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- typographical errors;
- comments being attributed to the wrong person;
- text being omitted in the transcription; and
- instances where the transcriber completely misunderstood what was being said, and writing something wholly incorrect.

Where the GLA has identified genuine errors in the transcription when compared to the audio recording, we have made corrections to these transcripts using “tracked-changes”.

In each case, the corrected text is shown in the margins of the page and is accompanied by a brief explanation for that correction.

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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Event: MH/Wilkinson Eyre

Date: 7 March 2017

Present: Dame Margaret Hodge MP

Jim Eyre

Claire Hamilton

JIM EYRE (JE): Well, let me just talk a little bit about our experience of that particular procurement. I'm in a way less interested in what people have said about it afterwards in the press and so on, that's -- it's more to do with the process itself.

DAME MARGARET HODGE (MH): Yes.

JE: And I think there were --

MH: Which is what I'm interested in.

JE: There were a couple of things that were unusual about it. One, that it was -- appeared to be done in a terrific hurry.

MH: You were given two weeks.

JE: -- with no obvious reason why. So I have the timeline here. We had an early warning. We had a draft copy of the document on 8 February 2013 and then we got the invitation to tender on 13 February, which I assume the others did too, and returned it on --

MH: 25th.

JE: -- the 22nd.

MH: 22nd?

JE: Returned on the 22nd.

MH: I thought it was the 25th. Where's my timeline?

JE: I have a copy here. Well, that's interesting, but --

MH: I've got the 25th.

JE: -- I wonder whether it was a weekend, a Friday maybe. But mine is dated.

MH: We can ... is it -- have you got it?

JE: Mine's dated the 22nd.

CLAIRE HAMILTON (CH): I've got the deadline as the 25th.

JE: Well, it may have been a certain time, so probably it straddled a weekend.

MH: Let's check that, because we can check that quickly.

So you were given -- and what were you told on -- because, interestingly enough, I'm just writing up this bit in --

JE: Have you seen any of this? Have you seen the invitation to tender?

MH: I have seen -- I have seen it says a pedestrian bridge.

JE: Yes, it says very little, which is the other thing that's unusual about it.

MH: I'll tell you what I've got, what I'm working from. I'm literally working on this bit at the moment, so if you bear with me just for one second.

CH: Just going back to the dates, 22 Feb was a Friday.

MH: 22 February was a Friday. The 25th was a Monday, so it might have been --

JE: Yes, so that must be why. We must have signed it on a Friday and maybe I wasn't in on Monday or something like that.

MH: Yes, yes. So I have seen ... I'll just put that there ... that.

JE: Yes, it's -- oh right, it's the same thing, yes.

MH: Which was all -- I was going to ask whether that's all you had.

JE: Yes, it is effectively all we had.

MH: That was the --

JE: In fact, there's only a couple of paragraphs that give you any clue as to what this really is. I think that's important too, -- it's important in that it doesn't tell you any more. Nobody asks for a design that isn't high quality.

MH: Okay.

So you had no idea they were looking for somebody iconic?

JE: Well, let's be a bit more clear than that, I think, because I think --

MH: But nobody -- do you mind if I put, "For something that isn't of high quality"? I think that's perfectly sensible.

JE: So there's nothing unusual in that statement, but what is unusual about the process, that if a design existed already, if -- I say "if", I think it did, , I assume it did -- but I didn't -- obviously I had no idea at the time. What is usual is that the client --

MH: Admits to it.

JE: -- shows that design and you use something called a reference design. And this is quite common, we come across it all the time and on a lot of public procurement.

, under the EU rules, there's nothing unusual about that, that a client will get a certain amount of work done within the constraints of the procurement rules and that will involve a feasibility study with some design. They need it to understand the nature of the project they're trying to put forward.

And then as architects and bidders, you look at that and you decide, "How real is this? Are they the incumbent? Will they be kept or can we do something better? Is there a chance that we can do something better and is this just a quick feasibility study and they clearly want something to go further?" So that was missing from this particular procurement, which apart from the fact that it was done in a hurry and you couldn't tell why it was in a hurry, made one think, "Look, this is just a feasibility study. Look at bridges in two or three areas and try and work out what's the optimum place". There was nothing to suggest that it was a visitor attraction in its own right.

MH: Nothing.

JE: Well, there's nothing.

MH: Did you talk to Richard de Cani?

JE: Well, we had an email from him on the 8th.

MH: He didn't ring you on the 8th?

JE: Well, he didn't speak to me on the 8th. He may have spoke -- we got an email from him. but everything suggested that it was a quick feasibility study. There's no reason why you would -- there wasn't enough to go on to suggest that it was anything more elaborate.

MH: Yes, yes. And no conversations with him during this process? No conversations at all?

JE: Well, I can't be 100 per cent sure of that, but I know there was no conversation -- there was certainly no conversation that suggested it was anything more than what it said on paper.

MH: Okay.

So that process of giving you a reference design, what you call a reference design, is common?

JE: It's quite normal, quite common.

MH: And failure to do so, does that contravene public procurement rules, as you understand them?

JE: No. No, it doesn't, because everything suggested it was a simply a feasibility study and no design exists.

MH: But when you knew what actually they were after, the fact they didn't show it to you, does that contravene the procurement rules? Were you therefore unfairly -- was it an unfair --

JE: No, I don't think I could say -- I can't say that. I literally can't say that, because I don't know that. All I can say is that I felt that we were at a disadvantage, that we knew less about the intentions than perhaps another bidder.

MH: Yes, yes, okay.

JE: But if I had known, one might have made a commercial decision, so --

MH: Not to go --

JE: Well, "Let's not bid" or, "Let's bid high" or, "Let's bid low".

The saving grace of the whole thing was we didn't -- we weren't asked to do a design as part of the tender, so there was nothing. It didn't really cost us anything.

MH: It didn't cost you a lot, no. You just put in --

JE: Very, very little. There's a week --

MH: You a process in, didn't you?

JE: We put a process in, yes. It probably cost a couple of thousand pounds' worth of time. Some bids cost £250,000, so it wasn't like we had --

MH: Lost a lot of money.

JE: I think if we'd been asked to do a design for the tender, I would have been furious.

MH: Yes, yes.

JE: But we weren't.

MH: But you wouldn't have done a design -- you wouldn't have done a design in ten days, would you?

JE: Not in ten days, no, which is another reason, in a sense, to suggest that it was a feasibility study. On our team, we suggested that we should include an engineer, which I think everybody else did. Because the reason being that it wasn't necessarily a fixed location and that having bid years ago for the competition for the Hungerford Bridge, which ran into all sorts of problems with what was below the waterline, there were Tube lines and bombs and God knows what and they had footings in the water and we did a design that was clear span. You need to know what's below the ground before you start saying, "We'll put a bridge here". There might be a Tube line underneath, for instance. So there was a good reason to put in an engineer, even though I think they may have said it wasn't required. I can't remember now.

MH: I think you both put an engineer in.

JE: So the only other thing I wanted to say, that if we had known -- I suppose if we'd known there was anything horticultural about it -- we'd already designed a garden bridge.

MH: What did you design?

JE: We did one for Newcastle University.

MH: What? Where?

JE: It wasn't built.

MH: Oh, right. Oh, my God.

JE: And it was to link the --

MH: Can you leave that report with me?

JE: Yes, certainly. And you can have this as well. This is just the book. Some of the things that grate slightly is that the scoring on relevant design experience and so on is that we'd done, probably -- We did dozens of bridges.

MH: Yes, yes.

JE: These are just the ones up to 2003 or something like that, but we'd done a design for a garden bridge.

MH: Is that it? So it will be enclosed?

JE: Yes. Well, we called it a botanic bridge, so it was an enclosed -- to go over the motorway. I don't know if you -- do you know Newcastle?

MH: Yes, I do.

JE: Well, the university, there's a dual carriageway cutting that separates the university from the town, which is this vast expanse of --

MH: So that would have been like Kew Garden is like then, with all sorts of exotic tropical things?

JE: Yes, and we had done a lot of work at Kew Gardens.

We've also -- I don't know whether you -- do you know Singapore, the Gardens by the Bay in Singapore? So we've done an awful lot of horticultural-related work, so of course it --

MH: What's it called, Singapore Garden --

JE: Gardens by the Bay, which is -- in its first couple of years, three years, I think it had 20 million visitors.

MH: You built that, did you?

JE: Yes, we designed it. I don't think it was complete by that point in time, but I think we had a lot of very relevant experience.

MH: What is a bit odd, just tell me the process, because were it me - and I'm not an architect and I haven't participated in these things -- I would ring up and try and find out a little bit more in detail about the nature of the --

JE: Well, somebody probably did. I just can't say that -- it wasn't me, anyway.

MH: Yes, yes.

JE: Even if they had rung up, it would have got back to me if there was any more information that was useful and it didn't.

MH: Yes, yes, okay, okay. Right, anything else about that first process?

Everybody was talking about bridges over the Thames, everybody is always talking about bridges over the Thames. Had you no idea whatsoever that this was Joanna Lumley and Thomas Heatherwick?

JE: No. No, none. None at all.

MH: -- that Joanna Lumley and Thomas Heatherwick were going around punting this all over the place?

JE: No, none at all.

And if I had, then I would have taken a different view. We might have said, "Yes, okay, we'll put a bid in" or --

MH: "Let him have it".

JE: Because the whole thing raises a very interesting question, I think, leaving aside the public money and the private money and so on. If you come to a public body with a really interesting idea -- how do you take it forward?

MH: Yes, I agree with that, and London needs to have these grande -- the rather sad thing at the moment is we've got the Garden Bridge and the Concert Hall --

JE: -- it is a great idea, I think.

MH: It is. You'd go there; we'd all go there.

JE: Well, as an architect, of course I would --

MH: Yes, but I would go there as an individual.

JE: But as a piece of public money, I suppose there are all sorts of other questions --

MH: And timing and all that, yes, yes.

Now, you knew there were three people in for the competition, did you?

JE: I think we knew it was a very limited tender, so we might have known it was three. Maybe, yes.

MH: Right. And then did you ever ask for the scoring? Did you ask to see the scoring?

JE: We got our scoring back and only later did we deduce --

MH: Who sent you this?

JE: Oh, that would have been TfL, somebody from TfL. I don't think it was an email. It might have been, but it might have been an attachment to an email. I can probably find out who sent it. And I think we deduced this from Will Hurst or something.

MH: Can I take this now or not?

JE: Can you copy it?

MH: Can we copy this? Matt, do you mind? Sorry.

CH: Would you normally get your scoring back? Is that quite standard?

JE: Yes, yes, normally you would ask for -- well, just as part of feedback. If you don't win a tender, you often try and find out why you didn't win. And if there's evaluation criteria, which there were, in the ITT, which presumably -- I'm sure you've seen those.

MH: Go on, what are the evaluation --

JE: Have you seen those?

MH: I bet I have, but let me have that.

JE: -- because they're very simple. They're terribly simple, "Relevant design experience, relevant experience". Well, that's an interesting distinction.

MH: What does that mean?

JE: I don't know, because --

MH: Understanding the brief.

JE: Well, the brief is so short, it's not difficult to understand, so how could we have had a greater understanding of the brief than -- that we're able to go on?

MH: Well, you had a lesser one. You were scored lower on that, weren't you? You were scored lower.

JE: Yes, I think we probably were.

MH: And I've got the scoring somewhere. I am so full of papers.

JE: I don't think I've shown you anything that's not in the public domain, have I?

MH: No, I don't think any --

CH: Yes, the scores have been released through FOIs.

JE: Well, that was the one, yes. That was the distinction, if this is correct, that relevant design experience, they got a four out of five and we got a three out of five, but --

MH: Yes, let me just get it. Hang on. Oh, here we are, this is it, this is it.

JE: -- this is relevant to an existing design. I can understand why.

MH: This is it, this is it. Okay. Heatherwick got four.

JE: Yes, and 3.5. That's interesting, so we actually got 3.5 on that. I think they're right on that one.

It's quite interesting. You see, I don't really understand this, because when you look at it, when you look at the information that was available, how could David and Julia understood less than we understood necessarily? Albeit that we have done so many bridges that we know what to look for if you were doing a feasibility study.

MH: I don't understand. We never really bottomed that out, what's the difference between relevant experience and relevant design expertise. One is experience, the other is expertise.

JE: That's the difference, I think.

MH: So expertise Heatherwick got four, experience you got higher. Well, yes, you did, you both got higher. So you've built bridges, you get a bit higher. Expertise Heatherwick is better than you. That's the implication.

JE: Well, but it does say "relevant", but relevant to what, relevant to feasibility study or relevant to a known quantity?

CH: Do you remember if there was a discussion with RIBA about that, where they were saying one of the reasons you sometimes go for expertise rather than experience is to avoid blocking out some of the smaller or newer designers, for example? You might want to include expertise where they've done different projects but that are relevant, because not everyone's going to instantly be able to build a bridge, for example.

JE: Yes, but as I say, you've got to relate it back to the brief. Which is the only thing we have to go on as to what could possibly be relevant, so we would be guessing as to what's relevant.

CH: Yes, and I think she was just explaining the difference between the two categories potentially, because to a layman, they sound quite similar.

JE: They do, yes. But you can imagine, if there had been a reference design, then those criteria would make perfect sense, wouldn't they?

MH: And the thing that intrigues me is this day rates and overall cost. I've now read all the -- gone back over the papers. Is it usual for you to be asked for both day rates and overall cost?

JE: Yes.

MH: That is usual. And did you know you were being assessed on day rates?

JE: Well, let's just have a look, because it's a really good point and to actually check this in a bit more detail. It does say, "Commercial 25 per cent, based on day rate". So yes, we did. The answer is yes, definitely, but what I'm not clear on, and I could do with just checking, is why did we put in a lump sum or appear to put in a lump sum?

MH: Yes, quite.

JE: Yes. No, there we are. That's why, I think --

MH: Why? Go on.

JE: What's slightly odd ... "As detailed in the price information schedule 4" so that is slightly different from that. So that's appendix 1. The bit -- you see this bit here? It says pounds in words.

MH: "As detailed in the pricing schedule on 4 --" Why don't we just have a look at that? Appendix -- schedule 4. Schedule 3 ... schedule 4 didn't -- "Please provide consultant's daily rates." Okay. So actually you were asked for both.

JE: Oh, let me just have a look.

MH: On schedule 4, it says, "Consultant's day rates". Here it says the total cost. If you look here, "Consultant's daily rates".

JE: Yes, which we -- in this document was what we actually submitted and it refers to schedule 4 day rates and form of tender separate, but unfortunately I haven't --

MH: I think you were asked for both. I think you were asked for both, because that would be the total sum and that's the day rates.

Well, the total cost of Heatherwick's was far higher than yours and then they rang them up on the day rates - did you know that? - to get them to, what they say, clarify.

JE: I've seen the email train, yes.

MH: Have you seen the email? It talks about clarification, does it?

JE: The FOI email train, which I'm sure that you've got --

MH: Yes, there is an email, wasn't there? I've got that. I'm not going to -- which one is this? Show me that, show me that, just in case I haven't seen it, but I think I have.

JE: That's that one. There's a whole sequence. I think in one of them it mentions day rates, I think.

MH: Yes. Yes, this is the email trail where Richard basically says, "We're going with Heatherwick anyway".

Now, let me go back to the question I was going to ask, which is they were rung up. They obviously thought it was going to take them longer to do this feasibility study, which they'd already done. If they had been rung up to ask for so-called clarification, would that contravene, in your view, public procurement rules?

JE: I'm a little hazy on this, but ... I think it's quite normal -- you quite often get clarifications that are relevant to individual tenderers, so -- and they're commercially sensitive, so they can't send them out to everybody.

MH: I think it was just reducing the day rates, that's probably --

JE: Well, they may well have done. I have no idea, so --

MH: But he could have done that? He could have done that?

JE: I don't know whether you're allowed to do that, are you, reduce the day rates once you've made a tender? Can you do that?

CH: I think that's -- because it came up again on the Arup point and I think the criticism there was that you're able to do it, but everyone should have the opportunity, so everyone should be asked the same question of -- I think they've used their best and final offers. Is that right terminology?

MH: Yes, that's it.

JE: In some tenders, it is so clear that you can't do that.

As a consultant, generally speaking you try and do what they're asking you to do, so if you get a question, you answer it, but some local authorities, for instance, will make sure that everything goes to everyone and, , they're very, very meticulous.

MH: Yes, but again, that would be a potential for challenge. It seems to me that you weren't given the same brief as they had, you were assessed.

Question: why was your undoubted much superior knowledge, and I assume expertise, actually, not only your experience, but I think expertise. Presumably you've got guys working - and women - for you who spend their lives designing bridges?

JE: Yes, we have, we have a bridge team.

MH: You have a bridge team?

JE: And I think Heatherwick had only done one at that point in time. It was a very nice bridge, but --

MH: Which bridge are you doing?

JE: No. What, at the moment?

MH: Yes.

JE: We're doing one in Copenhagen across the inner harbour, which is quite interesting, and we're doing one in Cork across their harbour. But we've done lots, we've done lots.

MH: Do you know Richard de Cani?

JE: I have met him, yes. He works for Arups now, doesn't he?

MH: I know.

JE: Yes --

But we did the cable car.

MH: Yes, so you actually beat Heatherwick on the cable car.

JE: I don't know. Did we?

MH: You did.

JE: I didn't know he was involved, yes.

MH: You did, just to put a bit of fairness on to it.

JE: We would have liked to have won the Nine Elms one, but we didn't, unfortunately. That was another competition.

MH: But that's never happened.

CH: I think some people are still quite keen on that.

JE: Yes, we were quite keen on that, because we're the architects for Battersea Power Station.

MH: Oh, right. Are you doing that?

JE: Yes, yes.

MH: My God, all been bought by the Chinese.

JE: We're doing the power station, so it is an amazing project, actually.

MH: Yes, yes, yes. It's a lovely project, it's a lovely project.

JE: So I think -- sorry, you asked me the question and I'm not sure I actually answered it, but I think the important thing to do is always go back to the brief, as to what we were being asked to do. When you look at the criteria, it should always be in relation to what we were asked and the rates we submitted and the experience and expertise that we were able to demonstrate in relation to what we were asked, so what could we have known.

MH: You weren't bringing in Arup, were you, as the engineer?

JE: No, we were bringing in an outfit called Flint & Neill that we do a lot of things with. Particularly on bridges, they really are bridge engineers.

CH: Is that Flint & Neill?

JE: Flint & Neill, yes, as they were then called. They're now part of that Danish outfit.

MH: What's so interesting is that this was around, it wasn't that they were particularly secretive about it?

JE: Well, were they though, because it was all highly super-confidential, "Do not talk --". One of the other reasons for being silent is that there's a very ... I don't know whether I've got the contract here somewhere, but they're pretty strict confidentiality clauses in there.

MH: Oh, really? Blimey. You can't show that to me, can you? I wonder why that was. Is that standard?

JE: It's not unusual. It's not unusual to have confidentiality clauses ... so that's the confidentiality clause, but it's a standard clause, in a way. There's nothing particularly unusual about that.

Oh, hang on, I'll just show you that as well. You asked me, "Who sent you that"? That's the second page of the thing you just copied.

MH: Oh, right.

JE: That's that one. Sorry, I'm a bit disorganised.

MH: Who is that?

CH: I've not heard of them. I imagine if they're a procurement officer, it will be the commercial team, I expect.

JE: Here we go, confidentiality. So that's the confidentiality clauses in the ITT, so there and that.

MH: Right. Okay.

JE: Interestingly, because some of the questions you asked, why didn't we call them or, "You should have spoken to them". If it had been a more drawn-out process, which is more normal --

MH: Yes, you might have then, yes.

JE: Quite often you would get -- non-public projects particularly, they'll have almost like an open day where you go along and sometimes all the contestants go together and you get a briefing about the project and you get to know it, what it's all really about. That tends to be more when there's a design competition involved.

MH: Yes. Some of the advice that they got internally was that they should have an - I always pronounce it wrongly -- OJEU open design competition. Would you, on the whole, if you knew what they had in mind, have thought that that would be the appropriate way forward? What would -- the normal way, let me put it, what's the normal way forward?

Or - and this is the other thing that I'm slightly thinking in my head, it wasn't a lot of money at 60K -- The OJEU threshold is 150, 160K, but it was well below, so why bother to have a competition at all? If you've got Thomas Heatherwick with a good idea, why don't you give him a bit of money to do a design?

JE: I don't know why they couldn't do that. It may be -- there may be within their own -- you get OJEU rules and then you get --

MH: Their own TfL rules.

JE: -- their own TfL rules. I don't know.

MH: But you must have done work like that on spec. Have you done any, where just basically they like you so they bring you in?

JE: Yes, but the normal way for that to happen is a framework. You have framework contractors and so on, so that you --

MH: Are you on the framework with TfL? You must be.

JE: Yes.

MH: For bridges or for engineering?

JE: Well, just a general TfL framework. I can't remember exactly which bits we're on.

MH: Yes, but you're on a framework. Yes.

JE: That's quite normal, and then they can -- you can call off people, and a lot of local authorities and public bodies do that, which is fine.

MH: To get through, yes, to speed the whole process up.

JE: Yes.

MH: So you wouldn't have been shocked if Thomas Heatherwick had simply got a -- I'm not even sure they need it at that level. What I can't work out is why they just didn't give him --

JE: I don't know either. I don't know. I don't think anyone would have --

MH: You wouldn't have been furious?

JE: No, but you'd have thought, "Mm".

It wouldn't have had to have been us that said, "Hang on a minute, this is going to be public money. Surely there should be some competition". But it goes back to that thing about if you go to a public body with an amazing idea and you own that idea, how do you take it forward? You don't want to give it away to everyone else, so I can see the dilemma.

MH: Yes, yes.

CH: And do you have any thoughts on how that process would work or any experience in having something similar, where there's been an innovative idea and trying to progress it?

JE: Well, normally, you see, not quite the same way, because they tend to come out of competitions, you see, that's how you get people to come up with the ideas usually. That's how it works, but as I say, the reference design thing is a perfectly good way of doing it.

MH: Who would have owned the IP then if it had been a reference design? He would have done?

JE: Well, I guess so, yes. He could have still owned it, but the reference design I've been involved in other competitions. Well, there was in Hong Kong, Stonecutters Bridge, with Arup, actually, which we set up with Arup. And there was a reference design, funnily enough done by Flint & Neill, who I mentioned earlier, who'd won the design competition originally and then there was a tender to actually take the whole project forward using that as a reference design and then competitors were allowed to come up alternatives for the same basic crossing and so on.

MH: Oh, right.

JE: But in that instance actually the Hong Kong client just went with -- they stuck with the design, which Arup then delivered. So there are ways of dealing with it.

MH: I think to understand what they were about is they wanted to deliver this. It was a bit of a whacky idea and there was public money involved and they wanted to deliver in the second term, so they cut corners.

JE: So how did it get past the second stage?

MH: Which second stage?

JE: Well, the initial -- this process was just for a feasibility study.

MH: It never had a second stage. What do you mean, a business plan?

JE: Well, how did the design -- what I don't understand is how -- normally in a situation like this, let's just say it was a feasibility study. You tender for a feasibility study and then when the feasibility study is done, the next stage in the design - because there's

lots and lots of stages of design - it's then retendered once you've demonstrated that there is a project.

MH: So normally you would have a feasibility study followed by a tender for detailed design?

JE: Well, I don't know what the fees are for that bridge, but for a very big complex project as, say, £200 million, the design fees could be £20 million or something and this was only a tiny amount of money. So when the real meat of the design was to be done, it wouldn't be unusual for that work to be tendered.

MH: Well, it was, I suppose, to be fair.

JE: Well, I don't know. I'm not saying it wasn't, I'm just saying I never heard about it.

MH: Yes. That's the Bouygues tender, isn't it?

CH: No, because that's the construction. That's different to the next stage of design, but that might be the point about Arup took some of that further work on, and that's when they then got a contract with Heatherwick.

JE: So they did it through Arup?

CH: So the second procurement was Arup.

JE: I'm not saying it was wrong.

MH: Was it called the second --

CH: They have very similar titles, like one of them is "design brief" and one of them is "design expertise" or something.

MH: Services.

CH: They're really similar, but one of them was the small one at the start, which Heatherwick Studios won, and then Arup did the second procurement, when they were -- that was off the framework, I think, when there were about ten competitors.

JE: Right, which is why we wouldn't have heard about it, probably.

CH: Yes, possibly.

JE: Because that's -- the only reason I mention it, because I'd never heard -- I didn't hear what happened.

MH: Yes, they used Heatherwick as the design -- so Heatherwick has made quite a nice sum of money out of it. Is that normal? It feels to me very -- it's public money. That's my problem with this is it's public money, and you will know from the work I've done, things have got to be transparent, open and fair and it wasn't very.

JE: Well, I don't know. I've seen a quote saying it was unfortunate. It wasn't ideal, was it? It's clear it wasn't ideal, otherwise there wouldn't be a big hoo-ha.

JE: We love the French system which is almost entirely competition, paid competition-driven.

MH: You're paid to compete?

JE: With proper money, yes, so in France you can actually make a living doing public procurement competitions.

MH: Blimey.

JE: I don't know how they make it work, but what it does, which is quite interesting, is that it brings out new talent. And I'm not saying necessarily that should happen here, but it's a very interesting contrast.

MH: Yes, it is.

JE: A completely different approach. You've still got to prequalify, you've still got to get from however many to six typically on a list, but when you're paid to do the competition, at least --

MH: And they decide, they give you a lump sum?

JE: Yes, yes. And that could be -- , it could be €100,000, €200,000. Depending on what they were asking for.

MH: So that means they've got to be quite an intelligent client to be able to assess that?

JE: Yes. And we do bridges in France, incidentally.

Otherwise, generally I'm a big supporter of the public procurement process. In principle, I'm a big supporter, because in the old days, how the hell did anyone get a job? It was who you knew. It wasn't how good you were.

MH: Right, right. For a project like this, it is a big project, £200 million, would you expect more than three or not at this stage?

JE: Not for a feasibility study. Not for what was being asked. There's no reason, because remember, it was only a six-week study, which is nothing. That's quite important, actually, that it was only a six-week study.

MH: Did it say that?

JE: I'd need to find it, but I think there must be something.

MH: I don't remember that at all.

JE: There must something in here.

MH: I hadn't heard that six weeks before. Have we?

CH: I don't think so. I was wondering if that relates to when Arup took it on, but that's further -- that's longer than six weeks. They were appointed in July.

JE: No, can't remember quite where that came from. I'm just wondering whether it was in the -- there was somewhere where we would have -- well, it may have been us that gave it as a six-week study.

MH: Yes, because you -- that feasibility study, you -- yes.

JE: It might have been. It might have come from us.

MH: If that would be your total quantum.

JE: I think we did it as a six-week study. I'm not sure that -- because we would have assumed that was about the right amount of time for the feasibility study.

MH: Have I given you the opportunity to say everything you wanted to say?

JE: I think so, yes. I think so.

MH: Well, that was very, very helpful.