

Open Letter : Engineers to Council re trams

We have received an interesting email this afternoon. The following is the text of an open letter from three engineers who are concerned about the tram project:-

An open letter to The Chief Executive, City of Edinburgh Council, The Chairman, Transport Initiatives Edinburgh, elected representatives of the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood, and elected Councillors of the City of Edinburgh Council . That Scotland, with our heritage of Engineering skills that developed not only the United Kingdom but many other countries throughout the world, has been unable to implement on time and within budgets recent multi million projects within the capital city of Edinburgh is regretted.

That the Edinburgh Tram Project is in danger of besmirching the reputation of current Scottish Engineers worldwide and making the Scots a laughing stock, where large, infrastructural projects and project management are concerned, is regretted by many Scottish professionals.

For this reason we, the undersigned engineers, have taken some time over recent weeks to analyse specific difficulties that have arisen, and appear to us as remaining unresolved, when the City of Edinburgh Council decided that, in June 2000, the development of a tram network was central to the city transport policy.

During these few weeks we have identified specific major challenges that may not yet be fully clear even to TIE and the City of Edinburgh Council. The project review was limited to the section within the southern ring road and Haymarket Station and was carried out by: Alan Welsh, a Systems Engineer and long term critic of the project who correctly

predicted in mid-2005 many of the problems that have since befallen the project. Alistair Laing, another, now retired, Civil Engineer who played a part in several large projects in Scotland and others in developing countries across the Globe and finally; Dr Derek Shepherd who, following a long and distinguished career mainly abroad, as the Managing Director for Taylor Woodrow in West Africa for 22 years before moving on to the successful Singapore Transit Authority Light Rail system and latterly as a full Board Director of Aggreko PLC during it's rise to being an Internationally recognised Scottish Industry Champion, as well as being the former head of Aggreko International Power projects. Having not quite retired he is currently the Chairman of NGenTec an Edinburgh University spin-out company in the Renewable Energy sector.

With workshops continuing to examine every aspect of the Tram scheme, major concerns have already emerged over the failures of planning in respect of health problems arising from uncontrolled traffic created pollution – a direct result of inadequate planning and project oversight. The finances of the project are in disarray and the questions below in the open letter show that the depth of the financial black hole may still not even now be completely understood by the beleaguered project management company tie and their City of Edinburgh Council masters.

Eight questions that cover serious remaining project engineering design and construction issues that hold the prospect of exhausting the remaining Edinburgh Tram project funding even before Haymarket can be reached.

1) The most technically and economically challenging part of the Edinburgh Tram Project is the section of the route beside the railway between Baird Drive, Murrayfield Stadium, the ScotRail Depot and Haymarket Yards. Has the proposed work on this section been costed and approved by Network Rail and ScotRail bearing in mind that the main Edinburgh to Glasgow and Edinburgh to the north railway links cannot be

compromised?

2) Has the cost of removing all the contaminated ground, that has been logged and plotted along the above section of the works, been taken into consideration?

3) Has the cost of relocating the Fuel Tanks at the ScotRail Depot, and the possible removal of contaminated ground associated with the former location of these Fuel Tanks, been taken into consideration?

4) The elevated portion of the line adjacent to the Murrayfield Stadium that lies within the Water of Leith flood plain may require to be piled. Have the full costs of this operation been assessed and taken into account within the current budget? If so what is that cost?

5) Has provision been made with the railway authorities to maintain access at all times given that the only ScotRail Depot approach road is in the direct line of the tram alignment?

6) Can tie confirm that work by Network Rail on the proposed Gogarburn Rail/Tram interchange has been cancelled for at least Five Years?

7) Can tie confirm that existing approved funding is sufficient for the tram to reach Haymarket and to be operational including all staff training and the electrification of the system?

8) Finally, if there is to be a temporary halt at Haymarket has provision been made for the design and construction of an integrated tram, bus, taxi, private transport interchange at this location?

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