

TRAMS 1

You can read that in full here. We have read this report carefully, and a wealth of other information from the council, and other sources, in an effort to establish who all the players are and what they do.

We try here to establish the current position, one month on from the Council Leader's report, and we will then ask what is to happen next. One urban myth which needs to be exposed is how much the tram project will actually cost. It has been rumoured that the budget is to be exceeded.

So questions continue to be asked and answers demanded. This is intended to be the first of a relentless series of articles to establish the true position about the trams. We may not reach the ultimate conclusion here in this first piece, but we intend to keep asking the questions.

So where to start? Well at the beginning of course... Here are the bare facts and some of the personalities and companies involved.

Trams are being introduced to Edinburgh as an alternative means of transport. They are billed as environmentally-friendly, and this fits squarely with the Scottish Government and the Council's aims to reduce carbon emissions.

The tram route has been agreed. When complete the tram will run from Newhaven to the Airport via Princes Street.

As a result of a dispute over some aspects of the contract, work has been stopped at some of the locations around the city where barriers have recently been dismantled. The work in these locations has not yet been completed. The intention is to allow the city to return to some kind of normality while the disputes are resolved.

Edinburgh Trams Ltd is known as tie. (Transport Initiative Edinburgh) Richard Jeffrey is Chief Executive of tie. They have entered into a contract with the BSC consortium to deliver trams to Edinburgh. There is now a dispute about this contract which began in January 2009.

There is a separate contract for the diversion of all utility pipes and cables called MUDFA. This programme is almost 100% completed, albeit behind schedule.

There is a separate contract for the provision of the infrastructure called INFRACO.

No financial details can be revealed about these contracts as the Council say it would be a breach of contract and they allege it would undermine the council's position in bargaining their way out of the mess that the contracts are currently in.

There is a Tram Project Board which meets monthly and comprises councillors and independent transport experts. Board members are under a gagging order for reasons of 'commercial confidentiality.'

Marshall Poulton is the Head of Transport for the City of Edinburgh Council and is also Tram Monitoring Officer. He is responsible for protecting the Council's interests, and works so closely with tie that he works from their offices for some of the time.

tie issue a monthly report to Transport Scotland.

There is a quarterly meeting of a review panel when officials from tie, the Council and Transport Scotland attend.

DTZ, Audit Scotland and the Office of Government and Commerce oversee the finances of the tram project.

The purse for the provision of the trams is £545m. tie needs Council approval for any expenditure which would mean an overspend on the budget by £1m, or where there is any

substantial change to design or service pattern or any need to stretch the timetable beyond October 2012.

By the end of financial year 2009-10 the spending was estimated by the Council to be £387.3m The infrastructure costs are to make up under half of the overall budget.

There is a depot at Gogar where work is reported to be progressing well.

Edinburgh Park viaduct, Gogarburn bridge

The dispute with Infraco has been settled on 135 separate points. In settling these points only 61% of the costs charged by Infraco has been paid on average.

There is provision in the contract for settling disputes. Four issues have gone through this complete process and have been adjudicated on. 14 other issues are still in the dispute process.

A nine month extension to the Infraco contract has been agreed since there were more works required to divert utilities than first envisaged.

In the background the first Traffic Regulation Order is going through the process of public consultation. Comments were invited until 21 March 2010 from emergency services public transport operators and road haulage representatives. A report on this order is due to be made to the council imminently.

Cyclists have been given some representation, particularly on matters of safety. A booklet has been produced which explains what is being done to provide cyclists with safe routes, and advice on safe cycling in the area where the trams will be. You can read that here.