

# **Opposition councillors say any tram extension must not be funded by the council**

**The Council Leader has been urged to not spend “a single penny” of taxpayers’ cash on a new tram line if the project is approved.**

Plans to extend the city’s line south will be unveiled during the current council term. It is estimated the extension could cost around £1 billion.

The Scottish Government has backed an expansion of the tram network which it said would provide “improved connectivity between Edinburgh and the surrounding communities” in its recent STPR2 report.

Early blueprints published by the council set out suggestions for the trams to run from Granton to Dalkeith by way of the Royal Infirmary in the future, with possible extensions to Sheriffhall Park and Ride and to Newcraighall.

Councillors have sought assurances on how the next phase would be funded if a business case is supported.

The Liberal Democrat group leader Cllr Kevin Lang called on city leader Cammy Day to promise not to use any council tax income for such a project at the council meeting on Thursday.

Cllr Lang said: “One of the big decisions which we will need to make in this term of the council is whether to proceed with further extensions to Edinburgh Trams.

“There will be big discussions to be had about routes, location, timetables, funding models.”

He highlighted the authority’s finances are “extremely stretched” and added: “Can I ask the council leader if he is able to give a guarantee that not a single penny of council tax money in Edinburgh will be used to pay for any tram extension?”

Cllr Day agreed that there should “not be council tax money spent on this”.

And he said the business plan for an extension would “commit to use fares from trams” to pay for the line, adding he hoped support would also come from Transport Scotland.

Cllr Day said: “I think money for a capital infrastructure project of this level needs to come from Transport Scotland and the governments that fund this council.”

He said the success of Edinburgh Trams “is proven” and added councillors should “at least” debate extending the line south out to the BioQuarter, The Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh and “many thousands of new homes”.

He said: “It is absolutely something we need to have an honest and frank discussion about.”

The construction of the first line from the airport to York Place – which was completed late and cost almost double the original estimate – was mostly financed by The Scottish Government with some council cash used.

The extension to Newhaven, which is set to open in the spring, has been funded with borrowing to be paid back by future tram fare revenues.

by Donald Turvill

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