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CHAIRMAN'S CATEGORY COMMENTS

NEWS REPORTER – Lee Mallett

Another great crop of stories this year from all the news teams out there. Stories generally fall into two obvious camps – those that report market activity and those that break news which affects the wider world. A balance is always needed. This year's winners and commendations reflect the traditions of all excellent news reporting and they all have an impact not just within the industry, but also on the wider world. Long may that effort continue.

Winner: Will Hurst, *The Architects' Journal*

This journalist was the judges' clear winner. He showed a relentless determination to get to the murky bottom of a bureaucratic process that is essential to the fair operation of the public procurement process. It is vital this process is beyond reproach. His work has shone a light on that process and demonstrated why that needs to happen. His work is what news reporting of any kind is all about. As a result the tale how TfL has procured Thomas Heatherwick's Garden Bridge has been one of the last year's must reads.

IBP News Reporter of the Year entry – Will Hurst, The Architects’ Journal

Having authored a string of investigative scoops using FOI which have raised serious questions about the Garden Bridge and its backing by London mayor Boris Johnson, AJ deputy editor Will Hurst is now regarded as an authority on the controversial project. Indeed, when the Observer newspaper published a prominent story about growing criticism of the £175m project at the end of May, it quoted Hurst alongside a string of leading figures including Sir John Tusa, Jonathan Meades, Zaha Hadid and Will Self. As Caroline Pidgeon, leader of the Liberal Democrats in the London Assembly, said in June: ‘Every step taken by the Architects’ Journal in examining the procurement process of the design contracts for the Garden Bridge has simply led to further questions needing to be answered.’

The 6th March story on the alleged ‘pre-judging’ of the bridge contest was an exclusive published following a detailed FOI request to City Hall. It sparked questions in the London Assembly and was immediately picked up by the Financial Times in a lengthy story giving prominent credit to the AJ with the Independent’s Jay Merrick following suit two days later. It also piled pressure on mayor Johnson when he was grilled on the Garden Bridge by Pidgeon and other Assembly members later that month. Referring to the Architects’ Journal by name, Johnson defied Pidgeon’s call for a full and independent inquiry and accused her of having a ‘Taliban-like hatred of beauty’.

However, as Hurst’s next major exclusive revealed, then Transport for London commissioner Sir Peter Hendy disagreed. After Pidgeon presented him with six documents obtained under FOI by the AJ, he was persuaded by to order a review of the Garden Bridge procurement process, which is ongoing. This story was immediately picked up by the Guardian - which praised AJ’s ‘persistent investigation’ – and Hurst was congratulated on Twitter by former Cabinet minister Vince Cable and leading investigative journalist Meirion Jones. He has now been asked by the London Assembly to appear in front of its oversight committee in September to discuss the procurement process behind the bridge.

The final exclusive provided a twist in the tale. Curious about the Treasury’s decision to provide £30m of funding to the bridge, Hurst made another FOI request to the department asking for ministerial correspondence involving the Garden Bridge. This revealed that Johnson had previously had serious misgivings about funding the project but was persuaded otherwise by none other than ‘austerity’ chancellor George Osborne. The story – which underlined the national ramifications of the story – was followed up by the Guardian, which quoted Hurst and credited the Architects’ Journal in the second line of its story.

EVIDENCE OF FOLLOW UPS AND CREDITS TO AJ:

FT story 6th March:

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/fbdd5c72-c407-11e4-a02e-00144feab7de.html#axzz3kPZrCGwf>

Independent story, 8th March:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/heatherwicks-london-garden-bridge-bid-given-unfair-advantage-10094478.html>

Guardian story, 19th June:

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/jun/19/tfl-to-review-tenders-for-garden-bridge-design-amid-claims-bid-was-prejudged>

Guardian story, 6th July:

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jul/06/george-osborne-boris-johnson-grant-garden-bridge-london>

Critics accuse TfL of ‘pre-judging’ 2013 Garden Bridge contest

6 March, 2015 | By [Will Hurst](#)



Heatherwick outscored Wilkinson Eyre on bridge design experience, FOI response reveals

The bridge contest which saw Thomas Heatherwick appointed for the Garden Bridge was ‘pre-judged’, critics have claimed, after it emerged that his firm was given higher marks for design experience than two of the UK’s most experienced bridge architects.

Heatherwick Studio went up against Wilkinson Eyre and Marks Barfield in early 2013 after Transport for London issued an invitation to tender for a Thames footbridge designer.

However, a Freedom of Information (FOI) request made by AJ has now revealed that Heatherwick was given a score of 4/5 for ‘relevant design experience’ while the other two firms received just 3/5 in the category, which was worth 25 per cent of the overall evaluation (*see document right, attached*).

Heatherwick has previously completed just one bridge – the controversial ‘Rolling Bridge’ at Paddington Basin while Wilkinson Eyre has designed more than 25 bridges including the Stirling Prize winning Gateshead Millennium bridge.



London Eye designer Marks Barfield has also designed a large number of successful bridge projects.

Last month, a previous FOI request by AJ revealed a handwritten May 2012 letter from Garden Bridge backer Joanna Lumley to Mayor of London Boris Johnson in which pitched the idea and suggested a meeting with herself and Heatherwick to discuss it.

The £175 million project – which now has planning permission from both Westminster and Lambeth councils – was originally billed as being 100 per cent private-sector funded, but now has £60 million of public funding from the mayor of London and the Treasury.

Walter Menteth, an architect and former chairman of the RIBA procurement reform group, described TfL's scoring for the contest as 'extraordinary'.

He said: 'The scoring does not make any sense. The fact that Marks Barfield and Wilkinson Eyre scored considerably lower than Heatherwick for design experience in a bridge competition raises serious questions about the process.'

'Heatherwick's bid does not appear to respond to the brief and all the indications are that it was pre-judged on the basis of approaches made prior to the tender. Indeed, the solution of the Garden Bridge had already been aired directly to mayor Boris Johnson by Joanna Lumley in her letter of May 2012.'

Leader of the Liberal Democrats in the London Assembly, Caroline Pidgeon said: 'The more that is revealed about how the contract for the Garden Bridge was awarded by TfL the more questions start to arise. It certainly seems hard to justify how, for example, Heatherwick was awarded the highest marks for its design experience when its rivals had so much more experience in designing bridges. Now that this information is out in the open I hope a full explanation can be given by TfL to counter the legitimate claims that the awarding of the contract was far from even handed.'

Pidgeon added that she was concerned by a 2013 BBC interview with Lumley in which Lumley was asked how she has got support from the mayor for the Garden Bridge and replied: 'I've known Boris since he was four so he's largely quite amenable.'

Pidgeon said: 'Public sector contracts should always be won on a fair, competitive basis and never on the basis of who knows who. The waters around the Garden Bridge project just get muddier and muddier.'

Labour London Assembly member John Biggs said he too was 'very concerned' by the scoring process.

He said: 'It's becoming increasingly apparent that Boris Johnson has always favoured Joanne Lumley's Garden Bridge project.

'Let's not forget, this is a project that's set to eat away at least £60m in taxpayer investment. The Mayor and all interested parties have an unavoidable duty to act transparently and fairly and we'll be looking very closely to identify whether the correct procedures were followed.'

In TfL's scoring, Heatherwick is also given higher marks than the other two firms for 'understanding the brief' and receives an overall score of 72.5% compared to Marks Barfield's 65 per cent and Wilkinson Eyre's 62.5 per cent.

The FOI reply redacted Heatherwick's winning fee bid but revealed that one of the architects had put in a bid of around £50,000 while the other a bid of approximately £15,000. Nevertheless, all three competitors were awarded a score of 3/5 for cost or 'daily rates'.

A spokesman for TfL said it was satisfied that a 'robust and proper process' had taken place.

He said: 'An initial tender was issued in January 2013 to select a designer to develop the concept for a new bridge across the Thames in central London. This was issued to three designers/architects as the time there was no approved TfL architectural framework in place, with the contract awarded to Heatherwick Studio in February 2013.'

Heatherwick Studio, Marks Barfield and Wilkinson Eyre all declined to comment.



Thomas Heatherwick's Rolling Bridge at Paddington basin

<http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/daily-news/critics-accuse-tfl-of-pre-judging-2013-garden-bridge-contest/8679602.article>

TfL boss orders Garden Bridge review

19 June, 2015 | By Will Hurst



Peter Hendy agrees to publish findings and reveals Heatherwick's fee bid was 11 times higher than Marks Barfield's

The boss of Transport for London has ordered a review of the procurement of the Garden Bridge designer following an investigation published by the Architects' Journal which has sparked accusations that the process was 'pre-judged'.

In a letter sent this week to the leader of the Liberal Democrats in the London Assembly Caroline Pidgeon, TfL commissioner Peter Hendy said: 'In response to your letter and the general level of interest in the Garden Bridge, I have instructed a review of the overall process of procurement of the Garden Bridge design contracts, the findings of which I will publish in full.'

Hendy also revealed that Garden Bridge designer Heatherwick Studio's estimated total price - wrongly redacted in TfL's February response to AJ's Freedom of Information (FOI) request - was far higher than its two fellow bidders in the 2013 invited concept design competition.

At £173,000, Heatherwick's initial estimate was more than three times that of Wilkinson Eyre's £49,939 and more than 11 times Marks Barfield's £15,125.

Heatherwick's bid was nonetheless judged by TfL the most 'economically advantageous'.



Hendy claimed in his letter however that these three estimates 'did not form part of the formal judging', and said that the selection process was instead based on day rates which he declined to divulge for 'reasons of commercial sensitivity'.

AJ first revealed in December last year that politicians were to investigate the 'sketchy' non-OJEU process by which TfL appointed Heatherwick ahead of competitors and experienced bridge designers Marks Barfield and Wilkinson Eyre.

AJ then broke further stories using FOI including celebrity Garden Bridge backer Joanna Lumley's personal lobbying of Boris Johnson on behalf of Heatherwick's design in the wake of Johnson's second mayoral election victory in 2012 and details of TfL's scoring of the contest which were seized on by critics.

This included the fact that Heatherwick Studio was rated highest for 'relevant design experience' despite having completed just one bridge compared to the more than 25 bridges Wilkinson Eyre had designed including the Stirling Prize-winning Gateshead Millennium bridge.

Pidgeon asked a series of questions in response and in March was accused by mayor Boris Johnson of having a 'Taliban-like hatred of beauty' as he refused to grant her demand for a 'full and independent audit of the process' undertaken by TfL.

However, she then wrote to Hendy earlier this month, highlighting serious concern with the procurement process given six documents 'obtained by FOI requests made by Architects' Journal' relating to the 2013 design contest.

She specifically questioned why 'given TfL's commitment to transparency...was the Heatherwick quote redacted as well as a redaction of all day rates, when the value of the quotes given for Marks Barfield Architects and Wilkinson Eyre Architects were listed?'

In his response, Hendy wrote: 'The inconsistent redaction of the total prices between the three bids when information was supplied to the Architects' Journal as part of an FOI request was a simple and unfortunate case of human error and we have written to the journalist, Will Hurst, to correct our mistake.'

'Following the assessment of all three bids, Heatherwick Studio was awarded the contract based on the day rates submitted but with a capped fee of £60,000. The actual value of work undertaken under this contract was £52,000.'

<http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/tfl-boss-orders-garden-bridge-review/8684970.article>

Chancellor urged mayor to fund Garden Bridge

3 July, 2015 | By [Will Hurst](#)



Newly released correspondence has revealed Boris Johnson's doubts over £30 million grant and underwriting maintenance costs

The mayor of London, Boris Johnson, had serious misgivings about the cost to taxpayer of constructing and maintaining the £175 million Garden Bridge but was persuaded to stand behind it by 'austerity' chancellor George Osborne.

The Thomas Heatherwick-designed bridge is now to be funded by £60 million from the public purse – £30 million from Transport for London (TfL) and £30 million from the Treasury – while Johnson has agreed to underwrite the £3.5 million annual maintenance cost.

However, letters between Johnson and Osborne, obtained by the AJ under Freedom of Information (FOI), reveal that the mayor initially recommended 'underwriting' rather than contributing to the construction cost, and said he wanted to see the public sector contribution 'recovered over time' through post-completion fundraising by the charitable trust developing the scheme.

Johnson also told the chancellor he had no intention of underwriting the ongoing maintenance costs.

But Osborne – who described the project as ‘iconic’ – encouraged Johnson to make TfL’s £30 million contribution a grant rather than a loan, and said the mayor should underwrite maintenance costs if private support could not be found, describing it as a ‘small funding requirement’.

In a letter dated the 7 August 2013, four months before the £60 million public contribution was announced, Johnson wrote: ‘A government underwriting of around the £100 million figure we discussed would be an invaluable contribution to what I think is a very exciting scheme.’



But when he wrote again on the 28 January 2014, Johnson’s position had changed and he said he was ‘happy in principle’ to match the government’s £30 million contribution.

However he added: ‘As we discussed previously, I would like to see the fundraising activities of the Garden Bridge Trust continue beyond completion of the Garden Bridge to ensure that the public-sector contributions are recovered over time ... the maintenance of the Garden Bridge will be a core

function of the trust and I should clarify that I am not intending to underwrite maintenance costs.’

In a note at the end of the letter, the mayor suggested the City of London Corporation’s charity might help, adding in his own handwriting: ‘Can’t we get the City Bridge Trust to do the maintenance?’

Five days later, Osborne replied, agreeing that the City Bridge Trust and other potential funding sources should be approached but added: ‘It is vital that the bridge is properly maintained and so if the necessary level of private support cannot be found I would encourage you to stand behind this small funding requirement.’



He added: ‘I was surprised by your proposal that TfL should offer to loan the Garden Bridge Trust £30 million rather than to provide this as a grant. I imagine that providing this support as a loan rather than grant will make the job of fundraising even more difficult, which presents an unnecessary risk to the success of the project. I will therefore be paying the government’s contribution as a grant and believe you should do the same.’

The last four words of this sentence were underlined by hand.

Architect and former chairman of the RIBA procurement reform group Walter Menteth, who has previously raised concerns about the procurement of the Garden Bridge, said: 'These letters reveal the austerity chancellor who is willing to fund an icon. He wants to fund a cocktail party bridge over social need. These two members of the Bullingdon Club are determining major public expenditure without any accountability or input from anyone else.'

'George Osborne seems to regard the Garden Bridge "icon" in the same way as he regards functional infrastructure despite not having any evidence that it meets any of the same functional criteria.'

Jonathan Isaby, chief executive of the TaxPayers' Alliance, said: 'These remarkable letters show just how absurd it is that the government is pushing ahead with this costly vanity project despite the overarching goal of bringing spending down.'

'It is deeply concerning that the chancellor has also suggested that cost over-runs and maintenance costs will be picked up by taxpayers if ongoing private funding cannot be found – which, at this point, seems the most likely scenario. This flies directly in the face of the mayor's public assertions that the TfL contribution would be capped and that additional ongoing costs would be picked up by the trust.'

'Taxpayers deserve to know how much this bridge – which barely functions as a bridge – will cost them in the long run, and the reasons that the chancellor is so keen on the project in a period of austerity.'

Caroline Pidgeon, Liberal Democrat leader in the London Assembly and a leading Garden Bridge sceptic, said: 'This latest discovery reveals just how much Boris Johnson has had his arm twisted by George Osborne. The mayor of London was absolutely right to oppose not only TfL picking up the maintenance costs for the Garden Bridge, but also objecting to grant funding for its construction. Why the mayor backed down on these issues is just one of the many questions he must now answer over the Garden Bridge.'

Last month, outgoing TfL boss Peter Hendy confirmed, in a letter to Pidgeon, that he had ordered a review of the procurement of the Garden Bridge designer. This followed an FOI investigation carried out by the AJ, which has sparked accusations that the process was 'pre-judged' as a result of lobbying of the mayor by Garden Bridge backer Joanna Lumley.

<http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/chancellor-urged-mayor-to-fund-garden-bridge/8685714.article>