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Water park makes a splash on urban landscape

Work has now started on Manchester's first urban water park, bringing greenery and water to the heart of the city. Located in New Islington, Manchester's Millennium Community, the 'eco' park, which is nearly four acres in size, is the development's centrepiece.

Landscape architects, Grant Associates and engineers Martin Stockley Associates have incorporated islands, decking, boardwalks and bridges into the design of a boating lake, which is framed by a reed bed. The 'eco' park will also feature a beach, a 'community' orchard – an idea suggested by local residents, follies and an area of public open space containing a range of trees and wildflowers creating a variety of habitats for wildlife.

A mooring 'island' will take up to six narrow boats, and the lake will also offer rowing boat hire, paddling, fishing and picnicking areas. The lake spills out to create canal fingers that lead to New Islington's quayside developments.

Situated on the edge of the city centre and with a pedestrian route creating a new link between the Rochdale and Ashton canals, the park's landscape gently slopes down into the new waterway, forming a valley.

Robert Hough, Chairman of New East Manchester Ltd said: "The first municipal park in the world was built in East Manchester so it is fitting that this innovative new park will be located here. This highly imaginative use of open space is designed to be fun, educational and community focused and I'm sure it will bring an enormous amount of enjoyment to local people and visitors alike."

David Chilton, senior regeneration manager of English Partnerships, said: "English

Partnerships' Millennium Communities are all about building places where people will want to live. People need houses, but they also need space to enjoy life, and this water park will be the ideal place to do just that.

"The whole development is about new ways of doing things and thinking about the longer term effects, or the 'sustainability' of the scheme. The work starting on the water park is another element of what will make the New Islington Millennium Community special. It's much more than building houses, it's about building a community with facilities – such as the water park - which in turn makes it a place where people will want to live. "

Richard Hattan, Associate Director, Urban Splash, said: "The water park is the centrepiece of New Islington and will be a great space asset, not only to the residents and workers in New Islington but for the whole of Manchester to enjoy. It will really stamp the identity of New Islington on the area and enhance the massive changes we are already delivering including Islington Square, the houses designed by FAT, and the completed remodelling of Old Mill Street."

Steve Pugmire, Engineering Manager, British Waterways added;" The new era of canals has changed communities across the North West. The new water park will be at the heart of the development at New Islington and will be a rare attraction on the outskirts of the city centre for all to enjoy."

Work on the water park is undertaken by Volker Stevin and the new facility will be open for public use from summer 2007.

The water park is part of New Islington, Manchester's Millennium Community, which in turn is one of English Partnerships' seven Millennium Communities, New Islington is a partnership between national regeneration agency English Partnerships, Urban Splash and New East Manchester Ltd together with appointed social landlord, Manchester Methodist Housing Group. The 29 acre site, just east of Manchester city centre is being radically transformed to a strategic and ambitious vision created by Will Alsop. A new canal and water park, over 1400 new homes, office space, a school, a health clinic, shops, bars and restaurants are planned to be created, using the world's best architecture.

www.newislington.co.uk

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Notes to editors

- **The Millennium Communities Programme** was initiated in 1997 with the launch of the design competition for the Greenwich Millennium Village. A range of different types of sites have been chosen to demonstrate that energy efficient, environmentally responsible development is achievable regardless of geographic location. These are Greenwich, South London; Allerton Bywater, near Leeds; New Islington, Ancoats, East Manchester; South Lynn, King's Lynn East Anglia; East Ketley, Telford; Oakgrove, Milton Keynes and Hastings, East Sussex. One of the main objectives of the Programme is to influence the house building industry and to encourage higher standards of innovation and energy efficiency. It also aims to deliver 6,000 homes by 2010. Each Millennium Community Project will need to meet environmental standards for its dwellings that are more exacting than current regulations. For example, the aim is to reduce the energy used in constructing homes by 50 per cent; the amount of water consumed in them by 20 per cent and the levels of waste disposed in them by 50 per cent. House builders involved in the projects will be encouraged to use innovative and energy efficient construction methods and materials, so the programme can also deliver viable innovations that can be adopted by volume house builders in the mainstream housing market.
- **English Partnerships** is the government's national regeneration agency delivering high quality, sustainable growth in England. We do this by developing our portfolio of strategic sites and acting as the government's advisor on brownfield land. We also ensure that surplus public sector assets are used to support wider government objectives, especially those contained in the Sustainable Communities Plan. English Partnerships helps create communities where people can afford to live and want to live. Information on projects and programmes can be found at www.englishpartnerships.co.uk
- Property developer **Urban Splash** has an established reputation as a pioneer of urban regeneration and advocate of modern design. The company was founded by Tom Bloxham MBE and Jonathan Falkingham in 1993 and since then has received 163 awards to date for architecture, design, regeneration and enterprise. Its mix of award winning residential and commercial projects include Timber Wharf, Box Works, Smithfield Buildings in Manchester and Matchworks, Tea Factory and Collegiate in Liverpool. Urban Splash is now expanding outside its established north west base and now have developments on site or in the pipeline across the UK including, Lister Mills, Bradford; Royal William Yard, Plymouth; Walsall Waterfront; Fort Dunlop and Rotunda in Birmingham and Foster and Partners designed homes at Altrincham, Cheshire. www.urbansplash.co.uk.
- **New East Manchester Ltd (NEM)** is an Urban Regeneration Company - a partnership between Manchester City Council, English Partnerships and the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA). It is NEM's role to implement the Regeneration Framework, secure the required public and private funding, lead on specific major development projects as well as co-ordinate the range of regeneration and renewal initiatives in the area.
- The development has been assisted by English Partnerships, Urban Splash, Manchester City Council and New East Manchester Ltd and on completion will form part of the infrastructure for the 'New Islington Millennium Community'. The design – drawn up by Grant Associates of Bath, in consultation with national regeneration agency English Partnerships, New East Manchester and lead developer Urban Splash – draws on landscape references from around Manchester, such as the Pennines and the Lake District. The aim is to evoke 'memories' of these landscapes rather than create a natural-looking landscape.