

Light Rail (UK)

All Party Parliamentary Light Rail Group

House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Trams, a catalyst for Clean Air, Connectivity, Jobs & Growth



Meeting held via Zoom
Wednesday 7th October 2020, 1500h-1700h

Chair

Andy Carter MP, Chair APPLRG

Speakers

Daniel Giblin, Financial Director, Light Rail (UK), & Lightweight Community Transport
Mr Stephen Metcalfe MP, Conservative MP for South Basildon and East Thurrock, Vice-Chair APPLRG
David Bailey, UK Operations Director Steconfer

Unfortunately, the scheduled speakers Matt Rodda MP, Shadow Minister (Local Transport), and Sam Flynn of Trams to Lytham were unable to attend the meeting.

The meeting was attended by 25 people.

Andy Carter welcomed the participants to the meeting and introduced the speakers. He summarised recent APPLRG activity, thanking Jim Harkins for letters to both 10 Downing Street and the devolved administrations on the opportunities presented by light rail. There are compelling messages particularly around the levelling-up agenda and addressing some of the problems that many of our town centres are facing. Jim has already had a positive response from Wales.

Daniel Giblin gave the first presentation on *Tram Tracker: imagining the new industry*. The presentation slides can be found at

<https://www.applrguk.co.uk/media/files/LR-Applrg-TramTracker-2-presentation-7-October-2020pdf>

and the accompanying script at

<https://www.applrguk.co.uk/media/files/LR-UK-Speakers-Script-Dan-Giblin-Applrg-7-October-2020pdf>

Dan can be contacted at dgiblinconsulting@gmail.com

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Has generously sponsored this meeting.

Mr Jim Harkins FCILT Tel 01925 740675, 07721378227 www.applrguk.co.uk Email jimh@jimmyharkins.com

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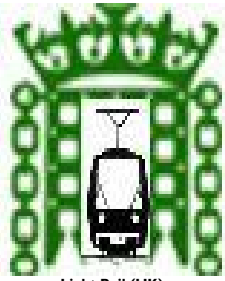


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Questions and comments

Graham. Swallow asked what the current status was with Preston.

Lewis Lesley replied, mentioning that he was preparing a second edition of his book on light rail promotion. Preston has been nine years in gestation and has not been an easy road to follow with many hurdles not least political objections by those who do not think trams should be run by private companies but there is insufficient public money to build the number of tramways that Dan Giblin had looked forward to. Preston has planning permission for a route mostly on an old railway line which closed to passengers in 1923 and freight in 1990. The line was in the wrong place for passenger traffic but using a tram to come in from the suburbs on the old line and then reach the city centre on road gives the best of both worlds. The railway tracks are still owned by Network Rail and we have not got permission from them primarily as they required a £50million insurance bond to protect their assets. As a result, the original planning permission lapsed, and another application is now in the pipeline with the City Council. We are working with a private funding organisation called Snowball who are confident they can put together a £25 million funding package for the 5.5km line with six trams but it has to be spade ready. So, as well as getting planning permission to build it we also need a Section 278 agreement with the County Council who are the highways authority which is under consideration. So, there is lots going on – watch this space. He understood that the KenEx project to build an 11km and 11 tram line linking North Kent with Essex is also progressing

Stephen Metcalfe MP then gave a presentation on *A tram for my constituents*, which can be found at

<https://www.applrguk.co.uk/media/files/LR-Applrg-Stephen-Metcalfe-MP-7-October-2020-Presentationpdf>

Questions and comments

Andy Carter asked what response Stephen had received from DfT on this and other projects. Stephen replied that DfT had not so far indicated that they were looking at the idea. The plans need to be further developed to come up with a firm proposal. KenEx has been working hard consulting with the local authorities but have not yet produced a hard plan with budget and timescales. We need to develop this into a spade-ready project before we take this to the DfT and begin lobbying hard.

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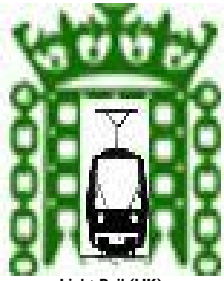


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Lewis Lesley added that Stephen's "Magic Triangle" concept had developed from two feasibility studies on linking Canvey Island and Gray's to Basildon. The tram tunnel under the Thames would take about 10% of the car traffic off the Dartford Crossing. The Lakeside to the river front proposal is self-funding in its own right and would reduce local car trips by about 20%. There have been discussions with Thurrock Council and there was to have been a conference at the South Essex College on 17th October, but this has fallen victim to Covid. Please carry on supporting KenEx because it is really an important project and once you have a self-funding core system it is feasible to add extensions which would not be viable as stand-alone schemes.

Jim Harkins raised the clean air benefits of tramways and that there was no mechanism yet to capture this for Webtag assessment. How can this be got round?

Stephen Metcalfe thought there would be potential to propose amendments to the forthcoming Environment Bill to ensure these benefits are fully included in any project assessment. What is needed is research into a way of quantifying these benefits and putting a value on them

Tim Kendell spoke of the difficulty in getting economists to take into account anything which was not monetised

Lewis Lesley compared starting a new bus service which required a mere six days' notice to the traffic commissioners with virtually no bureaucracy involved – no environmental or economic justification – with setting up a new tramline which requires lots of hurdles to be jumped through Perhaps we should push for a significant simplification of this latter process.

David Bailey UK Operations director of Steconfer Rail then gave a presentation on the work of his company. Steconfer is a privately owned Portuguese company, a global railway engineering construction and maintenance company with a number of internationally recognised accreditations in quality, environmental management and health and safety. It has a full branch office in the UK. It has been working with transport authorities in many countries for more than two decades.

It is a relatively small company, employee numbers fluctuate, depending on the number and extent of current projects, but average at around 200. It deals with all modes of railway construction and is active in five continents in a wide variety of environments including those which may be challenging.

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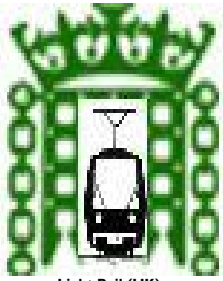


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Examples of recently completed projects are the tram extension in Blackpool, track and OLE work for LUAS in Dublin, work on light rail in South Lisbon and Porto and on metro in Lisbon, also Mozambique, Taiwan, Qatar, Spain, and Chile. It can deal with trackwork, overhead, signalling and telecoms. There are currently projects in Sweden, The Philippines, Norway, Peru, and Israel.

The company deals with installation and maintenance, not manufacture of materials or components - that is subcontracted. It has a specialised department for dealing with slope stabilisation and can-do work on high-speed lines, conventional heavy rail, metro, light rail and ultra-light rail and maintenance depots.

Steconfer works closely with TIG/m and are their partner of choice for installation of their streetcar system. TIG/m has spent twelve years redesigning every aspect of their streetcar system for minimum energy consumption while maximising power and safety. Their streetcars require no external power supply or overhead catenary and operate entirely on an internal battery or hybrid system. Absence of overhead improves the visual environment particularly in historic city centres and avoids the necessity to obtain multiple permissions for attaching overhead to buildings. During the work in Dublin there was considerable difficulty in obtaining such permission for two significant buildings – the Guinness factory and a Garda station. In association with TIG/m Steconfer can provide a turn-key system with end-to-end management from feasibility studies right through to operation and maintenance.

The advantages of steel rail over rubber tyre systems are: 15% lower rolling resistance which translates into a lifetime energy saving of 50%; vehicles last longer; there is no NEE pollution; tracks structurally improve road surface; increase in property values along route.

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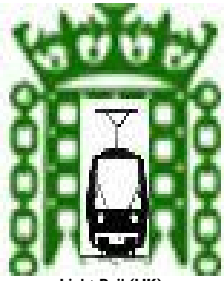


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David showed examples of embedded rail track from the Qatar project and details of the TIG/m hydrogen fuel cell propulsion system.

In summary a tram system designed and engineered by TIG/m and installed by Steconfer:

- Provides environmentally superior mass transit systems, embracing latest innovation and technology including virtual coupling to address peak demand and contributing to a multi-modal truly integrated urban transport system
- Assists with decarbonisation – it does not generate air-borne contamination or pollution, and is therefore a long-term sustainable solution to reducing roads-based commuter traffic
- Will increase the market value of nearby real estate while attracting new business and rejuvenating local and wider economies
- Provide valuable jobs and boost the local economy during the construction period and beyond
- Steconfer typically provide a core team of technicians from Portugal with all project management, supervision and construction personnel recruited locally
- TIG/m will supply “flat packed” tram kits for assembly in North West England.

Questions and comments

John Parry asked if other forms of hybrid arrangement were used other than hydrogen fuel cells.

David Bailey replied that there were other propulsion systems that could be used such as internal combustion engines and biofuel, but hydrogen was the favoured system because of its efficiency and safe storage and delivery

John Parry doubted whether these options provided the optimum peak power for acceleration. He asked how well these vehicles accelerated compared with conventionally powered electric trams.

David Bailey was unable to answer this but promised to get the information from TIG/m
David Bailey Email address: david.bailey@steconfer.com

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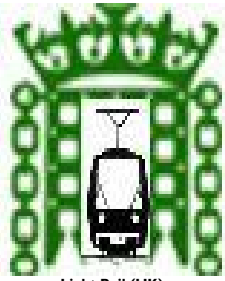


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Andy Carter said that APPLRG would be making representations to government ahead of the spending review. Several of the schemes mentioned are potentially ready for development. The Group will also be working to help progress other schemes that are not so far forward

Jim Harkins asked if Dan Giblin would comment on the fitness of DfT to further light rail development

Dan Giblin said that the behaviour in DfT needs to change and it needs to come from the top. Light rail needs to be seen as a solution to the transport problems in our cities. We are looking for a relatively small amount of money to get feasibility studies done.

Andy Carter said that the target should be the Treasury to get this into the spending review.

Lewis Lesley recalled that the NAO report of light rail had branded it poor value for money, and this has influenced government ever since. This was why recent extensions to existing systems had been funded locally

Andy Carter said it was an opportunity to ask the Treasury to look again at this and to consider more recent analyses. The pollution argument is really relevant in the current situation and the government is now more receptive to environmental arguments

Lewis Lesley said that until we put a value on the environmental and health benefits they will continue to be overlooked.

Tim Kendell said that there were very few people at DfT working on trams. Trams are thought of as a local transport issue and the responsibility of the ITAs. DfT lacks personnel to deal with policy development

Andy Carter said that Baroness Vere had told him that there was interest in trams in DfT and they had a list of projects that they were keen to progress. There is more interest now in government related to the green agenda.

Roger Jones referred to the recent DfT staffing chart which has no mention of trams only "local transport". If they really do want to prioritise trams, surely there should be a section in the Department that deals with trams.

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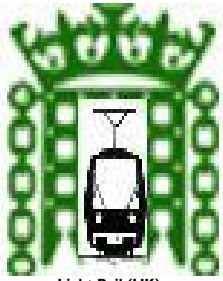


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Andy Carter replied that it was clearly the job of APPLRG to write to DfT and ask what resources they are putting into tram development. If there is no satisfactory response, he will put a written question to the Secretary of State.

Andy Carter then thanked the speakers and attendees and closed the meeting.

James Harkins FCILT MTPS

Secretariat

Mike Willsher
Scribe

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