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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

29 March, 1985.

The Prime Minister was grateful for your Secretary of State's minute of 28 March about the future of the Liverpool Garden Festival Site. She has commented that this is excellent news.

(Timothy Flesher)

Alan Davis, Esq,  
Department of the Environment.

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Prime Minister:

A satisfactory  
outcome.

Prime Minister

*Liverpool news.*

*9.5 at 11.00*

*Or*

*28/3.*

FUTURE OF THE LIVERPOOL GARDEN FESTIVAL SITE

Following your visit to the International Garden Festival last year I wrote to you on 15<sup>th</sup> October about plans for the future of the site. I can now report that the site will be re-opened to the public in 1985.

You may recall that although there was considerable public pressure to retain the Festival there was uncertainty over both the amount of the site that could be made available and the intentions of Liverpool City Council. The Council had a legal agreement with Merseyside Development Corporation to take over those parts of the site to be retained for recreation use.

With your approval the MDC announced their intention to re-open to the public those parts of the site not immediately required for development in 1985. At that stage however it was far from certain that the substantial part of the site intended as a permanent recreation facility would be reopened. The City Council were threatening to renege on their agreement with the MDC.

Since October MDC have been in long and difficult negotiations with the City Council but the major difficulties have finally been resolved. The two parties have signed a new agreement under which the MDC will retain control of the site until the end of 1988. During this time they will seek a private sector operator to take on the facility on a permanent basis. I am sure you will agree this would be far the most satisfactory long term solution.



With this obstacle out of the way the Development Corporation have been able to announce plans for the opening this Summer. The site, to be known as the "Festival Gardens", will comprise the permanent parkland area and the best of the international and domestic theme gardens not immediately required for development.

The Festival Gardens will not, of course, be on anything like the same scale as the IGF but they will serve the dual purpose of satisfying popular demand for the retention of the asset and more importantly demonstrating the long term potential of the modified site to the private sector.

I attach a copy of a recent MDC press statement which summarises their plans.

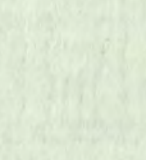
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# PRESS RELEASE

Ref: FGL

6 March 1985

## FESTIVAL GARDENS - THE SHOW GOES ON!

Following the announcement that the Merseyside Development Corporation and Liverpool City Council have reached agreement about the future ownership of part of last year's International Garden Festival site, details have now been announced of the 'Festival Gardens' which will be open to the public this summer.

The site will continue to be managed and operated by the Merseyside Development Corporation, which will be seeking a commercial leisure operator or developer in order to secure the long term future of the site as a major tourism and leisure facility for the people of Merseyside.

More than 70 acres of gardens are to be retained, ensuring that the Festival Gardens will be one of the major events in Britain this year. The individual gardens, with an extra year's growth, are now more spectacular than ever. Special features, including the Yellow Submarine and the Blue Peter Dragon, have been relocated but remain prominent.

A brand new, larger-than-life attraction is intended to appeal especially to children. The festival hall will contain the 'Magic Garden' with plants and features up to ten times life size!

Over 1,000 special entertainment events are planned. With dancers, dragons, bands and buskers, the accent is placed firmly on Merseyside, and the programme is intended to be a showcase for the best creative talents in the region.

Merseyside Development Corporation

Royal Liver Building Pier Head Liverpool L3 1JH Telephone (051) 236 6090 Telex MDC 627110 CHACOM G

Many of last year's favourite entertainers will return together with resident artistes, a sprinkling of international performers, and with the involvement of local schoolchildren.

Part of the former International Garden Festival site is already being developed and prepared for housing and modern-technology industry. But the MDC believes that the exceptional demand from the public that the remainder be reopened demonstrates the enormous potential for tourism and leisure-related projects which exists on Merseyside.

The Festival Gardens will open on Thursday 23 May and continue every day until 8 September. It is expected that more than 250 jobs will be provided during the summer months.

For further information, please contact:

Diana Day  
Merseyside Development Corporation  
051 236 6090

For entertainment details, please contact:

Andrew Caspari  
Albert Dock Company  
051 709 7373

To obtain photographs, please contact:

Judith Barnes  
Northern PR Unit  
051 227 2222

### Notes to Editors

The Merseyside Development Corporation was established by Parliament in 1981 to regenerate Merseyside's derelict docklands.

Britain's first International Garden Festival, together with the phased restoration of the Albert Dock complex of grade one listed buildings, spearheaded the MDC's overall regeneration proposals. In less than three years, 125 acres of derelict and polluted land was transformed into a riverside paradise which attracted 3.4 million visitors in just under six months.

As the Festival closed, a massive popular campaign began for its return. The Development Corporation welcomes the further opportunity to demonstrate the leisure industry potential of the area. Last October reshaping began of parts of the site to accommodate the future uses of housing and light industry. However, a great many gardens remain to provide the basis for this year's event.

### Opening Hours

The Festival Gardens will be open seven days a week from May 23rd to September 8th 1985, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. (last ticket 6 p.m.).

### Admission Charges

Day Tickets:	Adults £2.00	
	Children (5-16),	OAPs £1.00
Season Tickets:	Adults £12.00	
	Children (5-16),	OAPs £6.00

Regional PD 1 A 6

Inner cities

28 MAR 1985

