

Please stop the Edinburgh Tram

by John Carson



John Carson is an opponent of the Edinburgh Tram project and recently stood as an Independent candidate in the Council by-election. He has written a guest article for us on why we should mothball the project.

The report presented to the Council on 25th August contained information on what was described as “a sealed bid envelope” from contractors, Bilfinger Berger, for terminating the contract. The process of reporting this sum was clearly outlined in the report: it consisted of opening the envelope and reproducing the sum in the report. However, at 8.50am on the morning of the Council meeting, an e-mail was sent to councillors claiming that an accountancy error had resulted in double counting and the figure had decreased by £19m.

Councillor Gordon Mackenzie has also claimed that the Haymarket option would require a turnback to be built in Shandwick Place at a cost of £25m, but he must be aware that a turnback is already included in the plans for Haymarket Yards to cater for times when Princes Street would be out of bounds so that trams could continue to operate between Haymarket to the Airport.

Claims by Councillor Mackenzie of a requirement to repay the paltry £5m developer contributions, were the tram to be cancelled, are equally unfounded. The conditions in relation to such contributions state the following: -“In the event of a decision being made by the council not to progress with the

Edinburgh Tram Project, negotiations will take place with the applicants (or their successors) with a view to using the already agreed contribution to address the transport impacts in another manner.”

Therefore, the issue is whether the information being cited as justification for the Lib-Dem’s intention to sign a blank cheque for the tramline to St Andrew Square on our behalf, is reliable.

I do not believe that it is and, therefore, the information being used as justification to reject any other option must be treated as highly suspect. In my view, the case for a blank cheque for the Edinburgh tram project has not been made.