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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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Event: Interview

Date: 9 March 2017

Present: Dame Margaret Hodge MP

Julia Barfield

David Marks

Claire Hamilton

DAME MARGARET HODGE: Over to you. The focus for you is the design services contract that Heatherwick got, and your perception of the process, really, and how you felt about it.

JULIA BARFIELD: Yes.

DAVID MARKS: Shall I start? I have prepared a note --

MH: Brilliant.

JULIA BARFIELD: Which we can leave with you.

MH: That's incredibly helpful. That will make my life much easier.

DAVID MARKS: Apologies. There are some typos.

MH: That's all right. That's fine. Okay.

DAVID MARKS: Basically, I have set it out in two parts. One is the background, and then a commentary, views. People are obviously going to ask why haven't we said anything before. There are a couple of reasons. First of all, TfL is a very important client for us and you don't go criticising around criticising your clients in public. Secondly, we were signed up to confidentiality clauses. But over the course of time, since we entered the competition, a lot of information has emerged which, I think uncontrovertibly, shows that the competition was not really -- it didn't follow due process.

MH: It was a sham. I tried to seek what words to use.

DM: So-called competition, pseudo competition; it didn't follow due process.

I was originally contacted personally by telephone and it can only have been Richard De Cani, although I didn't write his name down at the time, because he subsequently followed up by email, in early February 2013, requesting that we participate in a competition for a new footbridge in central London. We said that we don't normally enter a competition like this without an engineer and what were their plans for an engineer.

MH: So you actually said that?

JB: Yes.

DM: Yes.

MH: That's the first thing.

DM: It was the first thing. Because we don't --

JB: Architects don't design bridges without engineers.

DM: We've done a lot of work on the Thames; it's not just the London Eye, but we have built a couple of piers, done studies for several other piers.

JB: And bridges.

DM: We did a very detailed feasibility study --

MH: Have you put all that down?

DM: No.

JB: No, we haven't actually put that down.

DM: -- detailed feasibility study for the Thames Gateway bridge, if you remember that, downstream, and more recently, the Nine Elms to Pimlico bridge; we did a very detailed feasibility study; again, all of these projects working with engineers. So we have very good relationship with the Port of London Authority, with the harbourmasters, with the riverine authorities, the Environment Agency. We have been up and down the river and done quite a lot of work on it.

The detailed work that we had done on Nine Elms/Pimlico, when it came to this particular tender, a lot of the work that we had done for Nine Elms was the same.

MH: So who commissioned you to do the Nine Elms/Pimlico?

DM: TfL.

MH: Who? Another bit?

DM: Another bit of it.

MH: Richard De Cani?

DM: No, nothing to do with Richard De Cani.

MH: And was that a design competition?

DM: No. It was a feasibility study. It was very different because we were working with BuroHappold --

MH: Who?

DM: BuroHappold.

JB: BuroHappold; they are a big engineering company.

DM: B-U-R-O Happold.

MH: H-A-P-O-L-D?

DM: Yes, double P; yes.

MH: Double P-O-L-D. Go on. Sorry. You were working on that.

DM: So, we were working on that and -- now, what was I going to say about it?

JB: So we had a lot of knowledge of the -- yes, so what they asked for in the tender was virtually the same as what we were doing - happened to be doing - at the time for this other bridge, which -- yes, quarter of the cost, but anyway, that's another thing.

MH: Okay.

DM: Yes, so we had done this work with BuroHappold, quite a lot of the detailed work. So yes, the question was, was it a competition. It was a detailed feasibility study but we entered that contract with TfL and BuroHappold, a detailed feasibility study, but we entered that contract with TfL and BuroHappold in the knowledge that there would be a design competition at the end --

MH: Ah, this is for the Nine Elms?

DM: -- and all of our work would be available to the competitors. So we went into it with our eyes open and that happens quite frequently; we do an initial piece of work and you know that it is all going to be handed over for a design competition at a later stage and there is nothing wrong with that at all, providing you know that is going to happen at the beginning. I think what this particular process showed is that there isn't really an accepted method for someone to come forward with an idea, with an original idea, and hang on to their project, as it were, as they take it forward.

MH: The IP; yes.

DM: The IP, exactly. And had we known that Heatherwick had been involved in this project -

MH: You just didn't know?

JB: No. We wouldn't have stood on his toes, you know. We wouldn't have wasted our time.

DM: If we knew about the Garden Bridge concept and we knew that Heatherwick was involved - there is honour among thieves and we would have said, "We are out; we are not going to compete with Heatherwick".

JB: Yes; let him get on with it.

DM: So, anyway, the second thing was the timescale because it was an incredibly short timescale and, frankly, we weren't that interested but this person - I think it was Richard De Cani - was quite persistent on the phone that we should make a submission.
So, key facts about the tender: it was issued on Wednesday, 13 February --

MH: Did you do work - this phone call you had in February - did you start work then?

DM: No. We waited for the tender.

MH: You waited for the tender.

JB: Yes.

MH: So that was really just a phone call saying would you be interested; would you come.

JB: Yes.

DM: Yes.

MH: Okay. So you waited for the tender.

JB: But it was a phone call that was more than just a phone call, "Would you be interested?"
We are kind of saying, "Not really ..."

DM: "We really need you to".

JB: Yes. But they said --

MH: We really need you to.

JB: Yes. No, they were really -- we were reluctant participants.

DM: It just seemed very odd.

JB: The whole thing smelt wrong from the beginning.

DM: Very short timescale.

JB: So it was the shortness of the period ... all very last minute.

DM: We had eight working days to return the tender.

JB: And that is unusual.

MH: They have said it's not. They've said that that happens quite a lot and you just work weekends and nights and things. Is that true?

JB: Well, it seems quite a short time but there may be other ...

DM: The EU regulations are ten working days.

MH: EU regulations are ten working days?

DM: Yes.

MH: So this didn't meet the EU regulations?

DM: No.

JB: In many respects, I would say, quite a few.

CLAIRE HAMILTON: Is there a specific bit of regulation?

DM: It's their procurement directives.

MH: I presume that you have seen this report by Project Compass. I presume you have seen that.

JB: Yes.

DM: So the tender invitation was to submit a proposal for the provision of design services to TfL, so it wasn't actually a design competition at this point; it was just a tender, which needed to include a method statement of how you would perform the services over the six-week period that the contract would cover: CVs; completed pricing information' completed form of tender. So there was nothing in here about design. The evaluation was 75 per cent technical, rather than design experience --

MH: Is that normal?

DM: Yes, that's not unusual.

MH: What is the difference between relevant design experience and relevant ...? I think it is expertise. One is experience. I think the other one is expertise. Is that usual?

JB: This is the actual evaluation.

DM: It is a little unusual. We didn't quite know what the difference was, relevant experience ...

MH: I think one is expertise.

JB: Yes, design experience and relevant experience.

MH: Both are experience, are they?

JB: Yes.

DM: Relevant design expertise.

MH: Relevant design expertise; I thought it was.

DM: It is. You are correct.

JB: Okay, so this is wrong, then.

DM: And then, understanding of the brief.

JB: One is expertise. So it is relevant design expertise. And relevant experience; okay

MH: And is that usual?

DM: I wouldn't say it is unusual.

JB: Yeah, no.

MH: So one is really technical expertise; the other is have you done it before?

DM: Yes.

MH: So one is qualifications; the other is prior knowledge.

DM: Actual experience.

MH: Okay. Is the fact that it was limited to six weeks -- what was your contract on the Vauxhall ...

DM: Well, it was a number -- I think we probably took about a year over the whole thing, but it was in stages.

MH: And were you employed on that because you are on Framework contract?

JB: Yes, we were on a TfL Framework --

MH: You were on a TfL Framework --

JB: Well, we were, yes.

MH: So have you been knocked off, then?

JB: No, no; well ... We have now reapplied. You know, you just have to reapply. So we have only just reapplied, so yes.

CH: So that Nine Elms bridge was done through a Framework contract and that is how you ...

JB: Was it through BuroHappold?

DM: We were sub-contracted to BuroHappold.

MH: So BuroHappold were the people who were contracted?

DM: Yes. I mean for bridges it is normal to employ the engineer and then the architect is sub-contracted.

MH: Oh, really?

DM: Yes.

JB: Yes.

DM: Yes, it is quite unusual for an architect to lead a bridge project.

MH: And you had never heard -- I mean, Heatherwick wasn't particularly -- and Joanna Lumley -- aren't particularly secretive about promoting this, but you hadn't heard about it?

DM: No, we didn't --

JB: No, at that time we hadn't heard at all, no, absolutely not. We knew nothing about their involvement, or about the --

DM: The Garden Bridge idea, or anything.

MH: You really didn't --

JB: I don't think it had -- had it had much publicity?

MH: Well, she claims she'd been touting it around for some time.

JB: Oh, she had been touting the idea around for a long time, but it wasn't ... She claims that she had it --

MH: Originally, she wanted it at Vauxhall so in your Vauxhall --

JB: Yes, so she had the idea, yes, years ago. I think we knew about the idea but we had no idea that she was involved and that this was -- you know, because she had it at other places, didn't she?

MH: Yes.

JB: Yes.

MH: She tried it on the Princess Di; that's when she said --

JB: Yes, that's right.

MH: She said on whatever --

JB: Yes, but we had no idea that --

MH: But she never talked to you -- you were working on Vauxhall and she hadn't come to see you on Vauxhall to persuade you to do that and turn that into a garden bridge?

DM: Not at all.

JB: No.

DM: No. I mean, we saw her at the opening of the London Eye and we haven't seen her since.

JB: Yes, she made lovely speech.

MH: That, of course, was controversial - that's the interesting thing - with the local community. I might talk to you a bit about that, but can we come back to --

JB: Yes.

DM: Okay, so the submission, the tender submission, limited to six pages and the duration of the contract was for six weeks.

MH: And you thought that was all odd?

DM: We thought that was pretty odd.

JB: Yes; a major project and such a short time to be ...

CH: I think from the six weeks thing -- I think someone else has mentioned that to us -- but we weren't sure if that was actually specified in the tender document, the length of six weeks. We couldn't find it.

MH: Couldn't find it, yes

CH: But someone else has said the same thing, six weeks, and we were not quite sure where it came from.

DM: I am sure I can find it.

CH: If you could do that, it would be really helpful, because we couldn't find it last time.

JB: It might have been in the covering letter, you know.

CH: That's true.

JB: I think it was in Richard De Cani's covering letter.

MH: Do we have the covering letter?

CH: We might have that, under ...

MH: You will have that under the FOI. There we are. Oh, is that why you didn't win it?

JB: No, this is -- yes -- oh, this is ...

MH: Yes, 8 March; this is why you didn't win it. (Several inaudible words), yes, we've seen one of those. There it says "experience".

DM: I can't find it either, at the moment.

MH: I bet it was in the covering letter. Can you check that, please, and then put that into that little bit? Yes? That would be brilliant.

So, this must have been -- pissed you off? Or did you not really care? Okay, well let's go through it. I'm jumping you.

JB: Yes, it's probably useful just to tell the story first.

DM: We will look for it a little bit more carefully afterwards.

So, there was a specification for the initial study.

MH: May I take this?

DM: Yes, of course.

The specification was remarkably thin, literally one page of A4.

MH: Yes, I have seen that. Yes.

JB: That was a bit odd, too.

DM: Then it was subsequently confirmed in TfL's letter of 8 March that we were unsuccessful--

JB: That one, yes, that we have just given you.

MH: Did they ring you to check your pricing at all?

DM: No.

MH: Can you explain to me why you put in both -- it says it is going to be assessed on day rates but you put in a total sum as well. Why do you do that?

DM: Because we thought it was competitive, we were prepared to do it for the lump sum, and we knew that they would ask us to do it for a lump sum at some point anyway.

MH: Because on the lump sum -- but you knew it would be assessed on day rates?

DM: Yes.

MH: Okay. Is that normal, that you are asked to put in day rates but you ...?

DM: It's normal to be assessed on a lump sum.

JB: Yes, there we go; contract awarded for six weeks, there, clear.

MH: Oh, right.

CH: Thank you.

MH: Brilliant.

DM: Well done.

MH: Brilliant.

DM: Eagle eyes.

JB: Well ...

DM: Eagle eyes. Well done.

MH: Okay. Thank you. Because you were one of the lowest on the lump sums, weren't you?

JB: We were the lowest; we were definitely the lowest.

DM: Well, we had done something very, very similar, very recently, so, you know, we thought we could just walk through it.

MH: You mean the Vauxhall thing?

DM: Yes.

JB: Yes. So we had it all there and we knew the South Bank very well; we had done things in the river.

MH: It is actually quite extraordinary - you've done the London Eye and you were doing the Vauxhall ...

JB: And we'd done two piers in the river.

MH: Which piers have you done?

JB: The Millbank Pier and the Millennium Pier at the London Eye. So we just had -- and we knew, you know, the PLA, you know ... So, we were just -- it wasn't difficult for us.

DM: But at the time, you know, it wasn't a great loss because it was a six-week study --

MH: And you didn't put a lot of time into --

JB: No, we didn't. I mean, it was not --

MH: It wasn't --

CH: You didn't have a lot of time.

JB: Yes, we didn't have a lot of time but --

MH: So you didn't put a lot of effort into it?

JB: No.

DM: Well, we put the right amount of effort into it.

MH: Would you have spent a lot of money yourselves? I've seen that ...

JB: Yes, so that's what -- so, it wasn't a huge amount of money, no.

DM: No, we wouldn't have spent a lot of money.

MH: Can I take that, because then it stops me having to go back on to it again?

JB: Yes, sure.

MH: Okay. Thank you, if I may.

JB: You know, that's not the issue.

MH: No.

JB: The issue is not that we spent a huge amount of time or money.

MH: No, okay.

JB: And we certainly don't want -- someone's suggested recently that we might want to be compensated. That is really not the case at all.

MH: Yes. Anyway, it's all in here.

DM: We have not sought any compensation, nor are we ...

MH: No, but what the allegation, assertion, is, is that you don't want to tarnish your reputation with TfL. There's too much at stake.

JB: Yes. That's why we haven't said anything, obviously. But it is helpful having you ask us to come because then --

MH: You can say.

JB: We can say we have been asked and, yes, so that is -- that makes it easier for us.

MH: Yes.

DM: I was contacted again by someone from TfL, about a year ago --

MH: The internal audit?

DM: Yes, the internal audit. And it was a very odd conversation, actually, because they wanted to understand our perspective on it but really what they were asking is, "Are you going to go and talk to the press?" That is what they wanted to know.

MH: Can I use that?

DM: Yes, of course.

MH: Sure?

DM: Yes.

And of course we weren't going to go and talk to the press but, you know, I was really annoyed at the time because not only the former mayor, but the commissioner for TfL, was bandying our name around and using it to justify the fact that this whole tender process was fair and unbiased.

JB: Because we hadn't complained. People were saying, "Oh, it must have been fair because they haven't complained".

DM: Yes.

JB: And it's like -- it's a bit of a kind of bullying ...

DM: And the mayor was saying, "We were looking for the best design and everybody had an opportunity ..." and the implication was obviously that we fell short on design, and it was never a design competition.

JB: That's one of the most sensitive things for us; it was never a design competition. It was not like Heatherwick beat us on design.

DM: Yes, so on the one hand they obviously wanted us to keep quiet but on the other hand, they were quite happy to use our name to try and justify their actions.

MH: Can I use that?

DM: Yes, please.
So, we have learnt a few things since.

MH: Hang on. Let me just write that down. Okay. Right. Sorry.

DM: So, we have learnt a few things since, you know, that the mayor was trying to raise money for the concept of the Garden Bridge.

MH: San Francisco?

DM: San Francisco -- before the competition.

MH: Beforehand? Yes.

DM: There is an interesting anecdote on this, which I would ask you not to use --

CH: I'll just pause this for you.

DM: Yes, probably good idea.

(off mic discussion)

DM: What is incredible is that TfL would not have been aware of that visit; they must have known about that visit, and yet they chose not to disclose it in the competition.

MH: Yes.

DM: And I think that is a failure of their duty to operate with openness and transparency.

MH: Yes.

DM: The other thing that has come to light --

MH: When you say "duty" --

DM: Yes, they have a duty.

JB: Well, that is in their -- you know, at the beginning of this; it's got, "...to operate with fairness and ..." Is that ...?

DM: "Openness and transparency".

MH: With openness and ... Is that in TfL or in EU?

DM: In TfL, yes.

JB: Yes, it's in here. So the summary of principles, "... underpinning the requirements are that the acquisition of process ... public works should be fair, non-discriminatory and transparent. So that's in the --

MH: Are you going to lend me this, or not?

I'll tell you what -- I've got it but because I'm writing this bit, can you just - very, very quickly, just copy it? I'm really sorry. Okay.

JB: No, that's a good bit.

And the small bit is about our bit, but then obviously most of it is about the Arup one, which we can't possibly comment on because we don't really know it, but ... yes.

MH: It is some time since I looked at that document. I looked at it ages and ages ... I might just -- when I'm writing it up, it might be sensible to check with it.

Right, go on.

DM: So the other thing that has come to light is that we have now discovered, or Walter Menteth has, discovered, that TfL's Legal recommended a design contest in January 2013. Obviously they didn't follow that advice.

MH: I think they have a justification for that; they don't have to.

DM: They don't have to; no.

MH: I actually think they would have been better just appointing Heatherwick.

DM: Absolutely.

JB: Exactly. If it had been all open and transparent and ... then, fine, you know. Don't waste -- don't pretend; and then don't try and defend the indefensible. That's the other thing, because, you know, obviously, you know, Heatherwick's a talented team, you know ...

DM: But there are ways of ensuring value for money without having a --

MH: A competition.

DM: -- a tender, and wasting other people's time, when the outcome has been predetermined.

MH: Can I just ask you, what bridges have you built? It will be on here. What bridges have you actually built, recently?

DM: Very few, actually built.

MH: So you have done a lot of the designs?

DM: We built a bridge --

JB: So, this is the pier in the river.

MH: Yes.

JB: This is a build.

DM: That's built.

JB: This is in Wembley, so, you know, near the Wembley Stadium. These are piers that we've done.

MH: It's a bit of a difficult question. What would you -- you would go for 15 per cent of the cost? That would be what -- what would you expect to earn?

DM: For an architect?

MH: Yes. What would you expect to earn?

DM: Probably between and 3 per cent and 5 per cent.

MH: Between 3 per cent and 5 per cent of the total cost?

DM: Yes, roughly.

MH: Okay. It's background for me.

DM: It might even be lower than that, depending on ...

MH: Okay.

DM: It depends on the scope.

JB: But obviously we built the London Eye in the river.

Oh, this is another bridge that we've done in County Hall. I mean, it is small, but ... you know ...

DM: Well the piers all have bridges; will have brows.

JB: Yes, all the bridges have brows. We've done the tree top walkway, which is 12 bridges.

MH: Yes.

JB: But then we've done a lot of other design for bridges, like the Thames Gateway bridge, which was a big project. We were working with Halcrow.

MH: And how much -- can I ask how much you earned out of that design? Do you remember?

JB: I don't know.

DM: We could find out.

MH: Okay.

JB: Not a huge amount because we were working for Halcrow, because that's normally what happens. You're working for an engineer.

MH: Did you say to Richard, "Why are you going for an architect, not an engineer?"

DM: Well, yes, you know ...

JB: Right at the beginning.

DM: We sort of queried it and said -- he said, "Well, no, no, don't need to worry about that. We're going to appoint the engineer later. What we want is an initial study to examine potential locations.

MH: So it wasn't even clear to you it was going to be there?

DM: It was clear that it was going to be in that area, linking the South Bank to Temple, but that there might be a number of different precise locations to look at in terms of landing points, which is exactly what we'd done on Nine Elms.

JB: Yes, at Nine Elms there were about four or five different --

MH: Where you land it.

JB: Yes.

MH: Anyway ... Right.

DM: So, yes I think there's still a number of outstanding questions. The obvious, why didn't he just go ahead and appoint Heatherwick, or, alternatively, conduct a proper design competition? Why did they fail to identify Heatherwick Studios or the Garden Bridge? Why was there only an eight working day period in which to submit a tender?

MH: You have never had that; never had that, that you can think of?

DM: I think this is probably the shortest one that we have ever had to do, yes.

JB: Which is surprising for such a major project; that was the kind of thing that you'd kind of thought that if it was a major project, it would have a lot of consideration and a lot of thought going behind it. And, because we were involved in the Nine Elms one, which was all done completely correctly, although they pulled --

MH: No. Yes, yes. Okay.

DM: Why were the design services to be provided for only a six-week contract period; very short?

MH: Yes, for a serious bit of work.

JB: Yes, because the Nine Elms one was about a year at least.

MH: Yes.

DM: If there was an assumption that designs, or even outline designs or concept designs, were expected, why weren't they requested?

MH: Yes.

DM: How did the highest tender end up as the winner?

JB: Yes, when we were told explicitly that it was --

MH: They did say they would judge it on day rates.

JB: Yes

MH: And they never rang you up on the day rates, did they --

DM: No.

MH: -- asking you whether you would like to reduce --

DM: And we understand they did --

MH: They did ring up --

DM: They did ring up Heatherwick, because he was over the OJEU limit.

MH: Yes.

JB: He was five, four times, as much as us.

MH: Yes.

DM: We were never given a further opportunity to --

MH: To compete.

JB: No.

MH: Yes.

DM: Which is not fair, if you give it to one --

MH: Yes, of course. Yes.

DM: -- you give it to all of them.

MH: Yes. Brilliant.

DM: So, yes, in the end, our conclusion is that we were simply there to make up the numbers and the outcome of the so-called competition had in reality already been predetermined.

MH: Yes.

DM: We feel very embarrassed about it, as I am sure --

MH: Can I quote that?

DM: Yes.

MH: Okay.

DM: -- because we feel like we've been used by a publicly accountable public body and they should know better.

JB: Yes.

DM: It shows a lack of purpose in terms of being a publicly accountable body but also lack of respect for us and the other competitors whose time they have wasted.

MH: Do you think it happens elsewhere?

JB: Well, it begs the question, doesn't it; this is the thing?

DM: I hope this is an isolated case but it does beg the question.

JB: It does beg the question. You kind of expect it to happen in - maybe elsewhere - but you don't expect it to happen in the UK.

DM: If you heard about it happening in Dubai...

MH: Well I'll tell you -- my experience from the Public Accounts Committee -- you are operating in a very small world and so inevitably personal relationships and people drift very easily, you know ... De Cani is now working for Arup and that's all --

JB: He was working for Arup before.

MH: I know.

DM: Yes.

MH: This is a tiny contract for Arup, so you'd think, "Why scar their reputation with a tiny contract; not worth it for them?"

JB: Yes, Arup is a fantastic organisation. So it's ... yes ...

MH: I think people forget that they are using public money.

JB: Yes.

DM: The bigger question about this whole process is the use of public money. It is quite unusual - exceptional, I would have thought - for the public money in a project like this, which is not revenue-generating, to be spent before the private money. The normal situation would be that the public sector stands back and says, "Okay, you put the private money together; we will provide you some form of guarantee. Once you have spent your money, we will top it up with ours".

MH: Yes, well, you might say that they want the catalyst.

JB: That is what we did with our project in Brighton, so I just brought you this because that's exactly what happened here.

DM: A catalyst is fine if it is for a project that is revenue generating.

MH: What was this?

DM: This opened last August in Brighton.

MH: Right. Why have I not seen ...? Where is it? The pier?

JB: Yes, the West Pier; it's on the West Pier.

MH: Oh, right; you have rebuilt that?

JB: Yes.

DM: We have not rebuilt the pier.

JB: We've done a sort of vertical pier --

DM: A 21st Century --

JB: -- for the 21st Century.

MH: Oh, fantastic.

JB: But the point about it -- we've got a really good public/private partnership going with the council whereby we took the initial risk with our money that we got from the London Eye - quite a substantial amount of money - and then the council came in and through the Public Works Loan Board, they borrowed the money and lent it to us and now we are giving -- so we have given the council £2 million already. So it's a public/private partnership that is really working to everybody's advantage.

MH: Right. That is really --

JB: But we took the initial risk.

DM: We also covered all of the construction; overrun risks, all of the private money, not just ours but also the mezzanine, from Coast to Capital, was all spent before the public money came in.

JB: And that is how it should be.

MH: What is this called?

JB: It is the i360.

DM: It's called the British Airways i360. They are there as a naming-rights holder.

MH: So they are funding it, basically?

JB: No, no. No.

DM: It's very different from the London Eye. They came in at the end as a naming-rights sponsor, so they have no ownership.

MH: Right. So it is called the British Airways i360. And that is the name of this ...?

DM: Yes.

JB: You can keep this if you want.

MH: That won't tell me that, will it though, what you have just told me?

JB: No.

MH: So, who approached you? The council approached you and said, "Are you interested in this?" or ...

DM: No, we approached the council. I mean, this project started 12 years ago.

MH: So this was an idea of yours.

JB: Exactly. So it is project where it's an idea ... So, we think that there should be room for people to come forward with good ideas. Obviously, the London Eye was our idea, too.

MH: Was that your idea?

JB: Yes.

MH: Right.

JB: So, it's not that -- there should be a way to do it that is fair, transparent ...

MH: But you risked -- both on the London Eye you risked your money, did you?

JB: Yes.

MH: Do you own London Eye?

DM: No.

JB: No. We used to own a third of it.

MH: But then you sold it off.

JB: We were bought out.

MH: Right. But on the Brighton, you put £2 million of your own money in before --

JB: No, more than that.

DM: A lot more than that. We initially put £6 million in.

MH: Bloody hell.

JB: That's what I thought.

MH: And then, finally, council --

DM: So £6 million came from us; £4 million, initially. £4 million came from Coast to Capital --

MH: Coast to Capital?

DM: It's a local enterprise partnership.

MH: Right. So that's public money? Right. So, it's a LEP?

DM: It's a LEP. And then subsequently, during construction, we had to find another £3 million.

MH: And that is where you got it from British Airways, did you?

JB: No.

DM: No. British Airways pay an annual fee, during the operation, again not be used --

MH: Right. The £3 million was yours?

DM: Yes.

MH: Goodness. So how have you made money out of it.

DM: We will in due course. It's a legacy project.

MH: Right.

DM: We don't stand to make anything for five years; in fact, we are locked out from making anything for five years, because we need to build up all the various maintenance funds – major maintenance funds – debt service funds; there is a whole series of pots that we have to fill up from operating revenue and then in five years' time --

MH: People pay to go up there, do they?

JB: Yes.

DM: People pay to go up it. So we have had 300,000 visitors so far.

JB: So that is where it is different from the Garden Bridge, yes.

DM: And it is doing quite well.

JB: It's like the younger brother of the London Eye. It's the same experience, delivered through a different site.

MH: Right. Very interesting.

Can I just go back – it's a different issue; it's not the issue you came to talk to me about – but when you did the London Eye ...

What has struck me about this, if I'm honest, is how unpopular it is with local people. I mean, I don't think we've had anybody come in and say, "This is a great idea; go ahead with it". Were it me, I would have made sure that I had some buy-in from the people who are going to be most impacted by it, by this construction. Thinking about the London Eye, it was pretty unpopular at the beginning, wasn't it? How did you handle it?

DM: We spent two years going round talking to everybody.

JB: We personally spent two years talking to everybody who would listen.

MH: Before you started --

JB: Yes.

MH: So you had the idea?

JB: Yes. We put in a planning application and then it took two years.

DM: The consultation was very, very thorough.

JB: And it took two years.

MH: And Coin Street?

JB: Yes?

MH: They hated it?

JB: No, no. They didn't hate it. No.

DM: There were very few people who hated it after we went --

JB: Once we talked to them about it.

DM: Some people we needed to go and see more than once but once they understood it, and they understood the benefits that were going to come from it, virtually everybody came on board.

JB: Lord Fawsley didn't like it.

MH: Who?

JB: Lord Fawsley, from the Royal Fine Art Commission.

MH: Right.

JB: He didn't like it, so he was the main objector, actually.

MH: Right.

DM: Even Waterloo Community Action Group, or whatever they are called - I can't remember their proper name - they supported it in the end.

JB: They supported it.

MH: They supported it?

JB: Yes, they did.

MH: So you just did the groundwork?

JB: Yes, yes. We went and talked to everyone.

MH: So by the time you got planning permission, were there people, apart from --

DM: There were still opponents, yes. There are still opponents, but I think were probably --

JB: Not among local people.

DM: There were probably around 100 local societies, statutory consultees, the 32 boroughs, the City of London, all the other societies interested in London, like the London Society or the Victorian Society -- we had seen them all, or attempted to; some didn't want to see us. So by the time it got to planning, we had a very, very strong case and it was voted through unanimously in favour.

MH: Kate Hoey objected to it, originally?

JB: No, we went to see her as well.

DM: She may have not understood it, but once -- that's why it is so important to talk to people.

JB: Yes, to go and talk to people personally; yes. No, we went to see her personally and explained it and then she supported it; yes.

DM: It was interesting, also, because it was at that time where computer graphics were just beginning to come of age and I think we were probably one of the early adopters of doing photo montages with computer graphics so we had these stunning images and we had a huge model of London with the wheel on it, stretching from Buckingham Palace to St Paul's Cathedral. What was interesting is that nobody was saying, "What's that funny-looking wheel in the middle of the river?" They were all saying, "Oh, look, I didn't realise ..." They were all looking at the view model.

JB: The view; the purpose. The view from the top.

DM: We were thinking, "Actually, this is what they are going to do when they go on it".

JB: And we got the support of English Heritage.

MH: Really?

JB: Yes, absolutely. We had a very nice quote from -- who was it?

MH: Simon whatever ...

JB: No, no; the previous -- pre-Simon. What was his name? I can't remember his name. Anyway, he said --

MH: Oh, he went off to -- I know who you mean; he went off to the Royal Academy or something, didn't he?

JB: Yes. But he said that English Heritage is not just about preserving the heritage of the past; it is also about supporting the heritage of the future, which is a phrase that we have used a lot since then, because it is a really good attitude to take, recognising something of quality that is 21st century.

MH: Yes. I mean, I have found it hard to find people who will argue for the Garden Bridge and it surprises me, because I quite like a bridge that is a garden across the Thames.

JB: Yes. It is just that public money -- I am actively involved in my local park in Stockwell, and the amount of money that has been slashed to look after it -- we are Friends, you know; it had £100,000 a year for maintenance and now that has gone down to £40,000. All they do is cut the grass and pick up the litter. When you think, you know, it is so tight -- in such local parks; we are surrounded by estates. It is quite a deprived area, Stockwell. It is so important; green space is so important and yet ... It just seems a bit of misdirected public money. That's my feeling.

MH: Yes.

DM: I think the point is that they haven't really handled the local consultation very well at all.

MH: No.

DM: It's a pity, because you've met Thomas; he's a perfectly nice chap.

JB: Yes, he's charming.

MH: Yes.

DM: Very innocent.

MH: Enthusiast.

JB: Yes, yes. Yes, like us.

DM: A great designer.

MH: Yes. Good. That is extremely helpful.

DM: Thank you very much, for seeing us.

MH: So, thank you very much indeed for coming in, preparing all that.
Matt, have you copied that stuff?

MATT: Yes, I have.

MH: Anything I haven't covered, that you want to ...?
Lovely; thank you. That is really helpful. Thank you.

JB: Well, the cost of the Nine Elms bridge was £40 million. You probably know that.

MH: The cost of the Nine Elms thing was £40 million? That is what the engineers got?

DM: The construction.

MH: Oh, I know that; I know that, yes. I had forgotten that. I mean they're all £20 million, £30 million; they are much less, yes.

JB: Yes, so you could have four of those.

MH: Yes, you could. I know.

JB: And we do need more bridges.

MH: I agree. Although they are saying -- I'm East London; that's where we need them.

MH: Yes. Exactly.

JB: We desperately need them.

JB: Exactly, yes; you do.

JB: We really do. We really, really, really do.