

MAYOR OF LONDON

Len Duvall OBE AM

City Hall
The Queen's Walk
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London SE1 2AA

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Date: 12 JUN 2018

Dear Len,

Garden Bridge

Thank you for your letter of 9 May.

I very much appreciate the energy and rigour that you and the Oversight Committee have brought to issues concerning the Garden Bridge project, borne of similar concerns to those that led me to commission Dame Margaret Hodge's review.

As you set out, this project has been extensively reviewed now and I appreciate your thoughts on the further issues which should be addressed going forward. I have focused on those in this response.

Mayoral Directions form an important part of the legislative framework for the Greater London Authority (GLA) Group. They are often used to enable the Functional Bodies to utilise the general powers available to the GLA in circumstances where those bodies are better equipped to facilitate a particular outcome for the benefit of London.

I agree that it is essential that due process is followed and that decisions are made transparently. I also agree that no Mayoral Direction or other action should be used to circumvent proper procurement process.

As you know, Mayoral Directions are made through the Mayoral decision-making process to ensure they are transparent and accountable.

In the case of the Garden Bridge, the Mayoral Directions made by the previous Mayor were published promptly on the GLA website and were included in the Mayor's periodic report to the Assembly that is published as part of the Mayor's Question Time process.

I won't repeat all the actions that have been taken at Transport for London (TfL) as a result of interventions from both of us and other reviews; they are usefully summarised in the letter sent to you by Mike Brown on 8 December and described in more detail in the published papers to the TfL Board, which I chair. It is a crucial part of those changes that I have substantially improved the reporting and oversight of the implementation of Mayoral Directions in TfL, as well as the quality of the Board whose role it is to perform that task.

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I agree, however, that the GLA's Corporate Governance Framework Agreement relating to Mayoral Directions should be reviewed and that additional guidance should be given on the use and implementation of Mayoral Directions. I have asked GLA officers to take this forward.

Clearly the scrutiny of the procurements for the Garden Bridge, particularly the process under which the Heatherwick Studio was appointed, identified a number of issues which needed to be addressed. The report on TfL's activities that we considered at the TfL Board on 19 July 2017 addressed those points.

It is an inherent part of the role of a successful Mayor to require timely delivery of work and to avoid complacency amongst officers. That must, however, be done in a proper professional manner and our Code of Conduct usefully sets out the basis on which we must all carry out our activities. Similar standards are in place for Mayoral advisers and GLA Group officers.

The Garden Bridge Trust is a charitable trust and, regardless of the issues with the conduct of this project, it is in principle appropriate for regulated charities to deliver work on behalf of the public sector. It is essential that appropriate arrangements are in place for any grant funding, and the GLA and functional bodies have policies to this end. Clearly the previous Mayor is accountable for the decision to pass responsibility for this project to the Garden Bridge Trust and the specific requirements placed upon them.

Scrutiny of the Garden Bridge project has highlighted a number of shortcomings. Some of these are specific to that project and some have a wider application. A lot of work has been done at TfL on specific issues and systems, and the other functional bodies and GLA have followed that activity from their own perspectives. I agree that we should set and follow high standards, and I have already taken action to ensure the whole GLA family has learnt lessons from the Garden Bridge.

Yours sincerely,



Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London