

34M Edinburgh Tram contingency 'not enough'

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Engineers have privately expressed doubts that the Edinburgh Tram's £34M contingency fund will be able to cover the risk of utility diversion problems at its York Place terminus.

Disputes about utility diversions have caused the project's costs to spiral from £545M when the scheme began in 2008 to £776M today.

Latest Edinburgh Council figures show that £592M has already been spent on the project by 31 March 2012 leaving just £34M in the revised contingency fund.

One source told NCE that if there are any major problems with utilities at York Place then "£34M would not go far".

Bigger contingency

Another source close to the project said that they would normally expect to see a bigger contingency fund for such a large project.

Earlier this month utilities diversion subcontractor McNicholas damaged a gas main causing work to be temporarily stopped at the Haymarket in the city centre.

Under the contract, McNicholas must move any utilities and provide a clear site before main contractor Bilfinger Berger can begin construction of the tram infrastructure.

Additional costs resulting from delays to utility diversions forced the council to scale back the project with its route significantly reduced. The line was originally due to run from Edinburgh Airport to the old port of Newhaven through the city centre but instead will now stop at York Place 5.5km short of Newhaven.

All construction work is due to finish at York Place by March 2014, with the tram operating a full service by the following summer.