

- [An open letter from prominent and respected experts in the field of Civil Engineering remains unanswered and unacknowledged by TIE; as the grotesque bungling on Princes Street confirms their worst fears](#)
- [These questions from respected Civil Engineers highlight even more potential problems for the Tram project which require serious answers from the City of Edinburgh and their 'arms length' company TIE.](#)

An open letter was sent to the elected representatives of the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood and the elected Councillors of the City of Edinburgh Council, as well as TIE.

The three experts who have looked closely at the project are:

Alan Welsh: A Systems Engineer and long term critic of the project who correctly predicted in mid-2005, many of the problems that have since befallen the project.

Alistair Laing, a retired, Civil Engineer who played a part in several large projects in Scotland and others in developing countries across the Globe.

Dr Derek Shepherd who, following a long and distinguished career mainly abroad, as the Managing Director for Taylor Woodrow in West Africa for 22 years before moving on to the successful Singapore Transit Authority Light Rail system and latterly as a full Board Director of Aggreko PLC during it's rise to being an Internationally recognised Scottish Industry Champion, as well as the former head of Aggreko International Power projects. Having not quite retired he is currently the Chairman of NGenTec an Edinburgh University spin-out company in the Renewable Energy sector.

There specific and pertinent questions are ones that at worst could mean the original total budget for the entire planned project being completely exhausted well before even Haymarket to the Airport can be completed---indeed to complete this stretch could cost many tens of millions over budget to complete:

1) The most technically and environmentally challenging part of the Edinburgh Tram Project is the section of the route beside the railway between Baird Drive, Murrayfield Stadium, the ScotRail Depot and Haymarket Yards. Has the proposed work on this section been costed and approved by Network Rail and ScotRail bearing in mind that the main Edinburgh to Glasgow and Edinburgh to the North railway links may not be compromised?

2) Has the cost of removing all the contaminated ground that has been logged and plotted along the above section of the works been taken into consideration?

3) Has the cost of relocating the Fuel Tanks at the ScotRail Depot, and the possible removal of contaminated ground associated with the former location of these fuel tanks been, taken into consideration?

4) The elevated portion of the line adjacent to the Murrayfield Stadium that lies within the Water of Leith flood plain may require to be piled. Have the full costs of this operation been assessed and taken into account within the current budget? If so what is that cost?

5) Has provision been made with the railway authorities to maintain access at all times given that the ScotRail Depot approach road crosses the tram alignment?

6) Can the Managers confirm that work by Network Rail on the proposed Gogarburn Rail/Tram interchange has been cancelled for at least Five Years?

7) Can tie confirm that existing approved funding is sufficient for the tram to reach Haymarket and to be operational including all staff training and the electrification of the system?

8) Finally, if there is to be a temporary halt at Haymarket has provision been made for the design and construction of an integrated tram, bus, taxi, private transport interchange at this location?

Signed:

Alan Welsh B Eng, FRSSA,

Dr Derek Shepherd FICE,

Alistair Laing FICE.

Reaction quotes

Dr Ashley Lloyd, a leading figure and Chairman of one of the Workshops working to try and rescue the tram project from disaster: ”

“My own work has been with data, much of it actually the Council's own, that has revealed an enormous blind spot in the initial planning and understanding of the potential effects on health of the mass diversion of traffic across many parts of Edinburgh---including many areas that will never be anywhere near a tram route.”

“Here a similar examination of the available facts in the public domain has led Civil Engineering experts to ask further potentially damaging questions about the project.”

“Before the Light Rail Rapid Transit project can be saved the people of Edinburgh need to know what the true state of the project is— if questions cannot be provided and the entire budget used before Haymarket can be reached it makes the recent announcement that lines will be re-laid in Princes Street, with nine more months of upheaval, almost incomprehensible.
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Dr Derek Shepherd, formerly of Aggreko said: “I have stepped forward, despite my workload with NGenTec because frankly as a civil Engineer I am embarrassed by Scotland becoming a laughing stock over this project.”

“When all is said and done we are the Country whose engineers, to a significant extent built the modern world, from James Watt and Thomas Telford onward Scots of talent and energy have planned, organised, financed and built great engineering projects across the world.”

“Yet here in our Capital City we have got ourselves into a sad situation where a project such as this is making us an object of worldwide ridicule.”

“There are many business people across Edinburgh who can’t understand how this project has careered so far out of control and continues to do so.”

“What we need to do now is take a sensible look at what is left of the money allocated and see how best we can use that. To go on and on without a clear idea of how much will be needed is way outside any business project I have ever been involved with, we are close to the point where continuing blindly with this project is to be losing our grip on reality.”

“We have to know now what the options are or we risk paying many tens and even hundreds of millions more on a fragment of the original plan that will then simply lose money throughout its entire life.”

Alistair Laing widely respected former Civil Engineer and another person working on the voluntary workshops to find a solution to the problems besetting the project said:

“The announcement to re-lay the lines in Princes Street, the excuses for the need to do this, and the evidence that gives of a project careering from crisis into a chaotic catastrophe, is very troubling.”

“I find it extremely difficult to find the words to describe how I feel as it seems we have a kind of bureaucratic bulldozer running amok with no way to stop it.”

“In their upside down world every new disaster seemingly becomes a reason for an upbeat Press statement that all is well and everything going to plan.”

“ The Councillors desperate to try and preserve their own reputations and political careers and the TIE staff simply looking after their well paid jobs seem to be locked together so closely that they can't see what is clear to everyone else.”

“How often can one say that ‘words fail me’ about this project? But then what else can one say following that truly bizarre press conference performance and statement by Vic Emery and Jenny Dawe?”

“It's like living through a kind of modern version of an old Soviet style Five Year Plan, the more clearly worse everything gets the more strident the claims we are forced to listen to that all is going well--- If Orwell wrote ‘Animal Farm’ today he'd write it about the Edinburgh Tram Project for sure!”

ENDS