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[Docklands visionary dies](#)



The next time you take a DLR or perhaps curse as a plane takes off from the increasingly busy City Airport, spare a moment's thought for [Reg Ward](#). For when the history of post-1980s east London is written in full, it is likely that his name will feature more prominently than most others.

He was the first chief executive of the London Docklands Development Corporation, the controversial but incredibly powerful and visionary quango set up by Michael Heseltine in Margaret Thatcher's government in 1981.

Many played a part in the transformation of the former docks into what is now some of the world's most lucrative office space, but it is widely accepted that Ward was the major on-the-ground driving force. The DLR and City Airport were both his ideas.

He died last Thursday, aged 82. He leaves two children, John and Sarah. David Donoghue, the director of information at the LDDC and now a serious player in preserving the heritage of Spitalfields, has written the following:

Reg Ward, Chief Executive of the London Docklands Development Corporation from 1981 to 1987, who developed and saw through the plans for the DLR, London City Airport, the Royal Docks, Surrey Quays and Canary Wharf, died in hospital on Thursday 6th January 2011. He had many fans, not least amongst the community and his staff, who still hold regular meetings to celebrate his regime.

A tribute to him on the [LDDC veteran's website](#) says: "So much of what the London Docklands are today is a direct result of Reg's huge vision for the area. He was much loved by all who worked for him in those heady days and he will be greatly missed."

"Reg was the Corporation's first Chief Executive (1981-87) from whose vision flowed so much of what you see in Docklands today. Indeed, the Olympics bid could never have been successful without Reg's work to create infrastructure and put East London on the map."

Born in the Forest of Dean, Reg started his career in the Inland Revenue and later filled posts with a northern firm of architects and Irvine New Town. Before joining LDDC in the “shadow period” in 1980 he had been Chief Executive first of the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and then of the County of Hereford and Worcester. After he left LDDC he spent many years working on major regeneration projects around the world, the most recent being in St Kitts in the West Indies.

In his last years Reg took life little easier at his home near his daughter at Broadwell Manor. In April 2004 Reg and his wife Betty celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary with a lunchtime party at Stow-in-the-Wold attended by many of the LDDC’s original staff. Betty died early in 2010.

Some early staff comments:

“What a pity we couldn’t have got some sort of recognition for all he did. Still we who knew him well knew that he was the force behind LDDC and there is a lasting memorial of him in all the development in Docklands”.

“it was an honour to have known him”

“He was truly a great man and he will be sorely missed by those of us with whom he worked at the LDDC in its early years.”

“The 30th Anniversary of the incorporation of LDDC is on 2nd July 2011. Reg would have played a key part in such a celebration and quite what we will do about this now is uncertain!”

” He was a true inspiration: a genius who achieved an enormous amount, whilst remaining ever polite, calm and helpful. An absolute original”.

The next full Tower Hamlets council meeting is on February 2. It would be good to see some mark of respect for him then.

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