

Report of: Strategic Policy Manager

Subject: Grant approvals in accordance with Section 76 of the Financial Standards

Decision Required: Yes

Recommendation:

The Authority is recommended to:

- a. Consider and authorise payment of approximately £75,000 to Pembrokeshire County Council as a contribution towards the coastal bus network and the Integrated Transport Unit Strategy Manager post for the financial year 2026/2027. Details of the final payment for 2026/27 based on indexation is awaited from Pembrokeshire County Council.

1. Key Messages

Authorisation is required in accordance with Section 76 of the Financial Standards (2020) which states that where there is a payment of 'Total value Grant and Sponsorships under any one agreement over £20,000', approval must be obtained from the National Park Authority.

The Authority has contributed financially towards the provision of the coastal bus services and the Integrated Transport Unit Strategy Manager post and seeks agreement for financial contributions to be made over the financial year 2026/27. The financial contribution of approximately £75,000 is considered to be manageable for the Authority.

Maintaining funding aligns with the National Park's statutory duties to conserve and enhance the natural environment, promote public enjoyment and access, and support the economic and social well-being of local communities. The coastal bus services support those without access to private vehicles, promote social equity, reduce carbon emissions, enhance biodiversity protection, and contribute positively to health, well-being and the Welsh language.

Continued funding during the next financial year is critical during a period of transport reform and will help secure the future of the coastal bus provision when services are franchised across the region. If Pembrokeshire County Council were to introduce a tourism levy in the future, it is anticipated that revenue generated through such a scheme could be used to support sustainable transport infrastructure, including the coastal bus network.

2. Background

The Authority has made longstanding payments towards the operation of the coastal bus network and support services provided by a transport officer post. In the financial year 2025/2026 the National Park Authority's contribution was:

- £55,989 contribution to the Coastal bus services
- £16,400 towards the Integrated Transport Unit Strategy Manager post which provides the Secretariat for Pembrokeshire Greenways and coordinates the Coastal Bus provision.

The Authority also contributes £7,000 towards the Tenby Park and Ride Service, however, this is under a separate agreement.

The contracts in place with the bus operators include an annual contract rate increase in line with indexation. The Authority's contribution rose by 2.6523% in 2025/26 and 5.9889% in 2024/25. It is anticipated that the indexation for 2026/27 would be 3.8%, which would increase the contribution for the coastal bus services to £58,117, however, the Authority is awaiting confirmation of the indexation for 2026/27 from Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC). The contribution towards the Greenways support officer is currently undertaken by the Integrated Transport Unit Strategy Manager and the Authority's contribution will remain a flat rate of £16,400. The total contribution is therefore anticipated to be £74,517.75.

The table below shows the total cost of providing the coastal bus network in 2025/26.

Route	Description	2025/26 costs
400	Puffin Shuttle (St Davids-Marloes)	£87,772.16
404	Strumble Shuttle (St Davids-Fishguard)	£87,772.16
403	Celtic Coaster (St-Davids peninsula)	£78,960.30
387/388	Coastal Cruiser (Angle Peninsula)	£62,251.33
	Total	£316,755.95

The National Park Authority's financial contribution equated to 17.6% of the total cost in 2025/26. Historically, the Authority contributed approximately one third of the cost of the coastal buses and this has reduced to around one sixth. The remainder is funded by PCC through the Bus Network and Bus Service Support Grants. The services operate almost entirely within the National Park, providing access to the majority of the coast for visitors and also provides a service for residents. The Authority's contribution enables the provision of enhanced services to the Pembrokeshire coast, running daily, seven days per week through the summer. The wider bus network in Pembrokeshire provided by PCC operates Monday to Saturday only. The coastal bus network complements the wider local bus network. All services are promoted in a Pembrokeshire coastal bus timetable booklet, produced annually each May.

- Passenger numbers

The table below shows the passenger numbers on the coastal bus services over a four-year period 2022 to 2025.

Route	Passenger numbers				2024-2025 passenger growth
	2022	2023	2024	2025	
400 Puffin Shuttle (St Davids-Marloes)	4,826	-	8,899	9,612	8%
404 Strumble Shuttle (St Davids-Fishguard)	3,898	-	5,884	6,324	7%
403 Celtic Coaster (St-Davids peninsula)	30,267	28644	25052	25058	0%
387/ Coastal Cruiser (Angle peninsula 388)	5179	5514	6071	6233	3%
	44,170	34,158	45,906	47,227	3%

The overall network grew by 3% between 2024 and 2025, reaching its highest passenger numbers in the four-year period shown. The Puffin Shuttle and Strumble Shuttle services did not operate in 2023 as services were retendered and only one tender was received which was unaffordable. Fflecsi bus services were operating which covered this area. Services were tendered again for 2024 and were able to award, partly due to additional Bus Network Grant funding from Welsh Government. The Puffin and Strumble Shuttle services experienced growth of 7% passengers between 2024 and 2025. The Celtic Coaster has the highest number of passengers, but numbers have not yet recovered to earlier levels recorded in 2022.

Greenways Partnership

The Greenways Partnership was established in 1994 to: “promote travel and access within Pembrokeshire by walking, cycling and public transport in an integrated approach which addresses problems preventing such access, having due regard to the needs of the socially excluded, including people with disabilities and visitors.” It is a partnership which currently includes representatives from PCC (Transport and Access Officers), the National Park Authority, The National Trust, Visit Pembrokeshire, Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations (PACTO), Southwest Connected (Community Rail Partnership for South West Wales) Sustrans and Planed.

The National Park Authority has an agreement to contribute 50% of a Greenways Officer post, however, this post has changed significantly during the last 10 years. Support for the Greenways Partnership and coastal bus services is now undertaken by the Integrated Transport Unit Strategy Manager who provides the Secretariat for Pembrokeshire Greenways and coordinates the Coastal Bus provision. The cost of the post has increased, however, the Authority's contribution remains £16,400 (based on old contribution of 50% towards salary of £32,800, which now equates to approximately 25% of salary and oncosts).

The Bus Services (Wales) Act 2026 gained Royal Assent in February 2026 and aims to re-regulate bus services in Wales, shifting responsibility for the provision of local bus services from local authorities to the Welsh Government through Transport for Wales. Transport for Wales would assume responsibility for routes, timetables, fares, hours of operation, and service standards. It is proposed that bus services in Wales will be franchised in the south west Wales region in 2027/2028. Transport for Wales carried out public engagement regarding the proposed bus network for the south west Wales region during the summer 2025 and a statutory consultation regarding the Wales Bus Network Plan. The draft network plan includes all current operating bus services, including the coastal bus services. The Integrated Transport Unit Strategy Manager is working with Transport for Wales regarding the bus franchising and network plans. It is therefore considered fundamental to provide continued support during the next financial year for both the coastal bus routes and the Integrated Transport Unit Strategy Manager as the bus franchising is established.

3. Consultation

No consultation is required.

4. Strategic Policy Context

Financial support for coastal bus services would align with the two statutory purposes of the National Park in the following ways:

- Conserve and enhance the natural, beauty, wildlife and conservation: promoting sustainable access can help to protect sensitive landscapes and habitats and reduces environmental impact.
- Encourage public access and enjoyment of the National Park: Bus services make the coast accessible to more residents and visitors, including those without access to a car.

The Authority is also required to have due regard to the need to foster the economic and social well-being of the local communities in the National Park. The proposal has economic and social benefits and the provision of bus services promotes social equity, Welsh language awareness and benefits mental and physical health.

The table below shows how the proposal aligns with The National Park Partnership Plan 2025-2029, the Authority Well-being Objectives and links to the Well-being goals.

National Park Management Partnership Themes and Mission	Authority Well-being Objectives	Links to Well-being Goals
<p>Conservation: Conserve and enhance landscapes, seascapes, natural beauty and wildlife.</p> <p>The provision of bus services reduces environmental impact and manages visitor flows in sensitive habitats.</p>	<p>Conservation: To deliver nature recovery and connectivity at scale, so nature is flourishing in the Park, contributing to the protection of 30% of our land and seas for nature by 2030.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A resilient Wales • A healthier Wales • A prosperous Wales • A Wales of more cohesive communities • A more equal Wales • A globally responsible Wales
<p>Climate and natural resources</p> <p>The provision of bus services reduces carbon emissions, and air pollution, thereby addressing the climate and nature emergencies.</p>	<p>Climate: To achieve a carbon neutral Authority by 2030 and support the Park to achieve carbon neutrality and adapt to the impact of climate change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A globally responsible Wales • A resilient Wales • A healthier Wales • A prosperous Wales • A more equal Wales
<p>Cultural Heritage and Connection</p> <p>Enables accessibility and supports public enjoyment and access to outdoor recreation and nature and cultural heritage in the National Park, thereby promoting the Welsh language.</p> <p>Enhances equitable access to the National Park and promotes the enjoyment and understanding of the natural environment. This brings mental and physical health benefits for all by connecting people with green space and nature.</p>	<p>Connection: To create a Park that is a natural health service that supports people to be healthier, happier and more connected to the landscape, nature and heritage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language • A healthier Wales • A more equal Wales • A prosperous Wales • A Wales of more cohesive communities
<p>Communities</p> <p>Provides sustainable transport for those without access to the</p>	<p>Communities: To create vibrant, sustainable and prosperous communities in the Park that are places</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Wales of more cohesive communities

<p>private car and reduces transport inequality often affecting younger people, older residents and lower-income households.</p> <p>Reduces transport congestion and parking pressures in coastal communities.</p> <p>Helps to boost the local economy and supports regenerative tourism that respects the capacity of the landscape and communities.</p>	<p>people can live, work and enjoy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A prosperous Wales • A healthier Wales • A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language • A more equal Wales
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5. Financial Considerations

A financial contribution of approximately £75,000 will be required for the financial year 2026/27. Details of final costs for 2026/27 is awaited from Pembrokeshire County Council.

The Authority is operating an ongoing significant budgetary structural deficit and continued support for the coastal bus services and the Integrated Transport Unit Strategy Manager impacts on this.

[NPA Report 43/25 Report on 2026 Pay and Display Parking Tariffs](#) (22 October 2025) recommended an increase in longer stay car parking charges for the forthcoming financial year 2026/27, partially in recognition of the need to support the wider provision around car parks which includes public toilets, beach wheelchairs, delivery of the coastal bus services, water refill stations and the wider public rights of way network.

Continued funding during the next financial year is critical during a period of transport reform and will help secure the future of the coastal bus provision when services are franchised by Transport for Wales across the south west Wales region.

If Pembrokeshire County Council were to introduce a tourism levy in the future, it is anticipated that revenue generated through such a scheme could be used to support sustainable transport infrastructure, including the coastal bus network.

6. Risk and Compliance Considerations

Risks of maintaining funding: The Authority is facing a significant budget deficit for 2026/27 and continued payment towards the coastal bus network and Integrated Transport Unit Strategy Manager will reduce opportunities for the Authority to reduce its costs.

Risks of not maintaining funding: The risk would be the potential loss of coastal bus services and the Greenways Partnership. This would have an impact on the National Park's statutory purposes and socio-economic duty as outlined in section 4 Strategic Policy Context. The withdrawal of funding would disproportionately impact on certain groups. If Members decide to withdraw funding, an Integrated Impact Assessment would be required prior to the formal decision to identify the potential groups affected. The withdrawal of funding would provide the Authority the opportunity to reduce costs.

7. Impact on our Public Sector Duties

7.1 Integrated Assessment Completed: No

An Integrated Impact Assessment screening has been completed and concluded an IIA is not required (see Appendix A). The proposed recommendation is for funding for coastal bus services and a contribution towards the Integrated Transport Unit Strategy Manager which supports the Greenways Partnership and functioning of the coastal buses to continue. If Members do not agree with the recommendation, then an IIA would be required prior to a formal decision, as services could be withdrawn which affects the community and an individual's access to a service could be potentially denied.

7.2 Equality, Socio-Economic, Health and Human Rights Impacts

The Public Equality Duty requires the Authority to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different communities. This means that, in the formative stages of our policies, procedure, practice or guidelines, the Authority needs to take into account what impact its decisions will have on people who are protected under the Equality Act 2010 (people who share a protected characteristic of age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and religion or belief).

The continuation of coastal bus services and financial contribution towards the Integrated Transport Unit Strategy Manager promotes and provides sustainable public transport access to the coast which contributes positively to health and wellbeing outcomes. It also provides the opportunity for those without access to a car to access the coast supporting both protected groups and people experiencing socio-economic challenges to access the coast.

7.3 Welsh Language Impacts

Signage, timetables and journey information is provided bilingually for users which increases the visibility and awareness of the Welsh language. Provision of the bus network can provide opportunities for the Welsh language to be enjoyed and promoted during journeys, helping to maintain and encourage the use of the Welsh language. The provision of a public transport network increases access to cultural heritage and Welsh history throughout the National Park.

7.4 Section 6 Biodiversity Duty and Carbon Emission Impacts

Planning Authorities must maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems through the planning process as part of compliance with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The continued provision of the coastal bus services reduces congestion and the number of private vehicles accessing sensitive sites and lowers disturbance to protected habitats. It also helps to lower carbon emissions per passenger.

7.5 Well-being Goals for Wales and 5 Ways of Working (Sustainable Development Principles) Impacts

The continued financial support for the coastal bus network and the Integrated Transport Unit Strategy Manager would align with and contribute to the Well-being Goals for Wales (see section 4).

The proposal aligns with the five ways of working and takes a **long-term, preventative and integrative** approach to reducing car dependency, thereby reducing congestion, habitat degradation and carbon emissions. The proposal has economic and social benefits by promoting social equity, use and awareness of the Welsh language and supporting opportunities to improve mental and physical health and wellbeing. The Greenways Partnership provides an opportunity for **collaboration** and **involvement** of partners to deliver sustainable transport.

8. Conclusion

Members are recommended to consider and authorise payment of approximately £75,000 to Pembrokeshire County Council as a contribution towards the Coastal bus network and the Integrated Transport Unit Strategy Manager for the financial year 2026/2027. A final settlement for 2026/27 is awaited from Pembrokeshire County Council.

9. List Background Documentation:

- Appendix A: Integrated Impact Assessment Screening

(For further information please contact Emma Gladstone,
emmag@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk)

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

PCNPA Full Integrated Assessment Trigger Document

This template should be completed to identify if an Integrated Assessment needs to be completed.

Version	Active Date	Document Owner
1	15/10/24	Performance and Compliance Officer

Note: A separate trigger and assessment document is available for carrying out a simplified assessment on Corporate Policies. The Authority is also in process of developing a checklist to inform the development and implementation of projects.

1. Strategic Plans, Decisions and Large Scale Projects: NPA/ Management Approval

1.1 A full integrated assessment should always be carried out on the following strategic documents that set the strategic policy direction of the Authority:

- National Park Management Plan
- Local Development Plan
- Corporate and Resources Plan
- Equality Plan and Objectives
- Welsh Language Promotion Strategy

Note: The Local Development Plan sets out requirements for when a Language Impact Assessment is required for planning proposals.

Note: For National Park Management Plan and Local Development Plan, sections of the integrated assessment may be separated out e.g. Equality Impact Assessment, Welsh Language Assessment or certain sections may not be required as covered by Sustainable Appraisals or Habitat Regulations Assessments.

1.2 For other strategic plans or decisions a full integrated assessment should be carried out if any of the following are true.

Statement for Consideration	Yes	No	Comment
A service is being withdrawn, changed or expanded which affects the community and/ or staff		X	The proposal is for funding for coastal bus services and Greenways Officer to continue. If Members do not agree with the recommendation, then an IIA would be required as services could be withdrawn which affects the community.
Individual's access to a service or function could be denied or restricted		X	The proposal is for funding for coastal bus services and Greenways Officer to continue. If Members do not agree with the recommendation, then an IIA would be required as an individual's access to a service could be denied.
Efficiency or saving proposals/ Significant change in size of budget		X	
Significant new project or recreational management proposals affecting communities or access to the built or wider environment		X	
Major procurement and commissioning decisions – with potential impacts on our carbon emissions/ or opportunities linked to socially responsible procurement		X	
Significant change in terms and conditions for staff/ re-organisation activities		X	
Decisions that affect the ability (including external Partners) to offer Welsh Language opportunities and services		X	

Decision that has potential consequences that could impact on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality outcomes • Welsh Language Outcomes • Addressing Socio economic disadvantage and inequality of Outcomes • Health Outcomes (including wider determinants of health) • Well-being Goals • Biodiversity and environmental outcomes • Carbon emission levels 		X	
Potential impacts have not been considered through an integrated assessment carried out on a plan it sits under		X	

1.3 Based on the above does an integrated assessment need to be completed for the Strategic Plan or Decision under consideration?

Yes/ No	Rational for decision based on 1.2
No	The report to NPA seeks agreement to continue funding coastal bus services and the Greenways Officer for the financial year 2026/2027. The recommendation is to continue with funding arrangements and there would be no change or impact to service provision. If Members do not agree with the recommendation, an IIA would be required and a decision should be paused until an IIA is undertaken.

Note: Where a full integrated assessment is not required, officers are still required to complete relevant sections within Committee reports to provide brief overview of considerations linked to areas covered by integrated assessments.

1.4 If yes, name of Officer who will be responsible for completing the Integrated Assessment:

1.5 Date Trigger Document Completed: (16/02/2026)

1.6 Member of Senior Management Team who has approved or completed Trigger document:

Name	Emma Gladstone
Signature	<i>E Gladstone</i>
Job Title	Strategic Policy Manager
Date	(16/02/2026)

Please forward completed trigger document for central record keeping to:
mairt@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk

Guidance/ Template Control Sheet

Version	Active Date	Document Owner
1	15/10/24	Performance and Compliance Officer

Approved by	Name	Date
Management Team	Tegryn Jones	15/10/24

Review	All Templates should be reviewed annually
Date last reviewed	15/10/24. Next review October 2025.

Publication

Template forms must be co-ordinated through the Performance and Compliance Team for compliance, auditing and control purposes. Please send all new or reviewed Templates once approved to mairt@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk for formal publication to staff.

Publication	Date
Published on Sharepoint Corporate Operational Procedure and Template Hub	18/10/24