

5. Evidence of Improvement

Table 9 sets out our actions to address Government's response to earlier progress reports.

Summary of the comments contained in the December 2002 LTP settlement decision letter that indicated a need for improvement or clarification (and any outstanding comments from 2000 and 2001 decision letters)	Summary of actions taken in response to comments contained in the decision letter (where appropriate, please cross refer to any information contained in the APR)
<p>Progress towards targets and objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The tables reporting against targets and objectives were not fully completed and do not fit well with the supporting narrative. Where targets are not met, there is no indication of actions that will be taken to rectify the problem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The tables have been fully completed this year and are more co-ordinated with their supporting narrative. Each target is now accompanied by a narrative explaining how it is to be met or revised if progress is not as planned.
<p>Delivery of schemes on the ground</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No summary of the number and type of schemes delivered in support of each objective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The latest APR contains a breakdown of the number and type of scheme by theme
<p>Spending programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little explanation of significant divergences from the proposed implementation programme Funding carried over from 2001/02 to 2002/03 is very significant Quarterly financial and progress monitoring of major schemes has not been provided There is no comparison of proposed and actual expenditure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant divergences from the proposed programme outlined in the F4 forms have been explained and justified in the latest APR The Plan Partners are confident that the latest APR demonstrates that the available budget and any carry over has been fully spent Quarterly reports have been made available to Government Office North East A new enclosure to the APR compares proposed and actual expenditure by theme
<p>Consultation arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on current arrangements and their success needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A full explanation of on-going consultation arrangements is included in the latest APR
<p>Best Practice sharing and learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have not clearly identified the links between LTP implementation and wider policy areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A flow diagram demonstrating the links between the LTP and other corporate policy areas has been developed for enclosure in the latest APR
<p>Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No on track/ not on-track column in the progress tables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tables 3 and 4 include this information
<p>Other issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no demand management strategy for Tyne and Wear Lacks detail of the links between LTP implementation and wider government policy A lack of reference to re-thinking Construction A lack of integration of the LTP with Local Planning Policy A clearer identification of the links between local objectives and PSA/Ten year plan objectives is required An explanation of the impact the LTP has on reducing CO2 emissions is required A specific narrative is required on how the needs of rural areas are to be met is required (this should include an indication of levels of rural expenditure) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A demand management strategy for Tyne and Wear has now been appended to the latest document The flow diagram demonstrating the links with wider policy areas also demonstrates linkage with the government agenda Addressed within the section describing linkage with The Urban White Paper and Community Strategy A description of the LTP teams role in the current round of UDP reviews is enclosed The linkage between the APR and other local and national transport objectives is more fully explored An explanation of the LTP's impact on reducing CO2 emissions is now included A new rural transport strategy has been appended to the latest APR, in addition an estimate of rural expenditure has been included

Table 9 – Evidence of Improvement in 2002/03

5.1 Revised LTP Strategies for Tyne and Wear

5.1.1 Rural Transport

The rural transport agenda was set by the Transport White Paper, A New Deal for Transport in 1998. This has been supplemented by other documents including the Rural White Paper, Our Countryside: The Future, the Countryside Agency's guidance on LTP's, Local Transport Plans: A Better Deal for Rural Areas (2003), and also the Social Exclusion Unit Report, Making the Connections (2003).

Rural areas in Tyne and Wear have experienced significant economic change in recent years, arising from the decline of coal mining and much-reduced employment in agriculture and forestry. As a consequence, rural residents have been forced to travel further afield for work and many basic services. This is reflected in rising car ownership in rural areas and a growth in rural deprivation in less accessible areas. The challenge, then, is to meet needs in a sustainable way, and improving accessibility for those without access to a car.

The Plan Partners are currently reviewing rural transport policy with a view to submitting a fully revised strategy in the next local transport plan.

Nexus works closely with neighbouring authorities to jointly secure cross boundary services where necessary. In many rural areas rural residents have a good standard of service with 99% of Tyne and Wear residents within 13 minutes walk of an hourly bus service. But this headline figure disguises small pockets of poor accessibility, and those for whom a substantial walk is impractical. To help remedy these problems, Rural Bus Challenge funding has been secured, notably for a new rural interchange and associated bus services in the west Gateshead area. As operators continue to respond to declining patronage on conventional services, Nexus will promote demand responsive services (DRT) to fill the gaps and also to meet local needs in a more targeted way. The most recent Rural Bus Challenge award secured funding for a rural DRT pilot and this will come into operation in October 2003, together with a pilot Taxi-bus scheme.

Community transport schemes operate throughout Tyne and Wear to meet the needs of people who have difficulty using conventional public transport. The Rural Transport Partnership plays an important role in helping groups and communities to devise and develop community transport initiatives. In

addition to these schemes the Nexus Care Service operates throughout rural areas to provide door to door services.

The LTP partners are implementing traffic calming and traffic management measures in rural areas to improve road safety. An example of this is the "Quiet Roads" project in South Tyneside, where lower speed limits, engineering measures, landscaping and improved surfaces are being brought together to produce a safer and improved environment for rural road users and residents.

As a result of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, funding has been set aside for the establishment of a joint Local Access Forum. The Forum will have the primary purpose of providing advice to local authorities on how to make the countryside more accessible and enjoyable. There are expected to be three main topics:

- Recreation and access strategies which cater for a wide range of people.
- The improvement of the rights of way network.
- The implementation, management and review of the statutory right of access to the countryside.

Proposals for further development

- Ensure that policies are in line with the Countryside Agency's "rural proofing" checklist.
- Develop service enhancement through Quality Partnerships.
- Village protection measures.
- Lorry surveys and route management.

5.1.2 Bus information strategy

The PTA has recently adopted a Bus Information Strategy. The strategy was developed in consultation with passengers, bus operators, Nexus and local authorities. Market research was conducted that found relevant information about bus services was already being made available to passengers in appropriate ways. The Bus Information Strategy therefore defines standards for bus service information that will further increase the quality of the information provided. Key features of the strategy are the focus on accessibility standards for information provision, and the commitment to actively market public transport in Tyne and Wear. The Bus Information Strategy has been published separately by, and is available from, Nexus. A Best Value review of Travel Information will inform a revised Bus Information Strategy which will be published in 2004.