

Strategic Environmental Assessment of the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan 2006/07 – 2010/11



**Environmental Report
June 2006**



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SUMMARY

Introduction

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) became a mandatory requirement for Local Transport Plans in July 2004 under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (transposing the 'SEA Directive' – EC/2001/42/EC). SEA aims to assess the likely impact of strategic level plans on the environment and to inform decision-making throughout the plan making process for the second West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan (LTP2), from the development of objectives and throughout the lifetime of the plan by means of a monitoring programme. It is a requirement of the SEA Directive for the LTP2 to identify how the SEA process has influenced its design to promote greater transport sustainability.

The SEA for the West Yorkshire LTP2 involved the production of two reports: a Scoping Report, and the Environmental Report. A draft Scoping Report was produced in March 2005 to determine the likely extent (spatial, temporal and thematic) of the SEA, the level of detail that will be needed for the assessment, and to identify what information will be included in the SEA and Environmental Report. The Environmental Report is required by the Regulations to provide a detailed account of the SEA process including prediction and evaluation of any significant environmental effects of the Plan, and consideration of mitigation measures that could be implemented. The Report should also contain a framework for monitoring the environmental effects of the Plan's implementation in order to determine whether it's effects are as anticipated and inform future revision of the LTP2. To reduce duplication and for a more consistent and coherent approach the final Scoping Report, taking on board consultee comments and other amendments, has been incorporated into the Environmental Report. This report will therefore detail the scope of the SEA, baseline information and assessment of strategic alternatives, and then move on to assess the likely significant impacts of the chosen LTP2 strategy and consider ways in which these impacts can be mitigated and monitored.

Findings of the Scoping Exercise

A set of SEA objectives were developed in accordance with the SEA Regulations and the Government's New Approach to Appraisal (NATA) topics for LTPs to assess the environmental performance of the Plan throughout it's development. Data was also collected to describe an environmental baseline for West Yorkshire structured around the SEA objectives, detailing the current and likely future environment in the sub-region.

The scoping appraisal described in this report used a matrix system to assess five alternative options devised for the LTP, each with emphasis on a different policy area. The alternative options considered were:

- **Option One:** is the existing situation that can be treated as a "do-minimum" or background situation. For the purposes of the hypothetical situations that follow, it can be assumed that the development / investment in the policy instruments here would be maintained with no further growth.
- **Option Two:** an alternative consisting of Option One (existing) plus policy instruments skewed towards constraining the strong demand for car travel.
- **Option Three:** an alternative consisting of Option One (existing) plus policy instruments skewed towards sustainable transport modes.
- **Option Four:** an alternative consisting of Option One (existing) plus policy instruments skewed towards unconstrained demand for car travel.

- **Option Five:** an alternative consisting of Option One (existing) plus policy instruments skewed towards targeted improvements to roads together with some improvements for walking, cycling and public transport.

The objective of this exercise was not only to establish which of the alternatives was likely to perform the best environmentally as a whole, but also to identify particular policy instruments that were likely to be beneficial/detrimental to the environment. By doing this decision-makers would be able to adopt the most suitable package of measures in the Plan as it developed.

The scoping exercise identified which alternative provided the best environmental performance. In the case of LTP2 this was option 2 - policy instruments skewed towards car use constrained through demand management.

Summary of significant effects assessment

The chosen LTP2 strategy was decided on following a number of processes including consultation with stakeholders and the public, the use of transport working groups, data analysis and the outcome of the SEA scoping process. This chosen strategy was subsequently developed into the Provisional LTP2, focused around the five priority themes set out in Department for Transport guidance (tackling congestion, delivering accessibility, safer roads, better air quality, and better asset management).

The Provisional LTP2 is divided into two broad components. Firstly, a number of 'strategy approaches' were developed to set the policy framework for LTP2, and secondly categories of capital schemes were established. As the Provisional LTP2 lists a large amount of individual schemes it would be impracticable to assess each of these at a strategic level. Instead, a more generic assessment was made of the types of impact that could be incurred for each scheme category.

The culmination of the assessment is a number of recommendations for how the LTP2 could either mitigate against potential negative effects brought about by implementation of the Plan or highlighting opportunities by which the Plan could actively enhance the environment. Recommendations for improvement were provided for both strategic policies and scheme design issues, even where the impact was only likely to be minor in order to avoid any potential cumulative effects.

Any effects considered to be 'significant' were highlighted and particular attention given to how the Plan could be altered to reduce or eliminate the impact. In the case of the Provisional LTP2, the following SEA objectives were considered to incur potentially significant positive or negative effects as a result of the Plan:

- Improve local/regional air quality and mitigate transport related AQMAs (major opportunity for improvement).
- Reduce transport-related emissions of greenhouse gases (major opportunity for improvement).
- Improve the ability of transport systems to adapt to climate change (both moderate beneficial effect and moderate opportunities for improvement).
- To secure improvements to health (moderate beneficial effect).
- Reduce the number of vehicular, pedestrian and other transport-user casualties (major beneficial effect).
- Reduce the risk and fear of crime for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users (moderate beneficial effect).
- Improve access to education, jobs, leisure (including sustainable tourism), community services and the countryside (moderate opportunities for enhancement).

For each SEA objective recommendations have been made for how the draft plan could be modified to either mitigate negative effects or enhance positive effects and opportunities for improvement.

Monitoring

The SEA Directive requires a monitoring framework is established to monitor any predicted significant effects and to identify any unforeseen significant effects arising from implementation of the LTP2.

For the potentially significant effects identified by the SEA an annual monitoring framework will be incorporated into the Local Transport Plan's Annual Progress Report (APR). This will review the appropriate baseline data and monitor trends. In addition to the Annual Progress Report, a separate review will be undertaken on an annual basis to update all aspects of baseline data included in this Environmental Report. If any changes in the condition of the environment relating to transport impacts become apparent over time these will be added to the list of 'significant impacts' and included also in the main LTP2 APR. Monitoring reviews will be made available on the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan Partnership (www.wyltp.com) alongside the Environmental Report, and will be included in the LTP APR. Alternatively copies can be obtained from the LTP Core Group representatives (contact details are provided in the LTP2 document).

1. INTRODUCTION

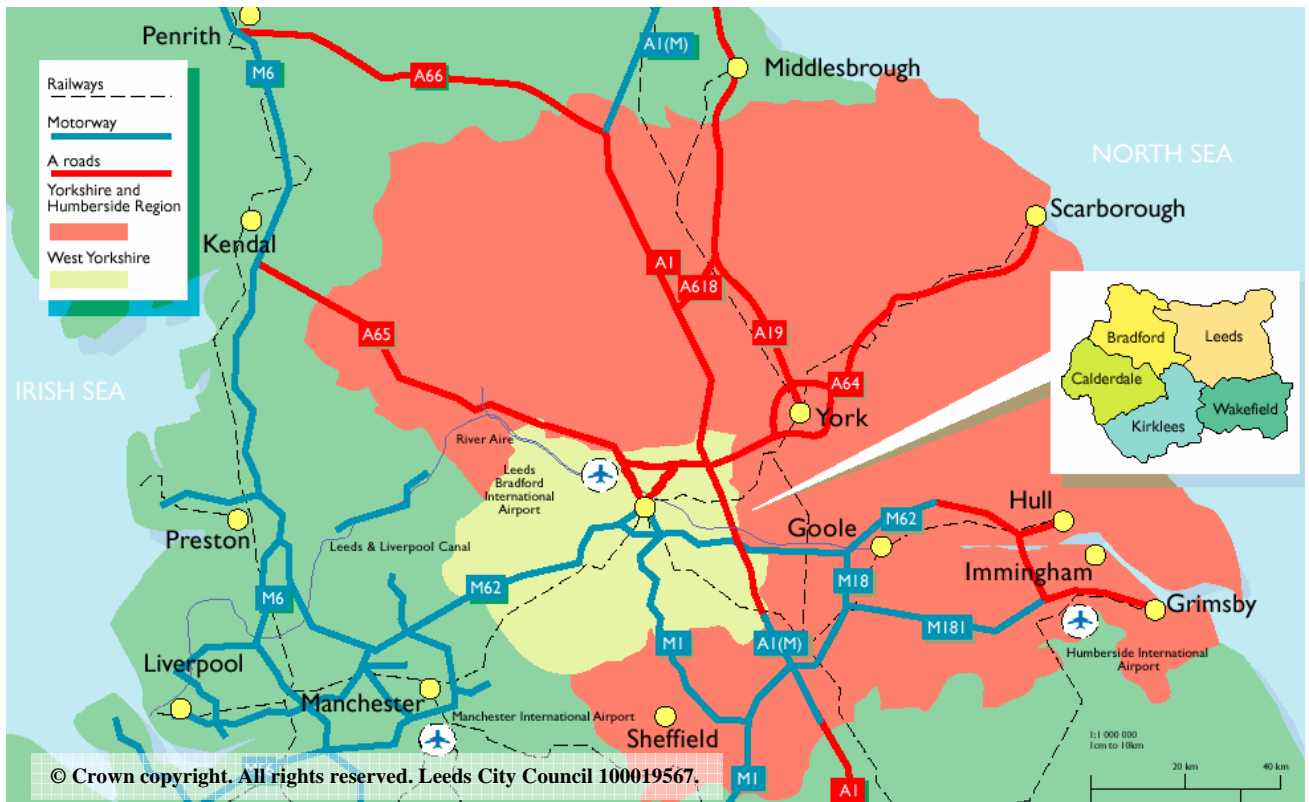
1.1 The West Yorkshire Sub-Region

West Yorkshire is a sub-region of the Yorkshire and Humber region, covering an area of 2000 km² and with a population of over two million. The sub-region is split into five Local Authority Districts – Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield, and is diverse in terms of both topography and urban settlement.

West Yorkshire is a highly urbanised area with several densely populated towns including Leeds, Huddersfield, Halifax, Bradford, and Wakefield. Other highly populated areas include the Aire Valley (Shipley, Bingley and Keighley) and the ‘five towns’ of Castleford, Pontefract, Normanton, Featherstone and Knottingley. However there are extensive rural areas within the West Yorkshire sub-region, many of which experience development pressure as a result of their close proximity to urban areas. These rural areas can also be prone to poor public transport links and high levels of car dependency, which can lead to problems of isolation for non-car users and a reduction in the number of local jobs and services.

The area has undergone significant industrial and structural change over the last 20 years, with the decline of traditional industries such as coal mining (in parts of Wakefield and Leeds) and the textile industry. Some areas in West Yorkshire are doing relatively well as manufacturing decline has been compensated by the growth of new industries and services. In particular Leeds has become a major city of regional, national and international importance in large part due to the development of it’s service-based industry. However, several areas within West Yorkshire still suffer a legacy of social, environmental and economic degradation as a result of widespread industrial decline.

Figure 1.1: West Yorkshire location map



1.2 The legislative framework and purpose of SEA

Legislative Framework

In June 2001 European Union Directive 2001/42/EC – the ‘SEA Directive’ – came into effect, requiring Member States to introduce domestic legislation to interpret the requirements of the Directive into national law. Accordingly, The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations came into force in England on July 20th 2004.

The SEA Directive aims ‘to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development’ (Article 1). The Directive applies to certain plans and programmes, and modifications to them, whose formal preparation or adoption began before 21 July 2006. The environment as defined by the Directive incorporates biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage, landscape and the interrelationship of the above factors.

Screening

SEA is required for the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan as it relates to the transport sector, and sets a framework for individual projects requiring Environmental Impact Assessment under the EIA Directive. SEA is also required if the plan is likely to require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive where the plan may damage Sites of Community Importance (namely Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation) which are designated sites of European ecological importance. There are a number of these sites within West Yorkshire’s moorland, which are discussed during the scoping exercise.

Aims of the SEA

A summary of the stages involved in the SEA process is shown in table 1.1. The aim is to assess the likely impact of strategic level plans and programmes on the environment, and to inform decision-making throughout the plan-making programme. Five basic principles of SEA have now been widely accepted¹:

- Improving the strategic action – SEA should therefore be started early and integrated in the decision-making process, focussing on identifying possible alternatives and modifications to strategic action.
- Promote participation of other stakeholders in decision-making – provides opportunity for decision-makers to include issues that go beyond their main area of concern.
- Focus on key environmental/sustainability constraints – should consider relevant thresholds and limits at the appropriate plan-making level.
- Identify the best option for strategic action – identify and assess different plan options.
- Minimise negative impacts of the plan, optimise positive impacts and compensate for the loss of valuable features and benefits – to include, for example, changing aspects of the strategic action to avoid negative impact or setting constraints on subsequent project implementation.

¹ Hales, 2000 – cited in Therivel (2004).

- Ensure that strategic actions do not exceed limits beyond which irreversible damage from impacts may occur – identification of limits, prediction of impacts from the plan/programme and judgement as to whether the effect will be exceeded and damage be caused.

SEA Guidance

The following guidance has been consulted during the production of this scoping report:

- Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidance for Transport Plans and Programmes – WebTag Tag Unit 2.1 (Department for Transport, 2004).
- The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities: Practical guidance on applying European Directive 2001/42/EC "on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment" to land use and spatial plans in England (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003).
- A Draft Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004).
- The Appraisal Process – WebTag Tag Unit 2.5 (Department for Transport, 2004b), and the accompanying guidance: The Environment Objective – WebTag Tag Unit 3.3, (DfT, 2003).
- Strategic Environmental Assessment and Biodiversity: Guidance for Practitioners (Countryside Council for Wales, English Nature, Environment Agency and RSPB, 2004).
- Strategic Environmental Assessment and Climate Change: Guidance for Practitioners (Countryside Council for Wales, Environment Agency, English Nature, UKCIP, Levett-Therivel Consultants, CAG Consultants and Environmental Change Institute, 2004).
- Full Guidance on Local Transport Plans: second edition (DfT, 2004).

In addition to the Environmental Report, the following documents must be made publicly available to improve the transparency of decision-making and demonstrate how the findings of the SEA have been taken into account:

- The plan or programme as adopted.
- A statement summarising how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme and how the environmental report [and consultation opinions] have been taken into account....and the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with.
- The measures decided concerning monitoring.

Table 1.1: Stages in the SEA Process (taken from ODPM, 2004)

SEA Stages	Purpose
STAGE A: SETTING THE CONTEXT AND ESTABLISHING THE BASELINE	
Identifying other relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives.	To document how the plan/programme is affected by outside factors and suggest ideas for how any constraints can be addressed. Help to identify SEA objectives.
Collecting baseline information.	To provide an evidence base for environmental problems, effects prediction and monitoring. Also helps in the development of SEA objectives.
Identifying environmental problems.	To help focus the SEA and streamline the subsequent stages including baseline information analysis, setting of the SEA objectives, prediction of effects and monitoring.
Developing SEA objectives.	To provide a means by which the environmental performance of the plan or programme can be assessed.
STAGE B: DECIDING THE SCOPE OF SEA AND DEVELOPING STRATEGIC ALTERNATIVES	
Testing the plan or programme objectives against the SEA objectives.	To ensure that the overall objectives of the plan or programme are in accordance with the SEA objectives and provide a suitable framework for developing options.
Appraising strategic alternatives.	To assist in the development and refinement of the strategic alternatives by identifying potential environmental impacts of alternatives for achieving the plan or programme objectives.
Consulting on the scope of SEA.	To ensure the SEA covers the key environmental issues.
STAGE C: ASSESSING THE EFFECTS OF THE PLAN OR PROGRAMME	
Predicting the effects of the plan or programme, including alternatives.	To predict the significant environmental effects of the plan or programme and its alternatives.
Evaluating the effects of the plan or programme, including alternatives.	To evaluate the predicted effects of the plan or programme and its alternatives and assist in the refinement of the plan or programme.
Mitigating adverse effects.	To ensure all potential mitigation measures are considered and as a result residual effects are identified.
Proposing measures to monitor the environmental effects of plan or programme implementation.	To detail the means by which the environmental performance of the plan or programme can be assessed.
Preparing the environmental report.	To provide a detailed account of the SEA process, including the findings of the environmental assessment and how it influenced the development of the draft plan or programme, in a format suitable for public consultation and decision-makers.
STAGE D: CONSULTING AND DECISION-MAKING	
Consulting on the draft plan or programme and the Environmental Report.	To provide the public and Consultation Bodies with an opportunity to express their opinions on the findings of the Environmental Report. Also helps to identify preferred alternatives and gather baseline information.
Assessment of significant changes.	To ensure that any significant changes to the draft plan or programme are assessed for their environmental implications and influence the revision of the draft plan or programme.
Decision-making and provision of information.	To provide information on how the Environmental Report and consultees opinions were taken into account in preparing the plan or programme.
STAGE E: MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OR PROGRAMME	
Developing aims and methods for monitoring.	To measure the environmental performance of the plan or programme in order to determine whether its effects are as anticipated, and thereby inform future revisions.
Responding to adverse effects.	Ensure that adverse effects can be identified and appropriate responses developed.

1.3 Regional Policy Framework

'Advancing Together' is the document that sets out the vision and strategic framework for Yorkshire and Humber, drawing together the region's plans and strategies. In particular there are four regional strategies that are crucial to realising the vision:

- ◆ Regional Economic Strategy;
- ◆ Regional Cultural Strategy;
- ◆ Regional Housing Strategy; and
- ◆ Regional Spatial Strategy (replacing the Regional Planning Guidance in 2004). This incorporates the Regional Transport Strategy.

There are many other strategies and plans developed at regional, sub-regional and local level that support these strategies and aim to achieve long-term regional objectives. Amongst these are Local Transport Plans (LTPs). LTPs should be developed to complement and integrate with other plans and strategies in the framework.

1.4 The West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan

The Transport Act 2000 requires the development and implementation of Local Transport Plans. In metropolitan areas such as West Yorkshire this must be done jointly between the district councils and the public transport authority (Metro). The West Yorkshire LTP2 is a statutory requirement and is used by the Department for Transport (DfT) to help in allocating national capital funding for transport improvements. The plan assumes no additional major schemes, although any major schemes that are implemented in addition to the LTP2 will be subject to separate, project-level environmental assessment. The outcome of these individual environmental impact assessments will be taken into consideration in the SEA process.

The objectives for the second LTP are built on the aims of a longer term strategy and are structured around central and local government's shared priorities for transport: accessibility, safety, reducing congestion, air quality and asset management. A list of the LTP objectives are shown in table 1.2. In addition to the main document, the LTP2 also includes a number of related supporting strategies including:

- Outline Accessibility Strategy.
- Air Quality and Vehicle Emissions.
- Rights of Way Improvement Plans.
- Transport Asset Management Plans.
- Metro's Bus Strategy.

Where appropriate, elements have been taken from these strategies for inclusion in this environmental assessment.

The 'West Yorkshire Provisional Local Transport Plan 2006/07 to 2010/11' was submitted to the Department for Transport in July 2005, setting out the long-term strategy for transport in West Yorkshire and an action plan for measures over a five year period. The scoping report produced as part of the SEA informed the development of the provisional LTP2, and it is this version that has been used as a basis for the strategic environmental assessments. A final approved LTP building upon the strategies set out in the provisional plan and taking account of the findings of this SEA was published in March 2006.

Table 1.2: LTP2 objectives

Shared Priority	Objective / sub-objectives
DELIVERING ACCESSIBILITY	<p><i>To improve access to jobs, education and other key services for everyone and;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve accessibility for all those people, services and facilities which have poor accessibility. • To broaden travel horizons and access to information. • To encourage planning for accessibility.
TACKLING CONGESTION	<p><i>To reduce delays to the movements of people and goods and;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To encourage more journeys by public transport, walking and cycling particularly in congested parts of the network. • To improve journey time reliability and make better use of highway capacity. • To reduce the demand for travel by car as a proportion of all trips.
AIR QUALITY & VEHICLE EMISSIONS	<p><i>To limit transport emissions of air pollutants, greenhouse gases and noise.</i></p>
SAFER ROADS	<p><i>To improve safety for all highway users and;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce the number and severity of road casualties. • To tackle problems facing vulnerable road users (including those in deprived areas).
EFFECTIVE ASSET MANAGEMENT	<p><i>To improve the condition of the transport infrastructure and;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To manage the infrastructure more effectively. • To meet the needs of current and future transport users. • To mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.

1.5 Bus Strategy

Metro's Bus Strategy 2006-2011 forms an appendix of the main LTP2 document and has been developed in the context of the LTP2 objectives. The strategy also supports the Northern Way Growth Strategy and the DfT target for a 12% growth in public transport trips by 2010 with growth in all regions, and to achieve this sets the following objectives:

- To increase patronage for all categories of bus passenger (senior, disabled and child concessions, non-concessionary).
- To achieve modal shift away towards the bus and away from the car.
- To increase satisfaction with bus services.
- To improve accessibility to bus services, requiring sustained improvement in the physical accessibility of vehicles and infrastructure.
- To improve the overall accessibility level provided by the bus network.
- To improve value for money for users.
- To improve confidence in bus services by improved perception of and actual safety and security.

The measures set out in the Bus Strategy have been taken into consideration throughout the strategic environmental assessment and have been incorporated into any comments and recommendations given.

1.6 Incorporating the New Approach to Appraisal (NATA)

The New Approach to Appraisal (NATA) was introduced in the Government's white paper 'A New Deal for Transport' as a requirement for Local Transport Plans, and is structured within the framework provided by the five key objectives of environment, safety, economy, accessibility and integration (DfT, 2004b). There is an overlap with the NATA objectives and the SEA topics which require assessment (as shown in table 1.3), and to reduce duplication of effort the requirements of both the NATA and SEA have been incorporated into the same assessment process.

A degree of adaptation is necessary to fulfil the requirements of both the NATA and SEA processes in the Environmental Report. The SEA Directive requires additional work on a number of areas of environmental assessment (including baseline information, impact prediction, alternatives, mitigation, consultation, reporting and monitoring). NATA on the other hand places more emphasis on social, economic and accessibility objectives, which although covered to some extent by the SEA Directive under the 'population', 'human health' and 'material assets' topics have less specific requirements for assessment. The SEA objectives included in this scoping report have therefore been widened in scope to include certain other social and economic aspects relevant to LTP2.

Table 1.3: NATA sub-objectives and other topics to be addressed within an SEA (taken from DfT, 2004a).

NATA OBJECTIVE	NATA SUB-OBJECTIVE	SEA TOPIC
Environment	Noise	Human health, population, inter-relationships
	Local air quality	Air, human health, population
	Greenhouse gases	Climatic factors
	Landscape	Landscape
	Townscape	
	Heritage	Cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage
	Biodiversity	Biodiversity, fauna, flora, soil
	Water environment	Water
	Physical fitness	Human health, population
Safety	Accidents	Human health, population
	Security	
Accessibility	Community severance	Population
	Access to the transport system	
Economy	Public accounts	Material assets
	Business users and providers	
	Consumer users	

1.7 The LTP Environmental Advisory Task Group

The Environmental Advisory Task Group was set up to support the development of the SEA process. The initial group included a mix of expertise from transport, land-use planning and environmental impact assessment (EIA) backgrounds, with at least one member from each of the five West Yorkshire Districts. Also present at the meetings of the Task Group was a member of the LTP Core Team to help co-ordinate the task group and report back to LTP Steering Group.

During the early developments of both the LTP2 and the SEA scoping process, it became apparent that the remit of the Environmental Advisory Task Group was too great. For example the latest draft Department for Transport guidance for full LTPs (DfT, 2004c) requires detailed knowledge of air quality and information concerning other 'quality of life' issues such as climate change and environmental noise. In addition to these requirements, air quality has been identified as one of the four key shared LTP priorities (the others being accessibility, congestion and road safety).

For both the SEA Directive and the New Approach to Appraisal a broad range of environmental topics must be considered and assessed against the LTP2 objectives. These topics (identified in section 1.4) incorporate land-use and transport related impacts. To cater for these requirements two environmental task groups have been established within the Environmental Advisory Group:

- The SEA Task Group and;
- The Transport Emissions Task Group - this group also includes a member from each district with an environmental health background.

In addition to the assessment teams, further specialist advice was provided by officers from health and economic backgrounds to help fill in any knowledge gaps. Key to this was the formation of expert 'assessment groups' involving specialist officers from all Districts in the assessment of effects of the chosen LTP2 strategy (discussed further in chapter 7). Additional support on developing the SEA process was also provided by assessment teams undertaking SEA in other service areas and from the Sustainable Development service area in Leeds City Council.