

129 – From Hope Street to Geneva—did something get lost in translation



1. it was recommended to note alternative rerouting (e.g. reopening of Hope Street eastbound) to help redistribution of traffic in the area.¹

¹ See in particular paragraphs 3.24 to 3.40, Item 2.1 in Appendix 1 and Sections 14 to 18 in Appendix 2 of the “Edinburgh Tram – Traffic Regulations Orders” report.

- **This extract above (underlining is ours) is from the recent ‘*Findings and Recommendations with regard to communication ACCC/2010/53 Concerning Compliance by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Prepared by the compliance committee and adopted on 28 September 2012.*’ Produced by the Aarhus Convention Complaints Committee.**

The use of Hope Street was in fact first mentioned to residents some time ago by an official working on the Tram project as a possible way of taking traffic away from the residential streets of Randolph Crescent and Great Stuart Street and using the very lightly lived-in route around Charlotte Square to get out to Queen Street.

Some time later it became clear the Council were also offering to allow developers to completely re-design the streetscape, reducing the traffic carrying capacity to an enormous extent.

The streets around the central Garden would become much narrower, single carriageway and one way, as part of extensive Public Realm works connected to a massive re-development in Charlotte Square, to which Hope Street connects from Queensferry Street.

This offer meant that Hope Street simply could not function in any way as the traffic 'safety valve' presented by the council in their talks with the resident's group.

When the above offer was mentioned, by the UK Government's legal team to the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee, to show that the Council were seeking meaningful solutions with the residents, presumably the UK Govt lawyers did not know of the other offer to the company with development plans in the Charlotte Square area.

And that one offer, or the other, could work—but not both.

The UK Govt, and the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee are blameless, they obviously can't take into consideration something they don't know about.

But there are many people within Edinburgh Council involved with the Charlotte Square Development who must have realised that the promise of using Hope Street simply could not be squared with the plans to radically change the traffic carrying capacity of the whole area of which it forms a part.

Perhaps it was this realisation, of the impossibility of reconciling the two proposals for Hope Street, that prompted the recent last minute decision by the Council to pull the TRO to enact the changes, just as the Aarhus Convention Compliance commission were preparing to make their Findings and Recommendation document public.

Could they have become concerned that exposing their own plans for the street would sit badly beside a report revealing them offering the same street as a possible way out of another problem, that those plans would render impossible to deliver?

The development is presently going ahead without any statutory underpinning for the traffic changes apparently promised by the Council and perhaps they are now going to renegotiate with the developers, to provide new bus stops around the Square, in line with the offer made to residents, and given in evidence to the Aarhus Committee.

The TI&E committee meeting at which this TRO finally re-appears is likely to be of more than usual interest not only in Edinburgh but even as far afield as Geneva.

END--Journalists can use usual contact details for spokespeople for the residents groups.