

# **Edinburgh tram extension project has learned lessons of past experience - John Yellowlees**

**At a recent presentation by the Trams to Newhaven team, the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport were given the welcome message that lessons aplenty had been learned from the unfortunate early history of Edinburgh Trams, and without prejudice to Lord Hardie's eventual findings, these are reflected throughout the structure of the current project.**

As delivered back in 2014, there was unfinished business since the line still did not go to the areas where it might bring the greatest economic and social benefits. Communities that had borne the brunt of disruption during preparatory works still did not have a Tram to show for their suffering, yet the fleet-size of 27 vehicles had been ordered with a larger network in mind. So work has proceeded on a 4.6 km route with 8 stops down Leith Walk and through the Port of Leith to the one-time fishing village of [Newhaven](#) completing the original Tram Line One.

Previously an arm's length company had sat between the contractors and the Council, isolating the politicians from the risks for which they were paying. Bespoke contractual arrangements had exacerbated the players' unfamiliarity with building a tram. Diversion of utilities had proceeded on fragmented sites well in advance of tramway construction, exposing neighbourhoods to a double dose of disruption. Political divisions had left the project lacking the necessary stakeholder support.

With these experiences still fresh in people's memories, it was evident that there must be strong leadership from the top of the Council, strong political support across the parties and regular reporting on risks, issues and costs, clearly-defined roles and responsibilities, clear management information and professional project management. Governance needed to be consistent, remits written down, roles identified, escalation routes clear and communicated effectively. The need for knowledge continuity had to be considered from the outset, a one-team approach embraced, and the importance of cross-project intelligence recognised so that outcomes could be checked and lessons learned as the project went along. Best practice had to be taken onboard from other cities.

Plans for stakeholder engagement were built largely around the Scottish Government's National Standards for Community Engagement, with acceptance of recurring themes such as noise, vibration, impact on parking and loading Triage and early resolution of key issues provided greater cost and time certainty and risk allocation under contracts. An understanding and recording of commitments from the outset prompted good engagement,

bringing stakeholders on the journey and helping socialise the things that needed done. Making clear that there would be a staged approach allowed for inclusion of feedback Support for local businesses needed to go beyond simple compensation, understanding their requirements early on and recognising the bigger picture in which the project was operating.

Early contractor involvement brought all key participants together for a period of six months prior to any physical works being carried out. So as to avoid double-dig and encourage reliance on big sites with their own logistics hubs, a swept-path industry standard contract provided for excavation and preparation of the tram clearance zone, utility diversions, resolution of all archaeology, installation of new manholes for Scottish Water and clearance for overhead line structures. The infrastructure and systems standard contract saw to design and construction of all tram works, including testing and commissioning

Construction is now on course for completion in the spring of 2023. Trams to Newhaven will be very much more than just about transport since they will create employment opportunities and support sustainable high-density carless housing development. Bringing necessary quality and capacity to link Leith with employment centres in west Edinburgh will build on the strong city tradition of bus usage while offering opportunities for promoting active travel. Reduction in carbon emissions, an improved built and natural environment, enhanced health, well-being and safety will all be promoted by Trams to Newhaven, which will also spread tourist spend by promoting new destinations.

***John Yellowlees, Scottish Chair, Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport***