

Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 30 March 2023
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Environment and Regeneration
Report Title:	Funding and Delivery of the Greenlinks Community Transport Service
Purpose of Report:	To agree the continuation of Sustainable Transport Planning Contributions (Section 106 funding) for the Greenlinks Community Transport Service until 31st March, 2024
Report Owner:	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Sustainable Places
Responsible Officer:	Miles Punter – Director of Environment and Housing Services
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Accountant Environment and Housing Services Legal Services (Committee Reports) Senior Planner, Development Contributions (\$106)
Policy Framework:	This Report is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greenlinks is a Demand Responsive Transport Service (DRT) which has been operational in the Vale of Glamorgan for 12 years. The service is operated using permits issued by Sections 19 and 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. This Report provides Cabinet with an update on the delivery of the Greenlinks Service and the proposal to continue to fund the service until 31st March, 2024 with Section 106 sustainable transport contributions. The Report also informs of other sources of funding that will be explored to fund the service longer term which will be reported to Cabinet later in 2023. 	

Recommendations

1. That the Greenlinks Community Transport Service continues to be funded by Section 106 Sustainable Transport Contributions until 31st March, 2024.
2. That a further report is presented to Cabinet later in 2023 once other sources of funding to purchase a replacement vehicle and continuation of the service after 1st April, 2024 have been investigated.
3. That the S106 contributions highlighted in Appendix D are earmarked to fund the service during the financial year 2023/2024 unless other sources of finance are identified.

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 allow other sources of funding such as the Shared Prosperity Fund and Welsh Government grant to be considered to fund the service longer term and to assist in the purchase of replacement vehicles.
3. To continue to provide the Greenlinks Community Transport Service until 31st March, 2024.

1. Background

- 1.1 As previously noted in the Cabinet Report dated 25th January 2021 - <https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2021/21-01-25/Greenlinks-Service.pdf>
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 Sections 19 and 22 of the Transport Act 1985, (although the Section 22 routes have been suspended since March 2020 due to lack of available volunteer drivers). 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 2,570 individual memberships and 124 group memberships since its inception. Since the last report in January 2021, 171 new members have joined the Service. The Service operates 7 vehicles: two 12 seaters, two 9 seaters and 3 cars, all of which are accessible. The Service currently operates using one paid driver, 10 volunteer drivers and two office staff (albeit one office staff member has expanded their role to work with Fleet Management and is not currently funded by S106).
- 1.3 Following a previous Cabinet Resolution Cabinet Meeting 25th January, 2021 – (Minute No C457refers) -

<https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2021/21-01-25/Minutes.pdf>

Section 106 Sustainable Transport contributions are considered on a project by project basis and funding made available to support Greenlinks and other community and public transport services where appropriate. At the time of the Report a list of potential projects were identified and any shortfall from the previous year would be carried over. This resolution will end on 31st March, 2023.

- 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 enhances public transport provision and infrastructure.
- 1.5** When the Dinas Powys Medical Centre was built, Dinas Powys Voluntary Concern (DPVC) were awarded finances from S106 towards the purchase of a vehicle to support transport to and from the Medical Centre. Working in partnership with Greenlinks, an accessible car was purchased with the S106 monies awarded to DPVC, and Greenlinks would support the on-going maintenance cost of the vehicle. As a result, the vehicle is shared, with DPVC using the vehicle in the mornings, providing transport to residents to the Medical Centre at the top of Murch Road (which has no public transport routes) and Greenlinks has access to the vehicle in the afternoons. This partnership continues to work well. Following the closure of the Medical Centre in Penarth, the patient enrolment at Dinas Powys Medical Centre has increased, resulting in a greater demand for transport to the Medical Centre.
- 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. 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. Both these services continue to be suspended as the demand to these areas, although

growing, is still low compared to the need of our services elsewhere in the Vale of Glamorgan which is delivered using the Section 19 permit. Priority has been given to where the greatest demands are to ensure best usage of the vehicles and drivers we have available. For instance, a vehicle is best used for taking 6 or 7 people to their local group over 1 or 2 going into Bridgend or Cowbridge. However, passengers who used to travel on the S22 routes are still able to request travel to the designated areas but they do not currently have the option to use their bus pass and are not given priority over the demand elsewhere in the Vale.

- 1.7** The remainder of the Greenlinks Transport 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 several 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. When the Greenlinks service was re-introduced in September 2020, it was delivered using Section 19 permit only so that all members had an equal opportunity to access the service.
- 1.8** The Greenlinks service operates between 9:00 and 16.00, Monday to Friday; however, it is also available to hire in the evenings and weekends for group members.
- 1.9** 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. A number of measures were put in place to reduce the risk of Covid-19 and a limited service was re-introduced in September 2020. At the time, only buses were used to carry a maximum of two or three people at any one time to ensure social distancing. The cars were being used and funded by the PPE Team for deliveries. As we have learnt to live with the pandemic, restrictions have eased greatly, the cars have been returned to Greenlinks (in September 2021 and January 2022 respectively) and the Service now operates using all the vehicles, with no restrictions on numbers carried. However, the Service continues to be cautious, continuing with the cleaning regime and ensuring a flow of air through the vehicles throughout the day. The Service operates with one paid driver and 10 volunteers, four of which have joined since the last report in January 2021.
- 1.10** The Greenlinks Service, when it initially re-commenced, was limited to providing local shopping trips, local health appointments or visiting family in care homes (if and when permitted). However, it is now open to all activities, including group

travel, attending exercise classes and local community groups such as Sight Cymru groups as mentioned above.

- 1.11** In 2019–2020, Greenlinks facilitated 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. In 2021-2022, when restrictions were still in place, the service provided transport for 160 individuals and two groups, delivering approximately 3,350 passenger journeys. For the first eight months of the 2022-2023, with little to no restrictions, 164 individuals and 5 groups have already used the service providing a total of 3,870 passenger journeys surpassing the 2021-22 figures. Whilst still below pre-covid numbers, the service continues to steadily grow back.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** With the introduction of the vaccination programme, we have learnt to live with the pandemic and restrictions have eased. Services and community groups have re-commenced meeting in person and the use of Greenlinks has increased in the last eight months.
- 2.2** The Greenlinks service is being continually reviewed, with the aim of re-introducing the S22 services albeit in a revised capacity early in 2023 i.e. G1 will operate 2 or 3 days a week and G4 will operate to Culverhouse Cross only
- 2.3** With the reduced number of passenger journeys, and ageing fleet, it would be prudent to review the number of vehicles required. It is recommended to reduce the fleet by two (the oldest vehicles being a caddy and a 9 seater vehicle) and replace with one electric vehicle. The aim is to have an accessible people carrying vehicle (i.e a wheel chair user and up to 4 passengers). Whilst further research is required, the cost of this size vehicle is in the region of £60,000. The residual cost of the two vehicles could go to help fund the replacement vehicle with a view of grant applications being made in January 2023 to WG? to fund the remainder of the cost. Vehicles are based at the Alps Depot which already have electric vehicle charging facilities installed and Greenlinks would be able to have access to them.
- 2.4** In Summer 2023, the charging structure (See Appendix B & C) will be reviewed and presented in a further report.
- 2.5** Commercial Operators are struggling to recruit drivers and are facing increases in running costs, putting a great strain on the public transport network system. If Greenlinks were to cease operating several areas within the Vale would have no access to public transport and individuals would be less able to live independently.

- 2.6 In the last 2 financial years, the Council has continued to receive Section 106 Sustainable Transport contributions. In 2020/21, the Council received approximately £290,666.61 for sustainable transport. In 2021/22, the Council received approximately £64,400.
- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 The budget forecast for Greenlinks for 2023/24 is set out at Appendix A. A total of £113,026 in Section 106 funding is required to fund the service up until 31st March 2024.
- 2.9 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 £113,500 . This amount is sufficient to fund the service as identified in Appendix A. Any underspend against the S106 allocation can be carried forward and utilised in future financial years.
- 2.10 Agreeing to continue Section 106 funding until 31st March, 2024 will fit in with the aim of continuing to deliver an expanded Greenlinks service, work with other departments and continue to provide a much-needed volunteer driven scheme.
- 2.11 During Quarter one of 2023 officers will be able to apply for both the Shared Prosperity Fund and Welsh Government transport grants towards the cost of replacement Electric vehicles or towards costs of running the service. If successful in either bid the S106 funding will be held and utilised for funding in future years. A further update report on this will be presented during summer 2023.

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

Long Term

- 3.1 The Greenlinks Transport Service has been operational for 12 years, and although there has been a disruption in the service, the service is growing again. 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 and its residents.
- 3.2 As the Public Transport network continues to recover 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.
- 3.4** Greenlinks may be able to assist in the prevention of gaps within the local transport network.

Integration

- 3.5** The Greenlinks 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', 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 Greenlinks Service is achieved in collaboration with 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 Greenlinks 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 after-effects of the Pandemic.
- 3.9** The Greenlinks service is operated by several volunteer drivers whose involvement greatly benefits the local communities.

Well-being Goals

- 3.10** The Transport Services Team Plan identifies objectives, NS/A009 and NS/A010 which will provide a significant contribution to the National Well-being Goals. The outcomes are to continue to support the running of the Greenlinks Community Transport service to transport passengers in and around the Vale, including areas without local bus services and to ensure the service is operated in line with accessibility regulations.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** The Council continues to encourage the use of public transport services and/or active travel. The aim being to reduce individual car journeys in as many areas as possible thus reducing carbon emissions throughout the Vale. Greenlinks supports this aim by providing access to public transport in areas where traditional public transport is not viable.
- 4.2** Whilst reviewing the ageing Fleet of Vehicles, any purchase of a new vehicle will need to be an Electric Vehicle (EV) option. A smaller vehicle which can carry up to 5 people (including a wheelchair user) will provide an excellent alternative option to diesel whilst not compromising on the mileage range it can do during the day. The depot at the Alps has charging facilities installed. Whilst the initial outlay is high, the running costs of such a vehicle is less therefore it would reduce some of the transport running costs. Purchase of an EV vehicle would help towards the Council's Project Zero programme of reaching net-zero carbon by 2030.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** The cost of delivering a Greenlinks scheme based on the existing fleet for the 2023/24 financial year is projected to be £211,566 and is identified at Appendix A to this report. £58,454 will be funded via the Council's own budget which will leave a required S106 contribution of £113,026 (the remaining £40,086 will be made up of income, concessionary fares reimbursement (when S22 routes are reinstated) 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.
- 5.2** Both the zonal pricing system and group hire charges will be subject to a 10% increase from April 2023. This increase was detailed in the Fees and Charges report that was presented to Cabinet in January 2023.
- 5.3** The cost breakdown at 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.
- 5.4** During this term, officers will look to secure grant funding for new vehicle(s) that need replacing due to age and mileage. There is no replacement vehicle budget for the Greenlinks fleet. There will be a need to request additional capital support to fund a new Electric Vehicle via grant applications to support the difference between the cost of the new vehicle and the funds received from the sale of the two vehicles. The anticipated difference would be in the region of

£50,000. Should the grant bid be unsuccessful a decision will be taken on whether the older diesel vehicles will be replaced.

Employment

- 5.5** 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 as Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) and Job Centres.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.6** 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.
- 5.7** The Greenlinks service offers fully accessible vehicles with most services running door to door meaning residents can travel easily regardless of any mobility impairments.
- 5.8** The Greenlinks service supports the Council's vision of a well organised transport network which helps to increase mobility and accessibility.

6. Background Papers

None.

APPENDIX A

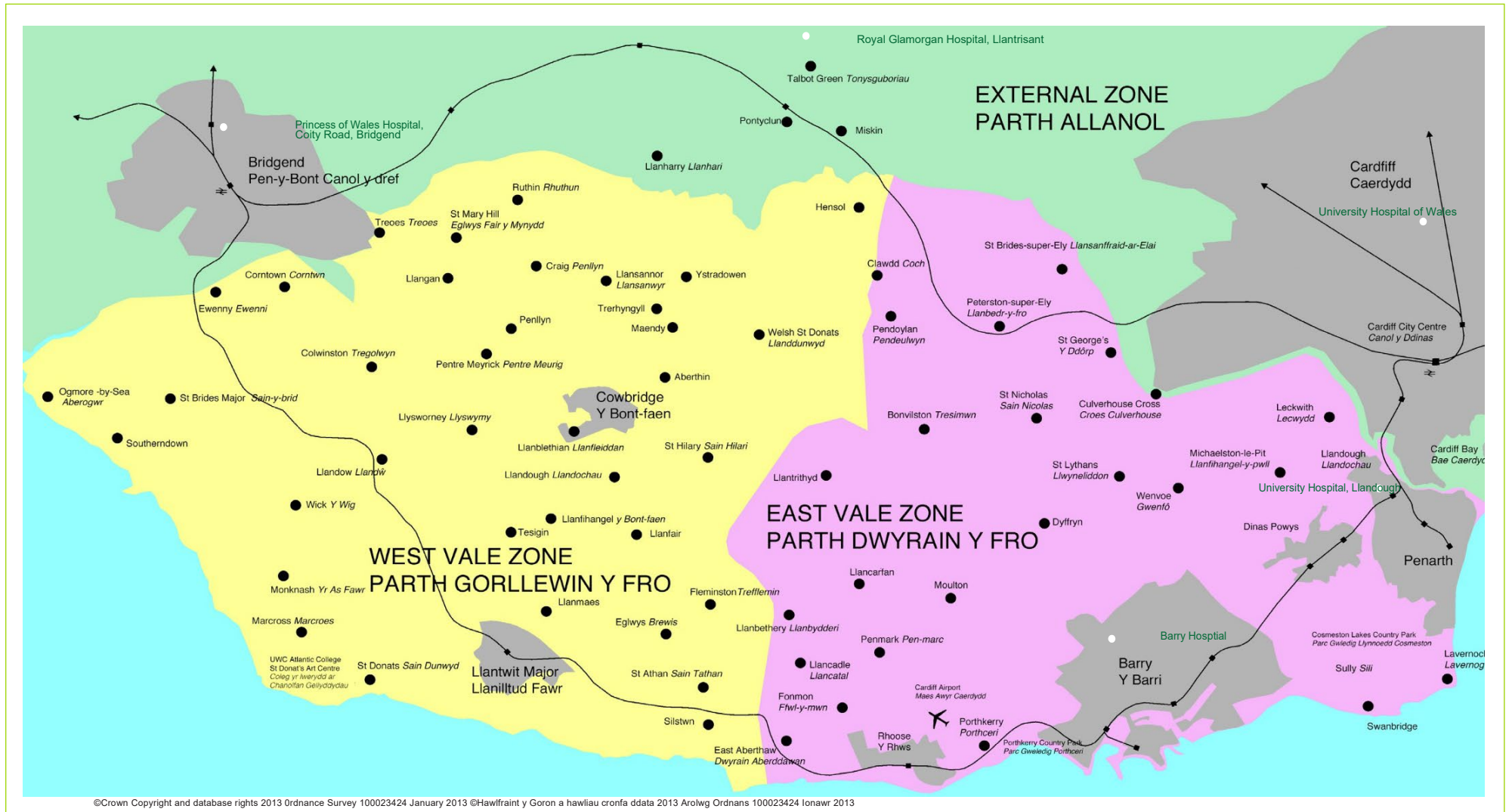
	Budget 23/24	Comments
Expenditure		
Staff	71,318	Two Officers-
Paid Driver	24,506	
Volunteer Drivers (travel, Subsistence, training & Medical)	5,000	
Office, Supplies & Services	10,536	
Transport (SLA, Fuel, maintenance costs)	48,758	
Departmental Charges	20,506	
Central Recharges	30,942	
	211,566	
Income		
BSSG (CT Kilometre support)	-12,119	
Customer Receipts (membership & fares)	-15,279	
Concessionary Fares Scheme	-12,688	
S106	-113,026	contributions to balance base budget
	-153,112	

Base budget**58,454**

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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



APPENDIX C

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 2023/24

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 2023 and 31 st March 2024
2014/01505/OUT Land at north-west Cowbridge	<p>£662k which is due in in instalments.</p> <p>1st instalment received: £183,561.13</p> <p>2nd instalment received: £184,780.80</p>	<p>Meeting held with local members in June 2022. A number of schemes were suggested and are currently under consideration.</p> <p>£50K committed to Green Links (£16,500 spent in 22/23)</p>	£33,500
2018/01368/FUL Land to the rear of Westgate, Cowbridge	£81,400 received	<p>Schemes under consideration</p> <p>£20K committed to Green Links (£10K spent in 21/22)</p>	£10,000
2014/00282/OUT Caerleon Road	£144,411.63 received.	<p>Pedestrian improvement scheme adjacent to the park completed July 2022.</p> <p>£20,000 committed to Green Links (£10K spent in 21/22)</p>	£10,000

Appendix D – Greenlinks Funding 2023/24

2013/01279/OUT Land south of Cog Road, Sully – Phase 1	£650k which is due in in 3 instalments: 1st instalment received: £237,354	Schemes under consideration. £50K committed to Green Links	£44,000
2021/ 00378/RG3 Land at Hayes Wood, The Bendricks, Sully	£64,400 received.	Member consultation undertaken in July 2022. Schemes under consideration.	£16,000
TOTAL:			£113,500