



# Gateway to the future

Olympic-fuelled regeneration in east London

**Peter Andrews** is Chief Executive of London Thames Gateway Development Corporation (LTGDC). Here, he sets out the challenges and opportunities facing the corporation in the build-up to London 2012.

Bringing the 2012 Olympic Games to London is a truly challenging proposition. As the glow of national pride generated by Jacques Rogge's announcement last summer is starting to fade, all of us involved in the regeneration of east London are starting to come to terms with the reality of the situation. What happens next is not just about our collective ability to organise the largest and most prestigious sporting event in the world; it is also about understanding how the Games will affect life in east London for future generations.

Personally, I do not doubt our ability to deliver a highly successful Games, and as many visitors to Stratford will attest, the construction work for the impressive transport infrastructure is already at an advanced stage.

The Olympic Delivery Authority, the body responsible for constructing what will become the Olympic Precinct, is already getting on with the job of project managing the task, and some 80% of the land needed is in public control.

These parts of the plan are coming together, what about the rest of it?

## A wide-reaching legacy

We all know that over and above the prestige of hosting the Games, the real reason we are all getting involved with the Olympic business is to deliver the very thing that impressed the International Olympic Committee so much – the potential for a lasting legacy.

So what is that legacy? Well it is more than a new stadium or aquatics centre for public use – it's a much more daunting prospect. It's about touching the lives of over two million people who live and work in east London, making their lives better as a result of the Games.

How will this be achieved? Stratford and the other communities in the Lower Lea Valley need to become better places to live, for a start. But what does that mean? We must remediate brownfield land and create new, high-quality public open spaces for residents. We must introduce variety and quality to the built environment – build exciting and practical places that people want to live in, that will be truly sustainable and withstand the test of time. We need more homes, built to higher design standards, offering a range of housing, not just one bed 'crash pads' but accommodation for families.

Housing must also include an affordable dimension, so ordinary people who make up the fabric of our society, such as teachers, nurses and bus drivers, have the prospect of staying in the area and raising future generations.

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New schools, medical facilities and quality public realm are needed to support the new housing and new skills that are required to create the economy of tomorrow – the mechanism that will create recurring wealth to support the economy for decades to come.

### **LTGDC: meeting the challenge**

Hard evidence of material improvement in the built environment has to be in place by 2012, so our role in defining what is required and delivering it on the ground is key. This is the agenda that links London Thames Gateway Development Corporation to the Games. Our job is to deliver exemplary sustainable regeneration for all of the area's residents, workers and visitors on a dramatic scale, and we have the powers to get the job done.

LTGDC is a strategic planning and development authority; its task is to orchestrate the people, organisations and investment required to deliver the regeneration of the whole area. We will coordinate development plans that cross administrative boundaries, assemble sites for development, cut red tape where necessary to get decisions implemented, and finance public infrastructure to create more investment opportunities in the area for the private sector.

We will address the challenges of supporting a growing and culturally diverse population, as well as planning to integrate the thousands of additional workers who will come to the area to help construct the Olympic facilities. We must also help local people to compete for the jobs that the Olympics will generate.

It is a tall order, and one that we cannot expect to achieve within our organisational lifetime, as LTGDC has a ten-year lifespan. However, we can reasonably expect to set in train a process that will deliver significant measurable outcomes 20 to 30 years from now.

The organisation has two operational priority areas: the Lower Lea Valley, running south from Hackney Wick to the mouth of the River Lea, east of Canary Wharf; and London Riverside, a mile-wide swathe of land stretching from Beckton to Rainham Marshes.

Although physically separated by the Royal Docks, both areas' development needs are closely tied to the Olympic vision. The Lower Lea Valley has to provide an appropriate setting for the Games, which means developing its connectivity north to south and east to west, as well as improving its recreation and leisure potential to encourage visitors to stay. London Riverside, meanwhile, offers successful local businesses presently occupying the Olympic footprint – and therefore facing relocation – the prospect of moving to facilities with better amenities appropriate to their interests nearby.

### **Regeneration frameworks**

We are now developing our plans for the future in a number of ways. The most apparent method is through what we call the 'Regeneration Frameworks', one for the Lower Lea Valley, the other for London Riverside.

These strategies, prepared by professional advisors and consulted on with our partners in national, regional and local government, the business community and other interest

groups, will become the blueprint for our work. They present a wide range of social, economic and environmental information, which will be used to assess the development potential of these two areas over the next 20 years. Importantly, they prioritise areas and projects appropriate for public investment, seek to identify new areas for housing and services, such as schools and shops, and also consider what opportunities may be available to create new employment clusters.

I expect these two frameworks to be issued in draft form for public consultation during 2006. These frameworks are not the full extent of our research. We have also commissioned new work to look at skills and the economy. Other research projects will be commissioned, looking at important services such as health and culture, key factors in improving the sense of community.

But in the short term, we are setting our priorities around three issues: transport and accessibility, environmental improvements, and town and neighbourhood centres.

### Transport improvements

We share a common purpose with the Olympic Delivery Authority and others in prioritising transport links not only to the Olympic Precinct but also throughout east London and beyond. Much has already been achieved on the transport agenda in recent times, with the connection of London City Airport to the DLR network and extra capacity on the Jubilee Line. Next year will see the extension of the East London line and the start of international rail services from Stratford.

We are fortunate to have a number of important transport interchanges that will inevitably become 'hot spots' for future growth – Stratford, Canning Town, West Ham, Barking, South Dagenham and Rainham.

However, there are still a number of pressing transport infrastructure issues to resolve. A new spine road for the Lower Lea Valley running north to south, the extension of the DLR to Barking and beyond, and a new iconic transport product – the East London Transit – initially linking Ilford with South

Dagenham and ultimately connecting with south London over the proposed Thames Gateway Bridge are all integral to the successful regeneration of the sub-region. We will be working with a wide range of stakeholders to turn these plans into reality.

We anticipate the successful conclusion of the public inquiry for the Thames Gateway Bridge and anticipate further positive news on Crossrail – arguably the most important strategic transport project in the South East of England.

### Open space

Improving access to open space for the communities of the Lower Lea Valley is also an early priority for LTGDC. The network of waterways in the Lower Lea Valley offer real potential for the creation of a 'water city' – an area that will capitalise on the desirable amenity of waterside living.

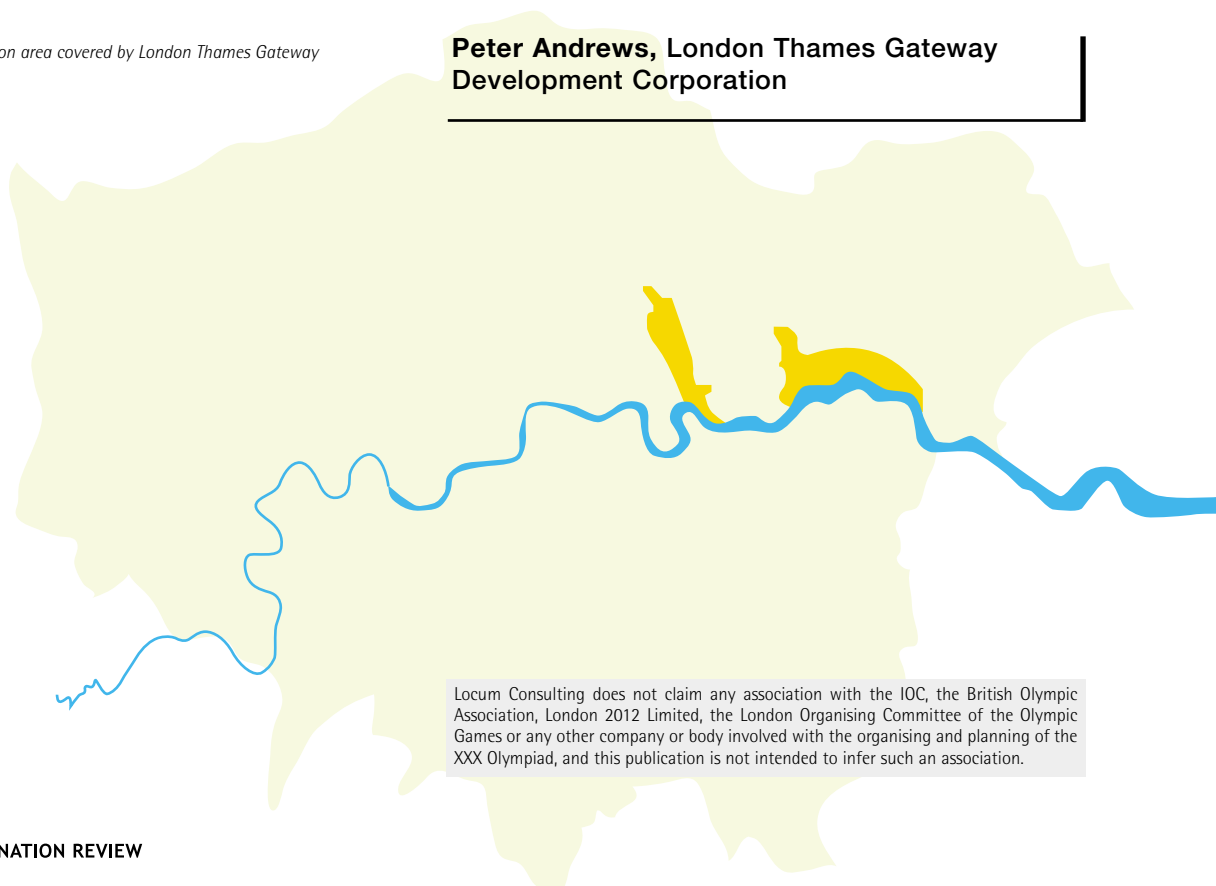
Combined with further extensions of the Lee Valley Regional Park, south through the Olympic Precinct and down to the River Thames, London will have its largest new open space in almost a century.

Clearly, a major part of the work of LTGDC is to reconcile the diverse development needs of communities across its operational area. That will require us not only to address the 'hard' issues of land assembly and site preparation, but also the 'softer' factors such as community cohesion and identity.

We must also remember that new investment in services such as water supply and treatment, as well as energy efficiency programmes, will need to be integrated into our planning if we are to deliver the scale of change that we need.

Yes, the Olympic Games is an unprecedented opportunity for east London and provides an ambitious timetable in which to effect lasting and positive change. Working in partnership with our colleagues in the public and private sectors, I am confident we will rise to the challenge.

Figure 1: Map of Greater London area covered by London Thames Gateway Development Corporation



**Peter Andrews, London Thames Gateway Development Corporation**

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