

Trams are go



Councillors tonight voted in favour of continuing with Edinburgh's Tram project, rejecting calls for a referendum on its future. The debate was delayed from earlier in the day as the Lord Provost, George Grubb had an appointment with The Queen. There was furious debate about that fact alone on Twitter under the hashtag #Edinburghcouncil.

The decision to build the line as far as St Andrew Square will be confirmed at the next meeting of council on 25 August, pending further information on costs, timescales and associated risks – and ahead of the 31 August deadline agreed as part of the mediation process. So in other words the decision to press on with the trams was approved by councillors, but it appears that the finance is still to be found.

Having heard from Chief Executive, Sue Bruce, and taken the opportunity to question her and other senior council officers on many aspects of her report, councillors debated the project's future well into the night before coming to a decision at 11.15pm.

The report, and its main recommendation to build as far as St Andrew Square, was predicated on a revised and independently verified business case for the Tram. This demonstrated that a surplus would only be delivered if the line was taken into the city centre, a surplus of some £2m per annum.

Councillor Jenny Dawe, Leader of the City of Edinburgh Council said:- "I believe that a first phase to St Andrew Square is absolutely the right decision for moving forward with the project.

"I look forward to the further report from the Chief Executive

later in the summer, which I believe will strengthen the case for building to St Andrew Square and beyond – whilst giving more clarity on funding.

“Hopefully we can progress this vision to ensure Edinburgh continues to be competitive in the global market and provides the modern, integrated public transport system we need.”

Sue Bruce said:- “Councillors were effectively deciding on how Edinburgh is going to grow and develop in the future. A modern public transport system is a catalyst for investment, jobs, regeneration and cleaner air.

“I can fully understand why they are seeking more certainty on what is a hugely important decision for this city. I will continue to work closely with the consortium, with whom we have an ever-improving relationship, to bring back more detail on the various funding options available to the council.”

As part of the plans for moving forward, it was agreed that the programme of works to remediate and complete the Princes Street section of the route could go ahead at the beginning of September. Full plans for this programme will be released shortly.