

Tram to Newhaven will open to the public on Wednesday

The part of the line between Picardy Place and Newhaven opens to the public on Wednesday 7 June 2023, nine years after the original part of the line opened between York Place and Edinburgh Airport.

It is much longer than that since the works began on Leith Walk, and businesses and residents there have had to endure two lots of roadworks while this part of the tramline was built.

It is a relief to all that there have been apparently no contractual disputes, no delay except for a few weeks during the pandemic, and that the contract appears to have been delivered on time and within the budget allocated.

On Tuesday members of the media were invited on board for a round trip to Newhaven. Apart from leaving a couple of photographers in Newhaven by mistake there were no other mishaps, and the trip takes just under 20 minutes. It is expected that a journey from Newhaven to the airport will take just under an hour.

On our first journey to Newhaven with [@EdinburghTrams](#) we spoke to several people – first the Council Leader [@cllrcammyday](#) pic.twitter.com/yb4fF4DgKz

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [June 6, 2023](#)

While on board we conducted some interviews with those involved.

Council Leader Cammy Day said he is already looking forward to the next part of the line – that from Newhaven to Granton, for which the planning permissions are already in place. In answer to the affordability of the tram, he said: “There’s always this myth that we’ve just found £200 million and we’re not investing somewhere else. But the money to fund the trams is purely based on its passenger income. So of course, we want the trams to be successful.

“The money we build the trams with is borrowed and will be paid back by the revenue raised by people on the trams. So we don’t have £200 million sitting waiting – that’s a bit of a myth. Do I think it’s worthwhile? Absolutely.

“We’ve just seen the boom in building in Newhaven where there’s been thousands of new properties built that we need in this city. And it shows you that the tram is helping build the economic business case. So yes, I am really pleased and I hope we can start talking soon about the next extension to the tram as well.”

Transport Convener Cllr Scott Arthur explained the need for trams as a mass mover. He said: “Fundamentally, what the tram lets us do is squeeze more people on the same bit of road space. So that’s part of it, and we give it priority through the city. It’s lower carbon as well, it’s zero emission, and still quite efficient compared to a bus. Last week, I travelled from Newhaven to the city centre in 17 and a half

minutes.

“I think in the past it has been about trams competing with buses in the city. But I think now we’re moving towards merging the two companies, and what we’re looking at now isn’t new services, it’s a single company. It will be a hopefully be a single company working together to deliver transport. So it’s not about competing for the same customer for on the same line, it’s about delivering a service for all of Edinburgh.”

Cllr Arthur also outlined that integrated ticketing should be available by the time the Festival is over. Part of the reason for the delay lies with the Scottish Government but also the introduction will be delayed until after the festival period to allow for more testing of equipment.

Harald Tobermann, Spokesperson for Community Councils Together on Trams, pointed out that there have been roadworks on Leith Walk for 12 years. The first phase of tramworks was aborted here when the decision was taken to stop the line at York Place. He said: “What we had before was a very mixed economy. Now we have much more of a cappuccino economy. I don’t mind either, but what’s crucial to this area here – the most densely populated in Scotland, where people walk a few blocks come to Leith Walk and do their shopping – if the only thing they can buy is a cappuccino, they have to go somewhere else to buy all the other goods. If that was to break down in a big way and not get substituted somehow, then you get just more car journeys. again, going to the supermarket. People should do local shopping. That’s a very important thing to do.”

Hannah Ross Senior Responsible Officer on Trams to Newhaven project talked about the way that the initial six months was all about talking to all the parties and not putting a spade in the ground until after that period. She said: “The early contractor involvement period we had at the beginning was really essential. Not only did it allow us to anticipate some of the difficulties that we would face, but it also built a

real culture of collaboration at that stage, which has seen us through a lot of the difficulties that we didn't envisage when we started.

"I would never be arrogant about how we've delivered the project compared to the last project. There's no doubt that we learned a huge amount watching the evidence that was given to Lord Hardie and talking to people who had been involved in the previous project to try and learn lessons. So we're really standing on the shoulders of those people and, and it's, in part, what we learned from them has helped to inform us about this part of the project."

Sarah Singh Head of Operations at Edinburgh Trams confirmed that the longest time between trams should be seven minutes.

She said: "I can't wait for tomorrow till we can finally open the service to our new customers. Ultimately my role is making sure the timetable is reliable and making sure that the service runs as it should, so that people can rely on us to transport them safely and efficiently. A tram will arrive every seven minutes during the day, and we do have the ability to drop that to a three and a half minutes headway during peak times."

Local councillors Chas Booth and Susan Rae were just alighting from a previous journey all the way to Newhaven and back.

Cllr Booth said: "Leith has had so much disruption over the last few years with the tram construction works. We're now on the brink of actually opening for public passengers. It's going to be a real boost for Leith. I think Leith has felt a bit under siege in some respects because of all of the tram works and all of the construction works. We're now starting to see such a significant improvement to public transport which is so good for Leith. It's so fantastic to finally see it here."

Cllr Rae said: "I think it'll make a huge difference to the

ward. Firstly, it will be a huge difference to see all of the works finished. People are delighted with that. I'm particularly delighted = it's been a very long haul. I totally enjoyed my trip on the tram today."

Karen Greig is from Constitution Street Business Collective where the street is now tram only on one section. She explained there were difficulties but they are now "holding on or persevering to see what what happens when this new baby arrives".

Trams will open to the public from Picardy Place tram stop on Wednesday at noon. [Details are on Edinburgh Trams website.](#)



Cllr Scott Arthur Transport Convener and Council Leader Cammy Day at Picardy Place 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



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Green councillors Susan Rae and Chas Booth had just been to

Newhaven and back. 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



At the Newhaven stop 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



At Newhaven the tram turns and goes back to the airport. 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



Priya and Elliot from Leith Academy on the left and Rhea and Eilidh both Primary 5 pupils from Leith Walk Primary School 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



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