



Photograph courtesy of Marcus Leith

Transforming the Thames

From cultural rebirth to economic regeneration

The year 2000 saw the opening of three major new destinations on the banks of the River Thames – the London Eye, Tate Modern, and, of course, the Dome. These followed on the heels of other high-profile Thameside openings in the previous year, including the *bfi* London IMAX and Vinopolis – City of Wine. The Dome was an ambitious but mismanaged public sector attempt to create the UK's landmark Millennium Project, which suffered unprecedented bad press before and after opening, as considerable holes in its balance sheet were filled time after time by Lottery cash. Just upriver, Tate Modern, another high-profile public sector project, opened for business in May 2000. While the Dome had been built on a previously derelict, polluted and disconnected site out in Greenwich, Tate Modern was created in a centrally situated former power station, which generated public interest, rather than scepticism, from the outset.

The two projects could not have been further apart in their clarity of purpose and vision, one claiming somewhat fuzzily to deliver 'One amazing day', the other being Britain's new national museum of modern art. Both shared a regenerative agenda. With all its attendant negative publicity, it was easy to forget that the Dome had always been part of a wider plan for regeneration: having installed new public transport in the form of the Jubilee Line extension, the Government

planned for the landmark structure to be re-used appropriately after the year-long Millennium Experience exhibition closed, and hoped its continued presence and connectivity would attract new commercial and residential development around it. In the event, the Millennium Doom, as it should possibly have been renamed, looks unlikely to be able to play this role. Tate Modern, on the other hand, opened with a bang and has attracted only positive public and media reaction. As well as succeeding commercially, welcoming 2.9 million visitors in its first six months alone, it has been able to participate in plans for a socially inclusive economic transformation of its locality, led by the local authority. In his article on the following pages, Fred Manson, Director of Regeneration and Environment for the London Borough of Southwark, explains how his organisation has worked with Tate Modern to bring about change, through integrating culture and regeneration aims, in this deprived and heavily populated borough of the inner city. We also go beyond the hype surrounding Tate Modern and look at the visitor experience on offer: Eve Peasnall of *The Times* delivers her verdict on why it is a destination for all seasons.

Further along the Thames, at Waterloo, the *bfi* London IMAX cinema has been wowing audiences since its launch. Jon Teckman, Director of the British Film Institute, writes for us about the next major *bfi* project: a

national Film Centre. While still very much at the planning stage, the Film Centre will be a landmark in the *bfi*'s history, bringing together all its functions and reflecting the organisation's aspirations over the next period. Jon also writes about various recent and forthcoming initiatives through which the *bfi* is communicating with the whole cross-section of film and TV audiences.

Just a few steps down the river bank, the South Bank proper is undergoing a radical transformation. The SBC's Commercial Director, Mike McCart, talks us through the masterplan for redevelopment. Concluding our look at entry points to London, Dr Tim Williams, Director of the Thames Gateway London Partnership, explains why commercial and residential development in the capital is moving east, leading ultimately to the creation of a city region on the east side of London in the area either side of the river known as the Thames Gateway. Government policy aspirations to regenerate this region are starting to be matched by private sector willingness to invest, and a programme of new river crossings is among the planned developments for the Thames Gateway, which will improve the area's transport infrastructure, encourage the creation of new homes and businesses, and lead to the creation of a new destination in its own right.