

TWO DEVELOPMENTS --- ON THE ISSUE OF THE HEALTH EFFECTS CAUSED BY THE TRAFFIC DIVERTED BY THE TRAM

1. A City Councillor on the Transport, Infrastructure and Environment committee says *"The main problem.... is the TRO process was not designed to cater for projects... like this one."*
- *"It could be a grave decision that was agreed If it subsequently transpires that there are implications for resident's health, by shifting a busy arterial route into residential streets."*

AND

2. A Packed Edinburgh Residents meeting asks 'why haven't we been told any of this before?'

A group of residents fighting to have the Edinburgh Tram project properly re-examined in the light of alarming pollution issues caused by the massive diversions of traffic from historic arterial 'through routes' into residential streets have found more support.

SNP councillor Stefan Tymkewycz attended an informal meeting with residents in order to see the issues in detail—and have the opportunity to ask detailed questions; two of his key comments are in red font above.

Following this meeting he attempted to have a controversial TRO thrown out in it's entirety as an alternative to supporting it as it stood.

Although many of Councillor Tymkewycz's colleagues on the committee also expressed worries and concerns over emerging evidence of health effects in recent statistics---and of doubts surrounding the accuracy of council measurements, the controversial motion was eventually passed.

It was then decided by this committee to form a special 'working group', following a suggestion to do this by another councillor on the committee; which would include Council Environmental Health staff, Dr Ashley Lloyd and another of the residents making the case , as well as leading UK independent experts to try and establish the real facts.

This special 'Science Group' is in addition to the already announced workshops, themselves intended to improve the way the Tram affects the lives of people living in the City.

The residents group were given a chance to tell people from across the New Town what exactly was going on in a meeting organised in the French Institute, and the reaction of many in the meeting showed that after all the Council's 'consultations' many people simply still did not know about the acute impacts caused by what had been sold to them as a '*temporary*' traffic measure *while the tram was being built*.

Dr Ashley Lloyd, one of the residents, said:

"The council cannot keep maintaining that their consultations show people have been properly consulted and have expressed massive support for the Tram based on knowledge of the impacts that the Council predicts it will have on their environment."

"The figures, claims and the consultations seem to have forgotten to include the environmental impact on residents who already feel well served by a bus system that is highly praised, highly flexible and has great potential to become much cleaner in the future."

"Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) aren't meant to be used to make an enormously significant change in the way traffic flows across the City, by stealth---- To introduce them, as they were introduced, , as Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs) 'while the Tram is built' and then to disclose that the plan was to make them permanent and can be justified because the 'experiment' has worked is actually quite shameful."

This whole project would never have been conceived in this way if the wider impacts were acknowledged at the start and the stated need for 'integrated transport' systems was extended to include integration into the life of the City. It seems evident that these inconvenient facts were largely ignored and omitted from the picture of a tram system as clean, green and good for everyone."

“ Then, having started the work, there is an imperative to marginalise the concerns of residents, even though the often quoted support of 3% of Edinburgh’s population is dwarfed by the 134,500 households expected to bear increased noise and air pollution 24/7.”

“As the residents meeting showed when people do understand the true facts clearly---they are both extremely worried, and increasingly angry, about how the council seem determined to plough on regardless of the cost either in cash or health.”

Allan Alstead another resident, said:

“I welcome the remarks from Councillor Stefan Tymkewycz who I feel has shown the way for all of the other councillors, both on the Committee charged with overseeing the Tram, and the whole Council to whom they report.

“It is very encouraging that he has taken time to look at the evidence for himself, and he has recognised that the whole project must be properly rethought in order to show that in this City the health of residents is not something the council treat as an incidental bargaining chip.”

“We are enormously encouraged and hope that more councillors and MSPs will follow his example and take a look at the facts themselves without relying on the spin that comes out of TIE---- we know the facts speak for themselves, and welcome it; Tie also know this, but are afraid of it.”

The message from our small group of residents is getting through at last---more people across the city are taking a look at the facts and becoming more and more worried.

Councillors are also beginning to question their own TIE experts’ view of the way this project is still being mismanaged in this health respect,

as it has been mismanaged in the far more widely publicised area of project management and finance in the past.

Residents welcome warmly these recent developments while remaining determined to ensure things move quickly --- but even more welcome is the evidence of Councillors beginning to recognise the very real dangers while there is still time to do something about them.

FURTHER BACKGROUND— Councillor Stefan Tymkewycz's full response following his detailed look at the implications of the present health dangers:

.....I first became aware some time ago of the more detailed aspect of what the objections from the residents of the Moray Feu were all about.

Whilst looking into the matter a bit further, and taking cognisance of your presentation and the extensive details provided by yourselves, I came to the conclusion that we, the council, were putting the 'cart before the horse' so to speak.

The main problem, as I see it, **is the TRO process was not designed to cater for large scale projects like this one, which led to lack of scrutiny and amendments to the TRO prior to making the decision.**

I was informed that legally I could not ask for a deferral of the TRO, for it to be amended, and for some of the outstanding questions to be answered.

That is why I moved for the TRO to be rejected in its entirety.

The most contentious aspect, and there were others, for myself, was the question of health.

The details that you had provided, the health statistics regarding respiratory admissions, even though they are circumstantial at this stage; and the responses to some of these questions from the department that led me to the decision to seek the TRO be rejected as it stood --- and as the health issues required answers in particular, which I believe should take primacy over the tram timetable being potentially held-up for a few minutes as it passed through the city centre.

It could be a grave decision that was agreed last week* if it subsequently transpires that there are implications for residents health by shifting a busy arterial route into residential streets, especially with the urban canyon effect exacerbated with the basement living.

END

1) ***note** this was written by Councillor Tymkewycz last week...the week following the TI&E committee meeting to which he refers--this meeting was on the 23rd November 2010.

2) **Note** The bolded type passages in the letter by Councillor Tymkewycz above are bolded by us, not by him, but otherwise unchanged.

3) **Note:** Councillor Tymkewycz has given permission for us to quote him on this issue but of course is happy and more than able to speak for himself: tel: 0131 529 3277 | 0131 529 4080