

Community Councils Together on Trams (CCTT)

JOINT STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

1. As a coalition of the Community Councils (CCs) affected directly by the proposed extension of the Edinburgh tram through Leith to Newhaven, we approve the project in principle, and view it, if done well, as an important opportunity for the broader social and economic development of the Leith area and beyond. However, we currently have strong concerns that are outlined in this statement.

2. We are committed to ensure that, whatever the final decision of City of Edinburgh Council (CEC), the communities along the extended tram route are not adversely affected by that decision more than is absolutely necessary.

3. We have agreed to work together as CCTT to promote and safeguard community interests during this next phase of the project and to ensure that, as the work proceeds, if it does, our respective communities' interests and views are effectively communicated to the Tram Team (TT) and CEC, and that timely, evidence-based responses are received by the community.

4. The communities that we represent are understandably extremely eager that the mistakes of the previous tram construction works should not be repeated. We think all sides can agree on that. Consequently the community is seeking a high standard of solid evidence that this time the work will be better planned and implemented.

5. Whilst we acknowledge there has been some limited community consultation, other experiences don't bode so well. Some CCs have had

promised presentations cancelled, and frequently our requests for additional information have not been answered.

6. This leaves the unavoidable impression that issues are being rushed and key information is not being shared. We fear in such circumstances that mistakes, a lack of incorporation of community concerns, and oversights, are all possible. It is vital that the confidence of our communities is not put at risk through inadequate information and communication.

7. The result is that, as of the present time, the four CCs which are party to this submission do not have the level of confidence and standard of evidence that our communities need.

Below we outline our key areas of concern.

KEY AREAS OF CONCERN

1. Design

We seek to ensure that the design philosophy, by which we mean the way in which the final designs are agreed and the manner in which the project is delivered, is informed by the following principles:

- that the wellbeing of the people along the extended tram route is kept front and centre throughout the project.
- that the design of the tram extension should be aligned with the city's over-arching transport and design priorities of environmental improvement, reduction of traffic, and people-led "place-making". It should preserve and enhance the frequency of pedestrian crossings at intervals which clearly demonstrate the priority of the pedestrian over the car user.

- that TT/CEC acknowledge the tram route passes through a unique and complex eco-system of distinct communities, businesses, cultural spaces, cafes, pubs and restaurants, and spontaneous meeting places.
- that the tram extension project, both in its design and delivery, should enhance this eco-system rather than diminish it, and in particular, this should focus on the complex inter-play between pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and car users.
- that the insertion of major infrastructure into one of Edinburgh's premier streets is focused on the highest possible quality of planning, execution and final outcome.

2. Local economy

We seek a comprehensive and independent appraisal to be carried out on the economic impact of construction work to local businesses (both on Leith Walk itself, on Constitution Street, and either side of these thoroughfares) – and a realistic compensation scheme for local businesses to be put in place within an appropriate timescale.

This should inform a Minimal Disruption Test, by which all expected disruptions for businesses and residents over the course of the project roll-out will be itemised well ahead of time, along with the corresponding actions CEC will take to mitigate their effects.

Businesses in Leith Walk, Constitution Street and indeed all along the length of the proposed tram extension (and certain side streets) are an essential part of the character of these streets, a major resource for and attraction of the city, and it is vital that they are preserved.

3. Environmental benefits

The Outline Business Case relies on an environmental impact statement published as long ago as 2003. We seek reassurance that estimates for the environmental gains post-tram have been updated and re-quantified and that they exceed (in the first three years) the environmental costs (including noise, pollution, travel times) incurred during construction – and that these gains will be realised, not just on the tram route itself but also in the corridor within which it is placed.

4. Readiness

We seek:

- evidence that key milestones have been identified for the project, against which progress can be realistically and tangibly assessed.
- assurances that the appropriate preparatory work will have been carried out well in advance of any irreversible decisions being made.
- further assurances that, at each stage, the identified milestones will be achieved before proceeding to the next stage.

CONCLUSION

Lacking any substantive evidence to the contrary, and based upon experiences so far, we are concerned that the timescale currently envisaged by the tram team is incompatible with the concerns that we have set out above.

Our overriding concern is that our communities run the risk of being disadvantaged, both short-term during the construction of the tram system, and long-term for future generations, through inadequately researched projections, options and solutions.

As representatives of the community we seek solid, evidence-based responses to these questions:

- 1. Are the matters outlined in this statement currently being adequately addressed?**
- 2. Do current plans for the project allow sufficient time for the full consideration and incorporation of these matters?**
- 3. If the answer to either of the above is 'No', what measures will TT/CEC take to remedy that situation?**

NEXT STEP

We would suggest two immediate actions:

- 1. A meeting between senior tram project members, CEC councillors and Community Council members should be convened to discuss the concerns raised in this statement and any implications which may follow.**
- 2. The opening of a dedicated communication channel between the TT/CEC and the Community Councils through which questions can be asked and answered, in both directions, in a timely and complete manner.**

PARTIES TO THIS STATEMENT

*Leith Central Community Council - Leith Links Community Council - Leith
Harbour and Newhaven Community Council - New Town and Broughton
Community Council*