

Tram report is mainly “common sense”

Former Edinburgh council leader, Donald Anderson, has described the findings of a nine-year inquiry into the city’s tram project as unsurprising and “mostly common sense”.

Donald Anderson, who was city leader from 1999 to 2006, welcomed the report but said it took “too long” to publish and failed to convey how the politics surrounding the scheme was “conducted in a pressure cooker atmosphere which led to lots of people who should have known better behaving irrationally”.



Donald Anderson former Labour leader on the council Lord Hardie's nine-year investigation into the tram project which concluded there was "poor management and an abdication of responsibility on a large scale," laying most of the blame at the door of the council and **tie**, its arms length company which managed the project, as well as Scottish Government Ministers who were criticised for withdrawing the oversight of Transport Scotland.

Among the main issues identified which resulted in the line being more than £400 million over budget, three years late and half the length promised were a "lack of collaborative working" and councillors being presented with "misleading" cost estimates in reports by council officers.

Lord Hardie said the scheme had a "significant and lasting impact on the lives and livelihoods of Edinburgh residents, and the reputation of the city".

The 957-page report said a "lack of clarity as to who had

responsibility for the performance of certain tasks" contributed significantly to delays and cost issues.

He mentioned that there was a failure by the council to "exercise proper oversight of the project with senior officials, including the responsible directors, failing to challenge **tie**".

Mr Anderson said he felt "a mixture of emotions" upon reading it.

He said: "Obviously I'm angry at the way the tram project turned into what was a horrendous problem for Edinburgh and its residents. Hopefully we can begin to put that behind us now and if you look at the tram in overall terms and what it's delivered for Edinburgh it's been transformational in so many ways.

"I don't think there's anything in the report that surprises me, most of its common sense. The bits that Hardie doesn't quite get in my opinion is the way in which the politics of it was conducted in a pressure cooker atmosphere which I think led to lots of people who should know better behaving irrationally.

"In some cases they provided misinformation to the people that they were advising which is just completely unacceptable."

Lothian MSP Miles Briggs said the report was a "scathing critique of the SNP government and City of Edinburgh Council's roles in a national scandal".

He said: "After years of delays and millions of pounds of public money, we at last have some conclusions on the appalling mishandling of Edinburgh's tram network.

"He is clear that ministers failed to protect the public purse and acted in the SNP's political interests, rather than the public interest.

“John Swinney, especially, has questions to answer for removing safeguards that would have protected grant funds.”

Current Labour transport convener of Edinburgh Council, Scott Arthur, said he and the council leader “will act on the findings where needed”.

He said: “The success of the opening of the line to Newhaven, however, shows that the current administration has already learnt many of the lessons from what happened a decade ago.

“We have already approached the Lord Provost and asked that it is discussed at next week’s Full Council. We now have a service which carried 1.2 million passengers in August alone. Nonetheless, we are on the side of those who want the Council and The Scottish Government to show they have learnt lessons from what went wrong in the past.”

His predecessor, former SNP transport convener Lesley Macinnes questioned the “validity” of Lord Hardie’s criticisms directed at The Scottish Government, pointing out the new Picardy Place to Newhaven line was delivered “on time and on budget...but without involvement of Transport Scotland”.

She said: “This inquiry has spent an eye watering amount of money and has taken an incredibly long time coming to its findings so it’s good that finally it has published its report.

“We look forward to getting a full breakdown of lessons learned but at first reading it appears that the tram extension to Newhaven has anticipated and reflected many of the report’s comments and should be seen as a positive example of delivery.

“It’s worth noting the extension was delivered on time and on budget with strong leadership and hard work of SNP councillors, but without involvement of Transport Scotland – raising questions about the validity of criticisms aimed at

the Scottish Parliament and Government.”

by Donald Turvill, Local Democracy Reporter.



18/09/2023 Picture Alan Simpson Nine years after the Edinburgh Tram Inquiry was ordered by First Minister Alex Salmond Lord Hardie has issued his report which has cost £13.1 million. The four volume report contains criticisms of several organisations whose acts or omissions were principally responsible for the failure to deliver the Edinburgh Trams Project on time, within budget and to the extent projected.