

CASE STUDY

PROJECT Bespoke low-freeboard pontoon system for Southwark Council

LOCATION Surrey Docks Fitness and Watersports Centre, Rotherhithe, London

At Greenland Dock, access to the water needed to work for a wide range of users, including children and people with disabilities. Walcon designed and built a bespoke low-freeboard system that combines safe, straightforward access with the stability and durability required for a busy public watersports centre.

Southwark Council's brief was to replace the existing infrastructure at Surrey Docks Fitness and Watersports Centre with pontoons that would make getting on and off small craft easier and safer. The centre serves a broad community and is used by Tideway Sailability, where disabled and non-disabled people sail together.

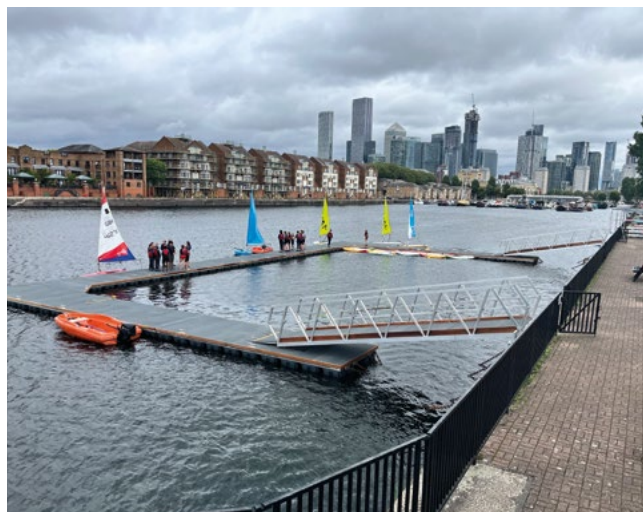
INCLUSIVE DESIGN

A conventional marina pontoon would not meet that need. Freeboard – the height of the deck above the water – had to be kept low enough to reduce the step between pontoon and dinghy, while the structure still needed to perform reliably in a working dock.

Walcon developed a new design specifically for the project. Seventeen pontoons form two floating structures extending into Greenland Dock, providing almost 180 metres of alongside access with open water on both sides. Aluminium frames, low-freeboard plastic floats and non-slip glass-reinforced plastic grating keep the deck just 300 mm above the water, supporting easier embarkation and disembarkation for dinghy sailors and other watersports users.

ACCESS CONSTRAINTS

The delivery plan also had to respond to a constrained urban site. With limited access at the centre's waterfront, the pontoons were delivered fully assembled to a neighbouring basin and unloaded directly from the lorries into the water. Local contractor Pat Walsh Civil Engineering then moved them into position and secured them using a chain-mooring system designed by Walcon. The system accommodates the small changes in water level within the dock.



COORDINATED DELIVERY

Installation was split between July and September, leaving the waterfront available through the summer holidays. Once the new system was in place, Walcon removed the old concrete tops so that they could be broken up and recycled.

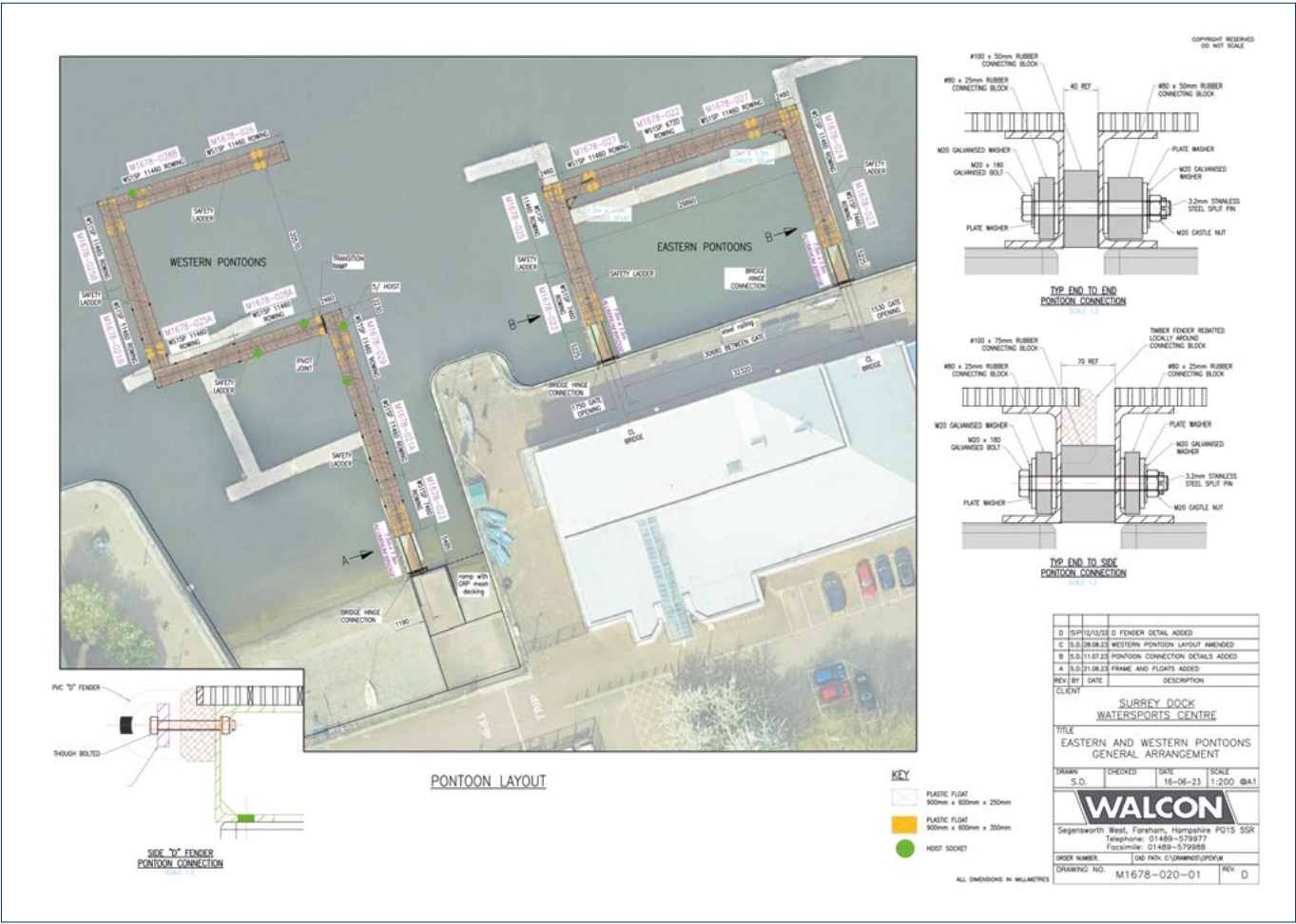
The completed system turns inclusion into a practical design requirement. It gives the centre a safe, flexible platform for everyday activities while enabling more people to take part on the water.

The new pontoons demonstrate our ongoing commitment to inclusive and accessible leisure provision.

David Pugh
Head of Leisure Insourcing, Southwark Council

PROJECT AT A GLANCE

Client	Southwark Council
Application	Inclusive public sailing and watersports access
Configuration	Two floating structures made up of 17 pontoons
Capacity	Almost 180 metres of alongside access, available from both sides
Key design detail	300 mm freeboard; aluminium frames; plastic floats; non-slip glass-reinforced plastic grating
Mooring	Chain-mooring system designed by Walcon
Delivery	Fully assembled off site, launched in an adjacent basin and installed in two stages



Founded in 1963, Walcon Marine designs, manufactures and installs engineered marina and harbour infrastructure in the UK and internationally. With more than 100,000 berths delivered in more than 30 countries, Walcon combines engineering expertise, specialist equipment and in-house installation capability to build for long-term performance.