

Edinburgh Trams – Labouring forward?

✖ There are actually so many puns connected with trams that even the rabbi opening the council proceedings before the [council meeting on Thursday](#) could not resist a wee pun or two of his own.

The position is that the Chief Executive has now been sent back to renegotiate with the contractors for a much shorter line from the airport to Haymarket. The administration motion to borrow £231m to finish the project to St Andrew Square was defeated after their coalition partners abstained from the final vote, and it is now planned to stop the tram line at Haymarket.

✖ The Labour Party have much to say since it was their motion and the Tories supported them. We spoke with Labour Group Leader Councillor Andrew Burns about the way forward:-

[Interview with Councillor Andrew Burns \(mp3\)](#)

The Labour Party have also issued its own statement today.

Following the decision on the Edinburgh trams project yesterday to reject a £230million borrowing requirement that would have affected city services for 30 years Labour Leader, Cllr Andrew Burns said today:

"The requirement to borrow £230million for completion of just over one mile of track to St Andrew Square, some £36,000 per foot was, and remains, totally unacceptable to the Labour Group.

"We believe that the Haymarket option can be delivered within current budgets and expect the Chief Executive and Council officers to vigorously pursue this option with the contractor.

"Following delivery of the project to Haymarket, and full integration with Lothian Buses, a rational decision on the future can be taken. That is the best course of action for the Council's finances, Council services and Lothian Buses. The Lib Dem plan to rush into massive debt would be complete folly, and would affect Council services for decades to come."

Labour Group Transport Spokesperson Lesley Hinds added:

"Payments plus interest for the St Andrew Square option would have seen the Council paying some £15.3m per year over the next 30 years. Funding that we believe should be invested in our schools, social care and other Council services. Lothian Buses also highlighted a significant threat to their operations should St Andrew's Square option have gone ahead.

"Labour Councillors have also been increasingly concerned at the tone of briefings from Council officers who could not provide certainty that the £230m borrowing would be sufficient. Given the history of the project and the relations with the main contractor we believe that the

'significant risks' attached to St Andrew's square could lead to significant further borrowing. Senior officers have privately outlined their personal concerns to me on this.

"Given the deep concerns of Group members, officers and the general public we believe that Haymarket was the least risky option.

"The current divided Administration have consistently shown that they are unable to take the project or our city forward. They have no authority on this matter and should consider their positions."