The London Docklands

Over the last 50 years, London has experienced rapid economic growth, partly as a result of the development of the financial service industries in places such as the London Docklands. However by the 1960s the area was in decline and had lost its productivity. The decline was mainly due to the effects of containerisation, which is a system used to ship a large quantity of goods, the replacement of workers by other new technology, loss of trade and having larger ships. This lead to the loss of approximately 80,000 jobs in the docks as ships became too large to sail up the River Thames.

As more people became unemployed, many dock workers moved elsewhere to seek employment and a better quality of life which lead to a huge decrease in the population of the docklands. The lower population meant that the local economy suffered with less money being earned and spent in the area, services and facilities had to close, leading to further job losses. To make matters worse, the council could do little to improve the situation as they were receiving little money in taxes because less money was being spent on the area, therefore the environment suffered greatly as well as services such as schools meaning that there were less qualified people. This also affected the economy, continuing the spiral of decline.

After the 1980s, governments set out to regenerate decaying inner-city areas like the London Docklands by using enterprise zones which develop the areas by demolishing old houses and empty factories, building new offices and creating more open space. In 1981, the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) was established to improve the conditions of the area. The LDDC aimed to improve social conditions by creating new and better quality housing - a total of 22,000 homes were built, new recreational facilities and improved shopping facilities. They aimed to improve economic conditions by creating new jobs, leading to a doubling in employment and numbers of businesses. They also helped to improve the transport system by creating a network of pedestrian and cycle routes through the area, where people could access the river and dock edge through waterside walkways. In 1987, the Docklands railway was opened - it now carries approximately 35,000 passengers a week. They also set out to improve environmental conditions by recovering damaged land, planting more trees – around 200,000 trees were planted, and creating open spaces.