

# **Tram bosses “surprised” by threat of strike action by Unite**

**Edinburgh Trams bosses say they are surprised by the threat of strike action announced by Unite the union today.**

Unite say that tram staff will be balloted over strike action from 29 July around the lack of comfort breaks due to late running trams.

One round trip from the airport to Newhaven takes about two hours. The maximum driving time before workers are due a break is five hours, meaning that staff may go without drinks or toilet breaks for that time, according to the union.

Unite say there are now health issues among their members as a result.

The trade union represents drivers, ticket service assistants, controllers and vehicle maintenance workers.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: “Unite’s Edinburgh tram workers are facing an unacceptable health and safety situation due to the pressures of having to get the travelling public to Edinburgh airport. We will back our tram membership all the way in the fight for better jobs, pay and conditions.”

A spokesman for Edinburgh Trams said: “We are surprised the union is taking this course of action as it has been closely

involved in our talks with the Trams to Newhaven project team on the efficiency of traffic signals that sometimes cause delays.

“However, we remain committed to ongoing discussions between all parties, with the aim of addressing their concerns while improving services for customers.”

The new tram timetable has added four minutes to each run and delays caused by the new signalling system have meant increased delays. Some trams have to turn round mid-route which also makes it difficult for tram workers to have a break.

Lyn Turner, Unite industrial officer, said: “Edinburgh’s tram workers are emphatically saying give us our breaks.”

“The sustained pressure being put on our members to complete the airport to Newhaven round trip is resulting in an alarming rise in incidents at work including stress and infections.”

“The situation has arisen due to delays in the new signalling system and changes in the new timetable which were not properly tested before going into passenger service. Action needs to happen quickly or strike action will be inevitable.”

