

# Council in coalition – hoping to take a tram to Newhaven

When they were elected last year the two parties who now run the council, SNP and Labour, came together to form a coalition.

It took a little time before the [agreement](#) could be signed, but both the Council Leader and Depute Council Leader said that the terms were relatively easy to identify. It was simply that the General Election got in the way of the agreement being formalised.

One of their jointly held aims is to extend the tramline in Edinburgh to Newhaven. It was originally envisaged that the line would run from the airport to Newhaven, and there was a plan for another part of the line running southwards.



Edinburgh Tram at Princes Street stop

**Commitment 22 : to deliver the tram extension to Newhaven by 2022 after reviewing the business case and delivery plan to**

**ensure they are robust.**

There are of course complications with this. The first part of the line was over time and over budget, and it fell far short of what it was supposed to be. At one point the council voted in favour of only building the tramline from the Airport to Haymarket, as the budget and the project had become unmanageable.

So much so, that there is an inquiry into what went wrong. Closing submissions were made to the inquiry before Lord Hardie on 24 May 2018. His Lordship will make his findings public on the inquiry [website](#). (All the evidence, both written and oral, is already online) There is no definite time for the report to be produced but the terms of reference are clear, and it is hoped that his report will be made public in the autumn. The terms of reference are :

***The Inquiry aims to establish why the Edinburgh Trams project incurred delays, cost more than originally budgeted and through reductions in scope delivered significantly less than projected. The official terms of reference for the Inquiry are to:***

- *Inquire into the delivery of the Edinburgh Trams project ('the project'), from proposals for the project emerging to its completion, including the procurement and contract preparation, its governance, project management and delivery structures, and oversight of the relevant contracts, in order to establish why the project incurred delays, cost considerably more than originally budgeted for and delivered significantly less than was projected through reductions in scope.*
- *Examine the consequences of the failure to deliver the project in the time, within the budget and to the extent projected.*

- *Review the circumstances surrounding the project as necessary, in order to report to the Scottish Ministers making recommendations as to how major tram and light rail infrastructure projects of a similar nature might avoid such failures in future.*

The council has not stalled in moving towards delivering the tram extension or completion, depending on how you look at it. There is a definite desire to extend the tramline to Newhaven, but it has to be built on a robust business case. They believe they have.

What the Council Leader has always said is that if the council agrees to proceed with the tram to Newhaven, then it will be completed under this administration which makes it absolutely accountable for the project. Last time there was a change in administration from LibDem to a Labour-SNP coalition council part way through the project.

We asked if they felt that the public view might now be more favourable towards trams.

Councillor McVey said : “I had a Leith Walk business at my surgery just a day or so ago, and they were very supportive of the tram extension, accepting that it might not all be smooth running if you’re a business on Leith Walk. They said they supported the tramline extension and could understand the reasons why we hope to do it.

“I think some of the evidence shows that people particularly in Leith are leaning towards it and appreciate what it can bring for the city. Those who live in Leith will both benefit and also have the disruption throughout any construction. But people appear to understand that to improve air quality and public transport this might be a good thing.”

Edinburgh Trams has just reported a profit and some very

positive numbers. Does that help?

Councillor Day agreed that it definitely did. He said : "There is a 24% increase and a 99% satisfaction with trams shows us that this is what people want. I accept there will be disruption if we proceed with a major infrastructure project like this, but the end result is that it is hugely successful. We will be pushing as hard as we can to get the decision to take the tram to Newhaven. I hope that might also include Line 1B in time too, and extend it across the city."

Cllr McVey pointed out that the Leith Harbour and Newhaven Community Council has taken a stance in favour of the tram extension. They will have three tram stops in their area.

The council say their experience across the consultation events appears to have been that businesses were there to learn about the practical implications both during and after the build.

But no decision has yet been approved and consultations continue till this week.

The last one will take place on Wednesday 27 June 2018 when the final design will be chosen. It is this layout that councillors will vote on later in the year.

Last week members of the Transport and Environment Committee heard a presentation from the project team outlining amendments which have already been made to the Trams to Newhaven plans following the spring consultation.

*These amendments include:*

- moving the location of the Balfour Street tram stop and signalising the junction to maintain access/egress to/from Balfour Street and Cambridge Gardens*
- introduction of three new signalised pedestrian crossings between Pilrig St and Foot of the Walk, with potential for*

*additional uncontrolled crossings*

*– amending alignment at south end of Constitution Street to accommodate loading*

*– signalling junctions at Albert Street and Manderston Street*

Transport Convener Councillor Lesley Macinnes said: “Thursday’s workshop was enormously useful and we’re very grateful to everyone who’s given their time and energy to help us refine the plans for taking trams to Newhaven.

“We’re working incredibly hard to shape the proposals using the invaluable feedback submitted, so that the final designs which Council will vote on towards the end of this year are as community-based as possible.”

Andy Keba, Sustrans Scotland’s Head of Strategic Partnerships, said: “We found Thursday’s Trams to Newhaven workshop extremely constructive. It is clear that the City of Edinburgh Council recognises the ambition for Leith Walk to continue to improve as a place that prioritises people. Sustrans Scotland look forward to continued engagement with the process, and will support those measures which improve walking and cycling for the community of Leith.”

Stuart Hay, Director of Living Streets Scotland, said: “The tram designs have come a long way to addressing the concerns of pedestrians and cyclists in terms of space and quality of the public realm. It was good to see the tram team working with communities on the solutions to some challenging issues. Hopefully, further work can meet technical and business considerations and the needs of the local community.”

