

World class trams for Edinburgh as project is given the green light

■ Willie Gallagher, Executive Chairman, Transport Initiatives Edinburgh (*tie*)

In a recent television poll, Edinburgh came out top of the list as the best place to live in Britain. Its combination of beautiful buildings and gardens, affluence, services, crime rates and culture put the judges in no doubt that Edinburgh is a great place in which to live and work. This success breeds success, and as such, Edinburgh is experiencing its biggest period of growth since Victorian times. This means more jobs, more residents, more tourists and more people trying to move around the city.

The knock-on effect is that Edinburgh's current public transport system, although one of the best in the United Kingdom, is near capacity. It is clear that doing nothing is not an option. Edinburgh's roads would soon be clogged, and moving around the city would be much more difficult.

The solution that the City of Edinburgh Council has chosen in order to meet the city's public transport challenges is to invest in a modern tram system. Trams are the best carriers of people in busy cities, enabling commuters to get to their destination quickly and cheaply. They provide a capacity of 20,000 people per hour, twice as many as existing modes of transport. This capacity means improved connections as trams connect people with jobs and leisure.

They can attract new investments and businesses along their routes. Across Europe, in cities such as Dublin, Nottingham and Strasbourg, trams have rejuvenated city centres and business areas. Importantly, trams are proven to make people leave their cars at home, more than any other form of public transport.

The Scottish Government and City of Edinburgh Council are therefore investing in Edinburgh's future by constructing a tram scheme that will be the backbone of the city's public transport network.

The proposed scheme comprises of two routes. Phase 1(a), which links Edinburgh Airport in the west of Edinburgh with the port of Leith in the east, via the city's key business areas and historic centre; and Phase 1(b), which joins the emerging housing and business developments to the north of the city to Phase 1(a) at an interchange at Haymarket.

Last month, we cleared the final hurdle in the approval of the scheme when Edinburgh Councillors overwhelmingly voted through the Final Business Case. They agreed that Phase 1(a) – costing £498m – should go ahead, with an option to commence Phase 1(b) – costing £87m – should the funding be secured. This gives the scheme a total cost of £585m. This figure is 99 per cent certain, with a £49m contingency fund built in and firm prices for design, utility diversion, legals and trams. The infrastructure costs for Phase 1(a) are firm and fixed with options for Phase 1(b). Councillors were therefore voting on a robust business case for a project that would not be exposed to cost escalation or overrun, and were confident in their decision to approve the scheme.

The trams will be funded by both the Scottish Government (which has committed £500m) and City of Edinburgh Council, which will fund the balance. The

TRAM

project, like all major pieces of public expenditure, has had intense scrutiny at every level. It has been approved by the Scottish Parliament, the City of Edinburgh Council, and Edinburgh's business community. It has also successfully passed the rigorous OGC3 Gateway Review.

The Scottish Government's new Finance Minister, John Swinney, also commissioned

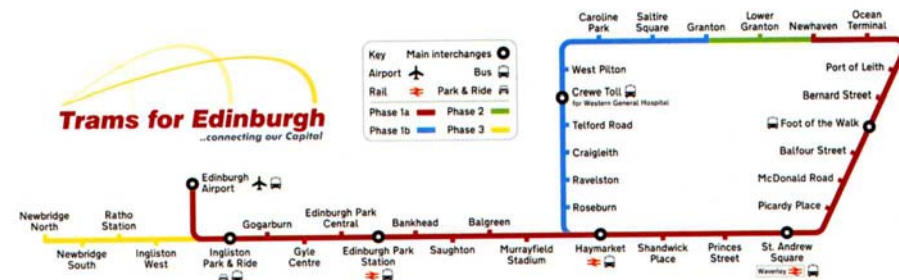
community and politicians, allowed the new Government to back the scheme.

It has been a long and sometimes challenging process to reach this point. The scheme had to seek Parliamentary approval (a process which took two years), followed by a year spent finalising the business case. This was run in tandem with an innovative procurement process

The focus, since the inception of the procurement process, has been on quality. The management team of **tie** has been unwavering in its commitment to this fundamental criteria. Success has been the outcome of every decision, whether selecting trams, designing the route, selecting contractors or managing the disruption caused by construction.

The utility contract was typical of the creative approach **tie** has taken. In order to minimise disruption in Edinburgh and to ensure more efficient completion, it developed a Multi Utility Diversion Framework Agreement (MUDFA), which allows one contractor to carry out diversions on behalf of a number of utilities including Scottish Power, Scottish Water and Scottish Gas Networks. This work is now underway and is being carried out by Alfred MacAlpine Infrastructure Services (AMIS).

The care taken in creating MUDFA is indicative of **tie's** wider recognition that Edinburgh must remain 'Open for Business' throughout the construction phase of the project. That is to say that



The proposed tram route

the Auditor General to examine the scheme and **tie**. The subsequent report commended the project's 'sound financial management and reporting' and its 'clear procurement strategy to minimise risk.' This report, along with the backing of Edinburgh's business

designed to manage delivery and cost and to minimise the risks associated with both. Rather than follow the model used by previous tram schemes, **tie Limited** divided the scheme into four main contracts; design, utilities, tram and infrastructure.

