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THE REBIRTH OF THE ROYALS

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The draft development framework for the transformation of the massive Royal Docks area of London Docklands has been published by the London Docklands Development Corporation.

The potential for the 270 hectares of land and water of the Royal Docks - now the major task of the LDDC - is immense. Just five miles from the centre of London, the Royals form one of the largest remaining urban redevelopment sites in Europe. Superimposed on a map of Central London, the area stretches from the Tower of London to Marble Arch east/west and from Euston to Waterloo North/South.

The Corporation's aims for the Royal Docks are: to achieve a vision of the future which responds to this magnificent site - a new city for the 21st Century; to make an early start on upgrading the environment and on building the infrastructure on which so much depends; to allow for implementation on the basis of incremental, progressive and flexible growth; and to help with community needs in the surrounding areas.

The development framework exploits the theme of a unique area of potentially prime development land just five miles from Central London; an innovative and visionary water city for business and commerce, leisure and recreation; with development sites of a size rare in London, with dramatic waterfront settings.

The commercial potential for major individual developments is concentrated at three key focal points: at the western end of the Royal Victoria Dock; the central point by the Connaught crossing and the far eastern end by Albert Basin; all on the land areas to the north of the Docks complex.

Development themes suggested include an exhibition/convention centre; a sports and leisure complex; business and commercial activities; and a large marine centre in the east, close to the newly-constructed craft lock at the Albert Basin. Lower-key and less concentrated developments - business and residential schemes for example - would occur between these main focal points and in the areas around the Docks.

As elsewhere in Docklands, the Corporation sees the retention of the Dock waters as an essential physical, commercial, and community attraction, providing the setting for new buildings and unrivalled water park activities: windsurfing, dinghy sailing, powerboat racing; first-class canoe and rowing events; major boat exhibitions and marina facilities.

Perceptions and accessibility of the Royals are being transformed by several major transport schemes; the South Woodford to Barking Relief Road; the East London River Crossing; the Eastern Gateway Access Road; STOLport; new and improved rail links (possible extension of DLR eastwards and upgrading of BR North London Line); and a possible new Thames Riverbus service.

Development of these four modes of transport - road, rail, air and river - will allow new activity to locate in the Royals, regional, national and potentially international in scale and flavour. New jobs, commercial and service activities will be generated, with major benefits to Docklands and East London as a whole.

To trigger development of the highest quality and to ensure a ratio of private to public investment equal to or exceeding that so far attained in Docklands, the Corporation intends to make an early start on the following major infrastructure:

- a main spine road replacing the existing convoluted system and providing clear links through the area;
- a major new north/south bridge link in the central dock area replacing a narrow 100-year old bridge;
- a comprehensive £20 million drainage system, vital to any new development;
- major landscaping throughout the area.

Commenting on the framework document, Christopher Benson, LDDC Chairman said "The development of the Royal Docks will clearly take time to achieve its full potential. We have made a positive decision to publish our initial thoughts on its future at an early stage in the programme - both to inform the public and to make the point that we will be receptive to ideas and initiatives from a variety of sources. The framework is not a rigid masterplan but a series of intelligent departure points for future growth. If the physical framework is strong and attractive enough, the Corporation is confident of its ability to attract and guide new activities to the most appropriate places in the years ahead. There is great potential here "a national economic opportunity"

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For further information and copies of the Framework documents please contact: Patricia Trinnaman
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