

- **A moment of Political commonsense and suddenly the clouds are clearing over Edinburgh.**
- **Residents fighting a long battle over pollution and health fears welcome the decision to halt the scheme at Haymarket.**

The sterile stalemate and politicking inside Edinburgh City Council which has allowed the Tram Project to descend into chaos has been broken by an unprecedented Labour/Tory Alliance.

In the political vacuum of the last few years a succession of executives and managers have struggled in vain to return some order to the flawed project.

But the chaotic and ungovernable management structure has proved impossible to control and the project was threatening the financial stability of the whole city as the administration, blinkered and unguided, pressed forward with a hopelessly misconceived plan.

Amongst the ramifications and changed realities of the new situation, not the least significant is that by joining forces, the Tories and Labour have changed the Tram from a potential air pollution and health disaster into a properly Green alternative for the first time in the project's history.

This long overdue manifestation of common sense is welcomed by members of the residents group who have spent over two years now, trying to bring the prospect of the health dangers, as well as the financial ones, to the notice of the managers, councillors and wider public.

Although it's clear that the commonsense outbreak hasn't reached everyone as Council Leader Jenny Dawe, showed with her comments immediately after the vote:

The clearly shocked Lib-Dem, so closely identified with the Tram project opined:” *The decision to progress to St Andrews Square has fallen, threatening the city's future financial vibrancy.*”

“I am really angry that Labour and Tory Councillors have rejected the professional advice of our Chief Executive and officers and some of the most highly regarded legal, technical, financial and engineering experts in the country.”

In days to come, when her disappointment subsides, she may reflect that in a world turned upside down, her views reveal just how far out of step with the public the administration she leads has fallen.

Throughout the unravelling of this project the administration and many of it's officers have failed to face up to the facts, the principle one being that this has been such a fundamentally misconceived project it has damaged or destroyed the careers, and reputations, of everyone who has come into contact with it, including even the entire company set up in the heady early days to manage it all.

In the last few weeks the ability of the administration to produce credible figures has disintegrated under the pressures of the unmanageable project, to the extent that on the same day Ms Dawe was making the above remarks it was revealed that £19 Million had been lost inside the budget through 'double counting.'

That £19M lost in the wash yesterday was merely the latest in an unbelievable series of financial blunders, mistakes and shady calculations that destroyed the project long before yesterday's (Thursday 25th August) vote -- and stands as 19 Million individual

pieces of evidence to show just how far out of touch with reality the post-vote comments of the Leader show her to be.

Dr Ashley Lloyd, Chairman of the workshops set up by the Council and a scientist with long standing deep misgivings over the pollution dangers

inherent in the flawed project planning: "I welcome this decision as a step in the right direction for Edinburgh, stopping at Haymarket provides a compromise that is understandably attractive."

"But we need to think again about this project - not lock in a design based on the longest, widest and heaviest tram in the world that we know is incompatible with a fully integrated and green transport system for Edinburgh."

"Stopping at Haymarket it has a weak financial case but is far better than taking on the debt required to get to York Place and it will improve air quality in Edinburgh, not, as the previously preferred option of York Place, make it worse."

"I have looked very closely at this project for well over two years, in terms of its environmental impact and I am pleased that the Council has decided not to bring the longest, heaviest and widest tram in the world on to the narrow streets of Edinburgh where it is impossible to integrate it with other transport."

" I also hope that this marks the long overdue beginning of a more open phase in consultation between the Council and the people of Edinburgh, and if so, that the Council will now release figures about the impact of the Tram traffic diversions on noise and air pollution

that it is currently being withheld."

Alistair Laing, a former respect civil engineer, and member of group fighting to expose the flaws within the project fro over 2 years: "This gives time for a full investigation of this flawed project, with flawed advice and estimates from the Waverley Court Executive that very nearly forced the City of Edinburgh into bankruptcy."

"As a result of this afternoons vote for Amendment 1 to complete the line from Edinburgh Airport to Haymarket the Council will require to borrow £0m and pay £0m in interest on the £0m loan every year for 30 years."

END