Introduction to Tyne Area
The Tyne LEAP area covers approximately 2,933km² and is flanked by the North Pennines to the west, the Cheviots to the north and the North Sea to the east. It includes the unitary authorities of Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside and South Tyneside, the district council of Tynedale, and parts of Alnwick, Carlisle, Castle Morpeth, Chester-le-Street, Derwentside, Eden, Sunderland and Wear Valley District/Borough Councils.

The vast majority of the area's population live in the lower Tyne valley. Within the last fifty years there has been a steady increase in the population to an estimated 910,000, a trend which is expected to continue. The population is unevenly distributed with the majority living in the urbanised east and coastal strip.

Some two thirds of the land area is agricultural and this has shaped the character of the landscape. Agricultural activities have led to a mix of upland moor, forest, arable land and pasture. The high landscape quality of the area has been recognised by the designation of the Northumberland National Park which makes up the majority of the northern Tyne area. Other areas are of recognised national importance for nature conservation with a wide variety of habitats ranging from upland bog and heathland to river shingle sites. The North Tyne is notable for the presence of otters.

The Tyne area also has a fine heritage of historic buildings, archaeological sites and monuments, including Hadrian's Wall which is a World Heritage Site. This heritage provides an important educational and tourism resource.

Business is focused mainly to the east of the Tyne area and around the population centres of Tyneside. The traditional industries were heavy engineering, ship building and coal mining which had their effect on the landscape and environmental quality of the east of the area. These industries declined dramatically during the 1970s and 1980s. Recently there has been an increase in the activity on the River Tyne with an upsurge in ship repair and offshore platform construction and decommissioning. Chemical production continues and there has been a recent major investment in the microelectronics sector. Within the small business sector there has been a general increase in service industries.
Kielder Reservoir to the north west of the Tyne area is the largest artificial reservoir in Western Europe. It is a vital water resource for drinking and industrial supplies the Rivers Tyne, Wear and Tees.

There has been a marked improvement in the water quality of the Tyne Estuary, mostly due to the Tyneside Sewage Interceptor Scheme. This has resulted in the River Tyne being classed as one of the country's top salmon rivers for the past 10 years.

The environment of the Tyne LEAP area is diverse and varied. Some areas need improving and all areas need protecting. It is important that our natural resources are protected, and used in a sustainable way, and that environmental improvements are made where there are specific problems.