

News Release

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BALFOUR BEATTY AND FAIRCLOUGH WIN LIMEHOUSE LINK CONTRACT

Construction of the 1.8 km Limehouse Link tunnel will start in November, following today's award of a £171m contract to Balfour Beatty - Fairclough (Limehouse Link) Joint Venture by the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC).

The Limehouse Link, a four lane tunnel, will link The Highway, at the junction of Butcher Row and Narrow Street in the west, to Westferry Road and the proposed Poplar Link, at North Quay, on the Isle of Dogs. The section to Westferry Road is scheduled for completion in mid 1993. The full scheme, to Poplar Link, is expected to open in Autumn 1993, six months ahead of original projections.

At the contract signing, attended by Michael Portillo, Minister of State for Transport, LDDC Chairman, David Hardy commented: "This is a magnificent achievement for the Corporation and the many people who have worked over the past few years to get our major highways schemes on site. It is less than three years since we commissioned Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners to carry out the detailed design for the Limehouse Link and within weeks we will see a start on site. This gives an indication of the pace at which major transport infrastructure is being built in Docklands.

"The Limehouse Link will cater for increased traffic generated by the new commercial and residential developments which are bringing thousands of jobs to Docklands. However, because the road is in tunnel the local nature of the Limehouse area will also be preserved. We are also very pleased that under the Accord, signed with Tower Hamlets Council earlier this month, we have the opportunity to improve the housing conditions of up to 450 families who live in this area and to fund a package of community, education and training initiatives."

Prior to choosing the present scheme the Corporation considered a range of options for providing increased road capacity to the western side of the Isle of Dogs: the widening of Commercial Road; a river based scheme and an at grade road. The construction of a tunnel, at its base up to 19 metres below ground, emerged as the most economically and environmentally acceptable option.

By linking numerous parcels of derelict, underused or cleared areas of land, the route minimises the amount of demolition required. The route only requires the demolition of 113 Council dwellings: Burrell House at the junction of Narrow Street and Butcher Row, and Garford House and Windward House on St Vincents Estate. However, under the Accord with Tower Hamlets, the Corporation has agreed to provide replacement housing for up to 450 Council tenants who will be directly affected by Corporation road schemes and to refurbish other properties near to the line of the new roads.

In addition, the underground route allows reinstatement and redevelopment, to provide new homes, shops, commercial and leisure opportunities, when construction is completed. The Limehouse Link has been designed so that buildings up to a height of 6 storeys can be built over the route. Ropemaker's Fields, to the east of Limehouse Basin, will be reinstated as a fully landscaped park.

Disruption during construction will be minimised by the 'cut and cover' technique as once the roof and tunnel walls are in place, most of the work will take place underground. Narrow Street will be open to traffic throughout the construction period. The contractor will also be required to use the river for delivery and removal of materials and the LDDC has already contributed £1.5M towards a new lock entrance at Limehouse Basin.

For further information contact:

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Note to Editors

THE SCHEME

1. The Board of the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) approved the Limehouse Link, as part of its highways strategy in June 1986. At the same time it resolved to make Compulsory Purchase Orders on land required for the highways schemes.
2. The Corporation commissioned Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners to complete feasibility studies and carry out the detailed design for the Limehouse Link at the end of 1986.
3. The Limehouse Link Compulsory Purchase Order was made by the Corporation on 29 April 1988.
4. Planning permission for the Limehouse Link scheme was granted on 4 July 1988.
5. A public inquiry into the LDDC's Limehouse Link Compulsory Purchase Order, the associated road closure order and four conservation area consents was held between 18 October and 16 November 1988.
6. Six contractors/groups of contractors from the United Kingdom and Europe were invited to tender for the contract to build the Limehouse Link on 6 December 1988. Tenders were received in May 1989.
7. Nicholas Ridley, then Secretary of State for the Environment and Paul Channon, then Secretary of State for Transport, jointly confirmed the Limehouse Link Compulsory Purchase Order on 27 June 1989. In addition Mr Ridley granted the conservation area consents and Mr Channon confirmed the road closure order.

The Limehouse Link is one of a number of highways schemes being progressed by the LDDC to improve access to Docklands. These include the widening of Westferry Road, from the Millwall Lock entrance northwards to Westferry Circus; improvements to West India Dock Road, including the realignment of the junction with East India Dock Road, the Poplar Link and improvements to Prestons Road, including a new flyover at the junction with the Poplar Link and the East India Dock Link.

Schemes in the Royal Docks include the widening of North Woolwich Road, the Royal Albert Dock Spine Road, the Connaught Crossing and the Eastern Gateway Access Road which is scheduled to open next week.