

**Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council**  
**Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Castell-nedd**

**Democratic Services**  
**Gwasanaethau Democrataidd**

## **Decision Notice**

**ENVIRONMENT, REGENERATION AND STREETSCENE SERVICES**  
**CABINET BOARD - URGENCY ACTION , FRIDAY, 23RD JUNE, 2023**

Please see below approval of decision as follows:

1. **Acceptance of Welsh Government Bus Transition Fund - Urgency Action - 116TD (Pages 3 - 18)**

To seek approval to accept the Bus Transition Fund offered by Welsh Government to provide immediate financial support to bus operators in NPT and other Local Authorities in the South West Wales Region.

That, having had due regard to the integrated impact screening assessment, delegated authority be granted to the Director of Environment and Regeneration to accept the Bus Transition Funding determined by Welsh Government for the financial year 2023/24 and continue to lobby Welsh Government for additional funding to maintain services.

### **For Immediate Implementation**

Yours sincerely

Tammie Davies

p.p Chief Executive

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Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

## **NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Cabinet Board**

#### **Report of the Director of Environment and Regeneration, Nicola Pearce**

#### **Matter for Decision.**

**Wards Affected:** All Wards.

#### **Acceptance of Welsh Government Bus Transition Fund**

#### **Purpose of the Report:**

To seek Members approval to accept the Bus Transition Fund offered by Welsh Government to provide immediate financial support to bus operators in NPT and other Local Authorities in the South West Wales Region.

#### **Executive Summary:**

The Bus Emergency Scheme (BES) introduced by Welsh Government (WG) during the pandemic to financially support bus operators has been extended until 24th July 2023.

Thereafter WG have introduced a Bus Transition Fund (BTF) to replace BES and continue to provide financial support to bus operators and protect the majority of bus services across Wales.

WG advised Local Authorities via a letter dated 14th June, ( Appendix 2) that bus operators are required to give 28 days' notice to deregister a service, WG need to ensure that funding relating to

routes in NPT has been considered and agreed by Council or delegated decision making powers before 26 June 2023.

As a result of the urgent timescale and the need to accept this funding, delegated authority is sought for the Director of Environment and Regeneration to accept the Bus Transition Funding by way of urgency action.

### **Background:**

BES was introduced by the WG when the pandemic hit in March 2020. The public were advised not to travel and hence the bus operators' income revenue ceased.

As patronage slowly returned, BES has evolved to BES3 and ceased on 31st March 2023, however the patronage has not returned to pre pandemic levels due to factors such as home working, home shopping, parcel deliveries and the elderly not venturing out as often.

Following lobbying by Local Authorities in Wales, bus operators and partners, additional BES transitional funding was allocated to maintain services in their current form until 30th June 2023.

The scheme has since been extended again to 24th July 2023 to ensure that pupils and students can use local bus services to attend school until the end of the school year.

Welsh Government have announced that they need to transition away from an emergency style funding and have introduced "The Bus Transition Fund from the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2023 until the end of the financial year (31<sup>st</sup> March 2024). A grant agreement will therefore be provided to local authorities to provide such funding, on terms and conditions that will be shared with local authorities shortly.

Despite no official settlement confirmed. According to the Deputy Minister's press announcement. The Bus Transition Fund is worth

£46,000,000 in total for the 2023/2024 financial year. Officers estimate £4,000,000 allocated to Welsh Government's Traws Cymru Network leaving £42,000,000 for the rest of Wales.

Again, despite no official settlement confirmed. Officers estimate a share of £10,830,000 will be allocated to the South West Wales Region for the 2023/2024 financial year. Officers have calculated that NPT would receive approximately £3,465,600 for routes operated in the County Borough.

Officers estimate that this funding is not enough to cover the funding required in its entirety and regionally could be short by up to £2,972,000 to maintain the existing local bus network throughout the region in its current form.

There are potentially other income streams such as concessionary fares increase and reconciliation of 22/23 BES accounts that could reduce the shortfall considerably. The reconciliation process is currently being undertaken by City and County of Swansea (C&C of S) as the lead authority for the administration of BES.

C&C of S are also awaiting confirmation from WG whether any shortfall from 22/23 funding can be carried over into 23/24 and also the actual funding available between April and 24<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

This report by no means supports or accepts any service cuts. This report only confirms that the Council accepts the funding currently available as determined by WG in order to protect the services in the short term and that further discussions continue and the appropriate funding is available to protect all services at current levels.

Accordingly, there are a number of options open to local authorities:

**Option 1 - Not accept the level of funding available and renegotiate the funding value.**

There are no terms and conditions to the offer as yet, the repercussions of not accepting the offer of funding has not been made clear in the Minister's letter.

However if the funding on offer is not accepted then there is a real possibility that the majority of bus services will be unsustainable. Due to the very short time scale there is no time to negotiate with the WG.

### **Option 2 – Accept the level of funding estimated and continue to lobby WG.**

Representatives of Local Authorities and the Region have expressed significant concerns over the level of funding and have written to the Deputy Minister for Climate change (Appendix 3) however recognise that there is no realistic alternative option but to accept the funding level determined by WG in order to protect the majority of services in the short term and continue to lobby WG.

Accordingly, it recommended that Option 2 be pursued and that the Council accept the level of funding that is now estimated, whilst at the same time lobbying of WG continues. This will ensure the protection of the majority of services in the short term.

### **Financial Impacts:**

No implications. The Council is dependent on WG funding to continue with service provision.

### **Integrated Impact Assessment:**

A first stage Impact Assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The first stage assessment, attached at Appendix 1, has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required

**Valleys Communities Impacts:**

A significant proportion of subsidised services serve valley communities. The acceptance of this funding will ensure that in the short term the majority of arrangements can continue.

**Workforce Impacts:**

No implications

**Legal Impacts:**

It is anticipated that the acceptance of any funding will be subject to terms and conditions and officers will undertake a detailed review of such conditions on receipt to ensure the interests of the Council are protected

**Risk Management Impacts:**

By accepting the funding value on offer there is a risk that some local bus services may not be sustainable, however not accepting the funding on offer will result in the majority of local bus services being terminated.

**Consultation:**

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that having due regard to the integrated impact screening assessment, delegated authority be granted to the Director

of Environment and Regeneration to accept the Bus Transition Funding determined by WG for the financial year 2023/24 and continue to lobby WG for additional funding to maintain services.

**Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

Representatives of Local Authorities and the Region have expressed significant concerns over the level of funding and have written to the Deputy Minister for Climate change (Appendix 3) however recognise that there is no realistic alternative option but to accept the funding level determined by WG in order to protect the majority of services in the short term and continue to lobby WG.

**Implementation of Decision:**

The decision is an urgent one for immediate implementation, subject to the consent of the relevant Scrutiny Chair (and is therefore not subject to the call-in procedure.)

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Screening Assessment

Appendix 2 - Letter from Region to Deputy Minister for Climate change, highlighting concerns over funding arrangements

Appendix 3 - . Deputy Minister for Climate Change’s letter to Local Authorities outlining changes by 26<sup>th</sup> June 2023.


**List of Background Papers:**

None



**Officer Contact:**

Brendan Griffiths  
Passenger Transport Manager  
Passenger Transport Unit.

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 [b.griffiths@npt.gov.uk](mailto:b.griffiths@npt.gov.uk)

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## Appendix 1

### Impact Assessment - First Stage

#### 1. Details of the initiative

<b>Initiative description and summary:</b> Acceptance of Welsh Government Bus Transition Fund
<b>Service Area:</b> Engineering and Transport - Passenger Transport.
<b>Directorate:</b> Environment and Regeneration

#### 2. Does the initiative affect:

	Yes	No
Service users		X
Staff		X
Wider community		X
Internal administrative process only	X	

#### 3. Does the initiative impact on people because of their:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't Know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence)/How might it impact?
Age		X				Accepting the funding on offer and continuing to lobby WG will have no impact on residents with protected characteristics.
Disability		X				
Gender Reassignment		X				
Marriage/Civil Partnership		X				

Pregnancy/Maternity		X				
Race		X				
Religion/Belief		X				
Sex		X				
Sexual orientation		X				

**4. Does the initiative impact on:**

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence used) / How might it impact?
People's opportunities to use the Welsh language		X				This initiative will have no impact on people's opportunities to use the Welsh Language.
Treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English		X				This initiative will not treat the Welsh Language less favourably than English.

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**5. Does the initiative impact on biodiversity:**

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence) / How might it impact?
To maintain and enhance biodiversity			X			There is no impact and there are no pathways for biodiversity to be maintained/enhanced.
To promote the resilience of ecosystems, i.e.			X			There is no impact and there are no pathways for enhancement to the environment.

supporting protection of the wider environment, such as air quality, flood alleviation, etc.						
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**6. Does the initiative embrace the sustainable development principle (5 ways of working):**

	Yes	No	Details
<b>Long term</b> - how the initiative supports the long term well-being of people	X		Accepting the funding on offer and continuing to lobby WG will directly contribute to Wellbeing Objective 1 by ensuring continuity of the majority of the local bus network, Of which some services transport pupils to education.
<b>Integration</b> - how the initiative impacts upon our wellbeing objectives	X		Accepting the funding on offer will support local businesses and secure employment for contractor's staff. Wellbeing Objective 4
<b>Involvement</b> - how people have been involved in developing the initiative	X		Officers have spoken to operators of the subsidised local bus network to ensure they are content with the option of accepting the funding on offer and continue to lobby WG..
<b>Collaboration</b> - how we have worked with other services/organisations to find shared sustainable solutions	X		Officers have spoken to operators of the subsidised local bus network to ensure they are content with the option of accepting the funding on offer and continue to lobby WG.
<b>Prevention</b> - how the initiative will prevent problems occurring or getting worse	X		Accepting the funding on offer will offer time to lobby WG and review and evaluate the network and to consult with Members on the most appropriate use of the funding.

**7. Declaration - based on above assessment (tick as appropriate):**

A full impact assessment (second stage) <b>is not</b> required	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Reasons for this conclusion	
This is an internal admin process which in the short term will have a positive impact on the traveling public and provide time to lobby WG for additional funds.	

A full impact assessment (second stage) <b>is</b> required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reasons for this conclusion	

	Name	Position	Signature	Date
Completed by	B.Griffiths	Passenger Transport Manager		<b>20.06.23</b>
Signed off by	N. Pearce	Director of Environment and Regeneration.		<b>20.06.23</b>



14 June 2023

Dear Leaders and Chief Executives,

Bus services tie our communities together, they are a lifeline for some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in our communities - providing access to education, health, and leisure. We must protect them.

The Bus Transition Fund – developed collaboratively by Local Authorities, Welsh Government, Transport for Wales and the industry – provides immediate financial support to bus operators in Wales so that those vital services can continue.

Your officers have been working incredibly hard, on a regional basis, to rapidly plan and cost a network of bus services which can be delivered when our bus emergency scheme ends on 24 July.

We believe that the funding available will protect the majority of services across Wales and we have asked the Regional Planning Teams and TfW to prepare an overview of changes to services. Although some services may change to reflect post-pandemic travel patterns, there will be little or no impact in some areas.

All regions have now confirmed they are prepared to move forward, building on the work undertaken to date and the initial regional financial allocations proposed. This work must be done at pace if we are to avoid mass-cancellations of bus services.

As bus operators are required to give 28 days' notice to deregister a service, without confirmation of regional plans, services **will begin to be deregistered from 26 June 2023**. Building on the real progress made in recent weeks, we now need you to ensure that revised plans relating to your area have been considered and agreed by your council **before 26 June 2023** - including using delegated decision making powers if required.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

Of course, the work does not stop there and we must continue to work collaboratively to develop a longer term sustainable funding model that bridges the gap to franchising.

Your assistance in ensuring continuity of services is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee', enclosed within a light grey rectangular border.

**Lee Waters AS/MS**  
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Newid Hinsawdd  
Deputy Minister for Climate Change

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Morgan', written in a cursive style.

**Cllr. Andrew Morgan OBE**  
Arweinydd CLILC  
Leader, WLGA



Lee Waters MS  
Deputy Minister for Climate Change

*Please ask for:* Councillor Rob Stewart  
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*Our Ref:* RS/CM  
*Your Ref:*  
*Date:* 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023

**VIA EMAIL**

Dear Deputy Minister

Further to your request for our acceptance of the reduced BES settlements which Welsh Government (WG) are proposing for the current financial year I have been tasked by our region to respond on behalf of the four Leaders. I confirm that we have discussed this as a region and we have significant concerns as to the impact of the reductions. However, we recognise that we must accept the funding level determined by WG in order to protect the services in the short term.

The timescales for reviewing the impact of the funding reductions have been incredibly tight and I am sure that you can appreciate the need for us to fully consider the impacts on the communities affected in particular for other services such as school transport, community transport and health transport. Although a 'yellow list' of potential service reductions has been sent through as requested, I am not able to confirm support for the proposals as we have not had an opportunity to consult with stakeholders and democratically elected representatives. This yellow list is a provisional list and does not match proposed budget reductions and should not be regarded as something the region is recommending in any way.

I would also request that consideration is given to further marketing work both to publicise the impact of these funding decisions to help the travelling public, but also to encourage bus passengers to return to the buses following the Covid pandemic. Longer term, community transport may be a means to help address some of these concerns, and we would propose further work with WG on this matter. During the Covid period there were clear and effective messages given out to the public to avoid using public transport and there has not been a marketing campaign to try to rebuild user confidence for using public transport.

I recognise that WG have some very challenging budget pressures but I would like to reiterate the need for continued investment in public transport as it provides a vital lifeline for many communities and individuals. As such whilst leaders understand we

have no option but to accept the grant for the immediate future, it is our expectation that WG will continue to work proactively with local government across Wales to find a sustainable and acceptable solution to bus matters.

We look forward to working in partnership to work through this very challenging situation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rob Stewart', written in a cursive style.

**Y CYNGHORYDD/COUNCILLOR ROB STEWART  
(ON BEHALF OF SWANSEA, NEATH PORT TALBOT, CARMARTHENSHIRE  
AND PEMBROKESHIRE COUNCILS)**