

Boris Johnson  
Mayor of London  
Greater London Authority  
City Hall  
The Queen's Walk  
London  
SE1 2AA

05 February 2016

Dear Mr Johnson

**Garden Bridge procurement process**

I am writing to express the RIBA's concerns over allegations relating to the procurement of the Garden Bridge.

Our concerns are by no means a comment on the work of the immensely talented Heatherwick Studio and Arup teams, but about the fairness and transparency of the procurement process.

All those who bid for work have a right to expect that their submissions will be judged fairly, transparently and in accordance with the law.

Given the high profile nature of this project, the amount of public money at stake and the seriousness of the allegations, we would urge that the project is put on hold and the whole procurement process is then opened up to detailed scrutiny.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this with you.

Yours sincerely



Jane Duncan  
President 2015-17

# MAYOR OF LONDON

**Jane Duncan**

President  
Royal Institute of British Architects  
66 Portland Place  
London W18 1AD

**Our ref:** MGLA050216-4646

**Date:** 11 FEB 2016

Dear Ms Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 5 February about the procurement processes that Transport for London (TfL) followed for work on the Garden Bridge project.

I had no personal involvement in the two procurement processes run by TfL which resulted in the appointment of Heatherwick Studio or Arup to work on the Garden Bridge project, but having seen the results of their work I can only agree with your comments about the immense talent which has been displayed by those two UK companies.

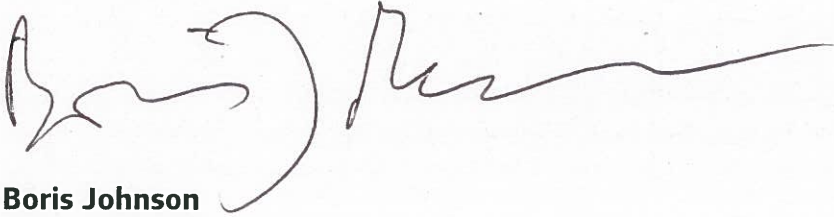
Recent allegations by members of the press that the procurement processes followed by Transport for London were not judged fairly and transparently are wholly unfounded. It was as a result of the public interest in the project that the former Transport Commissioner, Sir Peter Hendy CBE, instructed a review of the procurement activities by TfL's Internal Audit department. That team conducted a thorough audit and found no issues in either procurement with regard to the selection of bidders; the development of the tender and associated contract documentation; the procedure used when awarding the contracts and providing the unsuccessful bidders with an opportunity for feedback; and the procedures used by TfL to manage the projects and contracts following award. The audit also concluded that no evidence had been found that would suggest that the final recommendations did not provide value for money from the winning bidders. The findings of this audit were published in full and have been publicly available on the TfL website for the past five months alongside all of the contract documentation and a number of other key documents relating to the Garden Bridge.

I appreciate that the model of delivery being adopted for the Garden Bridge is a novel one, and that this may have confused some commentators in the media. There have been so many false reports and statements made about this project – what it is there to deliver and how it will be funded and operated – and I would urge your organisation to fully understand the background to the project before commenting further. Furthermore, the model for delivery of this project is proving successful and I am optimistic about its potential for replication in future to deliver other wonderful additions to London's landscape through private endeavour and charitable donations. The public funding element of the project is being used to secure considerable private sector investment – currently at £85m from the private sector and rising, which is a huge achievement.

# MAYOR OF LONDON

Thank you again for writing to me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'B' followed by a series of connected loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Boris Johnson**  
Mayor of London

Cc: Mike Brown MVO, Commissioner of Transport, Transport for London



Jane Duncan  
President  
Royal Institute of British Architects  
66 Portland Place  
London  
W18 1AD

**Mike Brown MVO**  
Commissioner of Transport

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11 February 2016

Dear Ms Duncan

## **Garden Bridge procurement process**

I have been copied in to your exchange of letters with the Mayor about the Garden Bridge procurement process. I wanted to write to you personally to give you some reassurance about the process by which we carried out the procurement of the design team for that project.

You will have seen the reference in the Mayor's letter to the audit that my predecessor Sir Peter Hendy CBE commissioned in response to a request from the London Assembly. This audit was extremely thorough and examined all aspects of the procurement process. A copy of the report is available on our website and has been subject to further scrutiny by the London Assembly. When I started in my post as Commissioner in July 2015 I re-examined all of the background information relating to this audit and am satisfied that the process which we followed was transparent and fair to all parties concerned.

The original design exercise, which was procured back in early 2013, invited three bidders to participate: Heatherwick Studio, Wilkinson Eyre and Marks Barfield. At that time we did not have a suitable procurement framework in place for this kind of work and these three designers were selected as a result of their design experience and their suitability for responding to our brief.

The approach we adopted was entirely consistent with those for other projects we were progressing as well as broader best practice for procuring contracts beneath the OJEU procurement threshold. We identified a short list of suitable practices and invited them to respond to our brief and assessed their submissions against that brief. Everybody was treated fairly and there was no bias in our assessment and as a result there was no criticism or challenge from any of the other bidding parties.

Since then the project has attracted interest in the media because of its unique design and novel funding and delivery model. Whilst we accept that a project of this nature will generate public debate, there have been many false reports and statements made about this project.

Given that, I would like to express my disappointment that having written to the Mayor about your concerns you chose to provide comment to the press immediately, before giving the Mayor or TfL an opportunity to respond. With so much incorrect reporting it is not helpful in my view, when respected members of the professional community elect to speak with the press before providing all parties the opportunity to clarify the facts of the situation.

We commission a huge amount of work from a broad range of architectural practices across London and the UK. We take that role seriously and wish to continue to work with the industry to support the work of as many practices as possible – both big and small. It is for that reason we have now put in place a procurement framework of architectural practices and design studios that we use for this kind of work going forward. We will also consider the use of wider design competitions where they would provide the best way of securing proposals for particular projects.

The Garden Bridge is a high profile project but it is just one of many projects that we are supporting. In terms of river crossings we have identified the need for 13 additional crossings of the Thames in London, the vast majority of which are in east London. We are directly pursuing three of the largest of these crossings at the moment and are about to commence the next phase of design work on the fourth, the proposal for a new footbridge at Rotherhithe.

If you are interested in learning more about these and our other projects and how we can work more closely together on progressing their design then I would be happy to discuss this with you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Brown', with a horizontal line underneath.

**Mike Brown MVO**

Royal Institute of British Architects

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**Mr. Boris Johnson**  
Mayor of London  
City Hall, London  
SE1 2AA

18 February 2016

Dear Mr. Johnson,

## **Garden Bridge Procurement Process**

Thank you for your correspondence of 11 February in response to my letter regarding the procurement processes surrounding the Garden Bridge Project.

As per your letter I also received a letter from Mike Brown giving further details on TfL's procurement approach and the actions that TfL have taken to address the significant weaknesses identified by the internal audit carried out last year.

Given the importance of TfL's work and the number of high-profile projects that are currently being considered, it is reassuring to know that there is a recognition of the need to avoid a repeat of the problems which arose from the procurement of the Garden Bridge.

TfL has a strong track record of excellence in procuring talented designers and contractors to work on projects across London and can be justifiably proud of the string of successful projects it has overseen.

With so many high-profile projects currently being considered, I remain of the opinion that there is an urgent need for an independent external assessment of the procurement process for the Garden Bridge project. I know you will share my concerns around the need to reassure the public that their money will be spent effectively by TfL and hope that you will be able to use your remaining time in office to do that.

Yours sincerely



**Jane Duncan**  
President

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**Mr. Mike Brown MVO**  
Commissioner of Transport  
Transport for London  
Windsor House  
42-50 Victoria Street  
London SW1H 0TL

18 February 2016

Dear Mr. Brown,

## **Garden Bridge Procurement Process**

Thank you for your correspondence of 11 February in response to my letter to the Mayor of London regarding the procurement processes surrounding the Garden Bridge Project.

As you refer to in your letter, TfL has a strong track record of excellence in procuring talented designers and contractors to work on projects across London and can be justifiably proud of the string of successful projects it has overseen. We are glad that there is a recognition that this process did not meet the high standards which TfL has aspired to. However, with so many high-profile pieces of work currently being considered, I remain of the opinion that there is an urgent need for an independent external assessment of the procurement process for the Garden Bridge project.

As I made clear in my original statement on this matter last week, my concerns around the Garden project are based solely on the seriousness of the allegations relating to the procurement process and the way in which this represents a significant departure from TfL's usual best practice. My comments were not intended to pass judgement on the proposals or their design in any way.

The RIBA has extensive experience advising and facilitating the design and organisation of architectural competitions which I would be happy to discuss with you in more detail if this would be of assistance.

Yours sincerely



**Jane Duncan**  
President

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22 February 2016

Dear Ms Duncan

## **Garden Bridge Procurement Process**

Thank you for your letter of 18 February. I think it would be very sensible for you to meet with TfL so we can go through your questions about the procurement and hopefully address them.

We do appreciate there is a great deal written in the press about this project and through technical journals like the *Architect's Journal*. However, rather than relying solely on what is written in the media about this project, an organisation like RIBA should establish the facts for themselves by talking to those people who were directly involved.

I know that Richard de Cani has contacted you to suggest a meeting and I would encourage you to meet with him and other colleagues where we can go through this in full.

Yours sincerely

**Mike Brown MVO**