



In the public interest

Summing up for the PTA at the Public Inquiry, Mr Stephen Sauvain QC said a balance has to be achieved between the public interest represented by the New Tyne Crossing and any harm that may be caused by the scheme locally.

He said the 'strong case' for the new tunnel is backed up by policy support at local, regional and national levels.

"We have shown how long lasting economic benefits can be brought forward by the scheme and how the environmental impact is relatively small and capable of substantial mitigation (reduction)," he said.

"The concerns, real or perceived, of the groups of local residents most affected by the scheme are understood. We believe those concerns would be very largely met or mitigated but the loss, for example, of the open area at Epinay Walk (in Jarrow) is undoubtedly an adverse affect for which the replacement of open land can only be partial compensation.

"Through the adoption of the discretionary (house) purchase scheme, the PTA has shown itself willing to go beyond statutory requirements to alleviate hardship caused by blight to local residents."

He said the PTA's ability to reach agreement with almost all of the businesses and utilities affected by the proposed works, as well as statutory bodies, indicated the high degree of effort that had been expended in ensuring that the construction of the new tunnel does not have any adverse impact on the local economy nor any significant or permanent adverse effects on the environment.

Mr Sauvain emphasised that the New Tyne Crossing was just one proposal amongst several for reducing congestion, easing bottlenecks and improving public transport in Tyne and Wear.

House purchase scheme in place



The PTA has gone beyond its statutory requirements in agreeing a scheme to buy the homes of people in cases of hardship because plans for the New Tyne Crossing may have affected the value of their property.

Jarrow councillor and PTA deputy vice chair Tom Hanson said: "In my view, the PTA has gone out of its way to help all residents, particularly those in the St Paul's area of Jarrow, and I will continue to plead the case for the Authority to do everything it can to help people who may suffer hardship as a result of the New Tyne Crossing.

"The PTA agreed that it would pay for an independent report into the causes of falling house prices in the St

Paul's area which found that the New Tyne Crossing is only one of several factors affecting property values.

"Although there was no legal requirement to do so, the Authority then introduced a discretionary purchase scheme designed to help people whose homes will be adversely affected by the construction of the NTC; have genuine reasons for wanting to move; and would otherwise suffer hardship if they were unable to do so because of negative equity, low prices or inability to sell.

"The criteria for handling these cases are based on guidelines drawn up by the Government for The Highways Agency. House values are assessed independently and take into account the impact of the proposed Crossing. In considering requests for discretionary purchase, the PTA is bound by law to act reasonably and takes great care to ensure this is the case.

"If any offer made to an applicant so far does not match their expectations or those of other residents then that to me underlines the fact that the New Tyne Crossing is not solely responsible for falling property values in the area. I can assure residents that if any depreciation due to the New Tyne Crossing is detected it has been reflected when an offer has been made."

New tolling regime



During the course of the Public Inquiry, the PTA put forward a new regime for setting tolls at the Tyne Tunnels.

The new regime means that ordinarily the tolls will only rise in line with the rate of inflation or, if they need to rise by more, they will be subject to public debate and scrutiny through an inquiry.

Changes in tolls necessary to address unforeseen problems at the tunnels - for example changes in safety legislation that require money to be spent to meet the new requirements - will be subject to a local inquiry held in public by the PTA.

Any other increases will follow a procedure similar to that used now which can result in an inquiry held on behalf of the Secretary of State who would make the final decision.

The New Tyne Crossing will be financed and built by a consortium of businesses that will, once appointed as Concessionaire, operate the existing tunnels as well. The return on the consortium's investment will be realised through tolls over a period of around 30 years.

This inevitably means that tolls will be higher than the current rate of £1 per car. Current estimates suggest a car toll level at today's prices of between £1.55 and £1.85 when the New Tyne Crossing opens. Public transport services could be exempt from paying tolls.

In order to avoid a sudden rise in tolls, transitional arrangements could be put in place by the PTA to ensure a more gradual increase over the coming years.

Objectors withdraw

The withdrawal of objections by the Environment Agency and the Port of Tyne Authority in the last week of the Public Inquiry brought to around 20 the number of objections withdrawn since the PTA applied to construct the tunnel under the Transport and Works Act 1992.

Other bodies and organisations to have withdrawn their objections include English Nature, DEFRA (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), Northumbrian Water Ltd, Transco, Shell, and TROOA (the Tyne Riparian Owners and Occupiers Association).

David Keates, Managing Director, Port of Tyne Authority said: "We are delighted to have been able to withdraw our technical objections as we are supporters of the need for the second tunnel.

"We had two quite complex issues to get straight and satisfactory legally binding agreements have now been signed with the Passenger Transport Authority. We couldn't stand back until these agreements were done."

Health report - the facts

Local people have expressed a great deal of concern about a Health Impact Assessment undertaken by the University of Northumbria.

Mr Sauvain said in his closing comments to the inspector: "The problem with that document is, as its author accepts, that it does not attempt to quantify potential health impacts (of the New Tyne Crossing) but simply describes pathways," he said.

"For example, it states that noise can impair hearing, which is true, but so far removed from anything contemplated in this proposal as to be unhelpful and alarmist. For that reason, it can be of no value to the assessment process at this inquiry."

Impact on...

Should the New Tyne Crossing receive the go-ahead, the construction period will have the greatest impact on local people. However, every effort will be made to ensure that this is kept to a minimum.

...local communities. Inevitably, as the new tunnel is built on either bank of the Tyne, roads and footpaths across its path will be severed, particularly in Jarrow. Pedestrian routes will be maintained during construction but diversions for vehicles will be necessary. Noise and air quality will be monitored and measures put in place to ensure that the impact on local residents is kept to a minimum.

...public open space. There will be some loss of open space in North Tyneside during construction but most of this will be replaced once works are complete. In South Tyneside there will actually be a net gain in the amount of public open space once the new crossing is complete. Riverside Park will be restored and improved. Epinau Walk will lose some open space currently facing the A19. An alternative area will be provided very close by.

...the river. There are no outstanding issues with regard to navigation. The Environment Agency is satisfied that measures will be put in place to ensure that fish and other marine life are not adversely affected by construction.

...the economy. One of the key objectives of the new crossing is to promote wider economic benefits in the region. The new tunnel will help to bring forward the development of employment opportunities along the A19 corridor. Construction will create around 270 direct and up to 108 indirect full time jobs.

...public transport. The new crossing will improve public transport links across the river. There will be a preferential route for public transport and the PTA will be considering proposals to make it free for public service vehicles to use the tunnel. The new tunnel will also allow the Stephenson Jobs Link – a guided bus link – to be extended south of the river.

...traffic on the A19. It is not expected that the new tunnel will generate a large amount of extra traffic on the region's road network, but will mainly accommodate the transfer of journeys from other crossings. The impact on existing junctions on the A19 – known as 'throttle points' – is not expected to be significant.



Queues like this could become a distant memory

...traffic on local roads. The new tunnel should reduce traffic levels on local roads by reducing the number of diverted trips seeking a less congested crossing and removing rat running down unsuitable roads to avoid congestion at the tunnel approaches. However, Tynemouth Road and a short stretch of Wallsend Road may experience an increase in traffic, although capacity exists on both roads to accommodate this.

...pedestrians and cyclists. The pedestrian and cycle tunnels will be unaffected by the new crossing. Work will be carried out to improve access to these tunnels particularly by public transport. Pedestrian routes across the line of construction of the new tunnel will be maintained and suitable diversions put in place for cyclists.

...the environment. Most impact on air, noise and river water quality will occur during construction, but measures will be put in place to keep these well within legally imposed limits. Once operational, it is expected that 'global' emissions will fall because of the reduction in vehicle mileage as drivers no longer need to travel further to avoid congestion. However, at the tunnel itself there will be an impact from increased level of traffic but air quality will remain well within legal limits.

Decision expected late 2003

The Deputy Prime Minister is expected to announce late in 2003 his decision on whether or not to allow the New Tyne Crossing to go ahead.

The six-week long Public Inquiry into the scheme came to an end at Jarrow Community Centre on 17 April after around 40 witnesses had given evidence for or against the application for the New Tyne Crossing.

By the time the Inquiry ended, around 20 organisations, including the Environment Agency and the Port of Tyne Authority, had withdrawn their objections to the scheme. Further withdrawals are expected before the Inquiry is formally closed on 31 May.

Inquiry Inspector Mr Stuart Nixon said he expected his report to the Deputy Prime Minister to be completed within three months of that date, after which the Deputy Prime Minister will consider his decision based upon the Inspector's report.

The £139 million New Tyne Crossing is being proposed by Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority (PTA) to relieve severe congestion at the existing Tyne Tunnel. It expects the new crossing –

an immersed tube laid into the bed of the river just to the east of the existing tunnel – will also improve economic prospects in North and South Tyneside and beyond; improve safety for tunnel users; improve potential for public transport links across the river; and improve the environment.

PTA vice chair Cllr Muriel Green said: "The Public Inquiry was the opportunity for all parties – for or against – to present their cases before a Government-appointed, independent expert.



Cobalt Business Park on the A19 in North Tyneside will accommodate 17,000 jobs when completed. The New Tyne Crossing will make them more accessible to people who live south of the river.

"I believe the PTA presented a very strong case for the New Tyne Crossing and I am confident that we will get the go-ahead."

If the Deputy Prime Minister gives the go-ahead late this year, it is expected that work will begin on constructing the New Tyne Crossing in 2005 with completion by the end of 2008.

Check out the New Tyne Crossing website at www.newtynecrossing.info