

Press release: Garden Bridge project was a 'failure for charity' that risks undermining public trust

Concluding report from Charity Commission suggests lessons for charities, policy makers, and the regulator itself arising from the failed garden bridge project

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The Charity Commission has published a [concluding report on the Garden Bridge Trust](#), which confirms the regulator's findings on the management of the charity, and sets out wider lessons for charities, the Commission itself and those making public policy decisions that involve charities.

The report acknowledges that over £50m of public funds were spent by a charity without producing demonstrable public benefit, and concludes that this represents "a failure for charity" which risks undermining public trust.

It concludes that the trustees of the charity fulfilled their legal duties in their decision making and that the charity was not mismanaged. However the report is critical of the charity's approach to transparency and accountability.

Londoners and taxpayers will legitimately feel angry and let down by the waste of millions of pounds of public money on a charitable project that was not delivered. I understand that anger and am clear that this represents a failure for charity that risks undermining public confidence in charities generally.

While the charity was not mismanaged, the public would also expect, as I do, that the right lessons are learnt from this case, so that we don't see a similar failure arising in future.

Lessons from this case

The Commission's report sets out a number of lessons for different actors to

draw from this case, including:

- The Commission advises that policy makers “think very carefully” before setting up an entirely new charity to deliver a singular public project or purpose. The regulator says it considers it “unlikely that the public would expect risks that are inherent in a major public infrastructure project to be outsourced to such a charity.”
- The Commission will update its approach when it receives applications from charities established for the sole purpose of delivering a publicly funded infrastructure project.

The regulator says it will engage with those seeking to establish charity wholly or mainly to deliver a publicly funded project to ensure they understand the consequences and responsibilities that follow, including the need to meet the public’s expectations around transparency and financial stewardship. The regulator makes clear that this change will not affect the status of such organisations as charities, which is determined by the law.

- Trustees of charities that receive public funds to deliver public services or projects should demonstrate scrupulous accountability and a spirit of transparency and openness to the public.

The report makes clear that “the legal minimum set out in the accounting framework should be viewed as just that: a minimum, not an aspiration.”

Baroness Stowell added:

The Charity Commission’s purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society. In order to deliver on that purpose, we need to understand the wider context in which charities work and to help shape and update the environment in which they operate – and we need to be driven by the public interest in charity.

That is why our report today goes beyond setting out our regulatory findings regarding the management of the charity in this specific case and looks at the wider circumstances that led to the project’s collapse, and at the lessons that should be learnt as a result.

The report complements the regulator’s 2017 regulatory report into the management of the Garden Bridge Trust, and sits alongside reports by the Rt Hon Dame Margaret Hodge MP and the National Audit Office, which have examined the project with different expertise and from different perspectives.

The [full report is available on gov.uk](#).

[Press release: Arts Minister steps in to save rare £3 million Baroque Cabinet for the nation](#)

Arts Minister Michael Ellis has placed a temporary export bar on a 17th century baroque cabinet by Roman maker Giacomo Herman.

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- Cabinet valued at £3.3 million is one of four created between 1669 and 1687 by Rome's leading cabinet maker

Arts Minister Michael Ellis has placed a temporary export bar on a 350 year old Italian Baroque cabinet in an attempt to save it for the nation.

Giacomo Herman (1615 – 1685) was Rome's leading cabinet maker during the 1660s and 1670s and worked for successive Popes and a number of leading Roman families. The German furniture-maker was most active in Italy, having settled in Rome in 1655 where he entered the papal service.

Documented works of significance from this period are very rare. The ebony veneered cabinet, valued at £3.3 million, is one of four created in Herman's workshop between 1669 and 1678.

Arts Minister Michael Ellis said:

This intricate cabinet is an outstanding example of the work of 17th century Italian cabinet makers. I hope that a buyer can be found to keep it in the country so that future generations can admire it and learn about our rich heritage.

Veneered with lapis lazuli, a blue semi-precious stone, and jasper gemstones

and mounted in gilt bronze, the cabinet includes 14 gouache miniature paintings depicting Roman basilicas and the city-wide processions that took place following the coronation of a new Pope.

The cabinet also features a clock by Giovanni Wenderlino Hessler and a virginal by Giovanni Battista Maberiani. It is supported by an elaborate carved giltwood table formed of two male figures, masks and scrollwork.

The other cabinets making up this series of works are now housed at the Chapel of the Virgin of Loretto in Krakow, Poland, and at Rosenborg Castle and Fredensborg Castle, both in Denmark.

The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest (RCEWA) made its recommendation on the grounds of its outstanding significance to the study of Baroque decorative art and cultural history.

Committee Member Christopher Rowell said:

This magnificent cabinet, surmounted by a clock and containing a virginal is one of four which were shown in 1669 to Cardinal Giacomo Rospigliosi, nephew of Pope Clement IX, at the palazzo del Quirinale in Rome. The various components were put together in Rome by a German cabinet-maker, Giacomo Herman, who veneered the church-like façade of this cabinet with lapis lazuli and jasper, as well as covering the drawer fronts and the central niche with painted views of the Eternal City.

The cabinet has been recently reunited with its original cresting: a reduced gilt bronze copy of the Antique bronze equestrian statue of the Emperor Constantine, which Michelangelo placed in the centre of his Piazza di Campidoglio, Rome. Originally supported upon an ebony stand, the present gilded support is early-eighteenth-century Roman, carved with supreme skill and brio and covered with a veneered marble top, shaped to fit.

This is the only one of the set of four cabinets to have been acquired for an English collection. Indeed, this remarkable composite work of art may well have been in England since 1738, when a very similar cabinet was seen by the antiquary, George Vertue, at Cowdray House, Sussex. It is very much to be hoped that the funds will be raised for it to remain in this country.

The decision on the export licence application for the Italian Baroque Cabinet by Giacomo Herman will be deferred until 8 July 2019. This may be extended until 8 November 2019 if a serious intention to raise funds to purchase it is made at the recommended price of £3,300,000.

[Download images of the cabinet on Flickr.](#)

Notes to editors

1. Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the cabinet should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.
2. Details of the cabinet are as follows: An Italian Baroque Cabinet by Giacomo Herman The cabinet recorded in 1669 as one of four cabinets from the workshop of Giacomo Herman in Rome. Height: 284cm; Width 172cm; Depth 72.5cm.
3. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by The Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria.
4. The Arts Council champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. It supports a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. www.artscouncil.org.uk.

Press release: Dstl to host AI Defence and Security Conference

Applied Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the theme for this year's "AI Fest", an annual conference hosted by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) that explores the implications of AI for Defence and Security.