

Transport Infrastructure and Environment Committee 27 September 2011



The Council's transport convenor admitted today that he does not yet have a programme of works for the tram project, although a new contract was signed a couple of weeks ago.

Councillor Joanna Mowat had tabled two motions this morning to try and pin down a timescale for the resurfacing of certain streets in her City Centre ward, and the replacing of some public monuments such as the Heart of Midlothian War Memorial at Haymarket.

Her two motions were defeated on the basis that, as Councillor Gordon Mackenzie explained in his amendment to the motions, it is impossible to put a time limit on such works until the details of what the tram contractor will do, and when the works will be done, are known to the council. Some incredulity welcomed this statement, but the convenor confirmed that while the detail is not yet known the overall contract terms are agreed.

Councillor Mowat expressed her disquiet that the reports were not yet available and was concerned that the need for two meetings about the tram project at the end of August and on 2 September had caused such delay already. She asserted that her constituents need to know when their streets will be put back into some kind of order.

Councillor Mowat said to The Reporter after the meeting:- "I am baffled about what happened at Committee today – I put down two motions asking for reports; one on when measures would be put in place to route traffic away from the West End

and re-surface the Great Stuart Street – Queen Street corridor and another on when memorials and public art such as the the Hearts War Memorial and the Conan Doyle statue would be replaced. It is important that now the decision has been taken to route the tram to St Andrew Square we give people certainty about when roads will be resurfaced and where traffic will be routed. It is extremely disappointing that the Convenor chose not to accept these motions, and show a commitment to the local residents and wider population of Edinburgh, by agreeing that these reports would come forward and give an indication of timescale but churlishly referred to reports in the pipeline with no indication of when these would come forward. Edinburgh is concerned that the tram programme has been subject to slippage and this again indicates that the Administration is incapable of asking for firm timescales regarding this programme.”

The committee agreed to put in place waiting restrictions on Brunstane Drive among other locations across the city, and also to put determination orders in place to allow for the use of certain footpaths by cyclists as well as pedestrians along the Seafield Road and Craigleith to Botanic Garden Cycle Route. Some of the footpaths will have to be widened to accommodate both uses. The purpose of these measures is to ‘provide a safer and more attractive link for cyclists and pedestrians between the North Edinburgh Path Network at Craigleith Retail Park and the Royal Botanic Garden, via Inverleith Park.’

Councillor Maureen Child welcomed the committee decisions which affect her Portobello/Craigmillar Ward. She said:-“Last night, the Portobello Community Council had an hour’s discussion about **cycling on the Promenade** which was very useful, well informed and constructive, with about 50 people present. A wider consultation, including schools and others will take place before signage is finally drafted. It was clear already that the Council officers had taken on board

that we wanted to ensure that pedestrians would clearly have priority at all times (even if they behave erratically) and that responsible cycling at sensible speeds might then be tolerated on the Promenade as a shared public space.”

There was one deputation to the committee from the Merchiston Community Council who are appealing to the council for help in their proposed detesting programme in an effort to decrease the number of gulls in the area. The chair of the community council Mairianna Clyde delivered a well-informed and thorough explanation of the positive effect of denesting as opposed to culling. She said:-“We are calling on the council to help. We need two pest control officers and perhaps a cherry picker to help us do the job in May. The cost of carrying out denesting in East Lothian is about £1500 so the financial cost is not huge.” She also explained that gulls can relay up to twenty times per breeding season, so simply removing eggs would not remedy the situation. Councillor Buchan was present to support his motion to the committee to report on the way in which other authorities deal with the problem of gulls and pigeons, and use this information to decide how Edinburgh will deal with it.

Today’s meeting was only an hour long so you will gather that most other items were despatched without too much discussion or enquiry.