

# Press release: Charity Commission publishes report on Garden Bridge Trust

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, has today published [its findings](#) into the [Garden Bridge Trust](#) (registered charity number 1155246).

The regulator's case examined the charity's governance, specifically whether the trustees were meeting their legal duties and whether the charity was complying with charity law. It did not examine matters such as the merits of the project or how it is funded. These issues are outside its regulatory remit. The National Audit Office has published an investigation into the Department for Transport's £30 million grant towards the construction of the project and, separately, Dame Margaret Hodge MP is conducting a review of the project, including its value for money.

The Commission inspected the charity's books and records and met trustees and staff from the charity to examine:

- the awarding of contracts by the charity, including whether conflicts of interest had been declared and properly managed
- the due diligence carried out by the charity and the charity's ability to carry out a project of this size
- the funding, structure and governance of the charity

The Commission found that the trustees were meeting their duties and were acting in compliance with charity law.

The Commission also found that the processes for awarding of contracts appear to have been robust. However, trustees did not fully explore the opportunities to compare the critical paths of other comparable infrastructure projects and thus better enable themselves to assess project risk.

The Commission examined the management of conflict of interests within the charity and found that they were managed in line with the charity's policy. The regulator can also confirm that benefactors were not party to contracts made by the charity.

The trustees of the charity met required standards of financial management and were able to justify the high forward spend made by the charity and account for the spend to date. The Commission considers that the trustees could make improvements to their annual reporting, to provide greater insight to the progress made and challenges addressed in the last financial year.

Further, the charity holds no reserves but expects to meet any obligations from the use of its restricted funds. Given the reliance on using restricted

funds, the regulator would have expected a fuller description of how these funds could be used with greater detail on how the charity would meet its liabilities in the event of closure.

The charity cooperated fully with the Commission throughout its case.

**David Holdsworth, Chief Operating Officer at the Charity Commission said:**

We have been able to offer public assurance that the Garden Bridge Trust is meeting its obligations as a registered charity and that it has the proper financial controls in place. We are aware of the considerable public debate regarding this project. Our role is not to comment on the merits of the project but to assess concerns about its governance and ensure it is compliant with the legal framework for charities.

This case shows that high profile charities can attract considerable public scrutiny, and the public rightly expect charities to be transparent and accountable. Having trustees in place with the right skills and experience is crucial for a charity to operate effectively.

The Commission [publishes reports](#) regarding its compliance cases where it is appropriate and proportionate to publish a report, there is significant public interest in the case and its outcome and/or other charities need to be aware of the issues or lessons in the case.

The full report is available on [GOV.UK](#).

Ends

PR 12/17

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## Notes to editors

1. [The Charity Commission](#) is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see our [annual report](#).
2. Search for charities on our [online register](#).