

Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 25 January 2021
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Environment and Regeneration
Report Title:	Funding and Delivery of the Greenlinks Service
Purpose of Report:	To agree the continuation of Sustainable Transport Planning Contributions (Section 106 funding) for the Greenlinks Community Transport Service until 31 March 2023.
Report Owner:	Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport
Responsible Officer:	Miles Punter - Director of Environment and Housing
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	<p>Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning</p> <p>Accountant Environment and Housing Services</p> <p>Legal Services (Committee Reports)</p> <p>Senior Planner, Development Contributions (S106 Officer)</p>
Policy Framework:	This report is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This Report provides Cabinet with an update on the delivery of the Greenlinks Service and the proposal to continue to fund the service for the next 2 years until March 2023. - The Greenlinks service is a Demand Responsive Transport Service (DRT) which has been operational in the Vale of Glamorgan for 10 years. The service is operated using permits issued by the Section 19 and Section 22 of the Transport Act 1985. The service forms part of the Council’s provision of public transport throughout the Vale of Glamorgan providing transport for those who have no access to local public or private transport or those who are unable to access public transport due to physical or mental abilities. - In 2019/20, Greenlinks provided nearly 11,300 passenger journeys and worked with an array of Council departments and organisations to make the best use of the service. - In March 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic the passenger transport service was temporarily closed. During this period, the service was outsourced to other departments, providing a delivery service for recycling and PPE. 	

- A limited service was re-instated in September 2020, in order to allow residents to be able to do their own shopping and attend health appointments. All precautions have been made to reduce the risk of spreading Covid-19 whilst providing a service.
- The future service will be delivered in accordance to the Welsh Government's guidance for Covid-19, however with the commencement of a vaccination programme for the population over the next 12 months, the service could recover to pre-Covid times in due course.
- As we move to the Covid-19 recovery phase the use of Greenlinks and other Community Transport services will be vital to providing passenger transport services where they do not exist, particularly in rural areas, and assisting with filling the gaps where regular bus services may be lost following the fallout of the pandemic.
- Since 2014 the service has been funded via the Council's Section 106 Sustainable Transport Contributions.

Recommendations

1. That the Greenlinks Community Transport Service continues to be funded by Section 106 Sustainable Transport Contributions until 31 March 2023.
2. That the contributions highlighted in Appendix D are used to fund the service during financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To continue to provide a flexible means of passenger transport for those who cannot easily access other forms of public transport in a cost effective and reliable manner.
2. To continue to provide the Greenlinks Community Transport service until 31 March 2023.

1. Background

- 1.1 As previously noted in the Cabinet Report dated 30 July 2018, Greenlinks continues to operate a Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) service available to all residents of the Vale of Glamorgan. The service operates using permits issued under Section 19 and 22 of the Transport Act 1985. This exempts the Council from holding a Public Service Vehicles (PSV) operator's licence when providing public transport for a small charge.
- 1.2 Greenlinks operates a membership scheme and has issued over 2,300 individual memberships and 120 group memberships. The service operates 7 vehicles: two 12 seaters, two 9 seaters and 3 cars, all of which are accessible. The service operates using one paid driver, 16 volunteer drivers and two office staff.
- 1.3 Following a previous Cabinet Resolution Cabinet Meeting 30 July 2018 (Minute No. C387), Section 106 Sustainable Transport contributions were considered on a project by project basis and funding made available to support Greenlinks and other community/public transport services where appropriate. This resolution will end on 31 March 2021. Prior to this, all Section 106 Sustainable Transport contributions were "top sliced" at 25%, however, due to the high level of sustainable transport contributions the Council had been receiving, it would have generated a balance for Greenlinks and other public transport services which would have been surplus to demand, and which would have taken the service beyond the legal timeframe the Council has to spend the sustainable transport contributions (usually defined as 5 years within the Section 106 Agreement).
- 1.4 To provide background, the Council's Adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Planning Obligations (2018) supports the adopted Local Development Plan (2011-2026). The SPG requires all new residential development (above a threshold of 10 dwellings), and new commercial development (above a threshold of 1000sqm floor space/ 1 Ha site) to contribute towards Sustainable Transport.

Where appropriate and having regard to development viability, the SPG currently requires a contribution of £2,300 per dwelling or £2,300 per 100sqm of floor space. These contributions, once received, can be used to provide infrastructure which provides or improves access for pedestrians and cyclists, and also enhances public transport provision and infrastructure.

- 1.5** Greenlinks continues to work in partnership with Dinas Powys Voluntary Concern (DPVC), with one of the cars being shared. DPVC use the vehicle in the mornings, providing transport to local residents to the Medical Centre at the top of Murch Road (which has no public transport routes), and Greenlinks then has access to the vehicle in the afternoons. This partnership continues to work well.
- 1.6** Prior to March 2020, Greenlinks operated two Section 22 permit routes – the G1 and the G4 service. These were registered routes with the Traffic Commissioner and allowed passengers to use their Welsh Government concessionary bus passes. The G1 service, operated Monday to Friday, serving St Athan, Cowbridge, Bridgend and the surrounding small villages. This was the only public transport provision in many of the villages connecting them to main villages/towns and other public transport routes such as the X2 (Porthcawl to Cardiff via Bridgend, Cowbridge and A48). The G4 service, operated on a Thursday only, and provided transport to Culverhouse Cross and Cardiff, serving the coastal villages between Llantwit Major and Rhoose.
- 1.7** In April 2018, VEST Community Transport (a community transport provider for residents of Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan) chose to withdraw their two day a week service into Cardiff due to falling passenger numbers. This resulted in an increase of passengers on the G4 service to the point whereby two buses were operated to meet the demand. So as not to lose the capacity that VEST could provide, a new service was developed to partly cater for the demand left by the demise of the commercially run Local Bus Service 90 (Barry to Culverhouse Cross via Pencoedtre Village). In May 2018, with the support of the Council, VEST introduced a 2 day a week DRT service to Culverhouse Cross that was doing well. As a result, this provides a more co-ordinated and better use of the community transport service in the Vale. In March 2020, this service was also temporarily suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic; however, the service re-commenced in September 2020.
- 1.8** The remainder of the Greenlinks service was delivered under the Section 19 permit. Members of the scheme could make a request for transport up until midday the working day before they wished to travel. Requests were then considered and schedules drawn up based on the vehicles and drivers available with the aim of accommodating as many passengers as possible. The service provided transport for health appointments, shopping, visiting relatives in care homes and accessing their local community clubs to name but a few. Sight Cymru organised a number of local community groups in Cowbridge, Barry and Penarth; Greenlinks worked with them providing transport for many of their partially sighted and/or mobility impaired members to attend the groups.

- 1.9** Over the last two years, the service has continued to work with Social Services, providing transport for young carers from a number of areas within the Vale of Glamorgan on a Wednesday evening to access Youth Services. Without this support, many would not have the opportunity to enjoy a few hours to be young people as opposed to young carers.
- 1.10** The service operated between 8:30 and 17.00, Monday to Friday; however, it was also available to hire in the evenings and weekends for group members.
- 1.11** In 2019–2020, the service accommodated over 350 individuals and 25 groups, culminating in nearly 11,300 passenger journeys. In 2018-2019, the total number of passenger journeys was 10,069.
- 1.12** In March 2020, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Greenlinks service was completely suspended and the Traffic Commissioner was notified accordingly regarding the G1 and G4 registered services.
- 1.13** Although the service was closed, the paid driver, office staff and some of the vehicles were re-deployed to provide support to a number of other areas of the Council such as delivering recycling equipment to residents of the Vale of Glamorgan (April - July 2020); delivering PPE equipment to Schools (mid-July); provision of a bus to the Cleansing Team whilst their own bus was off the road; reviewing the potential of Greenlinks vehicles and its volunteers administering the foodbox deliveries (this wasn't progressed as the scheme was not outsourced to the Council and came to an end in August 2020); erecting notices and leaflet drops for consultations (September 2020); and PPE deliveries (from July 2020 to date). Costs incurred over and above core costs were funded through the Covid-19 funding.
- 1.14** In June 2020, the Greenlinks service reached a milestone having operated for 10 years, but unfortunately, this was not formally celebrated due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 1.15** As restrictions began to lift in August 2020, the Greenlinks service was reviewed and a risk assessment of providing a service during the Covid-19 pandemic was undertaken. As a result, a number of measures have been put in place to reduce the risk of Covid-19 and a limited service was re-introduced in September 2020. The service now operates with the use of the buses only, between the hours of 9:30 and 16:00. The vehicles are limited to carrying a maximum of 2 or 3 people at any one time in order to maintain the 2m social distance and a strict cleaning regime has been introduced. Meanwhile, a car continues to be used for delivering PPE equipment. Seven volunteers have re-commenced their driving duties, whether it be for Community Transport or delivering PPE and all have received appropriate training. Since October 2020, the relevant vehicle costs and volunteer costs have been allocated to the PPE Team.

- 1.16** The service is limited to providing local shopping trips, local health appointments or visiting family in care homes (if and when permitted). In September, 124 passenger journeys were completed, in October 151 journeys (this would have been more, had the firebreak not occurred) and in November 137 journeys. Compared to last year, when the service ran as normal, 1076 passenger journeys were completed in September; 1128 passenger journeys in October; and 1076 passenger journeys in November.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the service operation is drastically different to that provided pre-March 2020. However, Greenlinks members welcome the opportunity and have the confidence to use a familiar service to be able to travel again. The service provided will continue to be reviewed and adapted in accordance with Welsh Government Covid-19 guidance. With the commencement of a vaccination programme over the 12 months, it is anticipated the service will recover over the next 1 to 2 years. A number of our members see this service as a link to their independence which, in turn, supports their well-being.
- 2.2** In the last 2 financial years, the Council has continued to receive significant Section 106 Sustainable Transport contributions. In 2018/19, the Council received c. £1.6m for sustainable transport. In 2019/20, the Council received c. £1.15m.
- 2.3** It is therefore recommended that Section 106 Sustainable Transport Contributions continue to support and fund the scheme for Greenlinks in full, and any other public transport services partially for the financial years of 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- 2.4** Section 106 Sustainable Transport contributions will continue to be considered individually upon receipt, in accordance with the Section 106 Protocol for Implementation on a site by site basis.
- 2.5** The budget forecast for Greenlinks for 2021/22 and 2022/23 is set out in Appendix A. A total of £229,261 in Section 106 funding is required to fund the service up until 31st March 2023.
- 2.6** Appendix D of this report highlights developments where Section 106 Sustainable Transport contributions (received or due in imminently) could be allocated to fund the Greenlinks scheme. The allocations have been the result of a review of the service and where existing members are residents. The total allocation suggested equals £281,418 . This amount is sufficient to fund the service as identified in Appendix A. Any underspend can be slipped into future financial years.

- 2.7** There is a risk that the Council will not receive all of the contributions set out in Appendix D, for example, if a development does not proceed. However, if this were to be the case, the Council's Senior Planner (Development Contributions), in partnership with the Council's Passenger Transport Manager and Finance Support Manager, will review the Section 106 account and continue to ensure that sufficient funding is allocated for the next 2 financial years via the Section 106 Protocol for Implementation.
- 2.8** Agreeing to continue Section 106 funding until 31 March 2023 will fit in with the transport team's plan of continuing to deliver an expanded Greenlinks service, work with other departments and continue to provide a much needed volunteer driven scheme.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

Long Term

- 3.1** The service has been operational for 10 years and continues to grow. Due to the nature of the service it continues to require financial support to deliver an accessible service to residents of the Vale. Providing a service that allows residents to live in their own homes for longer and in more rural areas of the Vale is a longer-term benefit to the Council. The demand responsive transport service has the flexibility to adapt during the Covid-19 pandemic recovery as residents start to venture out.
- 3.2** As the Public Transport network recovers following the Covid-19 pandemic, the Greenlinks service may be able to assist in filling the gaps where services may be lost.

Prevention

- 3.3** The provision of a demand responsive transport service assists in the reduction of unnecessary mileage and provides a different, more sustainable and viable mode of public transport. In the current climate - the Covid-19 pandemic - the service will provide that little bit of extra reassurance to our members, in providing a familiar service and that measures have been put in place to reduce the risk of Covid-19 as much as possible.
- 3.4** Greenlinks may be able to assist in the prevention of gaps within the local transport network.

Integration

- 3.5** The service forms an integral part of the Council's public transportation plan ensuring that all areas of the Vale of Glamorgan has access to public transport

where it is not viable to operate a more traditional 'timetabled' service. The service also improves access for those with impaired mobility.

- 3.6** The 'All Wales Transport Strategy', currently being consulted on, has community transport as a key component of the Transport Network, particularly linking in with other modes of transport.

Collaboration

- 3.7** The continued development of the service is done in collaboration with the Public Transport Officer and other CT operators within the Vale to provide the greatest coverage and opportunities for the residents of the Vale to access public transport.

Involvement

- 3.8** As the service is demand responsive, it automatically responds to and is aware of the needs of the Greenlinks members catering where possible for the greatest demand. It will continue to evolve moving forward particularly as we learn to live through the Pandemic.
- 3.9** The Greenlinks service is operated by a number of volunteer drivers whose involvement greatly benefits the local communities.

Well-being Goals

- 3.10** The Neighbourhood Services and Transport Service plan identifies the well-being objective, W03.2, to continue to support the running of the Greenlinks Community Transport service to transport passengers in and around the Vale.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** The cost of delivering a Greenlinks scheme based on the existing fleet for the next two financial years is projected to be £424,597 and is identified at Appendix A to this report. £115,164 will be funded via the Council's own budget which will leave a required S106 contribution of £229,261 (the remaining £80,172 will be made up of income, concessionary fares reimbursement and the Bus Services Support Grant kilometre funding administered through Welsh Government) . Fares for the services are based on a zonal pricing system and are attached at Appendix B. In addition, Appendix C shows group hire charges.
- 4.2** The cost breakdown in Appendix A includes paying volunteer drivers expenses, the paid driver's salary, funding the two members of staff dedicated to running the service as well as all vehicle costs (garage service level agreements, repairs, fuel, etc.). The breakdown does not allow for vehicle depreciation costs. However, all vehicles were funded by grant monies or asset renewal money and have no finance outstanding.

- 4.3** As mentioned above there is a risk that the Council will not receive all of the contributions set out in Appendix D. However, the Council's Senior Planner (Development Contributions), in partnership with the Council's Passenger Transport Manager and Finance Support Manager, will continually review the Section 106 account and continue to ensure that sufficient funding is allocated for the next 2 financial years via the Section 106 Protocol for Implementation.
- 4.4** Towards the end of the proposed term, the need to replace some of the fleet will be reviewed due to the age and mileage of the vehicles. This will be done in conjunction with reviewing how the longer-term demand for the service has altered as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This may result in reducing the number of vehicles in the fleet. There is no replacement vehicle budget for the Greenlinks fleet however the scheme does have access to the Council vehicle replacement fund should a replacement be required prior to this time. Any future purchase of vehicles will take into consideration the option of purchasing electric vehicles or low emissions vehicles thus providing the opportunity to apply for Welsh Government's 'ultra-low emissions vehicle' grant.

Employment

- 4.5** The Service will be administered with two members of office staff, one paid driver and a number of volunteer drivers. Recruitment of volunteer drivers is a continual process, working with partners such Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) and Job Centres. Eligible volunteers can also benefit from the Council's Timebank scheme (currently suspended), whereby they can earn credits for the time volunteered. The credits can then be redeemed at participating leisure activities.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.6** The running and maintenance of the vehicles will continue to comply with legislation as identified in the terms and conditions of the Section 19 and Section 22 permits and Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) requirements for operating a public service vehicle. This involves daily visual checks on the vehicles completed by drivers ensuring the vehicle is fit for purpose, eight weekly safety checks, services and MOT's as required.
- 4.7** The Greenlinks service offers fully accessible vehicles with most services running door to door meaning residents can travel easily regardless of any mobility impairments.
- 4.8** The service supports the Council's vision of a well organised transport network which helps to increase mobility and accessibility.

5. Background Papers

None.

APPENDIX A

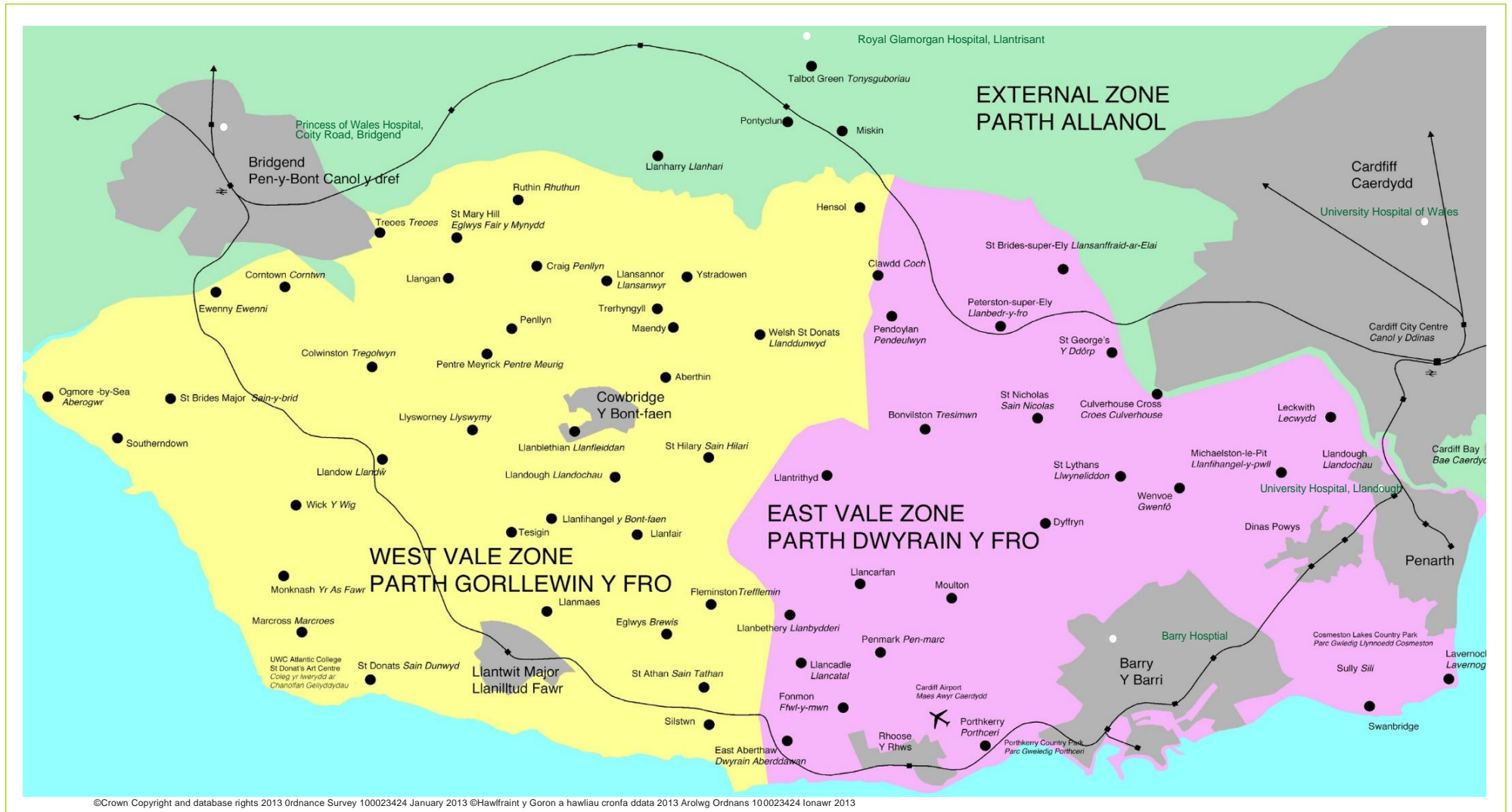
	Budget 21/22	Budget 22/23	Comments
Expenditure			
Staff	74,011	76,624	Two Officers
Paid Driver	21,665	22,261	
Volunteer Drivers (travel, Subsistence, training & Medical)	5,000	5,000	
Office, Supplies & Services	6,983	6,983	
Transport (SLA, Fuel, maintenance costs)	48,571	48,571	
Departmental Charges	20,506	20,506	
Central Recharges	33,958	33,958	
	210,694	213,903	
Income			
BSSG (CT Kilometre support)	-12,119	-12,119	
Customer Receipts (membership & fares)	-15,279	-15,279	
Concessionary Fares Scheme	-12,688	-12,688	
S106	-113,026	-116,235	contributions to balance base budget
	-153,112	-156,321	

Base budget**57,582****57,582**

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FARE ZONES



CHARGES FOR TRAVEL WITHIN OR ACROSS ZONES

1 Zone	single £2.00	return £3.00
2 Zones	single £3.00	return £4.00
3 Zones	single £4.00	return £5.00



Greenlinks - Group Hire Charges

½ day or evening: £30

Full day £60

The above charges are inclusive of 40 miles. Over 40 miles, the group is required to pay mileage costs at the rate of 45p per mile.

Appendix D – Greenlinks Funding 2021/22 and 2022-23

Site	Amount S106 Sustainable Transport contribution received in total / due to be received	Progress and allocation of contribution to date	Amount suggested* for Green links between 1 st April 2021 and 31 st March 2023
2014/01424/FUL Land off St. Brides Road, Wick	£215,283.93 received.	Contributed committed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to the existing crossing facility in Wick village centre; • Provision and enhancement of the footpath between the development and the Sports Ground. £12k spent on design and feasibility in 2018/19. £22,244.47 spent in 2019/20. £15k Green Links	£15,000
2015/00249/FUL St. Nicholas site - Redrow	1 st instalment: £86,950.74 2 nd instalment: £88,362.54 Total received: £175,313.28	Schemes under consideration.	£20,000
2015/00662/FUL St. Nicholas site - Waterstone	£36,407.81 received.	Schemes under consideration.	£6,407.81
2009/00946/OUT Barry Waterfront	1st instalment : Barratt - £48,382 Taylor Wimpey - £48,382 Persimmon - £48,382 £145,146 in total. 2nd instalment: Barratt - £44,470.60	Numerous schemes implemented. Reviewing projects alongside Highways identified in the S106 agreement. £564,173.52 remaining.	TBC

Appendix D – Greenlinks Funding 2021/22 and 2022-23

	<p>Taylor Wimpey - £44,470.60 Persimmon - £44,470.60 £133,411.80 in total.</p> <p>3rd instalment: Barratt - £180,846 Taylor Wimpey - £180,846 Persimmon – £180,846 £542,538 in total.</p> <p>Total received: £821,095.80</p>		
2014/00460/FUL St. Joseph's School	£110,592.74 received	<p>Contribution utilised towards pedestrian/cycling facilities between St. Josephs RC School and Ash Path. £86,822.66 spent in 2018/19 on Capital Programme. Scheme completed.</p> <p>£3,732 committed to East Vale Community Transport – mini bus. £599.74 spent in 2019/20. (capital code 852535)</p> <p>Balance under consideration.</p>	£TBC
2017/01136/HYB Former St. Cyres Lower School, Murch Road, Dinas Powys	£479,245 received.	Schemes agreed with Members, including improvements on Murch Road and a crossing facility. £19,517.04 spent in 2019/20 on detailed design and feasibility.	£30,000
2014/00282/OUT Caerleon Road	£144,411.63 received.	Pedestrian improvement scheme highlighted adjacent to the park. £20,000 to Green Links.	£20,000

Appendix D – Greenlinks Funding 2021/22 and 2022-23

2015/00392/OUT Cardiff Road/Cross Common Road	£104,935.18 received.	Contribution committed as follows: 2no. new bus shelters on Cardiff Road; Footpath improvements between the site and Bryn Y Don	£10,000
2014/01505/OUT Land north-west Cowbridge	£662k which is due in in instalments. 1st instalment received: £183,561.13	Consultation by Cowbridge Town Council underway.	£50,000
2016/00809/FUL Land to the rear of Westgate, Cowbridge	£81,400 received.	Consultation by Cowbridge Town Council underway.	£20,000
2014/00995/FUL Land adjacent to Llantwit Major Bypass, Boverton	£63,374.70 received.	£25k allocated to the footpath / lighting of the bridge. £15k for PROW network to beach. Balance under consideration.	£5,000
2014/00831/FUL Land at Plasnewydd Farm, Llantwit Major	£347,668 received.	£100k allocated to bus stop enhancement scheme. £40k allocated to Greenlinks £1k being consulted upon for "Pedestrian in Road" signs. Balance being considered for improvements in the town centre.	£40,000
2013/01279/OUT Land south of Cog Road, Sully – Phase 1	£650k which is due in in 3 instalments: 1st instalment £237,354	Meeting held with local members. Consultation to be undertaken in 2021.	£50,000
2018/01108/FUL Land at Subway Road	£108k due in imminently.	Not yet received.	£15,000
TOTAL:			£281,418 + TBC amounts from underspend from projects

*May be subject to change, dependent upon projects. Any underspend from the 2020/21 financial year will be moved into the 2021/22.