

## 9. Barriers to Implementing the LTP

In last years APR, the Plan Partners highlighted a number of factors which acted as barriers to full implementation of the LTP programme. The Plan Partners are pleased to report here on progress and actions taken to overcome these barriers.

### 9.1 Skills shortage

In 2002/03, the Plan Partners agreed to set up a centralised Core LTP Team for Tyne and Wear. In the past we have developed our plan within the existing joint working arrangements between the partners. In hindsight, this may not have been conducive to the most effective form of working. Plan Partners recognised the need to strengthen the capacity for long term planning and monitoring, whilst enabling others to concentrate more on the delivery of projects. This approach is based upon best practice employed in other joint planning areas, for example, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire.

In essence, the Core Team act as a link between the Joint Transport Steering Group and Lead Members and the theme groups delivering the works across Tyne and Wear. The impact the Core Team have had since its formation is demonstrated by first, the successful delivery reported in this APR and secondly, the new processes put in place to monitor the impacts of scheme delivery and associated expenditure. Finally, the Core Team will be involved in the wider planning policy reviews of the UDP's within Tyne and Wear. By doing so, it will enable planning and transportation policies to be developed as one.

### 9.2 Contractors reaching capacity

In 2002/03, Plan Partners were encouraged by contractors responses to demands placed upon them from Local Authorities as a result of the substantial increase in Government investment on transport infrastructure. This has resulted in full expenditure of financial allocations and delivery of schemes. The Plan Partners realised as a result of increased capital investment that partnership arrangements with contractors were the best means of delivering schemes within tight deadlines and are now actively pursuing this delivery method. Expressions of interest notices have been advertised following all relevant procedures.

### 9.3 Financial regime

The Plan Partners were concerned previously that 1-year funding was incompatible with highways and transport capital construction projects, which are frequently affected by adverse weather conditions, unexpected site conditions or prolonged public consultation. However, in 2002/03 the Partners utilised the flexibility afforded by the Single Capital Pot (SCP) to fund an accelerated delivery programme on the integrated transport block. It must be acknowledged that these funds must be paid back from the 2003/04 transport settlement. This change in the Local Government funding regime, however, is regarded as a significant step forward in delivering a continuous transport infrastructure programme.

### 9.4 Refining our approach to consultation

Public consultation is an essential part of delivering transport projects. The Plan Partners have a well-defined toolkit for consultation supporting the delivery of the LTP from policy to scheme construction. We are concerned that public consultation on many projects, especially those that seek to reallocate road space or restrain traffic, are so complex and prolonged that they significantly delay delivery of the project. We have reviewed our approach to consultation on many projects, seeking to maximise opportunities for public involvement but minimise the risk of delays. Typically, our approach now provides consultation on an analysis of problems – building consensus about the issues to be addressed, followed by consideration of a range of potential solutions. We seek to avoid an iterative approach of “scheme-design-in-public”, which can become excessively time-consuming whilst adding little value to the outcome. In all instances, the Plan partners seek to address the concerns of people affected by our proposal in the context of delivering the LTP objectives.