

1. Introduction

This report describes progress during 2002/03 (April 2002 – March 2003) towards delivery of the strategies and implementation plans set out in the Local Transport Plan 2001-06 for Tyne and Wear. The last full year of work towards the LTP objectives has been a challenging time for the LTP partners. All partners were especially keen to ensure our Annual Progress Report (APR) leads to a marked improvement in Government's disappointing assessment of last year. In this regard, we have paid particular attention to reporting our progress in accordance with revised guidance from the Department for Transport. The content and structure of this report are considered to be wholly consistent with this guidance.

Throughout this APR, we have tried to ensure that all progress is monitored with regard to our stated LTP objectives, namely;

- improving accessibility
- ensuring safe and secure travel;
- reducing the environmental impacts of travel;
- improving the efficiency of transport; and
- integrating transport systems.

The Plan Partners work in a rapidly changing environment with new arrangements for decision-making and a regime of Best Value and Comprehensive Performance Assessment seeking improved services and value-for-money. In Tyne and Wear, two of the partners were awarded excellent status in this year's appraisals. We are confident that this Progress Report clearly demonstrates changes in our delivery of the LTP programmes and a positive response to feedback received from Government. We are pleased to report that LTP resources have been fully utilised in delivering substantial progress towards national and local targets. Where progress is not on track to meet targets, the APR outlines our actions to address this. Information on delivery of projects is found in Section 2 of the report and progress towards targets is set out in Section 3. Additionally, technical and financial details can be found in the accompanying APR Technical Annex, which is extensively referenced throughout this document.

The Plan Partners have responded to a need to strengthen their capacity for long-term planning and monitoring of LTP objectives, enabling others to concentrate more on the delivery of projects. In 2002/03, the Plan Partners agreed to set up a central LTP Team for Tyne and Wear, similar to examples of best practice in other joint planning areas.

The team's impact is demonstrated by

- new processes that have enabled improved monitoring of impacts, delivery and expenditure as reported in this APR,
- improved delivery and a greater focus on LTP objectives
- involvement in wider planning policy reviews across Tyne and Wear.

We anticipate that the role of the LTP team will help to plan and deliver improved integrated transport programmes in the future.

The LTP implementation programme includes 8 major schemes, each costing over £5 million. Two major schemes have been completed recently – Sunderland Direct Metro Extension and the West Central Route in Newcastle. Other major projects are at varying stages of development having made substantial progress during 2002/03. Further details on progress of all major schemes is summarised in Section 2.17.

Block funding is available for integrated transport and maintenance projects. Over 300 projects were completed in 2002/03 across a wide range of programmes. The case studies in this report show how these contribute to national and local targets. Summaries of block implementation programmes for 2002/03 and plans for 2003/04 are set out in Section 4.

We have responded positively to our designation as a Centre of Excellence for transport planning, disseminating our practice through web sites, seminars and workshops. Preparations have been made for our CofE conference "Social Inclusion & Accessibility" in September 2003. Further information on our approaches to dissemination and learning from others is set out in Section 6.