

**Garden Bridge Review
Meeting transcript**

Event: *MH/ Coin Street*

Date: *5 December 2016*

Present: *Dame Margaret Hodge MP*
Iain Tuckett
Scott Rice
Claire Hamilton

DAME MARGARET HODGE MP (MH):

I suppose what I want to start with, with you, you tell me everything you want to, but what it seems to me, and I think, Iain, it's probably for you. Are you a member or are you a work --

SCOTT RICE (SR):

I'm the chair.

MH: You're the chair. What it seems to me it comes from is that somehow Coin Street changed its mind halfway through. When I read it, it says, "We went to see Iain early on and he was all onboard and it was all going to be absolutely -- everything was fine", and then suddenly maybe the mood of your members changed and therefore you became --

IAIN TUCKETT (IT):

That's really interesting.

MH: And I'm sorry if I misinterpreted other people, but that's what it feels like to me.

IT: No, there's a bit of a history of that really from both TfL's point of view and from Garden Bridge Trust. I would argue, and I think Scott would too, that we've probably been the only party that has been completely consistent throughout the entire process in that we took -- going way back, I've got a timeline for you.

MH: Brilliant, that's always helpful, thank you.

IT: And I can send it digitally.

MH: So you didn't know before March 2013?

IT: No.

MH: You didn't know. I think they claim they came to see you before then.

CLAIRE HAMILTON (CH):

I think Joanna might have.

IT: Thomas would have come in advance of that.

MH: To you?

IT: To me, I introduced him to George Nicholson, to Ernie Hearn --

MH: What's George's position on it?

IT: He sits on the Coin Street board.

MH: He doesn't live there, does he? Does he live there?

IT: He lives nearby. And Ernie Hearn, in other words the river, the people who would most have strong views about the river I introduced Thomas to. But this was in advance of him and Joanna coming to make a presentation to our joint board.

MH: Yes, but they told you about it and you were excited about it.

IT: They would have talked to me, I don't know whether --

MH: In about 2012.

IT: It would have been towards the end of 2012. I did what you would expect, which was to warm up the people who would have the strongest views, to alert them --

MH: But you were quite keen.

IT: I think, well, let me say they came and did a presentation March 2013 and we gave it unanimous in-principle support and at that point we were looking at the idea, everyone felt it was a good idea. They then came back in February 2014, now Richard de Cani and --

MH: And that was after the planning apps were in, were they?

IT: No, no, this is in advance.

MH: Right.

IT: Richard DeCani said that the Mayor had asked TfL to assist in the funding design, setting up of Garden Bridge Trust, with Mervyn Davies chairman, £60 million had been secured, the scheme requires our land, and if you look at the little slide, which comes from their presentation, essentially it says they've got to do further work on construction, organisation, operations, all that, and the use of the land and building.

We raised a number of issues there and you'll see that Scott as chair concluded that crowd management was a key issue and invited TfL and the Trust to return in May to specifically deal with these operational issues.

At that point in April, I started convening -- because I think we'd been disappointed that because the numbers involved, there was clearly going to be a management issue. We took very early a decision that it was not one where we were going to say the authorities all agreed that we were going to say no, but we would insist that there were proper management arrangements and we wouldn't take a view on the public money. At a very simple level you guys were elected to look after that, why would someone not want £60 million.

So we'd carved out what role we would play, but what was disappointing was there was - very crudely - there was a complete focus on planning and on fundraising and no one really was addressing the operational issues. And yet for us, because we operate that stretch, the walkway, Bernie Spain Gardens, the operational issues are quite significant. Didn't used to be, but the build-up since the mid-1990s has been a lot.

So what we then did in the absence of anything was we convened a series of meeting with Lambeth planners, South Bank Employers Group, and the London Eye, ITV, Garden Bridge Trust, TfL, and then South Bank Social National -- in other words the main stakeholders who look after public realm in that bit, in order to get this debate about how they were going to look after it.

And you can see in April 2014 had a meeting with Richard de Cani and Tony Wilson and Bee Emmott and this is a quote from their minutes: "The issue of how to pay for the running costs must be addressed now." This was what bothered us, was there didn't appear to be any understanding about the real costs of this stuff.

So, in May they'd come back, now Bee and Richard de Cani, and I would say about Richard, whatever criticisms I've got of TfL, he was one of the most able of all that were involved in this project. He obviously had experience. What I think we were disappointed was there were an awful lot of people who didn't have experience and who was therefore making really the mistakes that you don't need to make.

MH: In the Trust more?

IT: I think that was particularly -- one of the things that became very apparent was there wasn't a single member that who had any experience on management of public realm. They'd got Paul Morrell, who knew about construction, that was a good appointment, the rest were really there to raise money. And they relied on TfL really for the planning.

SCOTT RICE (SR):

And to raise capital money.

IT: Yes, and of course it's the classic that we have this in spades at the moment because all these bits of public realm that they get their money maybe as a section 106 or whatever and then they've got to run it and now the councils don't have the money and they're trying to devolve it and these are the real issues.

TfL's way of consulting is "Look, we're thinking of doing this, what do you think? But actually we're going to do it anyway." And I've got sympathy with them, what infrastructure thing can you do without upsetting somebody, but of course if you're a charity that's a much more problematic thing and the charity were not that good at consultation. But Thomas Heatherwick is fantastic, you wanted to help him. I saw the worst presentations to our local community I've ever seen.

MH: From him?

SR: No.

IT: Not from Thomas Heatherwick, no, he wasn't rolled out for that, it was the project manager, it was --

MH: TfL project manager?

IT: No, Garden Bridge Trust.

SR: And we fed back to them on that, we said, "The first presentation was a disaster"

MH: So who did they have, Bee Emmott?

IT: Anthony Marley went down a storm locally.

So, as I say, we then, and South Bank Employers Group does quite a lot of public realm stuff, it's got a control group, it does all that, so we put those together. Over the course of the period produced a report on Garden Bridge South Bank Impact, and I'll give you a copy, you don't I'm sure need to read it yourself or now, but essentially what it does is it begins to spell out for them what they need to be thinking in terms of what you do to manage the bridge and then what the implications are going to be on the land surrounding it.

SR: And this is May 2014.

IT: Yes, so the problem is they came back in May 2014, remember this was the one where we specifically said, "We want you to address all these operations", and they hadn't. They hadn't done enough work. And indeed, just to let you hear the story, it wasn't until this year that we finally got their draft business plan.

MH: Their draft management plan, not business, the management? The operational plan.

IT: Yes. And of course that was fundamental because you could either see that they'd allowed enough --

SR: That's been incredibly difficult in getting forthcoming. I've had meetings with Mervyn where he said, "It's all finished, it's all finished, we'll send it to you", it's never been forthcoming, we've really had to push and Iain's entirely clear, we said very early on, "We need to have comfort that you can run this bridge and we're not going to be (a) left with a half-built bridge, (b) left with a bridge that's unsustainable, and (c) our estate" -- and we said that in March 2013, we liked the bridge in principle, we remained of that position, but what we don't want is a load of people coming over and no plan, no security, and we having to pick up the bill, the mess, the litter.

MH: So it's not about the use of the land, it's just much more about --

IT: No, absolutely not.

MH: You don't mind the use of the land?

IT: I think our view was and remains that if it's properly managed it will be a benefit. If it isn't properly managed it will be a liability and we made that statement in public.

MH: So when you got the comfort that the Mayor would underwrite it --

IT: Well, we'll come on to that, because that comfort, as it happened, never came. So, in May they did this presentation and we said, "Look, your staffing plan for the bridge is simply not credible". We set out then some requirements and you can find more of the narrative in here, which will actually show the frustration, but I'm going to move you forward to at the end of that May meeting. Our board basically decided that we would be losing a key bit of income, at the time it was about £600,000 per year, which you'll be surprised we earn out of the temporary events --

MH: On that piece of land?

IT: Yes, it's that little stretch of riverside, Sud de France festival, you have the French cheeses, wines, what's-it's --

SR: Malaysia Kitchen.

MH: Yes, I go to the South Bank a lot, but I come across the bridge and on to the cultural thing. And the South Bank is great but I just don't know that Riverside bit.

SR: We've worked really hard so we have lots of pop-up events on that land to animate it. Normally small festivals, local things and festivals.

MH: So they're big earners for you really.

IT: They are, they're very good, and what's more the costs are taken by maybe tourist organisations or whoever it is that's behind. So, for us, it is just income, which then goes into the public realm.

MH: But you knew this in March 2013.

SR: We said that then.

MH: So you always said you needed to be compensated for your --

SR: We never said we were going to give the land away.

IT: You will find in here the detail of that.

MH: So they knew in 2013, they knew?

SR: Yes.

IT: In this May/June 2014, we said in order to deal, so that we're not -- instead of you paying us compensation -- they wanted to pay us a one-off compensation --

SR: That's the difference I think perhaps you're trying to get at. They came to the table saying, "We just want to buy this land", and almost thought we would just give it up.

IT: But, for us, we've got the wider public realm, Bernie Spain Gardens, our Riverside Walkway goes through National Theatre and to Sea Containers House on the other side. So we have to have an income that's going to rise with the cost of staff and all the rest. At that time it was 410 square metres of flexible space, they'd proposed a restaurant, we said the restaurant's not acceptable because it would generate too much servicing along the Riverside Walkway, and we said at that time, "No, we will keep that instead, earning." It's not ideal for us of course, because instead of being cost-free, we then get rates, all sorts of costs related to the building, so it's flexible. But that was what we agreed.

So then, as I say, the impact report, which I gave you there, we provided to them and to Lambeth in August 2014. It was welcomed and then Lambeth used it as basically the section 106 impact agreement with Garden Bridge Trust.

MH: Who is Andrew Tice, looking at this?

IT: He was Ernst & Young and I think, looking at some paperwork that has come to you, I think they're donating their time, but they were acting on behalf of Garden Bridge Trust.

MH: He's one of the trustees?

IT: I don't know that he is. He was the first person --

MH: Ernst & Young, Andrew Tice.

IT: They're down on the list -- I think I came across -- sorry, I opened that to look at your terms of reference, came across the TfL, opened that and thought, "No, forget it". But I did see one interesting one, which was what TfL had spent, £10.5 million, and one of the lines is EY's pro bono stuff, so I think that's probably their pro bono stuff.

MH: But he's the guy you dealt with?

IT: At the time. He didn't seem to last very long, but there it was.

Now, it's probably important that you understand that we have a lease but that lease doesn't allow us to grant consent for a building, so we then had the discussions with Lambeth because, unless Lambeth wanted to go ahead we had no ability to make it go

ahead anyway. And so the result of that was that Garden Bridge Trust would do a 200-year lease and we said we're not going to surrender our land because we need to be able to enforce the obligations on you, but if Lambeth give us this longer lease and approve us giving you a sublease that would be fine.

I think I'm going to take you on to the middle of the next page that starts on 19 September because this is the first time we went along to City Hall. So it's a significant one, convened I think by Eddie Lister as Chief of Staff, and it came because TfL had been complaining about us not being prepared to give the land away. And we were very clear at that. It had, as well as Eddie, it had Isabel Dedring, who was the Deputy Mayor for Transport, it was her offices, Mervyn Davies and some of his trustees, Lib Peck and some of the Lambeth people, Scott and I, and then Eddie Lister and GLA officers.

And it had an update on fundraising, progress with planning, and then discussed acquisition of interests in land, both on the north side where I think there had been some necessity for some - if I call it - compulsory purchases, shorthand. I think there had been an arrangement with the Duke of Norfolk, but some of his tenants had to have -- it might be a Transport Act. We never got involved in that, but that went on, and then of course this issue of ongoing maintenance and I put in quotes there, the biggest here is the running costs.

MH: They have committed to giving you your 600K per annum, have they?

IT: No. This -- it was at this meeting that Isabel said, "£600,000, that's difficult to believe".

SR: And she was very forthright I think is perhaps the way I would put that in effectively saying, "We don't believe you earn £600,000. We want to see your accounts." And she followed that up to an email to me saying, "We need to sort out the 600K issue".

IT: So, within a week we'd sent her our accounts and she thanked us and there we go.

MH: But they had known about this now for 18 months by the time you got there.

IT: I don't think any of these things really come out until 2014. And you will find in here, I specifically mention when particular issues are done, but 2014 I think all of the issues that subsequently need to be addressed have all come out.

MH: When did they let the contract to Bouygues?

CH: I don't remember, sorry.

IT: It won't be until 2015 earliest.

MH: So they knew about all this when they were --

IT: Yes, yes, yes. But the extraordinary thing was at that meeting I had said, "You're telling us that we should give up this thing where we're earning money, which we use to look after the existing public realm, and so if you, TfL, want to support it on the north bank in the Temple you've got a whole restaurant there, you put the revenue ..." "Oh, no, we couldn't do that." Well, I said, "Don't ask us ..." And Eddie Lister said, "I think Coin Street is absolutely right", and that was the end of the conversation at the meeting.

MH: And that was because they wanted to put a restaurant there to earn them money, which would have revenue from that.

IT: Yes, which is completely understandable. I think I'm going to make a point that I think there's a problem with the model that you raise the capital sum but unless someone's thought about what the running costs...

Now, at this meeting at City Hall, they were still talking to City Bridge Trust and that, I notice, it was on the back of --

MH: How they could get money from them.

IT: And I think that's what they'd hoped.

MH: So all you ever wanted was to hang on to a bit of land to give you some revenue from doing pop-up stuff, which they wanted to put a restaurant on, and you wanted 600K annually in perpetuity?

IT: No, no, no. The 600K we would need during construction, but afterwards, instead of that, we would just have this -- We won't make as much as we do from the pop-up because you don't have costs, but we were willing to do that in order to help.

MH: What does it take up, this bridge, at the bottom? So, if you knock out their restaurant, what is it? So I'm trying to envisage how much land would you need?

IT: Well there's a very big podium and people go up, it's used for queuing, if there has to be an evacuation, you have to get off quickly --

MH: So that takes what, a sixth of your site, a quarter of your site?

IT: There's a grass area outside ITV.

SR: The size of the ITV building to greater or lesser.

IT: That grass area would go and the river walk remains.

MH: Is it about a quarter of your site?

IT: No, our site is big, we go to Waterloo Bridge.

MH: So the rest you'll keep, so you wouldn't lose that much.

IT: But it's the open site on the river, whereas the rest of the site is social housing, et cetera, but in terms of the Riverside Walkway, it is a large chunk.

MH: Yes, and it's currently used for play for kids and things?

IT: No, it's grassed and we use it for pop-ups and various pieces.

MH: So, what is it, flat and paved?

IT: No, it's flat grass.

MH: Flat and grassed.

IT: Yes, so in fact the deal was extremely good from their point of view because, if you like, at --

MH: All they had to do was give you the income during the period of construction.

IT: Yes.

SR: And this is the point that I think is important, Coin Street's board, in fact we were broadly supportive of this bridge, but give or take we thought it would add to London, we weren't going to give away our land for free, nor were we going to make a year-on-year loss in order to facilitate it. It had to be a quid pro quo and also we were not prepared to pick up the bill for all of the mess and all of the litter, so we said, "We'll be supportive, we'll work with you, but you need to provide a business plan and you need to listen to our legitimate concerns".

And I think all the way through until the end of 2014 and to some extent to this day those legitimate concerns are repeatedly not listened to. They are filibustered, they're moved around, there was a particularly tense moment with Mervyn after the meeting where I was up against a lift outside of the meeting and there was a bit of finger-waving, saying, "Well, , if this project goes down, we'll put the blame at Coin Street and you can imagine what that's going to be like in the Evening Standard".

We are a small community organisation that does social housing. They came along, they wanted to have the bridge, we said, "Okay, we'll work with you but we are not going to veto, if Lambeth say yes and Westminster say yes and the Mayor's behind it and George Osborne's behind it, we will not stop it. But what we're not going to do is just roll over. We're a campaign organisation, we will not roll over and just say we're going to give you the land that we campaigned for free of charge and we're not going to take any payment for it".

And what I'm not prepared to do is sit and have people like the chair and various other people wag their finger and tell me that, "You must dance to our tune". That's 30 years of work --

IT: I think there's a certain arrogance because, "I've got support of the Mayor, I've got support of Chancellor".

SR: And so we became a pain in their side.

IT: So our lawyers could not believe how we were treated.

MH: So all you're wanting is 600K for however many years it takes.

IT: Well say three years, but two to three years.

MH: And then all you're wanting beyond that --

IT: Is that space. And they've agreed that, but it took so long.

MH: They have now agreed that?

IT: Yes, they agreed it.

MH: So you're about to sign?

IT: I'm not aware that there are any significant --

SR: We had a meeting with them last week where they suddenly started -- at the start, you wouldn't believe some of the things where, "We only need one security guard on the bridge for millions of people", and we've seen the lessons around the London Eye, et cetera, which is managed quite well, but still loads of litter and theft, and we just said, "You're on a different planet". And it has been a struggle to drag them through. Toilets, they said, "Well, if people need the toilet they can use your restaurant", and time after time they've then managed the public narrative really badly, which we offered to help them with that.

IT: Anyway, let's just quickly get you to the end here. What then happens is we meet with Lambeth, we agree it will be a 200-year lease, 200-year sublease to them, and then an under-lease to us of that flexible space, which goes down from 410 square metres to 350 in order to accommodate public loos. We're happy with that because actually public toilets are one of our aspirations for that stretch.

What then happens, and not until July 2015, Lambeth finally issues heads of terms, because remember we can't really do anything until we get heads of terms, so July 2015 Lambeth issues heads of terms for land interest restructure and, guess what, it's a stay incorrectly, as it later turns out, that both construction and operations, the

Mayor's guarantee will cover us. Now, in fact that was never true, but it took a long time.

I'm going to again rush you forward because you're short of time, but they then issue new terms in February 2016, which, instead of this 200-year lease, is just a variation of our existing lease, which has got 75 years to run. In other words, it doesn't really deal with the lifetime of the bridge. Now, although we have - and I will if you want get into the legal bit - we have a right to renew for 99 years. That would have been undermined if we'd agreed this thing.

Now, our lawyers communicated very quickly, but again there wasn't a system. And remember, behind all this, there's politicking going on and people withdrawing and saying, "Well there's too much public money", there's loads of people --

MH: So this is when people locally started --

IT: No, they'd been going certainly since --

SR: Beforehand, but it really started to whip up.

IT: It started before the planning application, which was in November 2014, and it got a lot worse, but all these things happening.

Again, even in February, it wrongly stated that it would all be covered by the Mayor's guarantee. In April we discover that we won't be.

MH: You will be, won't you?

IT: No. it only covers the operations and it's only to Lambeth.

SR: Yes, it doesn't cover us.

MH: Explain that to me?

IT: the things that have been approved, subject to, as everything is, is the Mayor guarantees the Garden Bridge Trust's obligations under the section 106 agreement. So that is, if you like, the minimum they're required to do under the section 106 agreement.

Our problem is of course, where most of the things that say, "You have got to keep this to grade A public realm or grade B, in terms of litter" are all in draft sublease, not in the 106. The 106 says, "You've got to pay 250K per year for mitigation", but the actual what makes them properly staff the bridge and all the rest is in a sublease, not in the section 106.

We've been told, why would we not believe Lambeth? Well you might give me a list of reasons, but to be honest this thing has taken so much of our time and, god, if we'd

known at the start -- it's just unbelievable. It's too political not to be engaged and yet --

SR: And I think that's important actually from my point of view as a non-exec, I've been watching our chief exec getting on effectively doing a part-time job, if not more, for the Garden Bridge Trust, TfL, and the Mayor's Office, in terms of we've come to be reacting to all of this work where we've obviously got our own aspirations and jobs and they have been pretty unreasonable in terms of we've been asking time and time again, classic example last couple of weeks, could we have the business plan, it's taken us two years to get it from them, we get it and they give us two weeks to come back on it.

MH: Do you accept the business plan? Do you think it's a viable plan?

IT: I have spoken privately, so that we can take this bit out of your record --

CH: Let's pause this.

IT: Lovely. They did say, were we prepared to manage it, and I said, "You must be kidding".

CH: Who is "we" at that point, is that the Trust?

IT: Yes. And that's probably roughly at the same time as we went to City Hall in September 2014, they were casting around for people.

Now, I will move on very quickly to June 2016 when Sadiq, now elected, and his Chief of Staff, David Bellamy, convenes a meeting with all the same characters involved and actually most pieces were to deal with the fact that we now had not got an appropriate legal structure with Lambeth and actually that intervention again, Lambeth sorted out themselves and there now is an agreed way forward that doesn't require the GLA, who did not want it, to have to grant to us a guarantee.

MH: So you're signing -- you are to sign an agreement with the Garden Bridge Trust without knowing that there is a guarantee on the maintenance?

IT: Yes, just remember what happens is they would like it by Christmas, I think that is highly unlikely, but we don't see any major things, if they're reasonable, why we shouldn't enter into. We also have to enter into agreement with Lambeth at the same time, so my guess is this will go January or February.

MH: But you haven't got, at the moment, the Mayor's underwriting of maintenance?

IT: No.

MH: So why are you doing it, having said this?

IT: Well what we've done on that is said we have to have some recourse because, if we repeatedly say to the Trust, "You are not doing what you are obliged to under your lease", then we need to be able in some way to trigger either the Mayor's guarantee or whatever. And the way that has been agreed between the various parties is that ultimately we serve notice, not just on the Garden Bridge Trust, but notify the GLA, et cetera, that this issue of breach is continuing and, if no one does anything about it, ultimately we can shut the bridge, which itself will probably trigger ...

But the point is, Margaret, somebody --

MH: Somebody will pick it up.

IT: Somebody, well somebody has to.

SR: We have kept final control of whether we can open or close.

MH: Right, you can close it?

SR: Yes.

IT: But only in certain circumstances and, to be honest, it was the nuclear option in order to avoid Sadiq having to extend Boris's guarantee.

MH: You mean put more money in?

IT: Not necessarily put money in.

MH: Boris's guarantee is pretty generous, all they have to show is they've got a strategic plan.

IT: Yes, but ultimately the Boris guarantee is of, as I say, these obligations under the section 106. So, although it won't achieve what's in the lease, there is an obligation to operate it properly. So that's into impact stuff. It's not ideal.

MH: I don't quite understand how they've addressed the issues, because they haven't.

IT: They haven't wholly, and --

MH: They haven't at all. What have they done? They haven't raised any money, they've got little plan, but you can write anything in your plan.

IT: But, from our point of view what we enter into is heads of terms, that's the next stage, and I'm saying I guess January/February time. Those heads of terms will require them, before they commence -- the same undertaking has to be given to Westminster, to the Mayor, and to Lambeth -- to demonstrate they've got enough resources to complete the construction.

MH: But it doesn't. The Mayor's guarantee is not that they've got it, but they've got a plan to get it.

IT: No, that's true, and we haven't either, because I think that's quite a difficult task. The first thing is, if you start, are you going to finish it. They may have pledges. Pledges are not absolute, but I think we would say to the Mayor, "You are ultimately the person who is providing the guarantee, you need to seriously investigate have they got sufficient resources".

MH: I don't see what you've got out of the delay. I'm sorry if I'm being stupid. I don't see what you've got.

IT: Out of ...?

MH: The delay. What have you got that you didn't have in 2014? You haven't got the certainty of the money. You haven't got any certainty that they'll have however many security people you think they should have that you thought they should have.

IT: That will be written in -- as I say, the heads of terms --

MH: The standards on management and maintenance will be written in to the --

IT: Into the sublease.

MH: Into your lease with them?

IT: Sublease, yes.

MH: So you will say, "We require x security guards"?

IT: Yes, so it does indeed, it says the flower beds have to a daily level of -- and then I think the walkways are grade B and then you've got at any time to have I believe it's six security on, two at each end, two walking in the middle.

MH: And maintenance of the bridge?

IT: Well the maintenance is, we believe, less of a concern. In other words, it's difficult to insist that their flowers always look beautiful. There are warranties as far as the land, in other words for the site, land and building, but the bridge itself --

MH: You're just worried about cleaning, aren't you, and things like that?

IT: Mainly it's about security, cleaning, those issues.

MH: Okay. And you're going to have built in to your contract that they'll pick up the litter, that they'll have enough security guards, blah, blah, blah.

IT: They pick up the litter off the bridge, we pick up the litter in all around, yes.

MH: Yes, and they don't pay you anything for that.

IT: That's where the section 106 with Lambeth --

MH: Will give you a bit of money.

IT: We then have first dibs on that.

MH: And how much will you get out of that?

IT: We have to show the invoices and paid against invoices. It's our additional costs, which we have to demonstrate, and then --

SR: Back to your point, the key point in the delay is actually seeing the business plan.

MH: But the plan is a plan is a plan.

SR: But it's better than thin air.

IT: Well the issue is, what we were getting, Margaret, we were getting wild statements about how many people would be looking after it.

MH: I look at the business plan and I don't have much confidence in their income sources.

SR: And as we say, we don't have a huge amount, but what we've said is we believe the Mayor and the Mayor's Office are the right people to say whether that's a viable plan or not.

SR: So the red lines are that there is a viable plan in order to operate -- a viable plan that we've seen --

MH: It doesn't matter that it's not resourced.

IT: No, it's got to be resourced.

SR: It has to be resourced. They need to demonstrate that they can resource it.

MH: They don't, because the Mayor will pick up the tab.

IT: That may be the bit, but I think what we're saying -if neither pick up the tab, we'll close it. We were faced with a choice of either asking Sadiq for a guarantee, which obviously would make it difficult for him, or --

MH: But he's got to give a guarantee because that is what the planning permission is for. It's a condition of the planning permission that he gives a guarantee.

IT: It's whether it extends beyond.

CH: So that's the extra bits that you were mentioning are going to go into the sublease that aren't covered by what the Mayor was providing and that's why you need to cover it in the sublease.

MH: Yes.

IT: So I would invite you -- I can send you all sorts of further documentation, but having looked at how much you've got --

SR: This is the latest letter that I sent to Mervyn, which outlines --

MH: I've got to say to you, you are not going to know that there will be sufficient funding in place to complete construction, you're not going to know that until they've started, you're not going to know. None of us know, you have a punt at it.

IT: That's what I've said to you. We've actually put in pretty much the same wording as has gone in AS Lambeth, Westminster --

MH: So that's their wording that:

"There will be sufficient funding in place to complete the construction of the bridge and that you have a robust business plan to support the ..."

IT: The wording is about resources, that you can demonstrate that you've got adequate resources.

MH: "Sufficient funding in place to complete construction."

SR: That includes pledges.

IT: No, sorry, that is not the actual phrasing in the document, which is along the lines of "sufficient resources to complete the bridge and operate it for five years". But, that is clearly a judgement.

CH: And is it that bit that you were saying you think it's right for the Mayor to make the judgement on, so you're not expecting to make a separate decision on that?

SR: We just do not have the resource to take that business plan and forensically analyse that and my view has been that, if Lambeth are looking at it and the Mayor's Office are looking at it, the Mayor's Office probably is the best place to take the view that that business plan is robust or not. We can take a view and give our advice, but we can't be the last person to say yay or nay. It puts us in a real conflict position with elected politicians and also with our local community and that's not the position we want to be in.

IT: Margaret, you would understand our position here is that we have to choose what role we play and we've decided we're not going to play the role –

MH: You're not going to be the ones that kill it.

IT: We're not going to be the ones that kill it.

SR: It's actually not a bad scheme on -- right at the very start, and we're not NIMBY, we are excited by London, we want to help London grow, but I go back to the thing I said right on the very first day, we're not giving our land away, we're not going to subsidise this, and so we need some guarantees, but we're also not going to be pushed into a position by others to say, "We won't take a political decision, you need to kill it".

MH: I'm going to have to stop in a minute, but can you just tell me, why are they accusing you of raising the bar and moving the goalposts?

IT: It is absolutely the same story of not listening. I am happy, if that's what they said, I will provide you with a copy of the response to that letter. But the final one I just want to get is we have put our public stance, our view on the bridge, our concerns, what the current situation is, these have been up on our website since March 2015.

Really we update from time to time, but they're all up there, you can look at the original ones. Our stance - and I invite you to find this when you've thought about it - I think we're the one party that actually took a position and have stuck to it. I don't think any other party has. We clearly defined what role we would take and we limited it and we said the authorities have to deal with this that and the other. It's taken an enormous amount of time. We were caught in the middle and yet what could you do? You've got the authorities all supposedly supporting it, you've got a lot of well-organised people opposing it.

If we had said, "No", which, yes, we could have said no, there were two possibilities. The immediate one would have been the Evening Standard and who else that afternoon saying, "Who the hell do they think they are? Who elected them? A major piece of London infrastructure." Or secondly, probably unrealistic, but it's at a certain stage, is compulsory purchase type arrangements. And we weren't going to have that because what we wanted to do was stay in control of that area and make sure that, if the thing was built, that it was operated properly.

SR: I think we've been honourable throughout. I think we've been very clear with our concerns. Iain has worked incredibly hard. We haven't changed our position. I am personally frustrated at how long it's taken and sometimes the sheer arrogance of some of the organisations that we've worked with.

MH: But you don't get anything except your heads of lease, so you won't know whether they accept the number of staff --

SR: No, but that's our red line.

MH: So they've got to accept the number of staff, the money they put into litter collection --

SR: And we said that they're our legitimate concerns. There may be some negotiation, but they have to accept the concerns.

MH: Do you think it will go ahead?

SR: I think the brand has become incredibly poisonous, rightly or wrongly, and I think the start of the idea was admirable. I want to see London grow but I think, if you want a case study on how not to do things, they've pretty well demonstrated it, TfL and the Mayor's Office. I hope Sadiq's come in and taken a fresh pair of eyes and, yes, I'm very pleased that you've been invited to look at it.

IT: That is -- it's only a two-page, but you can see that I actually stole most of the timeline from that, but --

SR: And that's a letter to Mervyn.

IT: That was the response to his, "You're always changing the goalposts".

SR: Because Mervyn then wrote to me and said, "I'm amazed Iain's written to me. Did he have your authority?" it's that playing people off and it's a very unfortunate way of being.

IT: Yes, and actually Scott and I work extremely closely together. He's the other board member who's got the dubious privilege of specialising on this project.

SR: And I'm really proud of what we achieved, I want to carry on with it. But, as I say, I'm not going to oppose things for opposing's sake.

IT: That was our letter to the planning committee, so --

CH: Would I be able to get the electronic copies?

IT: Yes, you tell me anything you want and I'll send it electronically.

CH: Great, thank you, Iain, very helpful.

MH: All righty.

