



# **London Docklands Development Corporation**

**1981-1998**

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## **An Overview**



## London Docklands Development Corporation 1981-1998

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### What was the LDDC?

- an urban development corporation (UDC) set up by the Government under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980

### Statutory objects

A UDC is expected to secure the regeneration of its area by:

- Bringing land and buildings into effective use
- Encouraging the development of existing and new industry and commerce
- Creating an attractive environment and ensuring that housing and social facilities are available to encourage people to live and work in the area



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### Why was LDDC set up?

The Government's response to the severe economic, physical and social damage caused to East London by the closure of London's docks

***“The place was a tip: 6,000 acres of forgotten wasteland”***  
– Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State, 1981

***“Conventional local government solutions failed to halt the accelerating decline. A new approach was needed.”***  
– Nicholas Ridley, Secretary of State 1986



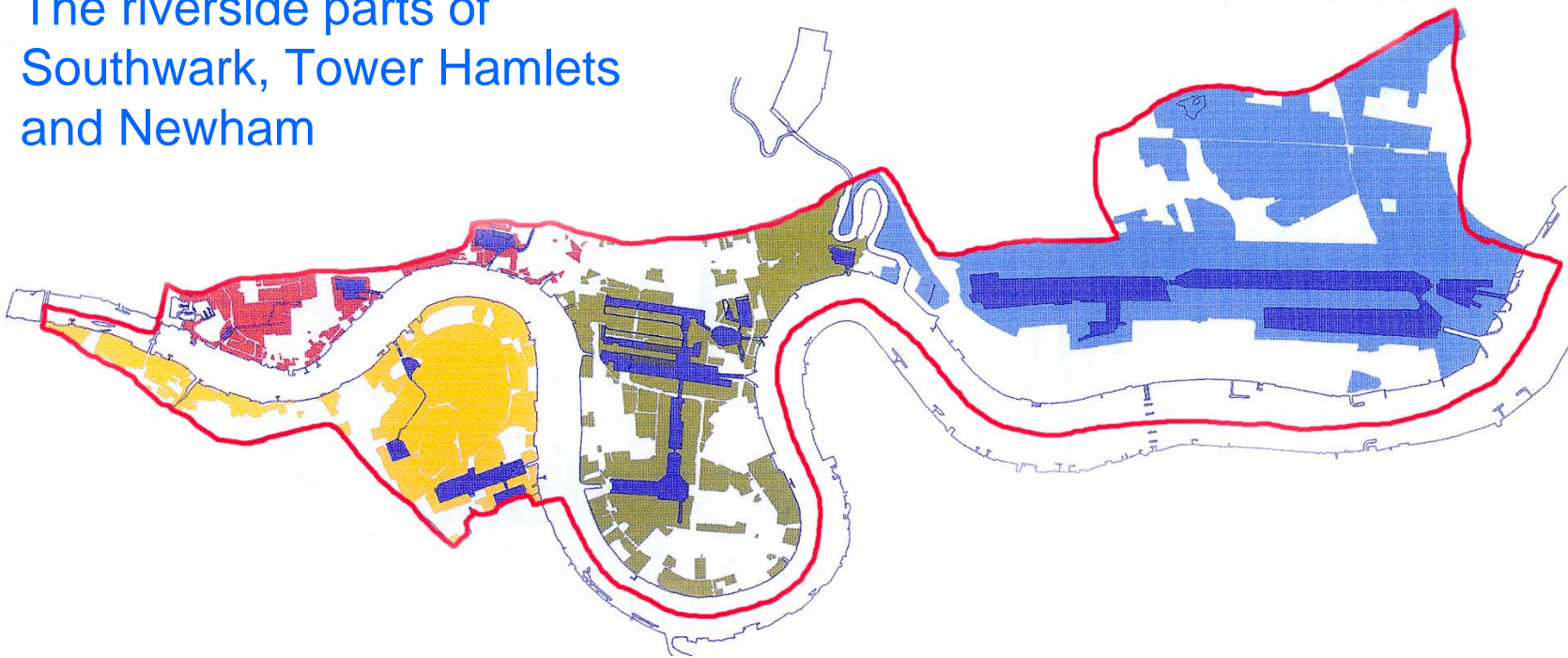
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## The LDDC's area

The riverside parts of  
Southwark, Tower Hamlets  
and Newham

Area = 8.5 square miles



Coloured areas show derelict land and waters in 1981



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### **The area in 1981** (Government Study)

- Catastrophic recent job losses
- High proportion of public sector land
- 95% social housing
- Local blue collar job skills did not match growth areas of the London economy.
- Severe dereliction made development costs very high and uncertain
- Government intervention required to cover extraordinary costs of land reclamation, infrastructure and essential amenities

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### **The area in 1981 .....continued**

- Many development sites poorly served by the local infrastructure
- Poor strategic links with the rest of London, the country and internationally.
- No track record - lack of development over many years made prospects for development very uncertain

**These factors made it difficult for the market, without external intervention, to reverse the steep cycle of decline**



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### **Four Key Powers**

1. Land Acquisition
  - by agreement
  - by compulsory purchase
  - new vesting powers
2. Power to give planning permission
3. Powers to renew/revitalise the infrastructure
4. Channel for central Government Resources

### **Funding?**

- Central Government grant
- Income from sales of land



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### What the Corporation was not!

- A local authority
  - A housing authority
  - An education authority
  - A health authority
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- These functions remained with the Boroughs and other public agencies
  - Corporation could and did provide funds for the development and improvement of these service
  - Lack of remit often misunderstood by those seeking benefit for local people





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### How the LDDC worked

- Huge energy
- Flexible staffing
- No time wasted on drawing-up new town style master plans
- LDDC worked to flexible development frameworks and was ready to respond to unexpected opportunities (e.g. Canary Wharf)
- Positive development control regime - LDDC worked with applicants and tried to say “yes”
- Effective marketing and PR
- Effective project management – ability to soak up under-spends in other DoE programmes



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### The three phases of LDDC

#### 1981-1986 – Putting Docklands on the map

- Key decision not to fill-in docks
- Initial focus on the Isle of Dogs
- Selling the area - marketing and PR
- Building the DLR
- Starting the infrastructure programme
- Establishing the private housing market
- Tense relationships with Boroughs
- Limited expenditure on community facilities
- Clinching Canary Wharf

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### The three phases of LDDC... continued

#### 1987-1990 – Building the Community Infrastructure

- Community budget boosted to £100m p.a.
- Heavily increased spending on social housing, health, education and training
- Increased community staff – 50 people
- Increased support for community organisations
- Improved relationships with the Boroughs
- The Tower Hamlets Accord and Newham Memorandum signed
- Continued spending on the infrastructure programme
- Property market falls into recession – much less private investment in housing and commercial development

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### The three phases of LDDC... continued

#### 1991-1998 – The balanced programme

- Whitehall concerned that LDDC turning into a local authority
- Community expenditure reined in and focused on the Accord and Memorandum
- Still a substantial community programme (e.g. 8,000 homes refurbished)
- The market recovers
- Schemes for the Royals launched – not fully delivered by 1998
- Progressive withdrawal from 1994 onwards



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### What was achieved?

(LDDC's 1998 Annual Report)

- £1.86 billion invested by public sector
- £7.7 billion invested by private sector
- 1,066 acres of land sold for redevelopment
- 144 km of new and improved roads
- the construction of the Docklands Light Railway
- 25 million sq feet of commercial /industrial floorspace built
- 1,884 acres of derelict land reclaimed

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### **What was achieved? .....continued**

- 24,046 new homes built
- 2,700 businesses trading
- contributions to 5 new health centres and the redevelopment of 6 more
- funding towards 11 new primary schools, 2 secondary schools, 3 post-16 colleges and 9 vocational training centres
- 94 awards for architecture, conservation and landscaping
- 85,000 now at work in London Docklands



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### How well did LDDC succeed?

(1998 Government Research Study)

- Widespread multiple market failure successfully tackled
- Total public sector cost about £3,900 million (LDDC 48%, London Transport 25% Enterprise Zone 27%).
- Half the public sector cost spent on transport infrastructure.
- Private sector investment £8,700+ million by March 1998 with more to come.

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### How well did LDDC succeed... continued

- Wide range of economic, environmental and social benefits including 24,000+ housing units and 80,000+ jobs (gross)
- Housing tenure substantially more varied
- Every £1m of public sector cost generated:
  - 23 jobs (net),
  - 8500 sq m of office floorspace,
  - 7.8 housing units plus many other diverse and intermediate benefits.
- Some benefits still to materialise - the cost-benefit ratio should increase by a third by 2010 - 2015.

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### How well did LDDC succeed ... continued

- Substantial benefits for local communities and residents.
- More social housing than if LDDC had not existed.
- LDDC generated an additional 23,000 jobs in Central London by increasing the supply of high grade office accommodation which led to a more competitive financial centre

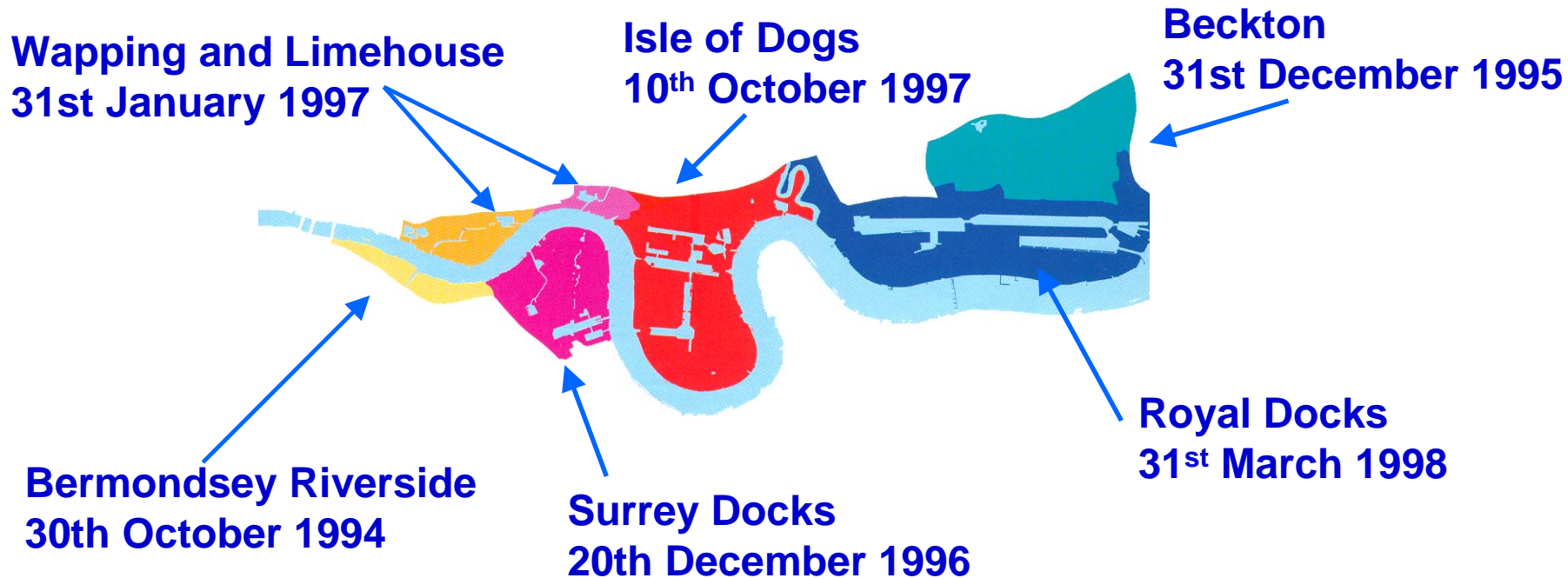


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## Dedesignation

The LDDC finished its work and left the area by stages....



The LDDC ceased to operate on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1998 and was wound up three months later



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### More Information... LDDC books

Mindful that its work aroused great interest worldwide the LDDC left :

- a Regeneration Statement
- 9 monographs on different aspects of its work
- 5 booklets about its work in particular areas

These were widely distributed but are not always easy now to obtain.....so.....

**MONOGRAPHS: Before LDDC, arts, engineering, transport, property market, working with local people, employment, planning and housing**



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### **More Information... LDDC History Website**

A group of former LDDC people have set up a website:

[www.lddc-history.org.uk](http://www.lddc-history.org.uk)

The site includes:

- **The Regeneration Statement, monographs and area booklets**
- **An e-mail service for LDDC's press releases**
- **Key personnel papers about the winding-up of the Corporation**
- **Other snippets of history**
- **Links to other useful sites**

**30,000 hits a year!**