

# LCCC and Leith Walk Works: a discussion paper

## Purpose of paper

- to remind ourselves of how we ended up where we are and to inform discussion
- to help us arrive at a position that commands support of LCCC members and to recommend the best way forward

## Background: how did we get here?

Since **August 2007 (2,363 days ago)** Leith Walk has suffered from an increasingly deteriorating public realm, impacting on every aspect of normal city street life usage. Most of the following problems are still unresolved as of today, January 2014:

- uneven and unsafe pavements
- pockmarked road surfaces
- temporary (and frequently changing) pedestrian routes and crossings
- unpredictable parking loading arrangements, impacting on retailers and waste collection
- poor drainage, especially near pedestrian crossings
- litter caught in the temporary road patches (notwithstanding the recent astonishing road cleanliness survey)

These problems started in the **summer of 2007** with the commencement of the underground multi-utility works (MUDFA) in preparation for laying tram tracks and were caused by contractors merely patching any holes that were dug, or constructing and shifting countless temporary kerbs, build-outs and pedestrian crossings. Routine maintenance of Leith Walk was also suspended in the expectation that the public realm works planned in the wake of the core tram infrastructure works (rails, overhead lines, signalling and tram stops) would fix these issues by **summer 2010**. The tram budget provided nearly £20m for such public realm works.

A three year wait for getting back a decent public realm was a big ask in 2007/8. The reality of subsequent events and delays is even more disappointing:

2009, February: **tram works halted** due to the notorious contractual dispute between CEC and the construction company

2010, March: TRO published, seeking to implement changes to Leith Walk as if the tram lines were still about to be laid

2011, June: CEC finally **votes for shortened tram line** (airport to St Andrew Square), thus clarifying the position for Leith Walk. Simultaneously, a **budget of £3.2m** for reinstatement of Leith Walk/Constitution Street was approved

2011, November: Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee notes that report that “north of York Place” “the majority of the carriageway and footway reinstatement works will be carried out in **Spring/Summer 2012 [sic]** after the utility-related works<sup>1</sup> are completed to avoid abortive works.”

2012, July: Finance and Resource Committee agrees a **budget of £5.5 million** to “upgrade roads and pavements and carry out a range of environmental improvements along Constitution Street, Leith Walk and Picardy Place”

2012, October: occasional “**Leith Programme**” **update meetings** commence

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<sup>1</sup> refers to “abandonment of redundant Scottish Water installations”

2012, November: design/scope public realm **consultation** commences  
 2013, January: utility works in Constitution Street works finally get underway  
 2013, June: regular Leith Programme Stakeholder meetings commence  
 2013, September: **£3.6m is added to budget** from Scottish Government funds towards a design that “prioritises pedestrians, cyclists and sustainable modes of transport, creating a vibrant and lively street which will benefit local residents and businesses as well as those visiting the area.”  
 2013, December: TRO for Crowne Place to Iona Street published  
 2013, December, **draft Leith Programme Stakeholders Group remit** issued  
 2014, January: controversial **Leith Walk petition** launched

Given the current serial phasing and slow design process, it is projected - **provided there are no further delays** - that the Leith Walk works will complete in **January 2016**, nearly 9 years after the start of the tram works, nearly 7 years after tram works came to a halt amidst the contractual dispute, 4.5 years after it was decided not to build a tram line along Leith Walk and money for reinstatement was available, nearly 2 years after the trams will have started running on the line to York Place.

In summary, we have not only witnessed, but had to live through and with nearly a decade of deterioration of vital public infrastructure and parallel devaluation of public assets, as well as serious problems for the many thousand daily users of Leith Walk - 40,000: as many as the Forth Road Bridge - ranging from inconvenience to physical injury, from increased costs and time wasted to the loss of livelihood.

The length of time it has taken for the remedial process to reach the present stage - 2.5 years since approval, preceded by a year of lobbying - has exhausted the patience of local residents and retailers. While the present scheme is far from perfect (£9m - even with the most efficient project management - was never going to go very far), any further delays would be unacceptable and in fact insulting: nobody wants to see Leith Walk reinstatement works still being argued over two years after the tram route has been completed.

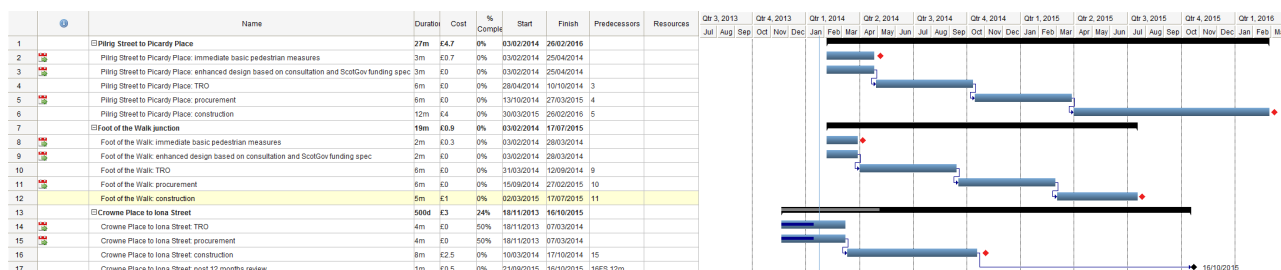
## Recommendations

In order to provide a **clarify and refresh the mandate** and **lend force to future interaction with CEC**, it is recommended that LCCC

1. notes that
  - a. Leith Walk is the most densely populated area in Scotland
  - b. less than 25% of Leith Walk's population has regular use of a car
  - c. Leith Walk (ward 12) and Leith (ward 13) represent over 10% of Edinburgh's population
  - d. Leith Walk has seen a 30% increase in population since the 2001 census
  - e. Leith Walk houses over 300 retail premises
2. agrees that the highest priority for Leith Walk is the **speedy implementation of physical improvement measures**, fixing the serious deterioration of the public realm since 2007. In particular, LCCC agrees to pursue implementation of measures with a design life of 7-15 years in the following order of priority:

- a. for **Pilrig Street to Picardy Place** and **Foot of the Walk** - the most heavily used sections of **Leith Walk**, implementation of **immediate basic pedestrian measures starting at the northern end**, reinstating pavements to what was there *before* tram works/MUDFA disruption - same materials, same layout and **requiring no immediate new TRO**, and using simplified procurement procedures and (some of) the £3.2m budget initially approved in 2011. This initial work should also include routine patching of potholes (from ordinary repair budget) and renewal of yellow lines.
  - b. for **Crowne Place to Iona Street**, approval of present TRO and subsequent speedy implementation - despite possible design shortcomings, **followed by a review in light of first 12 months experience**, in particular the option of locating a number of communal bins in suitable side streets.
  - c. using projected remaining funds and coordinated with implementation of recommendation 2a (accepting minor duplication of work), create a more ambitious design for **Pilrig Street to Picardy Place** and **Foot of the Walk** that meets the Scottish Government funding criteria and benefits in the first instance local residents, particularly pedestrians, then public transport and cyclists, then retailers and visitors to Leith Walk and finally road users who are passing through.
3. agrees to renew the nominations of LCCC members Julian Siann and Harald Tobermann as LCCC representatives on the Leith Programme Stakeholders Group with the following remit:
- a. support a programme for Leith Walk works that meets the priorities set out in para 2 above
  - b. support a Stakeholder Group remit and standard agenda that provides transparency and certainty and meets the programme priorities set out in para 2 above
  - c. support the present TRO for the northern section of Leith Walk in the interest of speedy progress, while arguing for an early review following physical implementation
  - d. support a strengthened and more focussed programme team, as was agreed recently for the similarly delayed Water of Leith flood prevention scheme
  - e. consider a deputation to the next Transport and Environment Committee in March 2014

## Illustration of timeline outlined in item 2 above



(click [here](#) for enlarged PDF version)

## Appendix: References and Links

- EDINBURGH TRAMS: A CASE STUDY OF A COMPLEX PROJECT, John G Lowe, Department of Construction Management and Economics, Glasgow Caledonian University
- Trams Update 24 April 2008: Programme, TIE Ltd
- Forgetting Leith Walk in tram project would be 'cart before the horse', Harald Tobermann: The Guardian Edinburgh Blog, 23 November 2010
- 2011 Census: Population Distribution and Density in Edinburgh, CEC Planning Information Bulletin 2013 No.11
- Edinburgh Trams, Wikipedia
- TIE papers, archived on historical LBA site
- Leith Programme 2012-2014, CEC website
- Leith Programme estimated phasing schedule version 2, produced December 2013
- Trams troubleshooter to help flood prevention, Evening News, 8 January 2014
- Item No. 7.6 - The Leith Programme Consultation and Design, TEC Report.March 2013
- Edinburgh trams: Timeline of twists and turns, Scotsman 12 April 2012
- Edinburgh trams Interim report, Audit Scotland, 2011