



[Mersey Ports Master Plan consultation](#)

Reviewed by [Denis Joe](#) June 2011

A couple of year's back I attended a screening of Ken Loach's documentary *The Flickering Flame*, about the 1995 Liverpool Dock Strike, organised by "Campaign for a New Workers' Party". For me, it summed up the pig-headedness of a left-wing that refused to let go of the past; who talked of building an industrial base and a return to traditional socialist principles. It was as if a group of people had been put into a cryogenic sleep, around the mid-1990s, and were woken up from an afternoon nap. Yet there was something about it that was very unique to Liverpool.

Thanks to Liverpool's docks being declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the city being declared European Capital of Culture, Liverpool's tourism sector provides work for around one in five people – or 20 per cent of the entire workforce. This gave the go-ahead for the city to indulge in an orgy of nostalgia. Whilst the City Council declared the city a no-go area for alcohol – driving out the homeless people from St Johns Garden: a popular site for congregating and getting blathered – they embarked on an enormous campaign to attract tourism. Obviously The Beatles, particularly Lennon, featured highly, but also the myth of Liverpool's link to the slave

trade was exploited with the opening of the International Slavery Museum in 2007 followed by a growth in entrepreneurs / shysters (depending on your point of view) only too willing to take tourists around the docks on a slave trade 'experience'.

Each year Liverpool seems to find a topic in which to celebrate its past - this year it's the [City of Radicals](#)

. Far more radical (and exciting) is the development of the Mersey Docks and the Liverpool-Manchester canal. Already we have seen the building of

[Mann Island](#)

, designed by Broadway Malyan; an imposing building that appears to maintain the memory of shipbuilding in the city, whilst it's 'prow' points towards Liverpool One and the future of the city. Behind Mann Island is the smaller, but equally impressive

[Museum of Liverpool](#)

, to be opened on 19 July (a review of the opening to follow).

Since moving to the city six years ago I have seen the transformation of Liverpool Docks from an area of historical interest to an area that is confidently looking towards the future, leaving those anchored to the city's history behind. Even the onset of the recession has not dented that vision - earlier this year an "embassy" (joint venture between Liverpool council and private firms in the city) opened in London. Its ambassador Joe Anderson, leader of the Labour-run council said at the time:

"Some people have called it a gimmick, but there is a very serious intention here. We want to show the UK and foreign investors that Liverpool has big ambitions and big opportunities . . . Liverpool is open for business and has a 'can-do' attitude." [The Guardian - which couldn't resist the opportunity to have a dig at 'Scousers caught misbehaving in the capital' - 21 January 2011].

