

# **Passenger numbers double on trams**

**Passenger numbers have doubled on Edinburgh's trams since the first part of the line was extended to Newhaven, the city's council leader has revealed.**

Cllr Cammy Day said patronage "remains high" and hailed the success of the first few weeks of the new line being operational.

He added that continued use by residents and visitors will provide funds to pay back money loaned for the construction and allow the council to begin preparations for the next phase.

Four-and-a-half kilometres of track and eight more stops have been added to the first part of the line opened in 2014.

Passengers boarded the first service to Newhaven after the council leader cut the ribbon at Picardy Place on 6 June.



Trams to Newhaven launched on 7 June 2023 at noon ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter

Some teething problems have been encountered with services delayed by car and other vehicle drivers leaving cars and vans parked on the tracks – and one councillor pointed out the project “isn’t quite complete” as work continues to finish public realm improvements along the route, including at Elm Row.

But speaking at a full council meeting on Thursday Cllr Day said it was “important to remember the successes” rather than focus on negatives.

He said: “In the last few weeks passenger numbers have doubled and numbers remain high.

“I want to again say a huge thank you to the people of Leith, the communities, businesses who have worked with us along this challenging time, particularly through some challenging years during Covid.

“It will now be over to Cllr Arthur and the transport team to progress the next phase.”

Responding the council’s Conservative group leader, Cllr Iain Whyte said it was “a project which isn’t quite complete because there’s lots of work still ongoing”.

He added that the extension, originally meant to be part of the first phase which opened in 2014, had cost “£66 million a mile when most tram schemes were costing 40 odd million pounds a mile”.

Cllr Whyte also highlighted the project’s £207 million price tag was “considerably more” than the £165m included in the contract when it was put out to tender in 2017. (The revised overall costing was however agreed by councillors before it proceeded.)

He said: “Given all of that, and no contingency has been saved, how are we going to pay back the loan?”

Cllr Day responded: “I understand the final settlement has not been reached yet and that will of course be reported to committee in due course.

“I think it’s more important to remember the successes of this tram; the first phase of the tram was a huge success with numbers exceeding the expectations and as I reported in my leader’s report the numbers in the first few weeks have doubled and are remaining high.

“That patronage is what will pay back the loan for the tram extension and I’m hopeful that as we look to extend into Granton and the south of the city that we’ll have the support of The Scottish Government to extend that and find the resources to support the next extension of Edinburgh Trams.”

*by Donald Turvill, Local Democracy Reporter.*

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On the eve of the launch of the Trams to Newhaven press were invited aboard to see for themselves what the new part of the line is like PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter