

Improving Access to Employment and Training in Former Coalfields Areas in the UK: the Access Alliance Programme

Introduction

The Access Alliance Programme (the AAP) was a funding programme to support and develop sustainable transport schemes to link local residents with employment and training opportunities. The fundamental issue which the AAP addressed was that simply not having access to transport can be a significant barrier to accessing employment or training. The AAP sought to remove this barrier to enable residents to learn, earn and play a full role in their local community.

Unique in England, the AAP was designed as an innovative cross-boundary funding programme to address access to employment and training in the former coalfields area of England's East Midlands region. It was funded by the East Midlands Development Agency (emda), one of nine Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) – non-departmental bodies which take a business-focussed approach to delivering economic improvements in the English regions. STAR Independent Consultants Limited was appointed as the Managing Agent of the AAP through a competitive tendering procedure under contract to emda.

The AAP was explicitly intended to be complementary with the Accessibility Strategies contained within the countywide Local Transport Plans prepared by Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire County Councils, although the AAP financed sustainable transport solutions which would not otherwise have been implemented by the County Councils. The AAP encompassed a high degree of partnership working across the public, private and voluntary and community sectors. Engagement across the sectors was actively encouraged through capacity building events and partner workshops. The Managing Agent also assisted the voluntary and community sector to design local solutions to specific transport problems, encouraging and enabling individuals and organisations to act as service champions who would ultimately be responsible for owning and operating the schemes.

With over £1 million of funding for the programme over four years, the AAP supported almost 60 transport schemes ranging in value from a few hundred pounds to almost £100,000, the average grant award being approximately £20,000. The composition of the funding pot was 75% capital and 25% revenue. The AAP ran from November 2006 to November 2010.

This paper highlights the need for the approach taken by the AAP in the context of more traditional types of transport delivery. It identifies the types of transport solution funded by the AAP and outlines the monitoring and evaluation process adopted both for individual projects and the AAP as a whole. The unique approach to Programme Management is also explained in detail. Some of the key accessibility improvements delivered by the funded projects are outlined with the assistance of case studies and the key impacts of the AAP are presented. A brief assessment of the value for money of the AAP is provided, drawing on the findings of other research projects and methodologies. The paper highlights the transferable elements of the AAP and identifies some of the key lessons learnt. It also identifies

some of the elements of the AAP which should be replicated in the future and looks to potential funding sources to continue or replicate projects funded. Finally, the paper draws brief conclusions about the achievements of the AAP.

Context

The AAP

The AAP was established and developed in a form and structure which ran counter to prevailing methods of public transport provision and funding within England. Traditional funding routes relied upon financial contribution from central or local government with a social and environmental remit, largely ignoring the economic and regeneration arguments for transport investment. The AAP was established to provide an independent source of funding for sustainable transport schemes in areas of high deprivation which was independent of traditional forms and sources of public transport funding. There were three principal reasons for adopting this approach:

- more traditional approaches had failed to provide the stimulus for developing community-led sustainable transport schemes in areas of high deprivation in England
- emda, the funder of the scheme, wished to establish a funding programme which acknowledged the supremacy of the economic and regeneration arguments for transport funding (that transport can provide a linkage for local people with employment and training opportunities which would otherwise be denied to them and thus stimulate the local economy in a number of ways which assist economic and social regeneration)
- such an approach would allow the appointment of independent project managers who would bring a new perspective to the task of public transport funding and who could bring their own transport expertise to bear on the problem

emda wished to approach the issue of stimulating the local transport market by providing a mixture of capital and revenue funding (heavily weighted towards the former) which would allow the purchase of appropriate infrastructure and vehicles whilst providing operating finance to allow for labour and operating costs in the early stages of scheme implementation. The intention was that transport schemes commissioned under the AAP would become sustainable after the initial funding period; the vehicles and infrastructure would still be in place, but the operating costs would then be contributed by service users or by other funding sources, for example, employers and local communities. In this respect it was more akin to competitive challenge schemes which had been pioneered by the then Labour government (DfT, 2005a).

General

Buses play a central role in delivering objectives relating to transport because the bus is flexible, having the ability to carry large numbers of people along main urban

corridors and to reach outlying suburbs, estates and rural areas, while providing local connections to other modes of transport. In addition, it is economical in its use of road space and is relatively cheap as it does not require the high capital costs of light rail systems (Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1999). In recent years bus operators have faced significant pressures including increasing staff and fuel costs (Confederation of Passenger Transport, 2007), increasing car ownership levels, congestion and lower density developments. Levels of bus use across Britain fell from a high of 93 billion passenger kilometres in 1953 (41% of all trips) to a low of 43 billion passenger kilometres (6% of all trips) in 1995 (Department for Transport, 2005b). In the period 1994/95 to 2004/05, bus passenger journeys in England increased by 7%. This is largely, however, the result of a dramatic 54.3% increase in London, while outside of the capital the number of trips continued to fall by 13.6% overall with the largest decreases in the major UK conurbations (Department for Transport, 2005c). These trends have resulted in some 44.2% of all bus journeys in England now taking place in London.

In 1985 local bus services outside London were deregulated with operators being able to provide services without subsidy upon registration (commercial services). Local authorities were able to invite operators to competitively tender to add services to the network (tendered services). Traditionally within England, funding for local public transport has come from two major sources – local government and central government. Local government has provided capital funding through Local Transport Plan funding, although this had to be approved and ring-fenced well in advance of drawdown and delivery. It has also provided revenue funding on a limited basis and generally to meet social and economic criteria to secure transport services which would not otherwise be provided by the market. Within England, the majority (around 90%) of local bus services are provided on a commercial basis by private bus operators. Local authority revenue funding has secured those socially necessary services which the market would not provide. Local authorities had increasingly moved towards adopting performance monitoring and managing schemes, to ensure value for money when financing public transport services. Nevertheless, the transport services purchased by local authorities would match the spending and policy profiles of the local authority; these would not necessarily reflect the transport needs of the local community. An example of this might be that until recently local authorities would place a priority on the provision of services for elderly and disabled residents and the provision of transport to secure access to local services, rather than the financing of transport services to access training and employment opportunities. The AAP aimed to remedy this situation and redress the balance in favour of providing funding for transport services specifically designed to assist those seeking to access work and training opportunities (whilst still acknowledging the importance of social objectives).

There are examples of schemes within the UK and around the world which have developed transport services with a primary or secondary objective of assisting people into employment or training opportunities. The uniqueness of the AAP lay primarily in the independent nature of the project management which allowed investment targeted at those people most in need of employment and training services, regardless of whether the actual services would have been funded through more conventional transport funding avenues.

The Kickstart Programme (Department for Transport, 2005a), following on from the Urban and Rural Bus Challenge schemes, was established to pump-prime transport schemes which were expected to achieve demonstrable commercial viability following the limited period of subsidy. The Kickstart schemes were envisaged as partnership working between local authorities and bus operators, although evidence emerged that smaller operators and community transport operators felt excluded from the process in certain cases. An evaluation undertaken for the Department for Transport (Bristow A. L. et al, 2007) established that the Programme had made significant advances and enabled some bus services to move towards commercial viability which was the primary objective. Other significant impacts included a modest modal shift from the private car and the achievement of good value for public money.

The Kickstart evaluation also found that widespread partnership working had been brought about through the close working arrangements required in developing and implementing Kickstart bids. The report acknowledged, however, that "the current schemes have been targeted at the margins of existing networks" (Bristow AL et al, 2007 *ibid*). The AAP intended to build upon and extend the Kickstart programme ethos by focusing upon a defined sub-regional area of high social and economic deprivation, by encouraging and necessitating a high level of partnership working across the sectors, by targeting the provision of new and innovative services at the heart of existing transport networks and by actively encouraging the participation of the community and voluntary sector and small transport operators.

The FIA Foundation commissioned a key research project to investigate the impacts and effectiveness of targeted access to employment programmes within the then G7 countries. A more detailed later study concluded that "...targeted, flexible, demand responsive and community transport schemes do work in helping people to gain and retain employment – at a cost. But sustained political support is essential if these closely targeted and highly subsidised schemes are to be given the opportunity to succeed over the longer term" (FIA Foundation, 2006). The report examined 14 case studies from the United Kingdom, France and the United States. Although the access to work schemes are generally provided at high cost, the report concluded that "...the real costs for government of a person remaining out of work are usually higher..." (FIA Foundation, 2006 *ibid*). The AAP intended to build upon this and similar research by linking local unemployed persons with training and employment opportunities, thus removing them from benefits dependency and thereby reducing a financial drain upon the national exchequer. The FIA study investigated a wide range of travel to work schemes covering fixed route services, demand responsive services, vehicle loan schemes and travel training initiatives. Different types of scheme were found to be most appropriate in particular circumstances, for example, "...vehicle loans were particularly effective in rural areas where distances were greater and employment locations more dispersed." (FIA Foundation, 2006 *ibid*). The AAP built upon this intelligence by commissioning and implementing transport schemes which covered a large number of scheme categories thus attempting to match service provision with local need by providing the most cost-effective and efficient service type.

Lucas et al (2009) reported that researchers have encountered problems in estimating a monetary value for the social benefit related to access to work provision, owing to the lack of an approved method of calculating the cash benefit

to central government arising from job take up. Lucas et al were, however, able to calculate the benefit of each trip to the individual based upon the Department for Transport's WebTag guidance. This was "...crudely based upon either the fare saving to individuals where they are existing public transport users and would have had to pay an additional (bus or taxi) fare to get to the same destination, or the value of their journey time saving if they previously had to walk" (Lucas K et al, 2009 ibid). Lucas et al were, therefore, able to calculate the annual cost savings to individuals who used four case study access to work services within the United Kingdom.

Later in this paper, similar calculations have been attempted for the AAP to those undertaken by Lucas et al. This expands upon the evaluation undertaken with the AAP as the AAP funders, emda, did not deem such calculations necessary. emda saw the AAP as very much focussed on economic benefits to businesses and employers in the area, rather than on the social benefit to scheme users. The authors of this paper feel that perspective is too limited and that one should consider the totality of impacts achieved within a programme such as the AAP. The individual project managers within the AAP, many of whom had not previously delivered such transport schemes and / or were representatives of the community and voluntary sector or of smaller transport operators, already felt overburdened by the requirement to report and evidence economic outputs, and were unwilling or unable to provide the robust data which would have been necessary to undertake a social benefit calculation for individual AAP schemes and for the AAP as a whole.

A different approach to calculating the social benefit of access to employment schemes was adopted by Wright et al (2009). The authors utilised a 'Social Return on Investment' (SROI) method to calculate the value of a transport to employment initiative in Highland Scotland. Later in this paper, this SROI calculation is adapted and applied to the AAP.

The Need for the AAP

The original area covered by the AAP was primarily the former coalfield area of north Derbyshire and north Nottinghamshire, which had experienced high levels of unemployment and deprivation over the two to three decades following the closure of the coal mines. During its final year, the AAP area was extended to cover the whole of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, excluding the cities of Nottingham and Derby. Today, the original AAP area is characterised by levels of worklessness, benefit dependency and young people who are classified as 'NEET' (Not in Education, Employment or Training), which are generally higher than regional and national averages. In addition, the population has low levels of skills and formal qualifications, resulting in their job opportunities being relatively limited.

The national Indices of Deprivation (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007) demonstrated that there are significant levels of deprivation across north Nottinghamshire and north Derbyshire. The East Midlands districts range from '1' being the most deprived district to '40' being the least deprived district. Each district is comprised of a number of 'Local Super Output Areas' (LSOAs) which are small areas within each district which combine to produce the average district score. The England districts range from 1 being the most deprived district to 354

being the least deprived district. Table 1 shows that all seven districts within the AAP area fall at least within the bottom half of the average rankings of multiple deprivation within the East Midlands region and nationally, with four of the seven falling within the fourth (lowest) quartile.

The 'rank of extent' figures portray how widespread high levels of deprivation are across the individual LSOAs within a district, thus demonstrating how far deprivation has penetrated through the LSOAs of a district. It only includes districts which contain LSOAs which fall within the most deprived 30% of LSOAs in England. Table 1 shows that multiple deprivation is widespread across each of the seven districts of the AAP area. When the figures for employment deprivation are considered, four of the seven districts fall within the lowest quartile in the East Midlands and all seven districts fall within the lowest half of all districts in England.

Table 1 Comparison of the AAP districts in terms of Index of Multiple Deprivation and Index of Employment Deprivation at the regional and national level (2007)

IMD Category	Rank of Average Rank of LSOAs in East Midlands Region	Rank of Average Rank of LSOAs in England	Rank of IMD Extent in East Midlands Region	Rank of IMD Extent in England	Rank of Employment Domain in East Midlands	Rank of Employment Domain in England
Nottinghamshire						
Mansfield	3	34	3	35	6	105
Ashfield	6	72	10	97	8	111
Bassetlaw	12	101	9	90	9	114
Newark & Sherwood	17	175	14	144	13	155
Derbyshire						
Bolsover	4	40	4	58	11	142
Chesterfield	8	81	6	68	7	109
North East Derbyshire	18	178	17	169	15	162

Source: Indices of Deprivation, DCLG, 2007

Much of the area covered by the AAP is rural in nature. Many of the new and proposed business parks designed to provide new job opportunities for the area are predominantly located on former colliery or manufacturing sites, outside of villages and towns. Beyond the principal towns of Chesterfield in Derbyshire, Mansfield, Newark and Worksop in Nottinghamshire, and the M1 and A1 transport corridors, accessibility and connectivity across the area are relatively poor. In the more rural districts of north Derbyshire, Bassetlaw and Newark & Sherwood, there are significant deficiencies in the quality and extent of the road and public transport networks. In those areas which are considered to be well served by public transport, the tendency is for daytime provision (i.e. between the hours of 07:00 and 18:00) to offer good access to jobs, training and other services. Outside of these times of day and particularly on Sundays, however, public transport provision is much less appropriate to meet the needs of jobseekers, many of whom are seeking to access shift work, typically starting before 06:00 and finishing late in the evening or early in the morning. Much of the employment in the area is characterised as unskilled or low-skilled, relatively low paid and often with the requirement for shift working. For those who are able to access local public transport to access jobs and training, the cost of bus travel in the area can be prohibitively expensive, especially for those who are dependent on benefits or in the first few weeks of employment.

Against this background, the objectives of the AAP were to:

- Link local people to employment and training opportunities
- Promote the job prospects of young people and returners to work
- Assist those without access to private transport
- Develop and build capacity within the voluntary and community sector
- Encourage and train local service champions
- Encourage and engender partnership working between the private, public and voluntary and community sectors
- Commission, monitor and assist a wide range of sustainable transport initiatives
- Establish the basis for future sustainability of the AAP
- Assess the potential for future replication / transferability of the AAP

Transport Solutions

The AAP funded a wide range of sustainable transport solutions. The Managing Agent ensured that the funding was focussed on filling gaps in transport provision in order to address the economic agenda. The solutions which were funded were designed to complement, rather than compete with, existing transport provision. The types of scheme funded and their overall aims are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2 *Types of scheme funded by the AAP and their aims*

Type of scheme	Scheme aim
minibus schemes	to transport people to training courses in or from inaccessible locations
scheduled works bus services	pre-booked minibus services to transport people to job opportunities which cannot be accessed (at the appropriate time) via the conventional public transport network
car sharing schemes	to enable large local employment sites to become more accessible to a potential local workforce
moped and bicycle loan schemes	to provide a flexible solution to accessing work or training for those people who cannot make use of public transport and do not have access to a private car
discounted public transport tickets	a short-term solution to make public transport accessible for those who would otherwise struggle to pay fares to travel to work or training
new cycling and walking infrastructure	to assist local residents to walk or cycle to work, training and other services via new routes and cycle storage facilities
training provision	to improve the passenger assistance skills of volunteer drivers to make community transport services more accessible to end users
transport marketing and information	to promote the availability of transport to work and training services to potential end users

Programme Management

The AAP was unique in its management structure. An independent Managing Agent was appointed through competitive tender to run the AAP between 2006 and 2010. The advantages of having an independent Managing Agent included the fact that the Managing Agent was able to bring independent transport expertise to the design and implementation of the AAP as a whole and of individual transport schemes funded through the AAP. The Managing Agent was also able to act in partnership with local authorities, most notably with Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire County Councils, whilst being able to act autonomously of these bodies. The Managing Agent was also ideally placed to encourage partnership working between the private sector, the public sector and the voluntary and community sector, an important feature of the AAP.

emda wished to develop a sub-regional funding scheme for transport which was independent of schemes currently promoted by local authorities and would encourage their economic regeneration agenda. In this way, the scheme would contribute to the upskilling of residents of the area and improve the situation of those currently out of work. This approach was both innovative and ground breaking, signalling a desire by an RDA to become involved in the provision and financing of transport services; most RDAs had been reluctant to assume this role, considering that it was traditionally the role of the commercial market expressed through bus operators, and of local authorities with their remit to finance socially necessary services to 'top up' those provided commercially.

The independent grant award process used within the AAP to assess applications for funding considered a number of factors including: benefits for the former coalfields area; alignment with regional and sub-regional priorities; outputs and outcomes to be delivered; financial stability of the applicant; value for money of the proposed scheme; and suitability of funding via the AAP as opposed to other funding sources.

The Managing Agent was charged with developing a wide pattern of partnership working in order to develop and implement individual schemes delivered under the AAP, as well as leaving a close partnership of stakeholders in place at the end of funding to ensure the future viability of the individual projects and of the culture of cooperation brought about by the AAP initiative. The partnership working was evident at a number of levels within the AAP (see Table 3).

Table 3 Partnership working within the AAP

Partnership level	Evidence
County Council	The AAP was designed to be entirely complementary with Accessibility Strategies. Both Councils were members of the AAP Steering Group.
Private sector employers	Cooperated with and benefitted from the provision of access to work schemes promoted through investment by the AAP
Training providers	Actively encouraged to participate in the development of the AAP-funded transport

	schemes and actively administered some of the schemes
Government-funded employment agencies	Jobcentre Plus and Connexions were actively involved within the AAP, being members of the AAP Forum, providing evidence of need for individual transport schemes and even administering some of the transport schemes
Stakeholder forum	Met on a quarterly basis with representation from the public, private and voluntary and community sectors

The Managing Agent set out a series of economic and social needs within the area which were to be addressed by individual transport schemes. Individual transport scheme promoters were invited to submit proposals to develop and implement schemes *specifically to address those needs identified within the AAP*. The proposals were rigorously assessed for funding against the objectives of the AAP, the particular social and economic needs identified and a series of value for money criteria agreed with emda. In some cases, the Managing Agent actively sought competitive tenders to address particular access to work needs identified within the target areas.

An independent evaluation report concluded that "the support offered by STAR, as the Managing Agent, and the funding available through the AAP were critical to the successful delivery of projects. STAR has also actively supported partnership working and development, encouraging cross-county working and new partnerships between community transport providers and private companies, for example, Stagecoach East Midlands, SLIC Training and Laing O'Rourke". (ERS, 2010)

Monitoring and Evaluation Process

Monitoring and evaluation played a vital role in the success of the AAP, ensuring that individual projects and the AAP as a whole met their objectives and achieved the intended impacts. Monitoring and evaluation occurred at three levels: Project, Programme and External.

Project managers were required on a monthly basis to report to the Managing Agent on progress in relation to their individual projects. This reporting included providing an update on how finance had been spent, highlighting issues which had arisen and how they were being resolved and providing evidence regarding the number of people who had been assisted to access work and training during the reporting period. This monitoring data was collated by the Managing Agent and provided the basis for a monthly report to emda to demonstrate that the AAP as a whole was progressing as intended and having the desired impacts on access to work and training.

At four stages during its lifetime, the AAP was subject to evaluation by external consultants. The objective of the external evaluation was to assess the AAP in terms of economic, social and environmental benefits. The evaluation focussed on qualitative impacts via interviews with project managers and representatives from the two County Councils. A brief survey of end users of funded schemes, delivered

via a simple self-completion questionnaire form, also provided an insight into the impacts of the schemes on the lives of local people.

Programme Outcomes - Accessibility Improvements

The Accessibility Strategies for North Nottinghamshire (Nottinghamshire County Council, 2006) and Derbyshire (Derbyshire County Council, 2006) included high level accessibility targets for the counties as a whole, e.g. the percentage of people who are able to access an employment site within 20-minutes travel time of their home by public transport, walking or cycling. Although the AAP-funded schemes will have contributed towards meeting these targets, the scale of the schemes meant that they were not expected to make a *measurable* impact on the achievement of the targets. The schemes did, however, have important local impacts on accessibility in a number of ways, for example, making travel more affordable; making particular sites more accessible to a local workforce; and reducing the need to travel to access training. The following brief case studies highlight these accessibility improvements in practice:

Making travel more affordable

During various consultation exercises undertaken in the early stages of the AAP, the cost of travel emerged as a greater barrier to accessing employment and training than the actual availability of local bus services in certain areas. Cost was particularly an issue for those people who had received an offer of employment and were trying to make the transition from benefits to paid employment, where they might have to work for a week or longer in advance of being paid. Cost of travel was also an issue for those who needed to attend short training courses to ensure that they possess the relevant skills required by employers.

Through close partnership working between the Managing Agent and Stagecoach East Midlands, a subsidised travel voucher scheme was devised. Stagecoach East Midlands is a local bus operator which operates a number of key bus routes in the former Alliance area and which is part of the Stagecoach Group, one of the largest bus operators in the UK. Stagecoach East Midlands provided vouchers for a 40% discount on one-day and seven-day tickets; the remaining 60% was provided by the AAP. The scheme was very well received among training and employment agencies which, before the introduction of the scheme, might have provided assistance to pay for travel, but would not have considered negotiating a bulk-purchase deal with a local bus operator.

This scheme demonstrated the principle of how partnership working between local bus operators and employment agencies and training providers can benefit local people who would otherwise struggle to attend training or accept offers of employment. In the 12-month period that the pilot scheme operated, over 700 local people benefitted via the issue of approximately 2,000 vouchers. At the end of the AAP, initial discussions had commenced regarding the future of the scheme. Stagecoach East Midlands had indicated their keenness to continue the scheme, offering the same level of subsidy. The agencies whose clients had benefitted from the scheme needed to decide whether they were in a position to provide the remaining subsidy to sustain the scheme in the long term.

Improving access to a particular site

In 2007, Laing O'Rourke – the largest privately-owned construction company in the UK - began the redevelopment of a former quarry site (Steetley Quarry) as a new construction plant. The site is situated approximately two miles from Worksop - the nearest town - on the boundary between Bolsover district in Derbyshire and Bassetlaw district in Nottinghamshire. Although physical access to the site by road was greatly improved as the site developed, access to the site by public transport remained very limited. Once completed, around 2,000 people are expected to be employed at the site. The manufacturing company is committed to employing a local workforce wherever possible and is working with a project funded by emda called 'Making The Connection', which seeks to match employers who are new to the area with potential employees from a pool of locally-based and specially trained people who are actively seeking work.

In partnership with the manufacturing company and the Making the Connection Team, the Managing Agent conducted survey work to identify the travel needs of potential Steetley Quarry employees. Based on the survey results, a car sharing scheme was proposed to reduce travel costs for employees for whom driving to work was the only option and provide a viable solution for those who did not have a car but would not be able to travel to the site by public transport, walking or cycling. A car sharing scheme was subsequently funded by the AAP, including designated car sharing spaces on site. It was also proposed that a scheme would be beneficial which offered mopeds and bicycles for loan to those people who lived relatively close to the site but could not access a bus route or could not access a bus service at times to meet shift patterns. Both schemes were launched as pilots with the AAP funding and discussions regarding their future sustainability had commenced before the AAP ended.

Reducing the need to travel

One of the more innovative ways in which the AAP sought to improve accessibility was to reduce or even remove the need to travel to access training and employment opportunities. Consultation undertaken as part of the AAP revealed that people with a low skills base may be intimidated by the thought of travelling to an unfamiliar location to access training. In addition, people who have been unemployed for a long period of time tend to need additional assistance to encourage them back into work. SLIC Training - a training provider based in Chesterfield, specialising in land-based and horticultural sector training - submitted a bid to the AAP to fund a solution to tackle these issues. The 'Mobile Training Hub' is a bespoke vehicle equipped with IT and other training resources. The Hub can seat up to six people at one time within the vehicle; an awning attached to the vehicle provides additional outside training space.

The Hub travels to villages and towns across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire on a timetabled basis, providing training in interview techniques, writing job applications and curricula vitae, etc. The Hub also travels to the premises of employers to enable employees to take time out of their working day to attend on-site training. The Hub is also used to interview aspiring members of staff.

Within the first nine months of operation, the Hub assisted approximately 275 people to access training or to get a job. Many of the people assisted were those who might be considered 'hard to reach' via more conventional approaches such as offering courses based at local colleges. Once these individuals had gained the skills necessary to (re)enter employment, they were likely to become much less 'hard to reach'.

Programme Impacts

Table 4 shows that the AAP overall achieved a range of economic outputs by the end of the monitoring period (31 March 2011).

Table 4 **Outputs delivered by the AAP by 31 March 2011**

Output description	No. of outputs delivered
Job created or safeguarded	38.5
Individual assisted to access employment	739
Business assisted to improve their productivity	105
Levered public and private sector funding	74.5*
Individual assisted to access training opportunities	2576
Sustainable transport scheme implemented	60
Total outputs	3593

*based on £10,000 per output

Additional, more qualitative, impacts were also achieved by the funded transport schemes and monitored through the external evaluation process (ERS, 2010 *ibid*). These included increased employment through job retention or job creation, as well as the provision of employment support through the removal of transport barriers to accessing local employment and learning opportunities. Higher public transport usage and lower car usage were also achieved, although evidence on these impacts is largely anecdotal rather than measurable given the localised impacts of the individual transport schemes concerned. The independent evaluators also uncovered some evidence of modal shift in favour of public transport following the implementation of alternative travel options to the private car. The local economy and businesses were able to benefit from a more highly trained workforce as local people were brought into contact with training opportunities which enabled them to improve their knowledge and skills base making them more attractive to local employers. The AAP also helped the voluntary and community sector organisations to understand their role in increasing economic activity at the sub-regional level; similarly, the AAP alerted other bodies to the potential role of the voluntary and community sector in delivering transport interventions.

Underpinning the AAP's objective to link the area's residents with jobs and training was the contention that allowing local residents to take up local employment has a number of qualitative benefits over and above the direct economic and social benefits to the individual. Table 5 summarises these benefits and highlights the anticipated timescale for their achievement.

Table 5 Indirect benefits arising from the AAP by timescale

Type of benefit	Qualitative evidence	Timescale for achievement
Indirect economic	Local businesses in a better position to fill vacancies and thus enhance their productivity	Short - medium
Indirect economic	Spending in the local community increases as local people becoming active members of the workforce	Medium - long
Indirect social	Social cohesion improves as the community improves in prosperity and the employment prospects of the local population increase	Medium - long
Fiscal	Benefits payments are reduced	Short - medium
Environmental	Employers draw upon a local workforce who access employment through sustainable means	Short - medium
Environmental	Reduced carbon footprint sub-regionally as people travel a shorter distance to work	Medium - long
Health	Health benefits ensure from people travelling to employment by sustainable means, for example by cycling or walking	Medium - long

It was anticipated that all short term impacts would be delivered within the lifetime of the AAP, as would many of the medium term impacts. Each of the longer term impacts were to be set in motion by the AAP and would start delivery before the end of the AAP, although their overall impacts may not become fully evident for some time after the completion of the AAP. The AAP was a test bed to pilot a number of innovative sustainable transport approaches to address transport needs to aid the local economy and reduce transport disadvantage. As such, funding deployed through the AAP has provided a catalyst to enable longer-term cohesive transport solutions. The benefits from the continuation of legacy AAP schemes within the area and for the replication of the most successful throughout the area will be strongly felt for a number of years to come.

A number of positive social impacts were engendered by the AAP including the improvement of social capital across disadvantaged communities through increased community activation and involvement in the development of solutions to their transport problems. Community assets have also been improved as local groups / communities were encouraged to take ownership of transport projects. The increased access to jobs, education, training and community services particularly benefitted economically and socially excluded groups and individuals including young people, old people, those living with disability, BME communities and minority white communities. Local communities were given an opportunity to become healthier through a reduction in the factors that may contribute to ill health and poverty, for example, involvement in social and economic activity reducing isolation and depression and access to jobs reducing poverty and increasing available access to appropriate services. The development of sustainable local transport solutions to local transport problems offered a chance for increased confidence in

residents, organisations and communities and should support the proliferation of a “can do” culture.

Value for Money

The number of outputs delivered and the costs of individual outputs have been closely assessed throughout the AAP. Taking the total amount of grant funding available over the four years of the AAP (£854,414) and dividing this by the number of outputs achieved in each category, a unit cost per output may be derived – these are summarised in Table 6.

Table 6 Unit cost per output delivered with AAP grant funding over the lifetime of the AAP

Type of output	Cost per output delivered
Job created or safeguarded	£22,193
Individual assisted to get a job	£1,156
Business assisted to improve its performance	£8,137
Individual assisted to access training	£332
Sustainable transport scheme implemented	£14,240

Based on the total amount of grant funding, if each of the outputs is considered on a like-for-like basis then the AAP as a whole has delivered a total of 3,593 outputs. This equates to an overall unit cost per economic output of just under £240. In addition, for every £1 of AAP grant funding awarded, £0.87 of funding was levered from public or private sector sources.

It is difficult to generalise about benchmarks for transport schemes as they tend to be assessed in terms of cost per trip, cost per passenger mile, or cost per beneficiary (or potential beneficiary) rather than being set against a series of economic outputs. The Managing Agent conducted a review of the impacts of Rural Transport Partnership schemes on behalf of the Countryside Agency (Transport & Travel Research, 2004) – the unit costs per beneficiary per trip for the 100 schemes examined in detail ranged from around £10 per trip to over £500 per trip. An initial analysis of the cost per trip for the AAP shows a likely range of between £5 and £10 per trip. This compares very favourably with the Rural Transport Partnership schemes and should be set against the average subsidy figure for local bus services subsidised by local authorities which is likely to be in the range of £3 - £6 per passenger trip. Given that the projects funded under the AAP are specifically sustainable transport schemes which have not been provided through existing transport funding structures and mechanisms and also given that the majority of the AAP schemes are start-ups, this would appear to represent good value for money.

A study conducted in 2000/01 to examine the costs per passenger of Rural Bus Subsidy Grant (Steer, Davies, Gleave, 2003) found that average costs per passenger trip for the bus services range from £3 - £15. Again, schemes funded through the AAP are at the lower end of this range which is remarkable given that they lie outside mainstream transport provision, effectively providing transport services where

conventional mechanisms have failed to address the transport needs of the area's residents. Table 7 compares the average cost per passenger trip for the various transport programmes reviewed here.

Table 7 Comparative cost per passenger trip for a range of transport programmes / provision

Transport Programme / Provision	Low estimate of cost per passenger trip	High estimate of cost per passenger trip
The AAP	£5	£10
Rural Transport Partnership Schemes	£10	£500+
Rural Bus Subsidy Grant	£3	£15
Average local bus subsidy	£3	£6

The Alliance Area Transport Study commissioned under Phase 1 of the AAP (JMP Consultants, 2008) concluded that for each £1 of capital investment, there was a fiscal return to the area of at least £0.33 per annum in terms of jobs created, wealth generation and reduction in benefits payments. This is only a very provisional and conservative estimate, and it is anticipated that the actual financial return might actually be closer to parity; that is for each £1 of capital expenditure under the AAP, an additional £1 is returned to the area / nation's treasury in some form each year.

Estimating the cost savings from the services to individual users, as elaborated in the Report "Assessing the 'Value' of New Transport Initiatives in Deprived Neighbourhoods in the UK" (Lucas K et al, 2009 *ibid*), the savings estimated over the AAP transport schemes based upon the number of economic outputs achieved equate to almost £3.4m per annum – an excellent return on the overall programme funding by emda of £1.1m. These figures are based upon current cheapest bus fares (where such transport is available) and a conservatively estimated taxi journey fare for journeys where motorised transport would be the only solution.

Alternatively, one may estimate the benefits arising to the individual from entering employment and to the exchequer from reduced benefits payments to such individuals. A methodology is established in the Journal of Geography which places a value of approximately £9000 per annum on a person entering the job market at minimum wage, taking account of Job Seeker Allowance, national insurance and taxation costs / payments in order to provide the Social Return on Investment (Wright et al, 2009). Utilising this calculation within the context of the AAP and applying it to persons obtaining employment, a total annual benefit of £2.8m is estimated – a considerable return on the initial total investment of £1.1m over the four-year lifetime of the AAP. The added value per client receiving support equates to £5,431; the social rate of return ratio is 2.56. In other words, for each £1 of AAP investment, approximately £2.56 worth of social benefit is generated.

Implications for Managerial Practice

Transferability and Lessons Learnt

This template for investment in transport as successfully represented by the AAP could have signalled the way forward for future investment in local and sub-regional transport provision. The recognition of the importance of transport in facilitating economic regeneration was a key factor in the decision of emda to invest and in the success realised within the AAP. Unfortunately, the change in central government within the UK in 2010 led to the abolition of RDAs and to the adoption of a localism agenda which runs counter to the sub-regional transport interventions which were introduced through the AAP. Nevertheless, the AAP will be able to provide a paradigm for transport interventions should central government transport policies shift again in the future.

Although it would require a shift in current central government thinking, in the future, there will be an opportunity to replicate the AAP template at sub-regional and regional level. Currently there is the opportunity to replicate individual AAP projects and initiatives at the local level which links with the current government's 'Localism' agenda. Unfortunately, the tight squeeze on local authority expenditure, including transport, means that many of the direct benefits of the AAP and the opportunity for replication throughout the ex-coalfields area and more widely throughout the East Midlands and the country as a whole will be lost until there is greater investment again in transport provision and social and economic inclusion.

The template provided by the AAP allows for replication elsewhere within the European Union and beyond. A grant funding programme of this type, administered via an independent Managing Agent which enables the development of a number of sustainable transport schemes which link local residents with jobs and training opportunities, which delivers direct economic outputs and provides, on a wider basis, a range of social and environmental benefits, allowing entry to the market of transport providers by a newly up-skilled set of voluntary and community operators, provides a vision for the provision of more sustainable local transport services. Schemes such as the AAP provide pump-priming funding to enable transport schemes to be developed, whilst linking residents to jobs and training and at the same time upskilling local communities and voluntary and community sector transport providers, who are in turn able to deliver mainstream transport at reduced cost.

Turning to transferability on a wider scale there appear to be a number of possibilities of replication arising from the AAP which can be realised when considering the commissioning and implementation of journey to work schemes. These are summarised in Table 8, along with the benefits of each transferable element.

Table 8 *Transferable elements of the AAP*

Transferable Element	Benefit
Use of an independent managing agent	Allows new transport operators to be encouraged into the market who would not have been considered within more

	traditional funding routes. Enables a new vision for transport investment.
Incorporating capacity building and mentoring with a funding package	Encourages smaller organisations, especially those from community and voluntary organisations, to take advantage of funding channels and to establish community-rooted transport schemes
Promoting and assisting partnership working	At the local level to actually design and implement transport schemes. At the strategic level to create the correct environment to foster the emergence of appropriate transport schemes and transport promoters
Encouraging local service champions	Individuals can be trained up to allow schemes to achieve strong community ownership which improves their chance of long-term future viability
Engagement with the business sector	Ensures initial take up of access to work schemes, and encourages long-term viability

Future Considerations

The AAP demonstrated, in practice, the principle that removing transport as a barrier has a considerable impact on improving the ability of communities in ex-coalfield areas to take advantage of local employment and training opportunities (ERS, 2010 *ibid*).

By deploying an independent consultancy with detailed knowledge of the passenger transport industry to manage the AAP, funding applications were assessed in relation to the overall Programme objectives, the existing transport network and the scope for long-term viability and sustainability. The resulting schemes were considered to offer the most appropriate solutions to improving access to employment and training.

The targeted nature of the schemes meant that the number of people who benefitted was relatively small, but the scale of impact for each individual from being able to access work and training was designed to be large. Measuring improvements in accessibility to employment and training resulting from the funded schemes, however, proved to be challenging. Crudely, the measure could be 'did the scheme enable the individual to access the job or training opportunity which they would not otherwise have been able to access?' In reality, however, the impact on individuals is much more than simply improving access to work. The calculation of Social Return on Investment and of the value of the AAP initiatives to individuals assisted demonstrates some highly encouraging figures which should stimulate future investment in similar independent access to work programmes.

The long-term viability of certain of the AAP-funded projects was expected to be difficult to secure, given the challenging economic conditions which currently prevail in England. Although both County Councils recognised the benefits of the AAP for the local residents who had used the transport schemes to access work and training, the transport budgets of all local authorities were expected to reduce each year for the foreseeable future. The Councils would not, therefore, be in a position to offer revenue support to continue the operation of certain schemes which had a good chance of achieving long-term viability following an extended period of grant funding support.

For the future, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire County Councils are exploring how the progress achieved via the AAP might be incorporated within their third Local Transport Plans (LTP3). This potential for schemes originally funded via the AAP to become part of mainstream transport policy and plans is testament to the success of the AAP in highlighting the need to fund improvements to access employment and training.

Along with the other RDAs, emda will be abolished in 2012. The new bodies to replace RDAs are known as 'Local Enterprise Partnerships' or 'LEPs' (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2010a). A single LEP will cover Nottingham City, Nottinghamshire County, Derby City and Derbyshire County. The LEP is intended to be an equal partnership between local business and local government to promote local economic development. The issues to be tackled by LEPs include local transport and infrastructure, employment and enterprise. The LEP could provide an opportunity for taking some elements of the AAP forward in the future and the two County Councils are actively promoting the AAP and its achievements during these early stages of LEP formulation and development.

Two new funding pots have been announced by national government which could provide potential sources of future funding to improve access to work and training. The 'Regional Growth Fund' will provide £1.4bn over 3 years (April 2011 to April 2014) and funding will focus on areas of England where unemployment and deprivation levels are high (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2010b). LEPs will be able to bid into the Regional Growth Fund and the minimum threshold value for bids will be £1m, although bidding for a package of smaller schemes will be allowed. This type of fund could provide an alternative funding stream to take forward certain key elements of the AAP in the future. The 'Local Sustainable Transport Fund' was launched in September 2010 (Department for Transport, 2010), making £560m available for English local authorities to bid into to develop packages of transport interventions that support economic growth and reduce carbon emissions in local communities. Similarly, this funding stream could offer the County Councils of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire a potential source of funding to continue to deliver improvements in access to work and training, building on the groundwork undertaken by the AAP.

Conclusions

The AAP leaves a legacy of sustainable transport schemes in place which will continue to benefit local residents over the coming years. More importantly, the AAP has introduced a new vision to the voluntary and community sector and

encouraged them to take a more active role in the provision of transport services. The AAP has proved the value of a transport funding scheme designed to promote economic and social regeneration, managed by an independent organisation free from the restrictions of local government regulation. A template has been developed both in terms of the AAP as a whole and of individual transport schemes, which can in the future provide for replication at a number of geographic levels: locally, regionally, nationally and on an international scale (ERS, 2010 *ibid*).

The authors continue to develop a simple integrated model for the assessment of the totality of (potential) benefits of such transport intervention programmes as the AAP. This assessment tool takes account of social and environmental benefits in addition to the economic and regeneration impacts of such programmes. Such an assessment tool would not only be of great benefit to the funders of future transport interventions, but also to operators and other practitioners who would be able to estimate in advance the likely impacts of the transport schemes in a number of areas. They would be able to fine tune their schemes to optimise the benefits realised in particular impact areas or in order to derive the maximum overall social and economic benefit. This model will be seen as a usable, practical tool rather than a detailed and wide-ranging forecasting model.

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