

Edinburgh Trams to begin carrying passengers to Newhaven

Edinburgh Trams will begin carrying passengers all the way from Edinburgh Airport to Newhaven as the date is announced for the opening of the new part of the line.

Construction began on the Trams to Newhaven route in November 2019, and now the last few test runs will take place next week, with the line opening on 7 June 2023 to paying passengers.

At Iona Street on Thursday morning two historic [cable wheels](#) dating back to the original tram system from Victorian times were lowered into place. The wheels were discovered at the Pilrig Street junction with Leith Walk in August 2021 during excavations and will now be on permanent display.

In recent weeks and months the trams have been put through their paces on the new part of the line, with drivers first trained on a simulator, and now running trams to the planned timetable at full speed. This testing will continue for a few more days until the launch of the new service.

The council is keen to stress that the extension to the existing line has been completed “on schedule and within the £207.3 million budget”.

Cllr Day said: “As we welcome back a piece of tram history to Leith Walk, it’s fitting that we’re also able to look forward to the future of Edinburgh’s tram network, and the start of passenger services on the brand-new line to Newhaven.

“While this is a moment for celebration, it’s also a chance to reflect on the last few years, and I’d like to take the opportunity to thank residents and businesses for their patience during this major, complex project.

“The completion of this line, delivering high capacity, clean transport to the densely populated north of the Capital, signifies our aspirations to become a sustainable, net zero city. And by improving connectivity to the waterfront, it won’t only promote further economic development in Leith, but will bring jobs and more affordable housing too.

“We’re now counting down the days to passenger services, and I’m pleased to say this project will be delivered within budget and on time. This is thanks to lessons learned from the previous project along with a great deal of hard work and dedication from our in-house Council team who have led and delivered the project, as well as contractors involved in the construction process.”

Lea Harrison, Managing Director of Edinburgh Trams, said: “The setting of a launch date for the new line is fantastic news for city residents and visitors, but particularly communities between the city centre and Newhaven.

“In recent years, thanks to the efforts of the entire Edinburgh Trams team, our multi award-winning tramway has become one of the most popular transport systems of its type thanks to a single-minded commitment to service excellence that will continue into an exciting new era.

“As we approach this major milestone in the history of Edinburgh Trams and the city, we can’t wait to welcome even more customers on board as we introduce swift and reliable

services to the vibrant communities along the route, helping to unlock their full potential and providing a real boost for local businesses.”

www.edinburgh.gov.uk/tramstonewhaven/

The first part of the line from Edinburgh Airport to York Place was opened on 31 May 2014. It cost almost twice as much as the council had budgeted for and only half the line was delivered. The First Minister, Alex Salmond, ordered a public inquiry into the project which began the following month.

That inquiry report under Rt Hon Lord Hardie has taken years and cost millions. On 26 April 2023 the inquiry website published a statement which reads: “Lord Hardie’s Report into the Edinburgh Trams Project has today been handed over to the publishing company and will be with them for several weeks. Please do not contact the Inquiry for updates during this time as the Report will be published on the Inquiry website as soon as it is ready.”

The Edinburgh Tram Inquiry which has examined six million pieces of electronic evidence, is working to the following Terms of Reference:

- 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.



First daytime testing on the new part of the line 19 April
2023 PHOTO Ross Nixon