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The GLA has taken this approach to ensure both the corrections and original text are available, and so we can balance our legal obligations under the EIR with our duty to help ensure accurate information is released in respect of the individuals interviewed as part of the Garden Bridge Review.

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Please note however, the transcript may, despite our best endeavours, contain errors due the transcription process itself.

*Garden Bridge Review
Meeting transcript*

Event: MH-Assembly Members (Copley/ Eshalomi)

Date: 5 December 2016

Present: Dame Margaret Hodge MP

Claire Hamilton

Tom Copley AM

Florence Eshalomi AM

DAME MARGARET HODGE MP (MH): Right. You are both members for that ward, aren't you?

FLORENCE ESHALOMI (FE): No, I'm the constituency member for Lambeth and Southwark. Tom is London-wide.

TOM COPLEY (TC): I'm a London-wide member.

MH: You're London-wide, right. I've read all your stuff from the transcripts.

TC: Yes. So what happened was totally by chance. I was substituting for a member who wasn't there. I read through all the paperwork they gave us and I was already sort of against it and didn't think it was a good use of public money. When I looked at the paperwork I just thought, "This is absolutely dodgy". I mean you've probably read this in the transcript but it was the fact that it seemed to me they decided who they wanted to do it and then they'd created the process in order to get to that point. Obviously what they wanted was Heatherwick Studios to design it. Everything from splitting the contracts, design engineering contracts, so that they didn't have to go through an OJEU process; the scoring, which I just found absurd where you've got Marks Barfield and Wilkinson Eyre who have done 25 bridges between them and Heatherwick who have done 1 and the score was only marginally different in terms of relevant --

MH: Technical, yeah.

TC: -- design experience. I didn't feel that the answers that Richard De Cani gave in the meeting were satisfactory. He just kept saying it was a fair and open process. Then we found - the audit that was done - there was a much tougher version that had been produced previously which had then been altered but that version was leaked.

It just seemed to me that everything was done the wrong way round. The whole process was designed to get this favoured designer the job, never mind the fact that Boris had been with Heatherwick in San Francisco before the tender was put out. Really it was the fact that he was so cagey about giving us that information.

MH: Was he? He was cagey about telling you that?

TC: Yeah. I questioned him at Mayor's Question Time, I forget the date but I can find it and send it over to you. He refused repeatedly to say -- I said, "Was anyone from Heatherwick there or Heatherwick himself?" just refuse, refuse, refuse. In the end the Architecture Journal found the smoking gun in a FOI and they had to admit he was there with them. That was just before they put out a tender for a pedestrian footbridge with no mention of a garden bridge, and there he was trying to raise funds for a garden bridge. Why didn't they tender for garden bridge if that's what they really wanted? That's really how I came to it. Nothing I've seen since from them has --

MH: Why did you guys not look at the Arup contract? That's something that's weird.

TC: That's a good point. I'm trying to think now where we came to that. There was a point when I questioned him at Mayor's Question Time about that but then I ended up getting one of my facts wrong which was absolutely -- and maybe that's what kind of threw me off because then they were able to say, "You've got that wrong". I'd thought that it was just Richard De Cani who'd made that decision on the awarding of the Arup contract when actually it was (Overspeaking)

MH: Yeah, I have seen that. Yeah.

TC: So I messed up slightly. Then I just went back to looking at the design contract so that was sort of my fault really.

MH: Go on, tell me your --

FE: From a constituency perspective, I'm the new constituency member since May.

MH: From Lambeth.

FE: Lambeth and Southwark. The constituency is called Lambeth and Southwark so I represent both boroughs.

MH: Right, so you do both. Right, of course you do because it's GLA. Yeah.

FE: In terms of any conflict of interest I'm also a current Lambeth councillor so I'm involved, but I'll be standing down at the next local election. I think purely from a constituency angle, knowing the cuts that me and my colleagues are having to make on the council where our budget's been cut year in, year out on the back of this coalition government -- but all of a sudden there's this wonderful money, straight from the Treasury, for this project that no one actually wants. It's totally unfair.

MH: Can I just tell you what's very weird, when you look at the very early public opinion surveys that were done, 85 per cent were in favour.

FE: In favour, but my caveat to that is they're in favour because they thought it was as private sponsored project not that they were getting money direct from government and from TfL.

MH: You think that's what was the --

FE: I think that's what the selling point was. Again, purely from a planning perspective -- obviously my colleagues on the planning committee in Lambeth, if you look at pure planning, there wasn't any strong basis in terms of objecting to it. Again, on the back of this is going to be funded by fundraisers and a private project, no public funding --

MH: They knew by then that there was --

FE: They knew by then in terms of the money.

MH: The £60 million.

FE: But, again, the rest of it would have to be funded by them raising donations. The other bit in the jigsaw is obviously around the sites around Coin Street and the land there which is quite contentious.

MH: Yeah, but why weren't they contentious originally?

FE: I'd say that area is -- I don't know how much you're looking into that but, again, that area of land's been quite contentious for quite a number of time in terms --

MH: That little bit of land?

FE: Yes, that little bit of land in terms of what's going there and what's not going there, the ownership, maintenance, all of that. So, again, there's still a lot of concern from the local ward councillors - I'm sure they've been in touch with you - around that patch.

MH: Yeah, I've seen --

FE: Kevin Craig, Jen Mosley and Ben Kind.

MH: I've seen Jennifer Mosley.

FE: Yeah, that's good. I think the other angle is around this selling point that we need another tourist attraction. Again, if you look at the Lambeth side, and bordering onto the Southwark side, we're awash with tourist attractions there. I don't think we need another one.

Again, in terms of access to the bridge, my concern for Lambeth residents were some issues around private events, that bridge being closed off for a number of days for events. Again, you know, what benefit are local Lambeth - and Southwark residents, because of the proximity and the way it is - going to gain from that?

I think, you know, there are a number of negatives that stack up against it. Then you throw into light all the stuff that the assembly members had been doing before I joined around how the contract was actually let, the procurement process. You just think to yourself, again with my councillor hat on, "There is no way we, as councillors, would have sat on any committee in the council to procure this kind of work. Why isn't there that level of scrutiny being applied to what the former mayor, with the help of the Chancellor and the Treasury, was doing?"

MH: Why did Lambeth give permission? Because they couldn't not probably.

FE: I think obviously it's difficult in terms of if we then --

MH: Did you get a good 106 out of (Overspeaking)

FE: We did. If you look back at the transcripts, one of my colleagues did object to it, Sally Prentice. I've told her to contact you. It may be worth touching base with her. I think, again, you know how -- as you're a former Islington leader, Margaret, you'll know in terms of officer advice and the information in front of you and obviously, "What's our grounds for rejecting that?" So then you've got to go and partially -- and obviously that threat of, you know -- would we then, as a council, be subject to an appeal if we turned it down. So, again, I'm sure you've seen a number of conditions attached to it - not all of them have been met yet - from both Lambeth and Westminster.

It's just a case of as the planning authority we've done what we can thinking that, you know, it's gone through the due diligence process from the mayor and the Treasury. But, actually, we then find a can of worms and, you know, would that have changed the way planning members would have, you know, viewed that application if we had all that information beforehand.

TC: I'm told also that threats were made to Lambeth in terms of, you know, "If you don't co-operate on this, well, we're going to have to look at what sort of transport funding the GLA is going to be providing to you". That's all stuff I've heard off the record, you know. It's not something that you could go on unless that was substantiated but it's known that the mayor would use his financial muscle through local transport funding to try and -- I think, you know -- I have to say I do think the previous mayor is the real villain here but I don't think that Lambeth Council really have covered themselves in glory over this, not least when they punted the final decision on the land over to Coin Street. Coin Street naturally feel, as a charity, having had two sets of elected politicians decide that it should go ahead for them to kind of throw a spanner in the works as a charity -- I mean I think they feel, quite understandably, quite sensitive about doing that.

MH: I mean what you hear from the Trust is that they went to see Coin Street early on who were quite keen on it.

FE: Something has made them now question it (Overspeaking)

MH: Yeah, all the way through. They will say 85 per cent of people were in favour - forget about process at the moment - if you actually look at the idea itself.

FE: Ian Tuckett, he's at Coin Street, a very sensible man but I think, you know, something's making them think, "Hang on". Because, again, you know, they've held back to date in terms of not signing (Overspeaking)

MH: I'm seeing them so I'll get it out of them. I will talk to them.

TC: This is absolutely confidential.

MH: Yeah, so we'll take this --

CH: Do you want me to pause?

TC: Yeah, that'd be --

MH: I mean the mayor is allowed to do mad things, right. Ken probably did mad things, undoubtedly did mad things, and so did Boris. Just sort of how do you think that should be appropriately structured within the structures of both City Hall, TfL, GLA, everything?

TC: Well, in this case, it should've been a mayoral direction.

MH: There was.

TC: There was one -- I'm sure there was an instance where there wasn't a mayoral direction for something to do with the Garden Bridge, or am I thinking of the --

MH: No, it's (Overspeaking)

FE: I thought that they did (Overspeaking)

CH: It is but they're quite late.

MH: They're late. The mayoral direction came well after they'd let the contract.

TC: Yeah, and that's the thing. So, again, the new bus for London, which again was a grand projet and, again, it's turned out to be pretty much a complete failure and waste of money. Boris issued a direction to TfL, I'm pretty sure, in that instance which --

MH: Did he? (Overspeaking)

TC: I'm pretty sure he did.

MH: We'll have a look at it.

TC: (Overspeaking) I'm pretty sure he did. Now I'm doubting myself. But usually with that kind of thing the mayor would direct -- if it's not considered to be something that's -- you know, if it's going to be something that is a political kind of thing of the mayor.

MH: They've still got to do it properly. Even if the mayor wants to do it, they've got to do it properly.

TC: Of course, in this case as well they did come up with a business case for a footbridge.

MH: After the event?

TC: I think they had the business case -- yeah, they sort of tried to claim that --

FE: I think it was the timing of everything as well that's (Overspeaking)

TC: The timing was an issue. But, you know, they came up with this business case for a footbridge. They then tried to attach the Garden Bridge to that footbridge idea. Actually it's not going to be a very efficient bridge to walk across because you're going to have to be going like this. I'm told you could get around quicker by going down to the next bridge and walking around that way than going across the footbridge. So they did try and attach a business case to it.

I think that mayors have a grand projet. A mayor, you know, does have a kind of status which allows them to pursue particular projects. But I don't think they have a right to sort of completely ride roughshod over all the processes and if you're going to do that, make it clear that's what you're doing. Don't pretend you're doing (Overspeaking)

FE: Don't pretend it's a transport project.

TC: Don't waste the time of two companies spending -- I think they spent £30,000 each or something like that (Overspeaking)

FE: Putting it together, yeah. There's costs (Overspeaking)

TC: It's expensive to put together --

MH: That's the first time we've had that figure actually.

TC: We better check the figure but, you know, they spent money and time putting in a bid.

MH: They thought it was a proper competition.

FE: Yeah.

TC: Thinking it was a proper competition.

MH: They did think that, did they?

TC: Yeah, absolutely.

MH: They had no idea it was a garden bridge?

TC: No, they weren't -- the whole tender -- their design proposals fitted the actual brief that TfL put out much closer than the Heatherwick done did because they came up with what was asked for, which was a pedestrian footbridge from Southbank to Temple. What Heatherwick came up with was this vastly embellished sort of design which, like I say, is more difficult to get across.

MH: It's a destination, yeah.

TC: They clearly had fitted the brief more accurately and they were under the impression it was an open process.

MH: You don't have an objection to a grand projet but --

TC: I think if you look at the ones that Boris pursued, in almost all cases they turned out to be either failures or very questionable.

FE: Yeah, the cable car, the buses.

TC: The cable car, the buses, the Garden Bridge now.

MH: He'd probably claim the bikes although that was Ken really more.

TC: Ken wanted a much cheaper Paris-type system and he went for this bells and whistles Montreal system. The most heavily subsidised part of the Tube network is the bike. Proportionally it is. It gets the most public subsidy and it's mostly used by rich, white men.

MH: Is that right?

TC: Yeah.

FE: Yes. Last week at transport committee we had a bit investigation into police and security at the Olympic London Stadium. Obviously, you know, I think that's another one we could attach to Boris in terms of -- this is around the seating there and the fact that the Airwave system hasn't been put in yet.

MH: I tried to look at that when I was at PAC and failed.

TC: You raise an interesting point because actually, yes, a mayor --

MH: Should do grand projets.

TC: A mayor can and should. I guess the --

MH: You might not like them but that's one of the --

FE: I think no one's objecting (Overspeaking)

TC: But the grand projet can be successful. He could have created a new bus for London that was a success. In fact, he's created ones that are overheated; they're too expensive; the whole issue with the conductor on board, well, they've now had to completely get rid of that because, of course, it turned out to be expensive; then they had to close the back doors because people would fall off.

FE: We're losing a lot of revenue. Another thing we're looking at on the transport committee is in terms of, you know, lost revenue from those new buses. Again, they're actually costing more money than any saving.

TC: All the top ten routes of fare evasion are new Routemasters. I'm trying to think now what one might regard --

MH: Given I think you'd agree that he has the right to do it, for both the GLA then and you, as members, what do you think are the appropriate -- so you can issue a direction to say they can undertake a grand projet. What should be in place to make sure that you protect the public interest and value for money?

TC: One of the issues for us as an assembly, as a scrutiny body, is we scrutinise after the fact. Only in certain cases, like voting on the budget, do we actually get to stop anything in theory.

MH: Yeah. So you ought to get some assurance before the money is spent.

TC: Yeah. I think there should be something --

MH: Prior assurance.

TC: -- upfront I think would be helpful. But that, I think, would require quite a fundamental change in how we are structured as a body.

MH: Yeah, but that's not a bad idea. A grand projet you could do it on. I mean everything else is in business plans.

TC: It could be based on things that require a direction, for example. I'm speculating now (Overspeaking)

FE: Or even a certain amount of funding, you know, sort of an upper threshold before --

MH: I mean I'm quite surprised -- you do TfL scrutiny?

FE: So I'm on the transport committee, so not the TfL board.

MH: They have the authorisation to spend £25 million, TfL, which is entirely down to the commissioner without any authorisation. He has a delegated authorisation which allows him to spend --

FE: That's a lot of money.

MH: It's a lot of money on stuff that's not in his plan.

FE: Again, I keep referring back to council because we had -- again, you know, bringing up history, bringing up people like Ted Knight who has just popped up again in Lambeth.

MH: I heard.

FE: But because of some of the issues we've had in Lambeth a few years ago they actually changed where -- in terms of anything procured over £5,000 had to come through to councillors. That's how much scrutiny we have.

MH: Are you on the TfL --

TC: I'm on the transport (Overspeaking)

FE: We're on the transport committee, not the TfL board.

MH: You don't do anything about this?

TC: Our function really -- we will question TfL and we will look at the TfL budget and things like that but not on a day-to-day basis.

FE: No, it's the TfL board that --

MH: They go to the board?

FE: Yeah.

TC: I mean they once described £30 million - TfL officers had spent £30 million - as a rounding error in a budget meeting because they have such a colossal budget. I don't think that they have necessarily -- they're not quite as tight with their funds, as it were, as some of the other bodies.

MH: You could, couldn't you, change things and say to them (Overspeaking)

TC: We can't tell them to do anything. We can advise.

MH: You can't say we want -- you're scrutiny?

FE: We're scrutiny. So it's something we can discuss as --

MH: You could do a recommendation.

FE: Yeah.

TC: Last report into taxi and private hire all 19 recommendations were taken up but we can't compel the mayor.

MH: It just rather surprises me that there's a quite a loose authority to spend.

FE: It's a lot of money as well.

TC: The mayor could change that. You know, if you recommended that that was not the case anymore the mayor could obviously change that.

MH: Yeah. The other thing was -- does it come to your scrutiny committee -- one of the things that emerges from this is that quite a lot of the decisions were taken right at the end of April.

FE: Just before he leaves.

MH: Changes in the management and maintenance which could have implications for future mayors, so that they didn't have to have the money in the bank for first five years. They just had to demonstrate that they had a good strategic funding plan for funding the management and maintenance and release of additional monies just before the election to cover any potential closure of, you know -- if the thing just folded down and therefore liabilities coming out of the contracts. Do you look at that in the TfL monitoring? Would you look -- would that come to you, all that last minute pre-election -- it's just -- I couldn't have done that either as a minister or, indeed, as leader of Islington.

FE: Again, all of that -- so I got sight of all of that in the run-up to the election as a candidate but in the sense --

MH: You knew it was happening.

FE: From stuff that Tom was doing, from other --

MH: You knew it was happening?

TC: We did, yeah.

MH: How did you know?

TC: I think it came to the GLA oversight committee. It's been less transport that's looked at this and more the oversight committee because it was down more to the kind of process stuff than the transport project (Overspeaking) don't think it is.

FE: Project in all but name.

TC: Yeah. I'm trying to remember back to -- because, of course, we were mid-election then as well. I think it came through then but I'm not -- I think it came through to us as members but I'm not sure if we had a session on it on the oversight committee.

CH: Did it come through in that pre-election period for you to see, do you know?

TC: I'm trying to remember. I'll get back to you on that because I'm going to have to go back and --

FE: Yeah (Overspeaking) again, I think I was notified by journalists saying, you know, could I comment on this.

CH: (Overspeaking) just wonder they don't normally publish them.

MH: (Overspeaking) construction contract was let before -- the NAO was critical of this, the construction contract was let before the permissions were given and certainly before the money was granted. Would that have come to you?

FE: That would have gone to oversight but, again, it would've been afterwards.

TC: Yeah. I'm trying to -- this is the trouble with it being --

MH: Would it automatically have gone or would it only have gone if you'd done another review of it?

TC: It wouldn't necessarily automatically have come to us. It might have come to light -- a lot of stuff came to light through the Architects Journal FOI because it wouldn't be expected, necessarily --

MH: That's not process, is it?

TC: -- that it would come to us, no. A lot of the stuff that we've done has come off the back of it having come out in the press and then we've asked for the paperwork.

FE: The campaign group as well, actually, in terms of some of the FOIs they were doing.

MH: You might do this on another project and find the same sort of stuff?

TC: I mean this is one of the points that was raised, that was everyone -- we were all focusing on the Garden Bridge but actually were we missing, you know --

MH: A bigger thing.

FE: So many other (Overspeaking)

TC: What else has been happening through all of this time? I mean this is something I think that we should follow up from that. But, of course, I mean I haven't really done that much more on the Garden Bridge or any of this in basically anticipation of what your report is going to come out with.

MH: Are there other examples of anything you've done either on oversight or through the transport committee where you think the current systems for monitoring of both process and value are not good enough?

TC: I don't think they're good enough in general. I think the whole system is quite -- I think it's quite lax. I think as an assembly -- I think we've done some really good scrutiny work on it but it's frustrating because we don't have the powers, for example, that the

select committee has, you know, in terms of demanding to see things, even compelling people to appear. It's expected --

FE: We can try.

TC: We can compel officials from the GLA family.

MH: Could you have had Thomas Heatherwick in?

TC: We've never had him in and we couldn't compel him to come in certainly. We can compel officers, you know, deputy mayors and things like that.

MH: Could you have had Arup in?

TC: We could have asked them to come in but, again, there's no sense that we can compel them to do that. And, you know, because I think the structure, as you've seen, is quite weak. It's more difficult for us to get things out of organisations.

FE: I think, again, comparing it to - sort of joining in May - the process on the council, again I'm thinking there are just so many loopholes and it needs -- that the role of assembly members -- and this is going back to the whole issue around devolution and, you know, that (Inaudible) function does need to be tightened, especially in light of the fact that the mayor has -- you know, essentially can have a blank cheque in terms of projects and signing things off. What I've learnt -- what I'm picking up since joining the assembly, it seems to be that assembly members only get sight of stuff afterwards and then start going through it.

MH: I think it's (Overspeaking)

FE: That can cause a lot of problems. So, again, it's not we're slamming the fact that, yes, we know the mayor has a mandate and, you know, they may come up with projects from time to time but if you've got 25 members there, cross party, and I think I'm right in saying that even on some of those big controversial projects you have had cross-

party support in saying, "Actually, let's look at this again. Is it value for money?" So in a sense, you know, how you're utilising those members to make sure what the mayor's doing -- because that then is public waste or what the mayor's doing -- is it value for money, is this in the interest of Londoners.

TC: We don't even have the power of call in like councils do. Councils can call in decisions made by those (Overspeaking)

MH: You can't?

TC: We can't call in a decision.

MH: I wonder why.

TC: I'm not sure. I mean --

FE: It's all in the GLA Act.

TC: We operate -- we're sort of a quasi-local authority but we're not.

MH: It's probably because if it's the role of the mayor, it would be seen as limiting. I bet that was seen as limiting the role. I mean you do want -- one of the trends I'm trying just to sort out in my head is you do want innovative projects and you don't want, sort of, to be sat on.

TC: I think what we need is the transparency. And also to know -- like I say, you know, if he's going to say, "This is a decision that I'm making as mayor, it's a political priority for me" fine. But don't pretend that you're going through --

FE: It's something else.

TC: Don't pretend that you're going through the process. Don't waste people's time. Don't essentially cause TfL officers to become collaborators in a political project. I think you need to have that separation.

MH: Is there anything else you want to say about the local community as the local member?

FE: No, I think most of – Jennie's probably touched on most of the concerns and, again, it's just making sure that if this does go ahead that we do have access to it and it's not limited. That, you know, local school children are involved. There are still concerns around the environmental aspect of it. Obviously, is it really a transport project? Again, you know, as you see day in, day out congestion is a big issue for us, not just in Lambeth and Southwark but across London. So, again, who has access to this bridge? You know, so questioning is it really a transport project.

I think the final thing is definitely around the fundraising and the money. You know, making sure if, god forbid, this has to go ahead no other money at all - whether from the mayor or Transport for London and, you know, your power from the Treasury as well - should be allocated to this.

MH: You can't do that because the planning permission from both Lambeth and Westminster say you've got to underwrite the maintenance. You can't do that.

FE: But that's still -- my understanding was there's a still a question mark on that because obviously --

MH: Well, it's in the planning permission. There's a question mark over whether the mayor --

FE: Signs it.

MH: But, you see, the mayor hasn't signed it but if the bridge is to go ahead that's in the planning permission.

FE: Cancel the bridge then I say.

MH: You can never get an assurance that there won't be public money.

FE: I say cancel the bridge then. That's what I'd like.

TC: That's my view. I mean it's probably the last card the mayor has, really, is to refuse to sign it and then --

FE: Yeah (Overspeaking) guarantee full stop.

TC: -- the whole thing goes.

CH: What would you think about the public money that's been spent on it so far if that did happen?

TC: Well, I mean unfortunately there's very little that can be done about that. I mean this is -- the way it's panned out means that, of course, if it doesn't go ahead we are going to lose all of this money.

FE: We are going to lose that.

TC: But even if it does go ahead, you know, the idea that -- I think that was it £20 million as a loan over 50 years, well, I mean really not much value is going to be returned to the taxpayer from paying back a £20 million loan over 50 years.

MH: I think that was a Lambeth condition.

FE: Yeah. So, again, you know, I don't want to speak for my colleagues on the planning committee but, you know, I think there are some things that we could have looked at differently from the Lambeth side.

MH: Right, okay (Overspeaking)

FE: Yeah. If you compare and contrast I think some of the conditions on the Westminster side seem --

MH: Are tougher.

FE: -- a lot tougher.

TC: Yeah. I mean I just think it's a terrible shame but I would say, you know -- you know, it's not to say I would rather have £40 million wasted but I think we're in a situation now where £40 million is going to end up being wasted.

MH: Would you put it somewhere else?

FE: Yeah. The (Overspeaking)

TC: The bridge?

MH: On the Thames.

FE: The new Rotherhithe Bridge we need for across -- near Canada Water in Southwark.

TC: I wouldn't put a garden on the bridge full stop, I don't think. But, yeah, I do think the Rotherhithe Bridge should go ahead.

FE: Yeah, which would be a pedestrian bridge. I think, again, if it was that, you know, we were to lose the money, my concern is how much will the ongoing maintenance of this bridge then going to cost.

MH: Well, that's what you have to underwrite.

FE: So it's a case of --

MH: That's what you underwrite. You can't change it. Yeah.

FE: Do we cut our losses now and say, "Actually, because of the process followed by the former mayor this is a loss that, you know, the mayor's" (Overspeaking)

MH: Did you ever meet the Garden Bridge Trust people?

FE: I have, yes.

MH: In your capacity --

FE: So Tom and I met them.

TC: We met them, yeah.

FE: Yeah, Tom and I met with them.

MH: You met them ages ago?

TC: No, we met them --

FE: No, only about three months ago.

TC: It was after you were elected. Three months ago, yeah.

MH: Recently? You just met them now. You never met them in the --

FE: Had you met them before?

TC: No, I'd met with Richard de Cani and Isabel Dedring but I'd not met with the Trust before that.

FE: Anyone from the Trust.

MH: Let me just ask you one thing, there's a lot of -- who do you think is responsible for this? Is it TfL or is it City Hall?

TC: I think it's City Hall and I think that TfL officers -- I think certain TfL officers have -- I mean it's difficult. I am loathe to blame officers but I do think Richard de Cani has not covered himself with glory over this. And I think the fact he has now departed to Arup -- I think there was a recognition that he could not carry on certainly under -- if a Labour mayor was elected at TfL in that role, given the part that he'd played.

MH: The mayor's chief of staff is absolutely clear that the procurement was entirely a matter for TfL and was never an issue for City Hall.

TC: But there might have been -- I do think that when people at TfL know what the mayor wants -- and the fact that the mayor had been out there promoting the bridge in San Francisco with Heatherwick, with people from TfL --

FE: And the Treasury.

TC: I think at TfL they were --

MH: (Overspeaking) TfL went along to that did they?

TC: To San Francisco? Yeah, there were --

CH: I think that's one of the questions you've asked Andy to come back on.

MH: Have I?

CH: Yeah.

MH: Think it was Amy.

TC: I think they were well aware of what the mayor wanted and I think that they set the process up to get the outcome that the mayor wanted. That's just my feeling from having questioned people there and, you know -- I do think that they got the outcome that they thought the mayor wanted. Which, ultimately, the officers had to be responsible for their actions but it is difficult when you've got a big political force like the mayor and, you know, a very powerful force. There might well be that temptation to get the outcome you think that they want.

FE: I think, again, you know, following on from that, it's not that one wants to blame officers but essentially this was a mayoral project so the buck has to lie with the mayor on this.

MH: I hear what you say. Is there anything else that I haven't given you an opportunity to say that you think you would like me to think about?

FE: I think there should be question marks in terms of, you know, again, I think you should definitely note that, you know, the mayor may, from time to time, think of, you know, some of these projects which may not have been in the manifesto, may not have been something that's been discussed before, but it could be an idea. But it's the process and in terms of do your transparency, do your diligence on that. I think there should be some -- again, I'm not sure how far your report will cover this bit, around -- what definitely struck me is around some of the stuff where do assembly members get sight of this. Again, (Overspeaking) as Tom said in terms of, okay, yes our powers are limited but equally it's a case of this is quite a big project. There's a lot of funding attached to it. So ...

TC: Well, it's like -- yeah. The initial draft of the audit report, we only got that because it was leaked. We had no power to discuss (Overspeaking) give us all the documentation in relation to it, including any drafts.

MH: I have to say to you at the PAC we never saw the draft NAO reports. I mean there is always a toing and froing.

TC: Right, okay.

TC: But could you have requested it?

FE: Could you have requested (Overspeaking)

TC: No.

MH: Probably not.

TC: Okay.

MH: Probably not. Because you have -- but actually the advantage was once you got it you knew that there was agreement so there was never any dispute on the facts. So there is an advantage in allowing that toing and froing but in this case the argument is did they do a whitewash. I've got to go. Yeah. Thank you so, so much for coming in.

FE: No, thank you.

TC: Thank you for meeting us.