

BRIEFING FOR CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCILLORS:

Trams are the right choice

Thursday 23 June 2011

Joint briefing from Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and Transform Scotland

1 Trams are the right choice

- 1.1 The reasons for pursuing the tram scheme are even more pressing now than five years ago. These include the need to meet Climate Change Act targets on transport, rising oil prices, improving local air quality and reducing congestion.
- 1.2 The three key interchanges with the heavy rail network at Edinburgh Park, Haymarket and Gogar will connect high quality public transport in Edinburgh with the wider rail network in Scotland and beyond. This provides direct rail access to the airport and other key points along the route. The values of property adjacent to tram lines have risen across the world and the same effect will be seen in Edinburgh. This will drive investment in the city.
- 1.3 Wherever tram lines are built the construction phase always creates opposition but public opinion changes as soon as they are running and extensions are demanded. This will surely be the case in Edinburgh and the current line should be seen as the first phase of a larger network.

2 First choice around the world

- 2.1 New tram systems are under construction around the world as well as extensions to existing networks. In the UK all the six existing systems are currently being enhanced while in Dublin two extensions have been added in the last year.
- 2.2 In the last five years in continental Europe more than 35 new systems have been built or are under construction.
- 2.3 Quite simply light rail systems are seen as essential for growing urban areas around the world.

3 The cost of not proceeding and reputational damage

- 3.1 This is a straightforward engineering project of the type being built on a daily basis across the world. Our problems are already being reported around the world and failure to complete the scheme will result in serious reputational damage to Edinburgh and Scotland.
- 3.2 The extensive liability of the Council arising from numerous potential claims relating to both the multiple contracts entered into by tie, and from third parties, should not be underestimated. They alone could exceed any funding gap that exists and could themselves leave our city in a precarious financial situation.

4 Consensus, Vision and Determination Now Needed

- 4.1 All parties supported the current contract at the Council vote in May 2008.
- 4.2 Expenditure to date has already delivered parliamentary approval, planning and design work, land acquisition, utility diversion, major new structures, the depot, the trams and the rails.
- 4.3 Capped funding to Edinburgh Trams should be contrasted with unlimited funding for other major transport projects. The M74 Northern Extension in Glasgow (approved at £245m with final cost of £692m) and the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (approved at £120m (in 2003), increased to £295-395m (in 2005), and with a final cost likely to be higher still) are just two such examples.
- 4.4 Now is the time for politicians at all levels to pull together in a spirit that is both consensual and avoids recriminations. Failure to do so will leave Edinburgh and Scotland the poorer in the long term.

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