

The Conservative Group on Edinburgh City Council OPPOSED both of their tram schemes on grounds of cost, pointing out that the very large sums could be much better spent. Why is your Conservative group not incensed that your big neighbour, Birmingham gets highly extravagant, luxury, prestigious trams that destroy **your** principal mainline railway between Worcester, the Black Country and Derby? Never again will you have a railway "of national strategic significance" (DfT letter of 8 March 2018) going between those three important places.

We each have a voice and have a responsibility, indeed duty to say something when things are going wrong. Otherwise, we stand condemned for our guilty silence.

Andy can't even claim the glory and the praise for the paltry 2 Kms of trams popping up in his 6 year reign as Mayor. Yet, he claims the credit! Now, the Dudley Tram is broken up into four phases, such is the colossal cost of the thing. The first phase of 5.5 Kms nearly all on the principal mainline railway, is finally due to open by the end of 2024 at over £385m. £650 m for all 11 Kms is the expected final cost but that depends when it is finished. A rise from £449 million or 45%, as journalist Peter Madeley first pointed out. The Wolverhampton tram extension of only 700 metres took seven years when reinstated TRAINS could have done it in the 1990s!

My family and I travel on the tram after changing onto it from the bus from Halesowen at Edgbaston Village tram stop - just for the short fun ride! The work started in 1981 and it was finally completed in 2023 - 42 years later! Even then, it fell short of going to the 1980s, original planned terminus on the further, **western** side of the white 'Calthorpe Estates' house on Hagley Road, as was the intention until last decade when work had to be curtailed because of the enormous and irresponsible cost. After 42 years, that lovely white building is still down for demolition with the tram extension to Bearwood, causing the felling of about 1,000 trees and shrubs and destroyed front gardens! Nature, of which we are part, gets more hammering for yet another vanity, grandiose, wealth-flaunting, all style over substance, totally unnecessary project.

The hundreds of millions spent on staff salaries, tram purchases from Spain (over £4m each) and construction has meant that trains and stations have still not been reinstated where track bed, miraculously, has not yet been built on. Buses, too, have languished in the sidelines, like the major, coffin rest-like shelter from the Victorian age that is actually the first bus shelter out of Kidderminster bus station! That important bus station is a joke, too. It is a slum, a disgraceful looking station that lets in rain water as you stand waiting for buses. It is the epitome of **foolish, stupid priorities by our transport planners and councillors** in wanting, still the 2020 £15 BILLION figure for 150 miles of trams to duplicate and replace buses and trains. You would never think that we are in a **worsening** climate emergency as our only habitable planet heats up and more of it burns to further tighten the screw on the runaway greenhouse effect. And Worcestershire CC is in the West Midlands but gets forgotten!

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