

THE FIVE QUESTIONS,

And comments by Tariq S Durrani

1. Is suggested wording of the Plaque Citation accurate?

Yes indeed. A most appropriate and apt statement, capturing the history and excitement of the development.

2. Is evidence presented in the proposal of sufficient substance and accuracy to support the Plaque Citation?

The proposal is very comprehensive, well written and well researched. It covers not only the historical development of the LEO I computer, but also provides extensive information on the development of computers in the fifties, across the spectrum of endeavours.

3. Does proposed milestone represent a significant technical achievement?

LEO I computer represented the development of first ever electronic computer used for business applications. In the words of Google chairman Eric Schmidt, he called LEO I "the world's first office computer", built in 1951. A unique achievement indeed.

4. Were there similar or competing achievements? If so, have the proposers adequately described these and their relationship to the achievement being proposed?

As stated earlier, the proposal gives a very comprehensive overview of the state of art in terms of the development of computing at the time and clearly illustrate how the development was head and shoulders ahead of other developments.

In my opinion, the proposal should itself be published as a well-researched record of historical development of computer technology at the time

5. Have proposers shown a clear benefit to humanity?

Very much so. The proposal gives significant details on how the history of the development is being preserved, through archives at the University of Cambridge 'History of Computing' Centre and through films produced by the BBC and others. It clearly marks the impact the development made in the first use of computers in the commercial arena. It reflects the prescience of the Lyons company – a producer of bakery products and manager of a chain of tea houses – to invest in the development of computers for civilian use in the fifties.

In answering the questions above, the History Committee asks that independent expert reviewers apply a similar level of rigor to that used to peer-review an article or evaluate a research proposal. Some elaboration is desirable. Of course, the Committee would welcome any additional observations that you may have regarding this proposal.

Tariq S Durrani

24 August 2025.