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## **Garden Bridge Review Meeting transcript**

*Event: MH/ Cllr Tim Mitchell (Westminster)*

*Date: 22 November 2016*

*Present: Dame Margaret Hodge MP  
Claire Hamilton  
Councillor Tim Mitchell*

DAME MARGARET HODGE MP (MH):

So just tell me your perspective. I mean, what I'm looking at is not: is it a good idea about any of it? I'm looking at: were the processes appropriate and what is the value for money? So I've got that narrow remit and I don't come to it either pro or anti bridge.

TIM MITCHELL (TM):

My perspective, first of all, starts off as a ward councillor and it's in a corner of my ward which has a lot of commercial activity, very little residential. I actually had to change because there's a new residential plan --

MH: Do you take Insen(?) and Temple?

TM: No, just the very edge. So there's Essex Street, which has got some barristers chambers in, which is in Westminster but then it becomes the city.

CLAIRE HAMILTON(CH):

There's a map on the back of that, if you want to see.

MH: All right.

TM: It's got one of those weird, historic, wiggly boundaries.

MH: Which one is it? This is the whole ward?

TM: Yes then you see, on the eastern edge, we wiggle round here to Temple, basically. So I'm coming from -- my ward colleagues and I are coming from that perspective that it's heavily commercial. It will be changing, though, because there's a very large residential development on 190 The Strand, which is --

MH: The old --

TM: -- it's opposite St Clement Danes.

MH: Yes, it's the old -- I used to board in that, funnily enough, as a minister. That's the old bit of Somerset House, isn't it? It's a complex, isn't it?

TM: No. Well, it might have been at some stage but no, it's --

MH: It's a bit more to the ...

TM: A bit more to the east.

MH: All right.

TM: So they're coming on stream in the next year or so; a very large development because it goes down the side of a hill so they've been causing a lot of disruption as a consequence of that. That's the residential perspective.

The business perspective is that it sits within the Northbank Business Improvement District, which is a relatively new - two years old, perhaps - business improvement district which goes from there, along through Aldwych, down The Strand to Trafalgar Square and bringing together a plethora of different business occupiers. Business in the widest possible sense because the two largest ones -- well, there are three large ones which are not commercial, being the -- first of all, NSE, King's College and then some Somerset House and they are big players in the Northbank bit because they want to see that area regenerated. Particularly because of the really adverse, hostile traffic environment, they want to see ...

And so I've been ward councillor -- well, a councillor now for 18 years and all of that, apart from my first two years, for St James's and there's been a constant issue about Aldwych; the fact that it's a racetrack and things like that. So when the bridge came along, it was something which I looked at fairly neutrally and then had various presentations from the (Inaudible) Garden Bridge Trust.

MH: When did you have those? Well before they --

TM: Well before they applied for --

MH: 2012?

TM: Perhaps I can check my diary but quite early on.

MH: So they were -- because they weren't a founded trust until after 2013, were they?

CH: Yes, in 2013.

MH: But they were around, were they?

TM: I don't know as early as that but quite early on.

MH: They registered in November 2013, you see.

TM: Yes, well, before there was any planning permission --

MH: Before it was all road.

TM: I've granted -- partially, that would become my caution. And this is wearing my next hat. I'm a member of one of the planning committees and so any planning application which has been lodged, I treat that as a quasi-judicial way and so therefore I'm very cautious about who I see, how I see them. And so it was well and truly before that came around.

As it turned out, I was on the planning committee which considered it and there, of course, has that quasi-judicial responsibility. Yes, being politicians, one looks at the

community side as well. We always get with our planning application reports, copies of all the representations made by members of the public, other interested parties et cetera. So I was keen to go through those and make sure that I hadn't missed any local interests which I might not have been aware of.

And then we had a planning committee where we were very much looking at it on planning grounds. It was not -- although there started to build up the concerns about the cost, we were all quite clear our role was as a planning authority not as an auditor or a financial investigator about the viability of the project. It was just: was it acceptable, in planning terms?

So we went through that and you can see that the papers for that as a matter of public record. It was that balance between the public benefits, the new green(?) infrastructure, another way of moving north-south across the river, which we thought would help bring, perhaps, the tourists back to us because actually -- because South Bank has been a great success and Covent Garden is a great success but people don't actually realise that they are not very -- geographically, not far at all.

So to give them another way across, whereas Waterloo Bridge is quite a hostile environment. Though it works quite well on Westminster side because you can get round, at the level, to Somerset House, on the southern side it's more car friendly than pedestrian friendly. So we have that.

My third role is I'm cabinet member for finance and corporate services.

MH: All right, okay.

TM: And so under that -- wearing that hat, I have responsibility for council's finance and also there is corporate services, including legal reporting too. And so what we have been doing --

MH: Okay, you've got every hat on then.

TM: Exactly. And so what we've been doing - the council officers have been doing - following that planning permission, is going through the various sides; the section 106 agreement, the various property issues between us, Transport for London, doing all our due diligence, looking to prepare all the relevant rights of light and various other private rights.

MH: The trust said to me yesterday that there had been a huge delay on that, from Westminster, which had cost them some uncertainty and money, over this thing, about Light Temple Station.

TM: Well, it's -- we were content to do our due diligence and go --

MH: Did you take much longer than the --

TM: From my perspective, no. We had a --

MH: Should they have realised it was going to take a year?

TM: I don't know whether they actually took ... I generally don't know whether they took professional advice, early enough, about the complexities or the various private rights which we --

CH: I think it's a really good point.

TM: We have the statutory power to expunge, in a way, that a private sector or third sector organisation doesn't. And so we have --

MH: But somebody would have told them that, wouldn't they, during the process of that? I mean, I did not believe the air belongs to one person and the --

TM: Absolutely. I, personally, got the impression they just hadn't got that detailed professional advice. These things do take time.

MH: You would have given them the planning consultant over it.

TM: Lawyer, planning consultant, surveyor.

MH: I mean, they did express a bit of -- they must have done that to you, haven't they?

TM: Yes, they had.

MH: Concern, of some kind, because they were surprised.

TM: And it certainly came through at a political level and we were pushing back to offices. And yesterday I had confirmation from our executive director, who's responsible for the area, that a draft report is due to come to me and my colleagues.

MH: This week?

TM: Yes.

MH: That's what I heard. But it's taken a year.

TM: I'm not aware it's taken that long but yes. These things do take time.

MH: Okay.

TM: Partially because you have to go through --

MH: Proper processes.

TM: Proper processes, yes.

MH: And they hadn't -- in your view, they should have understood that a bit better.

TM: I think they should have understood that. From our point of view, in St James's and Westminster as a whole, St James's ward, we welcome the project. We think it's a high standard public infrastructure of the standard that we are promoting ourselves elsewhere in the West End. We've got a bid through to the treasury, at the moment, for a TIF.

MH: What's a TIF?

TM: A tax increment financing arrangement, whereby we hold back some of the business rates to pay for the infrastructure and investment.

MH: The (Overspeaking) in the business (Overspeaking)

TM: Exactly. So us and Camden are promoting a series of schemes in the east end of Oxford Street and various other places.

MH: Do you get business rate(?) out of the bridge?

TM: I don't know. I don't know. Because they're a charity, they would be --

MH: They would exempt?

TM: They would be -- they would have an 80 per cent exemption.

MH: But there's still 20 per cent.

TM: So there's still the 20 per cent.

MH: Does it belong to the bridge, you or Lambeth?

TM: It would be 50/50.

MH: It would be 50/50.

TM: So, for example --

MH: Do you get anything out of Tower Bridge?

TM: Can we see it from here? Westminster Bridge is notorious for problems with three-cards tricksters doing gambling scams and there's a lot of letters the speaker gets - and various other people - saying, "This is a disgrace. I've just got ripped off", etc, etc. So we had to have two enforcement teams to meet in the middle and have plainclothes policemen from the Lambeth and Westminster Police and so it is a 50/50. Even though, legally, Westminster Bridge is Westminster and Lambeth Bridge is Lambeth, in terms of the maintenance and upkeep, it's 50/50.

MH: Can you find out for me, Claire?

CH: Yes.

MH: I think we should be able to establish that, shouldn't we; whether or not they are liable for ...?

TM: I think they're liable for 20 per cent and then they would have to make an application to us, to determine.  
So wearing my finance hat, I have a group of colleagues who have a -- we have a rating advisory panel and so charitable organisations make representations and say -- and they -- bluntly, if they can make a case that the public benefit is substantially directed towards Westminster residents, then we're more likely to give them the full 20 per cent.

MH: Yes but this will be different on this one.

TM: And this one is a wider benefit so ...

MH: I'm interested. I hadn't thought about that so there you are, we've got a new -- trying to get more money.

TM: Yes, indeed, indeed.

MH: Okay so that is a very interesting point for me; that you think that -- because they do say that you're delaying it.

TM: No, no. We're not consciously delaying it at all. In principle, we are in support of it but on the other hand, we're guardians of public money; we want to make sure we do things properly.

MH: Just tell me, have you seen the draft business plan; the strategic business plan?

TM: Not -- no, not.

MH: Do you think there would be an uplift in property values on your side of the river?

TM: I -- there could be. There's also -- I think it's a part of the -- as I mentioned earlier, in terms of the pedestrian flows and getting people through to Covent Garden, getting people back to the South Bank. So it's increasing the footfall in an area which is quite quiet, particularly at weekends. Go down there and Temple is --

MH: Temple is very quiet.

TM: Very, very quiet. Well, in fact, perhaps you and I would use it because we know it's quiet, in the way that others wouldn't. So, of course, brings -- could bring problems, in itself, but I, personally, don't think so.



MH: When you considered the planning application, did you look at economic benefits or did you just think in the round; this must be -- it was a judgement, rather than --

TM: It's a judgement, rather than an assessment, because I think those macroeconomic assessments can -- you always get --

MH: Get all the money, get all the figures.

TM: Well, just look at the Brexit referendum and two sets of economists coming up with completely different conclusions. Unfortunately, that's how it goes. But certainly all the work we've done in the West End Partnership in advance of this TIF bid and we have robust macroeconomic evidence about the uplift in values which come from something like this.

MH: So you might -- okay, we've been through that. Go on. What else? Then you've got the management maintenance issue.

TM: The management maintenance issue, that is actually the third sector ownership, as opposed to public ownership. In a strange way, it gives me more confidence because our experience in Westminster is that the legal powers available to private sector owners -- Covent Garden is a good example and there are others elsewhere, in Westminster, where they are able to manage the quasi-public space in a way, using legal powers which we don't have access to.

MH: Tell me about that.

TM: Well, and (Inaudible) the management of busking; that's a current issue. We've got a meeting, tomorrow, about it. On the one hand, you've got the macro point made that busking is something which adds to the vibrancy of London; that's why tourists come here. But if you're an occupier, a residential or business occupier who lives next door to a busker playing the same monotonous music day in, day out, you'll have a completely different point of view. A private sector landowner is able to actually deal with those in a way that we, on public land, we cannot -- or, rather, we can after 9 o'clock and night because of the Environmental Health Legislation Inspector etc.

MH: It's a bit like squatters and all that stuff; it's much quicker to get rid of them within the private sector.

TM: Yes. Of course, they do have to -- they would have to make sure that they are adequately staffed and all those challenges. But the fact that it's private sector space, as I said, it more encourages me than discourages me.

MH: Yes, okay.

TM: Because of that history, which is a sad reflection in a way, but --

MH: But you put this condition in, didn't you? You were the first local authority to put the condition in that ... just take me through why you felt you had to do that.

TM: This very much came from -- I think it came from our planning officers and the experience of other -- not an identical(?) application to this but similar things, to make sure that there was adequate management. Because the concern, sometimes, can be that spaces are -- even though they are private sector spaces, they impact on the public realm and therefore we want to have them properly managed.

MH: Another thing that's emerged from the paper saga is that there was a proposition in the -- put to the Mayor that when he tendered for the design of the Garden Bridge, there was consideration being given to a bridge from Vauxhall over into ...

TM: Yes, well, they --

MH: -- and they thought they should design -- they should be(?) returned(?) to the closed bridges together.

TM: All right.

MH: And what I'm now being led to believe is that that did not go ahead because of hostility on the Westminster side.

TM: Yes, there very much hostility on the Westminster side. Not least because, on the Westminster side, it's landing slap bang in the middle of a residential area, in the way that the Garden Bridge(?) is (Overspeaking). It's a different characteristic; very much indeed a different characteristic. So there's a united opposition/scepticism, on the Pimlico side, from all councillors of all political colours about this bridge proposal, which I think is part -- the new mayor's assessment about bridges; public botanic bridges anyway.

MH: Go on. I hate to interrupt you.

TM: No, no. So I suppose there is a distinction to be made between those two bridges.

MH: Okay, fair enough.

TM: In terms of our (Inaudible).

MH: So the original -- I mean, I think that's fair enough. So the decision by the Mayor not to go ahead with it. (Several inaudible words) is very busy. He wanted to get on this one and there's much more --

TM: Yes. And also, I suppose, this one - because of its high-profile location and also had a high-profile designer - it would be a project which would be easy to attract charitable funding from a plethora of different sources, whereas something in Pimlico would

perhaps get money from the developer on the Vauxhall side. That's the Vauxhall side, whereas it's a completely different perspective here.

So where we end up, at the moment, is that these -- we also have, of course, the Thames Tideway project happening --

MH: Yes.

TM: -- and so there's quite a lot happening on the river.

MH: Are you worried about the two happening at the same time?

TM: No. In that, the proposals for the various shafts and access points are well away from each other. So our nearest one is on this side of the Magna Tube/Bridge(?) and using, primarily, a little bit of foreshore and I'm bluntly wearing my licensing hat and am quite pleased to see at least one of the party boats be dislocated and so that's not necessarily a bad thing.

MH: I mean, do you think any of the colleges or Somerset House feel so strongly that they might put money into this project?

TM: I don't -- well, Somerset House --

MH: Hasn't got any.

TM: -- hasn't got any money.

MH: A fantastic success.

TM: Yes. And Jonathan Ricky(?) is putting a lot of effort into the art space. I don't know whether you've been down there but there's a catacomb-like arrangement below.

MH: Yes. I was the Culture Minister when there was a row going on between Somerset House and King's College. Do you remember that or were you not around?

TM: Sort of, yes.

MH: I brought somebody in and then there was the Courtauld; so there was Courtauld of Somerset House. Mary something or other was running Somerset House.

TM: Yes, at that stage, yes.

MH: Is it Mitchell? Anyway, I can't remember but I brought somebody in, to bang heads together. I went down those wonderful staircases. I mean, they are completely beautiful.

TM: They still have a --

MH: They're absolutely beautiful.

TM: -- bit of a love/hate relationship because there was this extraordinary -- there was a planning application by King's College, which English Heritage originally said that they were neutral about or -- they were becoming Historic England at that point. And Somerset House were not keen about it because from the courtyard you could see a sliver of this new development in King's College. And then English Heritage gave what was tantamount a direction to refuse. But it turned out that the new head of Historic England had been formerly a director of Somerset House so ...

MH: Oh, no. Oh, dear.

TM: It was a little ... anyway, so I don't know whether they are in love with each other again or not but ...

MH: Oh, dear. Then you've got the lovely little Courtauld Gallery.

TM: Yes, absolutely, which is a nice --

MH: Gem.

TM: -- space which --

MH: Have you ever been in there? No, I bet not.

CH: I've been into the house. I don't remember that gallery, specifically.

TM: Yeah, as you go in on the courtyard -- not courtyard. I mean the entranceway; either side is the Courtauld Gallery.

CH: No, I don't go through that way. I think I go towards the back.

MH: They've got some beautiful, beautiful pictures in there.

TM: Exactly. But King's, because they've just bought a substantial interest in Bush House, they have got --

MH: Yes, I'm a professor; I'm visiting professor at King's.

TM: All right, okay. Well, actually -- but your point about King's or NSE putting money in the Garden Bridge --

MH: (Several inaudible words) really.

TM: Well, they do have access to an extraordinary amount of money.

MH: The HE sector has been the most protective bit of the public sector.

TM: But also those two institutions, in terms of donations from alumni etc, is massive.

MH: Yes, I know.

TM: In the way that some small, little college just doesn't have access to it. I mean, the fact that they manage to -- well, both of them have got an enormous building programme. Which actually comes back to the piece about their interests in the Garden Bridge.

MH: So what would you feel if the Garden Bridge started, without having raised even all the capital money for it? I mean, you now have comfort that the GLA is underpinning the maintenance and (Overspeaking) to try to reduce your planning permission, on the capital side.

TM: I would think that unlike a private sector organisation, a commercial company who might take a bit of a punt, because this has been promoted by a charity, that they are going to be a lot more cautious about proceeding unless they have confidence that they're actually going to be able to get out the other end. Even though I can think of building projects which have lain scaffolded for years because they've run out of money, I couldn't foresee this happening in this particular instance.

MH: You wouldn't be minded to put money in from Westminster?

TM: Well, we've got -- I mentioned the TIF bid. We've got a very large shopping list and so we're supportive of this but --

MH: But you don't want any money in it?

TM: Well, our nearest priority would be helping King's and Somerset House with sorting out the Aldwych and that's not going to be cheap. As you know, any civil engineering project has eye-watering amounts of money going into these things in the way that, as lay people (Overspeaking) how can that happen? But it does and so that's our priority. Because there was a scheme promoted, at the time when Ken Livingston was mayor, of a tram.

MH: Oh, really?

TM: It was going down the Aldwych.

MH: The old tunnel?

TM: Yeah. Well, using the old tunnel or adjacent to the old tunnel and going across Waterloo Bridge.

MH: All right.

TM: And so that lighted the area a little, in terms of the transport, for some years and then that was well and truly kicked into touch. So it came back to: how do you deal with the buses? Which is not dissimilar to our dilemma with Oxford Street; how you deal with the buses.

MH: Yes.

TM: And so we're keen to see that happening. You know, only the other day, sadly, a cyclist was killed on the Aldwych.

MH: It is scarily dangerous at Aldwych.

TM: It is.

MH: I was just thinking about it because I go to King's and I go to LSE quite a lot and crossing the Aldwych is absolutely petrifying.

TM: Just crossing the Aldwych.

MH: Unless you go up to the bridge which, of course, you never do because you think it's just ...

TM: Absolutely, absolutely. And that's what King's are petrified about, is that students just going across off The Strand bit, to the new Bush House, some absentminded academic type. It's grim, the thought of it.

MH: Yes.

TM: So it does need sorting out.

MH: That's your priority.

TM: That's our priority in that immediate area.

MH: Okay. Anything else? What else?

CH: Can I just ask a question about funding?

TM: Yes.

CH: Did the Garden Bridge Trust or TFL or the Mayor's office ask Westminster about paying money at any point? I know you said that's not what your priority is.

TM: Not -- never formally.

CH: Okay.

TM: I never heard it informally because it would have come from the leader or deputy leader. It's above my pay grade - bids for millions of pounds - but no.

MH: Can I just ask you another thing? Because one of the things that slightly surprised me, in coming to this, is it is an iconic idea but it seems to have upset a lot of people on the sides of the river; river residents.

TM: Yeah.

MH: From your perspective as a ward councillor, did you feel that the consultation was appropriate or do you -- I've seen one letter floating around, it might not be your ball, from one of the lawyers; a Middle Temple lawyer.

TM: All right.

MH: Have you seen that?

TM: No. No, I don't recall it.

MH: Really moaning and hostile.

TM: No.

MH: That's probably city, isn't it, rather than ...?

TM: Could be city. It depends whether Essex Street bound well. There's various different -- Milford Lane and various other ...

MH: Did you feel the consultation was good? You haven't had -- of course it's from Middle Temple. There's a big, big thing you sent me, from one of the Middle Temple people, just saying it's going to ruin their garden and ... you know, there's a garden there and they're going to put loos on the garden. Does that make sense to you?

TM: No, it doesn't, actually.

MH: It must come in with Temple Garden. I don't know where it ...

TM: Yeah.

MH: I assume they're going to put public lavatories somewhere.

TM: That doesn't ring any bells with me because the landing --

MH: Is on the station.

TM: -- is on the station, away from the Middle Temple side.

CH: I don't quite -- I'll have to have a look at that again.

TM: I'm not aware of that. I come back to what I said at the beginning, in terms of the perspective -- comparatively few local residents. There was a lot of London-wide/national publicity. When I saw the Garden Bridge Trust I did actually reel off the various streets and where I knew people lived, to make sure that they liaised with them.

MH: And did they?

TM: As far as I know, they did. But what that area lacks, at the moment, is an active community association. (Inaudible) for example, it had been a historic Covent Garden Committee Association, where it's very straightforward. Any planning application from Covent Garden you say, "Well, have you spoken to the CGCA?" There isn't, for this particular area. I suppose the nearest one probably would be Lincoln's Inn Field which, of course, we share with Camden. So we don't have that. That's why I've tried to make sure that they focus in on those streets which have residents.

MH: Yes. Good.  
Well, I think we've got everything we need, haven't we? Now, if --

TM: If you need anything, from a Westminster perspective, then please do --

MH: I think I -- no, we've -- I understand the plan. It was very helpful, your view, because I think they were a bit taken aback about how long it's taken to get the various permissions in place. I think that is fine. If you, when you go away, think, "I should have said something else", just drop me an email or something.

TM: I will do, yes.

MH: All I'm trying to do is really understand everything, from that limited perspective; the value for money and process.

TM: Yes. Yes, well, I think I'm more about process, rather than value for money, because that's ...

MH: Yes, that's been really, really helpful. That's really helpful.

TM: My concern is from Westminster side.

CH: I have just one last question. You mentioned about enforcement on the other bridges. What commitments have you had to make or what are you expecting to have to contribute around enforcement on the Garden Bridge?



TM: Well, because it will be a -- won't be public space, then our enforcement activities are probably going to be limited to the apron on Temple Underground Station, as opposed to the bridge itself.

CH: Okay.

TM: So we're not going to be chasing hotdog sellers and various others like, historically, we've had to.

MH: Are you relaxed about the night closure?

TM: For the Tube?

MH: No, for the bridge.

TM: For the bridge? Relatively, yes. I think because of -- the footfall is smaller and you would have to have -- given the history of the Hungerford, now called the Golden Jubilee Bridges, which hang off either side of the Hungerford Railway Bridge. There were, prior to the work which we did, which was funded by a plethora of organisations primarily in the GLA, that there had been the odd murder, every four or five years, in the middle of the night because they -- the old pedestrian bridge, as I recall, is almost caged in, as you're walking across.

MH: Yes.

TM: Whereas, now it's lit, there's quite a reasonably-high footfall. I think it could be problematic.

MH: Yes. And do you see most of the footfall as visitor footfall or commuter? Do you see a commuter footfall from --

TM: I would see -- given the way that Waterloo seemed -- does seem to be like a battlefield - and particularly in the morning - then yes, it would help with that.

MH: Do you think people would cross to go to Temple Station?

TM: Could do, yes. But --

MH: Because that gets them on the Circle and District and Jubilee. Is it on the Jubilee? Yes.

TM: No, you have to go to Westminster for ... no, Waterloo has its own Jubilee (Overspeaking).  
So outside in the morning and maybe afternoon peak but definitely the morning peak I would see primarily more tourists/visitors. Which, of course, will be London visitors, as much as UK visitors or non-UK visitors.

MH: Yeah. And do you see any potential ... you know, they have these plans for fundraising for events and charging.

TM: They'll need to -- they would need to manage those - certainly initially - sensitively and they would need to make sure that they tell everybody when they are planning to do that.

MH: Can you find this? I know you can hire Tower Bridge for parties.

TM: Yes, you can, from the Corporation.

MH: Is that from the Corporation? Can you find out how much that is because that's -- I've been to a party there.

TM: Yes, the bit above, yes.

MH: You cross over the bit, don't you?

TM: Yes, that's right, yes.

MH: There's two rooms. I felt it was a not very attractive space, actually. But I went to a party there once.

CH: It's a bit more weatherproof.

MH: Yes but it's a bit weird because they've got two rooms and then you go through this corridor that links the two rooms. So you've got one set of -- you know, you've got one set of people on one side and one on the other and then you go ... it was a weird ... I don't know if you got the feeling. I didn't think it was very attractive. And this will be a little bit more ...

TM: Rather utilitarian, yes.

MH: It would be interesting to know how much it would cost. They're assuming 60K, which seems to be very high.

TM: I don't know.

MH: You've no idea? You don't have a feel for ... does Westminster let an of its ...?

TM: We do and, actually, I'm about to make a phone call, when I leave here, because there was a planning application to put a pop-up theatre on in Bankment Gardens.

MH: All right, who's putting that in?

TM: Well, Cameron McIntosh was wanting to put a show there.

MH: Gosh.

TM: But it was to be for six months so we managed to ... but we would have got -- bluntly, Westminster would have got a good fee out of it. But the local residents were less than keen and therefore (Inaudible) was less than keen. But with the Garden Bridge, if that commercial site can be managed so that it's largely in the hours when the bridge would be closed anyway, I think would be a lot more supported. It's those days which there potentially might be closed when public access is due. I'm not quite sure what the grievance is on that.

MH: They've agreed 12 days, haven't they, closure?

TM: Yes.

MH: I have a feeling that's Saturday, is it?

CH: I don't know. I'm not sure they specified, to answer the question.

TM: But they really would need to have a good system in place to notify everybody, otherwise --

MH: Tim, do you think it will happen?

TM: On balance, yes, I think it will happen. Whether it happens straightaway ... there's quite a lot of uncertainty around generally 2016 has been an interesting year so ... yes.

MH: You haven't been recommended, by Trump, to become our ambassador.

TM: You couldn't make it up, could you?

CH: Absolutely terrible.

TM: The West Wing looks -- well, in all those --

MH: I think he's a sort of bully, you know?

TM: He is, yes.

MH: He's an old-style bully and he just thinks ... you know, he used to run things so ...

TM: But you and I have seen people who have come from outside politics to take up roles, here in Westminster, and most of them have fallen flat on their face because they do not understand --

MH: Do not understand democracy.

TM: Exactly, yes. It's as simple as that.

**Commented [GLA FoI1]:** The GLA has redacted the remaining part of the transcript as the conversation becomes a private conversation. The conversation does not relate in any way to the Garden Bridge or contain anything remotely relating to the scope of the Garden Bridge Review.

It has therefore been removed as being out-of-scope of "a transcript of the conversation in relation to the Garden Bridge Review".

MH: Yes.

TM: Which means that you've got to be -- you've got to work with other people. And you might not like the people you work with but --

MH: You've got to find a way of making it work.

TM: -- you've got to find a way. And that's the trouble.

MH: Yes. Good, well, thank you so much for your time.

TM: Not at all.

MH: I'm really, really grateful.

TM: Well, good luck with the audit. So what's your timescale?

MH: I haven't really got one. I obviously don't want to hold it up but, equally, this isn't my only task. I'm fully committed so I'm trying to give it a day a week. That's what I'm trying to do. And I tell you, I've got pile of paper this high.

TM: Yes, well, hopefully you won't get involved while doing too much of the legal process because, of course, lawyers will be more than ready to throw stuff at you.

MH: Well, I think the trust will be going through it with a fine tooth comb so I'm going to have to watch what I say. I think I will have to look at it.

TM: Yes, I suppose you don't --

MH: It's a bit of a shame but that's the world.

TM: Of course, you don't have parliamentary privilege for this, do you?

MH: No, damn. That was a great plus, when I was doing Google. And once you say something in parliament ... I've written a book now, you know, on my public community stuff. And as long as I quote what I say in parliament, I can say it all. So it's full of quotations of what I actually said when I was in parliament. I don't think they're very happy with it.  
Thank you so much for coming.

TM: Not at all. I will let you know if there's anything comes up.

MH: All right.

TM: So you're going to be doing this for at another month or so?

MH: Oh, yes, then I'm away on holiday for two weeks over New Year so I'm going to lose three weeks.

TM: It's the only time you can get away, I suppose.