

Council sets out its response to the Tram Inquiry

The City of Edinburgh Council has published its response to the Edinburgh Tram Inquiry which reported in September.

Lord Hardie took nine years to write the report, it cost millions, but nevertheless, as the council officer responsible for Trams to Newhaven said to us today, the report is still of huge value. It was also pointed out that the team responsible for the next part of the line to Newhaven had the opportunity of listening to the evidence given at the inquiry – and to learn from it.

Next week's Transport and Environment Committee will discuss a report setting out the council's understanding of the failures identified by Lord Hardie when the council then delivered the first phase of the tram project. The report also sets out how lessons learned can ensure that future delivery of major infrastructure projects can avoid similar issues.

Legal action against previous contractors is virtually a given now that the report has been issued, but the council will not be taking any action against any employees named or unnamed. The first part of the line opened in May 2014, and many of the councillors – and a lot of members of staff – have changed since then.

The council has issued its response to the Edinburgh Tram Inquiry Report for discussion by two committees and the full council in the next few weeks – here we speak to the Council

Leader about the lessons learned pic.twitter.com/adCVviT44X

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [November 10, 2023](#)

The Council Leader, Cammy Day apologised again to everyone in the city who had been adversely affected by the building of the tram line but pointed this was the largest infrastructure project in the UK at the time and that the council was completely divided on it politically. And he also pointed out that when the tram was taken down Leith Walk for the first time this year, he was astounded to see people coming out of pubs and applauding the arrival of the new part of the line.

Lord Hardie's recommendations relating to the Council, and an assessment of the consequences of the project's failings, such as additional costs, disruption and impact on the Council's reputation will all be up for discussion by councillors next week.

The report is accompanied by separate papers: the financial cost and reporting of the tram project; whether any action is to be taken with employees as a result of the Inquiry's findings and assurance of arrangements in place for Arm's Length External Organisations (ALEO) and contractors; and an update on any possible legal action (the final to be considered in private).



First trams since November 1956 go down Leith Walk on 13 March 2023 during testing phase PHOTO Thomas Haywood Photography
These three reports will be considered by a variety of committees as determined appropriate – the Governance Risk and Best Value Committee (GRBV) on 28 November and that part, along with the report to Transport and Environment Committee, will be referred to December’s Full Council for consideration.

Council Leader Cammy Day said: “Since the start of the Tram Inquiry we’ve completed the line to Newhaven and launched passenger services, the success of which was down to the hard work of the in-house project team and partners. It’s also thanks to lessons learned from the first project, and our own improvements to project management and governance, communication and independent oversight.

“It’s worth noting too that in the nine years since the line between Edinburgh Airport and York Place was built, the service has flourished to become a hugely successful transport route for thousands of residents and visitors each day.

“While we broadly agree with Lord Hardie’s recommendations, prior to the inquiry’s announcement we had already introduced processes and strategies to help avoid some of the problems

experienced in the original tram project. Not only have we applied this in the construction of the line to Newhaven, but these lessons are hugely beneficial to other major infrastructure projects.

“Of course, scrutiny of the Inquiry’s findings has allowed us to provide further, robust assurance that we understand the factors that contributed to the difficulties in the first phase of tram delivery, and to build confidence in future infrastructure delivery. We want to make sure we continue learning and improving.

“We know that serious mistakes were made in the construction of the original tram line, which caused a great deal of disruption and concern for residents and businesses, as well as impacting the Council’s reputation. Once again, I want to apologise for this.

“Ultimately, creating a better connected, environmentally friendly transport system is essential for a modern, successful city and we need to transform the way people move around if we are to achieve our net zero goals.”

The Edinburgh Tram Inquiry report provides an account of the original Edinburgh Tram project’s progress, identifying factors that contributed to difficulties in its delivery. The independent inquiry was commissioned by The Scottish Government following the completion of the tram line between the airport and York Place in 2014. Its remit was to establish why the project was delivered over time and budget and did not produce a complete line. At one stage councillors agreed to stop the line at Haymarket – only to reverse that decision the following week.

The Council’s response examines and acknowledges the findings made by the Inquiry, including those around governance, the need for independent legal advice and reporting practices. It also considers the implications for future project management,

many of which have already been incorporated into the latest tram project.

While the report broadly agrees with Lord Hardie's recommendation, it highlights that, since the original tram project, several processes and strategies have been put in place which have helped to avoid some of the problems experienced. It is the council says thanks to this approach, along with lessons learned from the original project, that the council has successfully delivered the Trams to Newhaven line.

[Read the full report and appendices, Response to the Edinburgh Tram Inquiry. Watch Transport and Environment Committee discuss the report live from 10am on Thursday, 16 November](#)



Council Leader, Cllr Cammy Day PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter