

A bespoke inclusive pontoon system at an Inner London sports centre

Surrey Docks, Borough of Southwark

Having won a tender put out by Southwark Council, Walcon Marine has designed, built and delivered a bespoke pontoon system for Surrey Docks Fitness and Watersports Centre. This will give all users, including children and people with disabilities, easy and safe access to a range of on-the-water activities on one of London's largest docks.

The new pontoons are part of the existing water sports centre located at Greenland Dock in Rotherhithe, a district of the Borough of Southwark in South-East London. One of the city's largest docks and still connected to the River Thames

via the adjacent South Dock, it is a remnant of the area's long history in maritime commerce and in recent years has seen much redevelopment. Today, the dock hosts recreational facilities as well as moorings for house boats.

Financed by Southwark Council, the new pontoons are being used for a variety of sailing and water sports activities, including by Tideway Sailability, a unique sailing club in inner London where people with and without disabilities can sail together in a safe environment.



The Walcon solution consists of two floating structures that extend out into the dock (see image, above). Made up of 17 Walcon pontoons, together they deliver just under 180 metres of alongside berthing with access to open water from both sides.

disembarkation to and from the dinghies and other watercraft. To meet this, Walcon created a new pontoon design. It combines aluminium frames with low freeboard plastic floats that maintain the non-slip GRP grating deck at just 300mm above the water.

A key requirement of the tender was that the pontoons have a low freeboard to assist disabled water sports users with embarkation and

The installation took place in July and September, with a pause in between to allow users full access to the waterfront over the summer holidays.

The pontoons were delivered fully assembled to an adjacent basin due to limited access to the Watersports Centre's waterfront. There they were unloaded from the lorries directly into the water. Local mooring contractor Pat Walsh Civil Engineering then positioned and secured them in place using a chain mooring system designed by Walcon. This allows for movement in response to the small variations that occur in the water level. Following the installation, Walcon removed the old concrete tops to be broken up and recycled.

"Southwark Council is extremely pleased with the redeveloped pontoons at Surrey Docks Fitness and Watersports Centre," said David Pugh, Head of Leisure Insourcing at Southwark Council. "Having brought the leisure service in-house in June 2023, we are investing significantly in our leisure assets across the borough.

The new pontoons demonstrate our on-going commitment towards inclusive and accessible leisure provision. They will enable everyone, regardless of physical ability, to experience the joy of being on the water. By providing a safe and convenient platform for disabled users, we are not only enhancing their access to sailing activities but also fostering a more inclusive and welcoming environment."



Walcon Managing Director James Walters added, "At Walcon we pride ourselves in delivering bespoke solutions for berthing facilities that require something special. Over the years we have worked with a number of sailing charities to enable people who might otherwise find it difficult to access boats, especially dinghies, to enjoy the pleasure of being out on the water."



Founded in 1963, Walcon Marine is the market leader in the design, construction and installation of marinas, yacht harbours and berthing facilities around the world. As probably the longest established and most experienced company in its field, Walcon's pontoons are now installed in over 30 different countries on five continents.

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