

Councillor calls for Gaelic tram signs in Edinburgh

An Edinburgh councillor has called for Gaelic signs to be installed at stops along Edinburgh's tramline.

It comes after the council decided against including the translations on the nearly-completed £207 million track – despite spending on having place names translated.

Cllr Chas Booth called it a “major missed opportunity” and accused the council of “ignoring its own policy” on bilingual signage.

Transport Convener, Scott Arthur, did not rule out the idea however, telling the Leith ward councillor he is open to discussing funding replacement bilingual signage for the whole route, which will run between the airport and Newhaven when the 2.8-mile stretch of the line opens next year.

Cllr Arthur said Edinburgh Trams would be likely to request any changes to stops to be made across the entire line, rather than just the new one through Leith, to “ensure consistency” which he added would “come at additional cost to the council”.

Investigation into the costs associated with having Gaelic signs took place last year, according to council papers, when the previous transport convener, Cllr Lesley Macinnes, said discussions were ongoing between the Trams to Newhaven team and local authority officials.

But Cllr Arthur said the plans were scrapped at the September meeting of Edinburgh City Council's Gaelic Implementation

Group.

Cllr Booth said: "It is extremely disappointing that the council has not installed bilingual Gaelic/English signage on the Newhaven tram extension. As Scotland's capital city it is vital that Edinburgh leads the way in promoting the Gaelic language and increasing its visibility.

"Installing bilingual Gaelic / English signage is an excellent way to do that, and is a strategy that has been successfully developed by ScotRail and many other bodies. It is a major missed opportunity that it hasn't been done on the Newhaven tram stops."

It cost £210 to obtain translations of the names of the stops – which include Àte Picardaidh (Picardy Place), Bonn Na Coiseachd (Foot of the Walk) and Ionad-Cuain (Ocean Terminal), according to Google.

In an answer given to Cllr Booth at November's full council meeting, Cllr Arthur said the price tag of additional signs on the new tram stops was "not known at this time".

He added: "The new tram stops are designed to be the same as the stops on the existing line, so that when the new section is open it feels like one line. Currently Edinburgh Trams have signs in Gaelic on their website but only in English on the tram stops. This has been carried forward to the new design.

"If Gaelic signage was installed on the line to Newhaven the Operator is likely to request that additional signage is installed on the existing line to ensure consistency, which would come at additional cost to the Council.

"I would be happy to discuss this with you as part of the 2023/24 budget discussions."



Cllr Booth at one of the new tram stops in Leith
But Cllr Booth said he was “very concerned” the council appeared to have “ignored its own policy”.

“Where new signage is installed, as in this case,” he added, “the council is required to investigate the cost of installing bilingual Gaelic/English signage so that an informed decision can be made on whether to do so or not.”

by Donald Turvill

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St Andrew Square Tram Stop. Photo: Martin P. McAdam
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