

# **Edinburgh council approve the tram extension to Newhaven**

**By 36 votes, and after two years of talking about it since they were elected, the SNP-Labour administration along with the Green Group on the council raised enough votes and approved the extension of the tramline to Newhaven today.**

The price is £207m and the line will run for for 4.69 kilometres/2.91 miles from York Place to Newhaven. It is seen as an enabler by those who support it – it will allow those living in Leith and beyond to get on a tram and perhaps go to work in Edinburgh Park or the airport.

According to the Transport Convener Lesley Macinnes who proposed the motion today, this whole project is couched with a lot of caution. There is a big difference between the administration as it was when the first tram line was constructed – relying on bespoke contracts and a Transport Convener who confessed later he was not really equipped to oversee such a big project. One of the protesters outside who did not want the tram to be extended mentioned the then council leader, Jenny Dawe, who lost the subsequent election after the project was so badly derailed.



Tram extension will go down to Newhaven

This time there is no intermediary contractor or company and the project will be wholly within the control of the council and their officers. The officers are professionals at what they do – and where necessary they have engaged consultants to advise them. NEC4 contracts which are the industry standard are being used and are believed to be robust. They have mechanisms in them to share both cost savings and overspending, sharing the risk.

Councillors have spent time in what is called the Data Room becoming familiar with every aspect of the case, although one who dissented from the council's plans today shared with me that they did not take up that opportunity.

There are many who are set against the tram in the city, largely due to the history of the original project which spiralled so spectacularly out of control and where contractors held the city to ransom by doing no work for months. This time we are assured that the work will be done properly by two separate contractors and using large work sites with road diversions remaining in place. They will not we are told chop and change as they did before causing such

frustration to those trying to get about the city centre.

Leith Walk will be open at least in part but work on three lanes will take around 18 months when it starts later this year.

Conservatives and Liberal Democrat councillors were adamant that there should be a delay until Lord Hardie reported after the Inquiry which has costed millions thus far. It is not clear why there has been no report, nor is there any time given for him to deliver it.

The Conservative Group in the recent budget debate wanted to spend money on schools not trams. We asked Cllr Nick Cook about that and how the Conservatives would have persuaded Lothian to give them the dividend for schools and not transport. Cllr Cook said : "That debate would have needed more detail certainly. But at the recent budget process every party presented a fully costed alternative budget, independently verified as being competent by the Chief Executive so we are confident that we would have been able to make that financial accommodation."



With approval now granted to proceed with completing the original Line 1a to Newhaven, the project will begin at the

end of March with a six-month Early Contractor Involvement period where the [two contractors](#) (Sacyr, Farrans, Neopul Joint Venture for the Infrastructure and Systems Contract and Morrison Utility Services Ltd for the Swept Path Contract) will work closely with the Council and other key stakeholders to finalise plans for construction.

Construction work will only get under way after the ECI has concluded and Edinburgh Trams are timetabled to take their first passengers to and from Newhaven in early 2023.

Nearly 16 million people are forecast to use the completed Edinburgh Airport to Newhaven tramline in its first year of operation – almost double the number predicted for the existing Airport to York Place route in the same period.

Work is ongoing to finalise a £2.4m package of support for business measures (devised in collaboration with local businesses themselves) to support them through the construction process and to maintain the vibrancy and desirability of the area while the tramline is being built. The project team will update businesses on the support for business plans later this spring.



Cllr Lesley Macinnes Transport Convener  
**Councillor Lesley Macinnes, Transport and Environment Convener, said:** “This is a crucial decision for Edinburgh –

for today's residents and for generations to come. Taking trams to Newhaven will allow brownfield development sites to be transformed, opening up the whole of north Edinburgh to a wealth of opportunities in terms of jobs, housing and local facilities. And vitally, this will be achieved without putting pressure on existing Council budgets.

"Our city is growing faster than anywhere else in Scotland – a sign of our continued attractiveness as a place to work, live, visit and spend time – and boosting our public transport infrastructure in a sustainable way is fundamental to catering to our expanding population. I firmly believe the tram project is in the best interests of the city's current and future residents and, as an Administration, we will do everything in our power to make sure it's delivered on time and on budget. Next stop: Newhaven!"

**Councillor Karen Doran, Vice Transport and Environment Convener, said:** "Connecting the people of Leith, Newhaven and north Edinburgh to major employment and leisure hubs through trams will boost the area enormously – socially, as well as economically. And for our city's top employers, giving them a safe, reliable, accessible and mass transit public transport link into one of Scotland's most densely populated areas has got to be a winner, hugely expanding their recruitment pool.

"We couldn't simply have stood still – the challenges of population growth coupled with the pressing need to improve Edinburgh's air quality compel us to act. I am very grateful to everyone who's contributed to the Final Business Case for their help in getting us to this point, from residents and businesses who gave up their time to feed into our public consultation to the extremely hard-working project team who put the case together and guided councillors through it as we prepared to make this decision."

**Tram compensation scheme must deliver for Edinburgh's small businesses**

As the City of Edinburgh Council agrees the final business case for the extension of the tram line through Leith to Newhaven, the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) is seeking urgent talks to ensure that the proposed £2.4 million businesses support package will help local firms along the construction route and surrounding streets.

Garry Clark, FSB Development Manager for Edinburgh, said: "As the City Council progresses with its plans to extend the tram line to Newhaven, local firms are concerned about the impact that the construction work will have on their businesses. The closure of lanes on Leith Walk and Constitution Street and the associated congestion on neighbouring roads will adversely impact trading. We know this from the construction work that happened during the preparatory works conducted last time around.

"We welcome the fact that the Council recognises this and that it will be putting in place a £2.4 million package of support for affected businesses. However the detail of this scheme has not yet been revealed and we are seeking urgent talks with the Council to ensure that direct support for local businesses is not limited to a business rates rebate, which would benefit only larger businesses. Additionally, the package must deliver for those businesses currently in receipt of the Small Business Bonus Scheme. Compensation for the disruption and loss of trade during the tram works must work for all businesses, not just the larger ones."