



# London Docklands Development Corporation Research Paper

---

## An Introductory Briefing

Henry Miller

April 2009

This paper sets out a brief history of the London Docklands Development Corporation, including the events surrounding its inception, a summary of its regeneration work and the contrasting conclusions that have been drawn about its results and legacy. By no means a comprehensive study, it is hoped that this briefing will provide useful background for the witness seminar on 29<sup>th</sup> June.

## **LDDC Timeline**

- 1973** Publication of report commissioned by Peter Walk, Secretary of State for the Environment, outlining development possibilities for Docklands.  
Formation of the Joint Docklands Action Group (JDAG).
- 1976** Publication of the *Strategic Plan* by the Docklands Joint Committee (DJC).
- 1979** Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State for the environment, announces the creation of Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) for Liverpool and London Docklands.
- 1980** Local Government Planning and Land Act.
- 1981** The order to create the London Docklands UDC is challenged by the Greater London Council and the borough councils. A House of Lords Select Committee hears petitions against the UDC.  
London Docklands Development Corporation set up.  
Construction company Mowlem and Brymon Airways develop a draft proposal for a Short Take Off and Landing airport (STOLport).
- 1983** The Government approve a grant of £77 million to build the Docklands Light Railway.  
A public inquiry into the STOLport proposal hears evidence from opponents such as the JDAG and the Campaign Against the Airport, and is presented with *The People's Plan*, produced by the Newham Docklands Forum.
- 1984** Public inquiry reports in favour of granting planning permission for the STOLport; the GLC launches an unsuccessful challenge in the High court.
- 1986** Proposal for Canary Wharf development is put forward by a consortium of three American investment banks. A sustained protest to the plan is organised by the JDAG, DCC, the Association of Island Communities (AIC) and many local people.
- 1987** London City Airport opens.  
Two large banks pull out of the Canary Wharf development plan. LDDC chairman Christopher Benson approaches Canadian firm Olympia and York to take up the project.
- 1991** First phase of Canary Wharf completed.
- 1992** Olympia and York files for bankruptcy.
- 1998** The LDDC is dissolved.

## London Docklands Development Corporation Research Paper

The creation of the London Docklands Development Corporation was one of the most ambitious and controversial examples of regeneration in British history. Born out of a desire to tackle economic decline using a combination of public funding and private investment, the work of the Corporation challenged traditional ideas of state-sponsored and locally managed economic development, and met with opposition from both local residents and local authorities. Opinion remains divided about the successes and failures of the Corporation, and whether it was an appropriate response to the economic decline of the docks. The LDDC was dissolved just over a decade ago. The witness seminar will provide an important opportunity to reflect on the concept of the LDDC and its practical effects. This report sketches out a chronology of events in Docklands during the lifetime of the LDDC, and suggests some tentative lines of inquiry to facilitate the seminar.

### Docklands Decline

By the early 1970s the future of the London docks was uncertain. Changing patterns of global trade, increasing preference for larger vessels requiring deeper docks, containerisation, and the need for good rail and road links to distribute cargo had all had a negative effect on the long-term viability of the docks.<sup>1</sup> The Port of London Authority (PLA) embarked on a closure programme and sought to concentrate dock activity in upstream ports like Tilbury, which were better suited for the requirements of modern shipping. In 1965 East India Docks were closed; London, St Katherine's and the Surreys followed in 1968. West India and Millwall Docks were closed in 1980 and the last of the docks, the Royal Docks, (Royal Victoria, Royal Albert and King George V) were closed in 1981.

The number of people employed in the docks fell from 20,000 in 1967 to 4,100 in 1981. The dock closure programme also affected related sectors; many manufacturing and industrial jobs were lost during the 1970s, and the situation worsened with the closure of the gas works in north Greenwich and Beckton.<sup>2</sup> With the loss of jobs the population dwindled from 55,000 in 1975 to 39,000 in 1981.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the Docklands were faced with the question of what to do with the large amount of increasingly derelict land, much of it owned by public authorities like the PLA, British Gas and British Rail.

### Regeneration Plans

Two different approaches for regenerating the Docklands area emerged in the 1970s. The Conservatives favoured a market-led strategy, whereby public expenditure would be used to attract private investment and develop private housing, new industry and business. The alternative, advocated by the Greater London Council (GLC), the Docklands boroughs and community groups such as the Joint Docklands Action Group (JDAG) and Docklands Forum, was public sector-led regeneration within the existing planning framework. This approach centred on the needs of local people, including housing and jobs suited to local skills in manufacturing and dock-related activities.

In 1971, Peter Walker, the Conservative Secretary of State for the Environment, commissioned consultants to investigate different options for regeneration. The report was

---

<sup>1</sup> Janet Foster, *Docklands: Cultures in Conflict, Worlds in Collision*, (London: UCL Press, 1999), pp. 38-41.

<sup>2</sup> Foster, *Docklands*, p.41; Nicholas Falk, 'London's Docklands: A Tale of Two Cities', *London Journal*, vol. 7, no.1 (1981), pp. 65-80 (at pp. 66-7).

<sup>3</sup> Foster, *Docklands*, p.54. See also DJC, *London Docklands Strategic Plan Draft*, p.8.

published in 1973 and outlined five possibilities ranging from private housing and commercial development, to increased public housing and a central role for industrial employment.<sup>4</sup> The JDAG was formed in response to this report, which was also rejected by the GLC and the boroughs for not taking into account the views of local people.<sup>5</sup>

The GLC and the five boroughs formed the Docklands Joint Committee (DJC) in January 1974 to develop alternative plans for regeneration. After extensive consultation, the *Strategic Plan* was published in July 1976. The plan set out a twenty year programme, striking a balance between housing, industry and recreation. Transport infrastructure was to be improved through a Jubilee Line extension and northern and southern relief roads. There were to be 23,000 new dwellings, mostly for renting. The plan sought to build on existing employment, particularly in industry, and some docks would be retained for economic activity.<sup>6</sup> For a variety of reasons little progress was made in implementing the *Plan*. Firstly, the DJC was a co-ordinating and planning body; the action would have to be carried out by the boroughs, which were to develop their own local plans. Secondly, the DJC lacked powers, particularly regarding the purchase of land.<sup>7</sup> Thirdly, the *Plan* required £1.1 billion of public investment during a time of public spending cuts and the Government made it clear that no additional money would be forthcoming for Docklands.<sup>8</sup>

### Urban Development Corporations

The Conservative government elected in May 1979 had a very different strategy for redevelopment. The new Secretary of State for the Environment, Michael Heseltine, announced that he would be creating Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) for Liverpool and London Docklands. UDCs would have the power to compulsorily purchase land; land held by public bodies could be vested in them by the Secretary of State; and they would take over from local authorities as the planning authority in their area. They were to be accountable to the Secretary of State, not local councils or residents.

The Local Government Planning and Land Act was passed in 1980, but due to an oversight, the order to establish the Docklands UDC could be and was challenged by the GLC and the boroughs. A House of Lords Select Committee then considered petitions against the creation of the UDC. The Government argued that only a unified body with strong powers, backed with public money, could drive through regeneration and attract private investment.<sup>9</sup> However, the petitioners rejected claims that the DJC had made little progress and argued that the order would take powers away from the local democratically elected bodies.<sup>10</sup>

In the meantime, Heseltine decided to press ahead and appointed a shadow team to begin planning, including Reg Ward as Chief Executive, Nigel Broackes as Chairman and Bob Mellish MP as Vice Chairman. The Lords Committee considered petitions against the creation of the UDC from February to May 1981 and in early June declared themselves in

---

<sup>4</sup> R. Travers Morgan and partners, Dockland Study Team, *Docklands: Redevelopment Proposals for East London, vol. 1: Main Report*, (London: R. Travers Morgan, 1973).

<sup>5</sup> Docklands Joint Committee, *London Docklands – Past, Present and Future*, (London: DJC, October 1980), p.6.

<sup>6</sup> DJC, *London Docklands Strategic Plan: Summary*, (London: DJC, July 1976), Newham Archives, Stratford Library.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Hebbert, 'One "Planning Disaster" after Another: London Docklands, 1970-1992', *London Journal*, vol. 17, no.2 (1992), pp. 115-34 (at p.121).

<sup>8</sup> Foster, *Docklands*, pp. 50-3; Hebbert, 'One "Planning Disaster"', p.121;

<sup>9</sup> House of Lords Select Committee, *Report on the London Docklands Development Corporation (Area and Constitution) Order 1980*, (London: HMSO, 1981), paras. 6.1-6.8.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 7.1-7.2.

favour of it, saying that 'nothing will be done unless there is a change of approach'.<sup>11</sup> A condition was added that the Corporation should try to engage the local community through consultation with the Docklands Forum, an umbrella organisation representing different local groups and interests, but questions were raised about how much impact this would have.<sup>12</sup>

### The LDDC

The London Docklands Development Corporation came into being on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1981 and covered 5,100 acres of three London boroughs: Newham, Tower Hamlets and Southwark. The sections of Greenwich and Lewisham which had made up the DJC's Docklands area were excluded. In the same month the Government vested land held by the GLC, Tower Hamlets, Newham and the PLA in the LDDC. The Corporation's funds came from a central government grant and the sale of land, and the chief executive was accountable to a board appointed by the Secretary of State. The Corporation was to be a temporary organisation which would hand back the area to the boroughs once the process of regeneration was complete.

The LDDC's main powers related to the purchase and disposal of land. It replaced the boroughs as the planning authority in Docklands and also had powers and money for new infrastructure, particularly transport. The Corporation's remit did not include public services such as health, education or public housing, which remained the statutory responsibility of the boroughs. Thus, the LDDC's focus was on the physical transformation of the area rather than social regeneration, in which the LDDC had limited powers and responsibilities.

The Corporation's strategy was to attract private investment and act as a catalyst for regeneration. This meant challenging and changing the perceptions of private sector investors. Public funds needed to be allocated to address problems which made Docklands unappealing, such as poor transport links and infrastructure. If sufficient private investment could be attracted and projects successfully completed, it was thought that regeneration would gather a self-sustaining momentum, attracting further investment and development.

The Government and LDDC Chief Executive Reg Ward argued that the detailed planning of earlier schemes had discouraged investors and that redevelopment had become bogged down in bureaucracy. A looser, quicker and more relaxed planning regime was needed to kick-start regeneration. For the same reason, consultation periods on proposed developments were to be brief, usually no more than fourteen days.<sup>13</sup> Another key element of the Government's regeneration strategy was the creation of an Enterprise Zone in the Isle of Dogs in 1982. Enterprise Zones offered big incentives to private developers and investors for a ten year period. These included tax breaks for the development of commercial and industrial buildings; exemption from local government rates; and the simplification of planning procedures. The response of the GLC and the boroughs was to set up the Docklands Consultative Committee (DCC) to continue the work of the DJC, monitor the Corporation, and promote the ailing *Strategic Plan*.

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., para. 8.4.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., para. 8.7.

<sup>13</sup> DCC, *Urban Consultative Committee: Six Years in London's Docklands*, (London: DCC, Feb 1988), p.3, in Docklands Consultative Committee Agendas, July 1982-Mar 1983, Newham Archives, Stratford Library.

### Private Housing

The Corporation began by promoting private housing development. At the time, 95% of the population lived in rented accommodation, mostly owned by local authorities. The LDDC argued that a more balanced housing mix was needed to draw in potential investors, but the Docklands Forum and JDAG condemned the focus on private housing, arguing that the needs of local people for affordable housing were being neglected. By 1987 the Docklands Consultative Committee asserted that rising land values and house prices had priced locals out of the market, encouraged speculation and oversupply, and created a bubble.<sup>14</sup> The LDDC's policy led to a significant change in the housing make-up. Between 1981 and 1991 the proportion of owner-occupiers rose from 5% to 38% and the proportion of households in local authority housing fell from 83% to 39%.<sup>15</sup>

### Transport Infrastructure

Another early priority was building up the Docklands transport infrastructure. This had long been recognised as a problem: the *Strategic Plan* proposed an extension to the Jubilee Line from central London and the creation of northern and southern relief roads, but lack of financial support from central government meant that these plans were not realised.

In 1982, Reg Ward proposed the development of a light railway, which had the advantage of being relatively cheap, partly as it would run on old railway lines and viaducts. He hoped that it would also attract interest and help to project a new image of Docklands. The government approved £77 million of funding in 1983 and construction started a year later. Jointly financed by the LDDC and London Transport, the original Docklands Light Railway was completed in summer 1987, with extensions to Bank and Beckton in 1991 and 1994.

New roads serving the Isle of Dogs and the Royal Docks were built in 1982-83 and 1989-90 respectively. In the north of Docklands the Limehouse Link and a series of other roads created an east-west trunk road from the City to the Royal Docks and beyond, cutting across the top of the Isle of Dogs. This was completed in May 1993.

### City Airport

One of the most controversial parts of the Docklands regeneration was the proposal for a Short Take Off and Landing airport (STOLport) in the central road between Royal Albert and King George V Docks. It was in part a revival of an earlier plan in the 1970s, to build a STOLport in Maplin Sands in Essex.<sup>16</sup> Reg Ward proposed the idea in 1981 and by the end of the year, the construction company Mowlem and Brymon Airways had developed a draft proposal.

A public inquiry into the planned STOLport was held in 1983. Opponents such as JDAG and the Campaign Against the Airport argued that the environmental costs, especially noise pollution, would not be outweighed by economic benefits. The net job creation was likely to

---

<sup>14</sup> Docklands Forum, *Housing in Docklands*, (London: Docklands Forum, February 1987); JDAG, *Housing in Docklands*, (London: JDAG, n.d. [1987?]), pp. 8-9, both in JDAG Archives, Museum in Docklands, Box 9.

<sup>15</sup> Alan Cox, *Docklands in the Making: The Redevelopment of the Isle of Dogs, 1981-1995*, (Survey of London series), (London: Athlone Press/Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, 1995), p.24.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Heseltine, *Life in the Jungle: My Autobiography*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2000), pp. 151-3.

be small, with many high-skilled jobs transferred from elsewhere. They also doubted whether there was sufficient demand to make the airport economically viable.<sup>17</sup>

At the public inquiry the Newham Docklands Forum presented its alternative to the proposed STOLport, in the form of *The People's Plan*. This was set within the general framework established by the *Strategic Plan* of 1976 and envisaged an important role for the GLC and Newham Council. It was the most comprehensive scheme to be proposed by opponents of the Corporation in the 1980s and aimed to meet local needs in housing, employment and recreation. It proposed the building of new, low-density accommodation with gardens, mostly for rent. The employment strategy was based on using the docks for cargo handling and ship repair; industrial development; creating public enterprises; and co-operatives. Recreation came in the form of greater open space, including parks; a water centre; and a children's centre and park.<sup>18</sup> A People's Plan Centre was established with financial help from the GLC.

The public inquiry into the STOLport lasted four months and in summer 1984 the Inspector reported in favour of granting planning permission, whilst stipulating conditions relating to night flying, noise and other issues. The GLC launched an unsuccessful challenge in the High Court and the Government finally approved the scheme in June 1985; London City Airport was opened in autumn 1987.

#### Commercial Property and Canary Wharf

The LDDC sought to diversify and expand the Docklands economy into new sectors, such as services. Commercial property development—particularly office space—was needed, especially to house the businesses attracted to the Enterprise Zone on the Isle of Dogs. In the early days, Docklands commercial developments had much in common with business parks erected elsewhere in Britain, generally being low-density 'shiny sheds' or having courtyard-style layouts.<sup>19</sup> This changed with Canary Wharf, a large development of office, hotel and retail space.

The Canary Wharf plan immediately aroused opposition from the JDAG, DCC, the Association of Island Communities (AIC) and many local people. Ted Johns, leader of the AIC, organised a mock funeral procession to mark the death of the community on the Isle of Dogs. A number of criticisms were made. The sheer size and scale of the project marked it out from previous developments, but as it was to be built in the Enterprise Zone planning permission could be granted without a public inquiry. Canary Wharf had poor transport links and it was not clear that there was sufficient demand for office space outside the City to make it viable. There were also architectural concerns about the design and the quantity and quality of public space.<sup>20</sup> Although the LDDC's *Docklands News* announced 'CITY MOVE TO CANARY WHARF:

---

<sup>17</sup> Robert J. Colenutt, 'JDAG STOLport Inquiry Evidence', typescript, n.d. [1983?], pp. 58-60; Bob Colenutt and Hilary Wainwright, *Newham's Campaign Against the Airport, Docklands Airport Expansion Plans: The Evidence*, (n.d. [1983?]), both in JDAG Archives, Museum in Docklands, Box 2.

<sup>18</sup> Newham Docklands Forum, *The People's Plan for the Royal Docks*, (London: Newham Docklands Forum, November 1983), pp. 7-8, 11-12, 16-19.

<sup>19</sup> Cox, *Docklands in the Making*, p.45.

<sup>20</sup> For examples of these criticisms see JDAG, 'The Canary Wharf Development: A Background Paper by the JDAG', 14 Jan. 1986, pp. 6-7; DCC, 'Canary Wharf', 12 May 1986, p.2, in Canary Wharf: Borough Comments folder; undated letter from JDAG to Kenneth Baker, Secretary of State for the Environment, in Canary Wharf: JDAG/Forum folder; all in JDAG Archives, Museum in Docklands, Box 4.

Finance Centre to Bring Thousands of Jobs',<sup>21</sup> critics doubted that local people would see many of these. JDAG argued that Canary Wharf showed that 'local communities were now expendable': sacrificed for a massive, speculative project whose commercial prospects were far from certain; it would become 'a mausoleum for a vanished community and a monument to speculators' greed'.<sup>22</sup>

The proposal for the Canary Wharf development was originally put forward by a consortium of three American investment banks in April 1986. Financial deregulation and electronic technology meant that stocks and shares could now be traded outside the City of London and created a demand for large computerised dealing rooms. The American plan proposed 10 million sq. ft. of office, hotel and retail space on the site at West India Dock, the focal point being three 850 ft towers. However, the developer was unable to raise sufficient finance and in July 1987 two of the banks pulled out, and the future of the project was put in doubt.

### Olympia and York

To rescue the scheme, the Corporation chairman Christopher Benson approached the Canadian firm Olympia and York. It had experience in developing unpromising, cheap sites in North America and turning them into attractive office complexes rented to top companies. It would build, own and manage Canary Wharf. The firm was in a strong position to extract concessions from the LDDC and got a good price for the land.<sup>23</sup> Olympia and York was keen to counter the bad publicity that Canary Wharf had received, and developed a community dimension to the project, although some complained that this was a PR exercise, with few benefits resulting for local people. The developers recruited Peter Wade, chair of the AIC, and brought most of their construction materials by water rather than road to limit the congestion and noise for local residents.<sup>24</sup>

The new plan had one rather than three towers. Construction started in late 1987 and the first phase was completed by 1991, including the Canary Wharf tower (No.1 Canada Square) designed by Cesar Pelli. By then, however, Olympia and York was in financial trouble, hit by the property slump; the firm filed for bankruptcy in North America and Canary Wharf went into administration in May 1992.<sup>25</sup> Despite the collapse of Olympia and York, Canary Wharf's prospects improved with the recovery in the property market, while Government approval and private money meant that the Jubilee Line extension could go ahead.

### LDDC and community relations<sup>26</sup>

As earlier passages of this report have shown, a criticism frequently made of the LDDC was that it was undemocratic and its consultation was inadequate. The Corporation was supposed to maintain a dialogue with the Docklands Forum, but the body felt that it was

---

<sup>21</sup> *Docklands News*, no.29, Oct/Nov 1985, front page, in Canary Wharf: LDDC folder, JDAG Archives, Museum in Docklands, Box 4.

<sup>22</sup> JDAG, 'The Canary Wharf Development: A Background Paper by the JDAG', 14 Jan. 1986, p.7, JDAG Archives, Museum in Docklands, Box 4.

<sup>23</sup> Cox, *Docklands in the Making*, pp. 54-6.

<sup>24</sup> Foster, *Docklands*, pp. 225-30, 235.

<sup>25</sup> Cox, *Docklands in the Making*, pp. 57-63.

<sup>26</sup> This section is based on Sue Brownill, *Developing London's Docklands: Another Great Planning Disaster?*, (London: Paul Chapman, 1990), pp. 152-70; Sue Brownill, Konnie Razzaque and Ben Kochan, 'From Exclusion to Partnership?: The LDDC and Community Consultation and Participation?', *Rising East: The Journal of East London Studies*, vol. 2, no.2 (1998), pp. 42-72; Foster, *Docklands*, pp. 157, 209-39,



kept in the dark and misled, particularly about Canary Wharf.<sup>27</sup> The Docklands Community Poster Project expressed these concerns using visually striking imagery and slogans such as, "What's going on behind our backs?" and "Big money is moving in. Don't let it push out local people."<sup>28</sup> Although local people experienced the disruption, congestion and noise that came with development, many felt that there were getting little benefit. Employment remained a controversial issue. The Corporation's job creation figures were frequently contested by opponents like the JDAG, which argued that many jobs were not new but transferred from elsewhere; that existing jobs in industry more suited to local skills were being lost; and that unless there was significant investment in training, people would not be able to compete for new jobs, particularly in the emerging service sectors.

In the late 1980s, the antagonism between the LDDC and its opponents began to change. The property slump took the pace out of development and the Corporation sought to consolidate. It also had to respond to increasing criticism from developers, the media, parliamentary committees, the Department for the Environment, and residents that its focus was too narrow and it needed to do more for local people. Developers, following Olympia and York, began to take a more conciliatory attitude to community relations. The LDDC's new chief executive, Michael Honey, appointed in 1988, set up a community relations department and sought to do more for social regeneration.

At the same time, opponents altered their position. Outright opposition seemed to have been ineffective. At one meeting in 1987, 'The [Docklands] Forum was challenged to say what, if anything, it had ever achieved.'<sup>29</sup> It was also clear that regeneration would continue, particularly after the abolition of the GLC in 1986 and another Conservative election victory in 1987. The councils now attempted to secure some concrete gains for local people from new developments. In 1988, Tower Hamlets signed a 'Social Accord' with the LDDC: in exchange for agreeing to the Limehouse Link (which displaced council tenants), the council got a package which included the re-housing of displaced tenants and investment in education and training.<sup>30</sup>

There was then a shift in emphasis; and social regeneration and community relations were given greater attention than before. However, this came at a time when the Corporation was subject to growing financial pressures. The costs of transport infrastructure were spiralling and the Corporation experienced a loss in revenue due to the recession in the property market. As a result, there were smaller funds available for social housing, community facilities and education and training programmes. Even so, it remained important to maintain decent relations to secure a smooth handover from the LDDC to the boroughs. The LDDC withdrew from Southwark in 1995-96, Wapping, Limehouse and the Isle of Dogs were returned to Tower Hamlets in 1997; Beckton was returned to Newham in 1996 and the last area, the Royal Docks was returned to the same borough in 1998. The LDDC was dissolved in July 1998.

### Legacy

There have been different assessments of the impact and legacy of the LDDC, but supporters and critics agree that the Docklands have been physically transformed. As part of the

---

<sup>27</sup> Docklands Forum, 'Canary Wharf Consultation Report, Summary and Conclusions', Jan 1987, item 7b, Docklands Forum, Minutes and Papers, Nov 1986-Dec 1987, Newham Archives, Stratford Library.

<sup>28</sup> Docklands Community Poster Project 1981-8, see [www.arte-ofchange.com](http://www.arte-ofchange.com)

<sup>29</sup> Docklands Forum minutes, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1987, item 12, in Docklands Forum, Minutes and Papers, Nov 1986-Dec 1987, Newham Archives, Stratford Library.

<sup>30</sup> Foster, *Docklands*, pp. 218-24.

winding up process, the Corporation had to produce a range of reports detailing its work in different areas, such as transport, housing, employment, property and community relations. The *Regeneration Statement* published in March 1998 summarised the content of these reports and is the Corporation's account of its achievements.

As evidence of regeneration, the report said that the housing stock had increased from 15,000 dwellings in 1981 to 38,000 in 1998 and that home ownership had risen from 5% to 45% in the same period. Employment had risen from 27,200 in 1981 to 85,000 in 1998, much of it in the 11.2 million sq. ft. of office space on the Isle of Dogs. As a result, the Docklands population had doubled from 39,400 in 1981 to 83,000 in 1998. The Corporation spent 7% of their total budget (£120 million) on community infrastructure and facilities, including centres, education and training programmes, and social housing.<sup>31</sup> The total cost of the regeneration in public money was £3.9 billion, 48% from the LDDC, 25% from London Transport, and 27% from the loss of revenue created through tax breaks in the Enterprise Zone. Half of the money was spent on transport infrastructure. Public spending attracted £8.7 billion of private sector investment.<sup>32</sup> The consultants commissioned by the Department of the Environment to evaluate regeneration concluded that this represented good value for money. They added that a final evaluation of the benefits of regeneration would only be possible in 2010 or 2015 by which time the figures relating to housing, employment, population and other baseline indicators were likely to be even better.<sup>33</sup>

Critics like Sue Brownill, formerly of Docklands Forum, presented a very different picture of regeneration and the LDDC. She argued that development was unbalanced, and, despite the Corporation's attempt to create a community dimension to its work, too little had been done for local people. Furthermore, Janet Foster argued that a lack of consultation and the scale, size and pace of redevelopment had reinforced a sense of powerlessness among existing residents.<sup>34</sup> It has been suggested that by adopting an approach orientated towards private investment, the LDDC missed an opportunity to regenerate in the interests of new and old residents, the nation and the locality. There were alternative forms of regeneration, notably the type envisaged by the *Strategic Plan* and *People's Plan* which could have been realised if they had been given the same powers, finance and support as the LDDC. Infrastructure, particularly transport, lagged behind the pace of development.<sup>35</sup> From a different perspective, architectural commentators complained that the LDDC's unplanned approach had resulted in a mishmash of styles and designs.

On its withdrawal, the LDDC admitted that regeneration was 'insufficiently far advanced'<sup>36</sup> and endowed the Royal Docks Trust with money to support community projects. The regeneration programme was taken forward by English Partnerships and Newham, with the

---

<sup>31</sup> All these figures are from LDDC, *Regeneration Statement*, (London: LDDC, March 1998), accessed from <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/regenstat/index.html#Main>

<sup>32</sup> The spending figures and breakdowns are from John Rhodes and Peter Taylor, 'Evaluating the LDDC: Regenerating London's Docklands', *Rising East: The Journal of East London Studies*, vol. 2, no.2 (1998), pp. 32-41 (at p.32).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33.

<sup>34</sup> Foster, *Docklands*, p.95.

<sup>35</sup> These criticisms are distilled from Brownill, *Developing London's Docklands*, pp. 175-78; DCC, Urban Consultative Committee: Six Years in London's Docklands, (London: DCC, Feb 1988), pp. 38-9, in Docklands Consultative Committee Agendas, July 1982-Mar 1983, Newham Archives, Stratford Library; Foster, *Docklands*, pp. 322-24.

<sup>36</sup> LDDC, *Regeneration Statement*, <http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/regenstat/index.html#Main>

former succeeded by the London Development Agency in 2000, which is accountable to the Mayor of London. There have been a number of significant developments since 1998, including a new campus for the University of East London, but future projects remain dependent on an improved transport infrastructure.

The creation of the LDDC was established as a response to the decline of the Docklands area. It was an approach that saw attracting private investment as central and favoured swift planning and implementation over detailed consultation. As such, it drew opposition from those who felt that development should occur with greater consideration for, and involvement of, the local community. Whatever one's feelings about it, the regeneration initiated by the LDDC created significant changes which remain evident today, with Canary Wharf and financial buildings dominating the Docklands skyline. Beyond the architecture, however, the social and economic results of the LDDC remain open to interpretation. The witness seminar will provide an opportunity to consider what the LDDC sought to achieve, where it was successful and whether there were any unintended consequences.

#### Suggested Questions for Discussion

1. How well equipped was the LDDC to manage the corporate environment? Did it give the private sector an easy ride, or was it necessary to provide heavy incentives to attract big investors?
2. To what extent was the LDDC endeavour ideologically driven? Or was it purely a pragmatic response to an intransigent economic position?
3. How did local residents respond to the LDDC? How did this relationship change?
4. How successfully did local residents organise and represent their own interests?
5. Could the local authorities have done more to reap the benefits of development for their constituents? Should they have compromised earlier?
6. Was the LDDC flawed by design? Should there have been greater scope to develop in the interests of local people, e.g. housing?
7. What unintended consequences were caused by the regeneration of Docklands? To what extent has the LDDC been unfairly blamed for the social tensions in the area?
8. What was the architectural impact of development under the LDDC? How has it changed the built environment in Docklands?
9. How did the development of Docklands change employment prospects in the area?
10. What will be the ultimate legacy of the LDDC? How has it informed subsequent programmes of regeneration?