

Tram Inquiry – powers increased to combat lack of cooperation



The Deputy First Minister announced earlier today that she has instructed that the Edinburgh Tram Inquiry is given additional powers to compel witnesses and production of evidence in the face of 'lack of cooperation'.

The Edinburgh Tram Inquiry will now convert from a non-statutory to a statutory inquiry.

The Deputy First Minister has ordered the conversion under the Inquiries Act 2005 after Lord Hardie advised that the Inquiry is not receiving the participation it requires.

Making the Inquiry statutory will allow Lord Hardie to compel the production of evidence, the participation of witnesses and enable a robust final report to be prepared.

It is not anticipated that the change in status will affect the cost or timescale of the Inquiry.

Deputy First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said:

“It was the view of the Scottish Government that a non-statutory inquiry with the co-operation of those with knowledge of the project was the simplest way to ensure the swift answers that people want.

“Lord Hardie has however now reported a lack of co-operation by some, which is clearly unjustifiable. I have therefore given the Inquiry the statutory powers he has requested to ensure that the necessary evidence is secured and a robust final report produced.

“Lord Hardie has assured me that converting the Inquiry to a statutory basis will not increase the costs and time required as he had intended to apply similar procedures. I continue to attach great importance to an inquiry that is quick, efficient and cost effective.”

Colin Keir MSP for Edinburgh Western has welcomed the news today about the inquiry. Mr Keir said:

“This is great news that the Scottish Government has acted on the advice of Lord Hardie to convert the Edinburgh Tram Enquiry from a non-statutory to statutory status.

“It is shocking that there has been a lack of co-operation by some of those who were involved in the project, this is clearly unacceptable. As the cost has risen to frightening levels over the years, surely the residents of Edinburgh as well as taxpayers beyond the city boundaries are entitled to know why this project became a financial liability and embarrassment to the city.”

When the tram inquiry was announced earlier this year it was flagged as an advantage that the format would be non-statutory as this allows evidence to be heard quickly and cost effectively with a view of learning lessons in the future. Other non-statutory inquiries held in the last include those into Holyrood and Mortonhall.

Brian Ferguson writing in [The Scotsman](#) today explains that Time Out has promoted a ride on a tram as one of the must do activities in Edinburgh.