from the Trail' with a riddle;

'Question: How do you wake up a sleeping giant? Answer: Poke him with a stick. Question: But how big a stick will you need?'

There will be readers who already know and have great affection for 'Moorsbus', but there will be many hearing the name for the first time.

'Moorsbus' is the rural bus service which has served walkers, visitors and residents in and around the North York Moors National Park for over 30 years. The first of its kind, it became a real asset to the National Park, it was widely acknowledged as 'the best recreational service of its type in Europe' and used as the model of good practice in many countries.

At the height of its powers there were up to fourteen 'Moorsbuses' whizzing around, providing scheduled services that connected larger towns surrounding the national park with small communities, popular destinations and attractions within the park area.

Then in 2013 'Moorsbus' received an almost fatal blow. Vital funding was withdrawn as a result of some hard decisions necessary during the financial crisis. Sadly for many at the time, it's wheels literally stopped turning.

Fortunately there were people who just wouldn't let 'Moorsbus' go. These volunteers banded together and formed the Moorsbus Community Interest Company with the aim of operating whatever services could be funded by contributions from passengers, supporters, parish councils, the North York Moors National Park and charitable donations. An opportunity for the public to give their support was also found with the creation of the Friends of Moorsbus.



They have been very successful. With careful management, they put 'Moorsbus' back on the road. The 2013 season saw one bus running services during the summer months, and this year there are three buses operating.

I met up recently for a brew and a chat with Bill Breakell, one of the volunteers who are actively involved in 'Moorsbus' today. Apart from making excellent coffee and sharing a passion with me for chocolate biscuits, Bill is eminently qualified to be one of the directors of the Moorsbus Community Interest Company. He has a lifetime of experience working in tourism and transportation. Bill has known 'Moorsbus' also from the start. He was an Assistant Director at the Moors Centre in 1975 and after wide experience in economic regeneration schemes based on heritage and tourism, he returned to the North York Moors National Park in 1990 as its Tourism and Transport Officer.

Bill told me how 'Moorsbus' started in the late 1970's, when the National Bus company at the time was concerned that its main services would not be well used if remoter rural communities in North Yorkshire could not access them. From the start 'Moorsbus' was well received and very popular, the National Park's support and involvement in the service increased over the years.

Local residents welcomed the improved transport links. They also saw it as a way to reduce the numbers of visitor cars using a fragile road network. Walkers enjoyed the opportunity for walks with easy transport links. Visitors, young and old got good access to many areas of the National Park. The Park Authority supported the long term environmental benefits from a reduction in car journeys; improved air quality, reduction of the visual intrusion by traffic in the landscape and a contribution towards reducing their carbon footprint.

'Moorsbus' was and still is today, a win win win.

It uses comfortable modern vehicles, has affordable fares and reliable services. A Helmsley to Rievaulx and Sutton Bank route was added this year, which has been enormously popular with walkers using the Cleveland Way. Customer surveys show that when funding and income allows they want extra 'Moorsbus' routes adding. Rosedale and Dalby Forest are top of the list. Imagine the increased walking routes that would bring within reach!

So the answer to the riddle:

'Moorsbus' is the sleeping giant and it needs a poke with your stick. The more sticks/support there are for the service, the more 'Moorsbus' will be seen as a 'well spent funding opportunity', and more journeys and destinations can be added to the timetable.

So if you are a walker use the service when you can. Take a look at the timetable and think of all the opportunities for great days out.

If you are a visitor to the North York Moors look at all the places you can get to on a 'Moorsbus'; no road map or traffic to worry about.

If you are resident in the park take a 'Moorsbus' when you can. Let the driver worry about the summer traffic and where to park at your destination.

Whatever size of stick you have – please use it."

Find details of Moorsbus timetables on

www.moorsbus.org

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