

WILDWAYS  
ALONG  
THE CHING

# Wildways with Artists : The River Ching Artist Call Out

## Artist Call Out

This is your invitation to join an **Artist Field Study Day** and develop an exhibition inspired by the **River Ching**.

Join a group of creative peers and find inspiration in this small yet vital river.

Artillery is the creative engagement partner for Wildways along the Ching. Wildways with Artists is the first of three creative initiatives for Wildways along the Ching. Looking ahead to Autumn 2026, Artillery will then recruit an artist facilitator to lead a participative creative neighbourhood project, with a public sharing of the collaborative creations in Spring 2027.

For Wildways with Artists, Artillery invites artists with ecology interests to come together and respond to this process of repair and recovery for a local waterway. This is a 5 month supported process culminating in a public exhibition. **Deadline: 10am on Thursday 21 May.**

# About Wildways along the Ching

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Launched in early 2026, Wildways along the Ching will enhance habitats, improve river health and promote climate resilience across Highams Park and along the River Ching. Local organisations, voluntary groups, residents, and Waltham Forest Council teams are working together to improve green spaces for nature and people.

Wildways along the Ching will not just create more nature-rich green spaces, it is working towards a more connected, resilient community and collective approach for caring for the environment. There will be opportunities for everyone to get involved, to discover and connect with nature and waterways as part of the 'Wildways' community network.

## Who is Wildways with Artists for?

- Artists working in any artform including performance\*
- Artists whose work is informed by urban ecology
- Artists who develop their work in the outdoors
- Artists who know the River Ching and surrounds - perhaps you're a resident or you work locally?
- Artists who want to be part of a wildlife and community focused project
- Artists interested in connecting with local ecology experts and activists

\*Do bear in mind we are planning an exhibition/showcase at Hale End Library



# What's involved?

## The schedule

### **Wildways Artists Day 1 : Field Study Day**

Saturday 20 June, 10.30am - 3.30pm with option to continue working collectively into the late afternoon.

This field trip is a creative R&D day for artists with an interest in the River Ching

- Start the day meeting the Wildways specialists and hearing about the ambitions and impact of this project to revive the ecology of the River Ching.
- Be supported by artist-ecology specialists Michael Holland and Sharon Drew.
- Spend time immersed in a location - apply your own investigative approach or take prompts from the field trip team.
- Make time to share ideas and discoveries, queries and initial points of interest with peers.
- Notice common threads and points of difference.

We anticipate that artists will want to allow a minimum of 5 hours for this process. You might want to stay longer, continuing into the evening, perhaps wrapping up work together in a local cafe.

### **Wildways Artists Day 2 : Field trip de-brief**

Saturday 18 July, 10.30am - 12.30pm

- Sharing your creative thinking so far, and make plans for the exhibition.
- Peer group meet-up to discuss what has excited you, your creative direction, and what's challenging you.
- Digitally document excerpts of sketch books etc (all acknowledging artists).
- Bring your sketches, notes etc - we'll be able to scan and photograph these to help collectively document this process.

### **Wildways Artists Day 3 : Online creative development meet-up**

Monday 3 August, 7-8pm

Exhibition prep:

- Online meet-up to discuss works in progress for exhibition/showcase.
- Deadline to submit details of exhibits for inclusion in the exhibition catalogue.

### **Wildways Artists Day 4 : Deliver artworks**

Tuesday 1 September, time tbc.

Deliver artworks to exhibition venue, time commitment approx. 30mins.

### **Wildways Artists Day 5 : Exhibition opens & launch**

Friday 4 September, time tbc

- Artists have the option to propose activities, performances etc on dates during the exhibition period.

### **Wildways Artists Day 6 : Exhibition completes**

Saturday 3 October, time tbc

- Artwork collection at close of exhibition OR 6 October

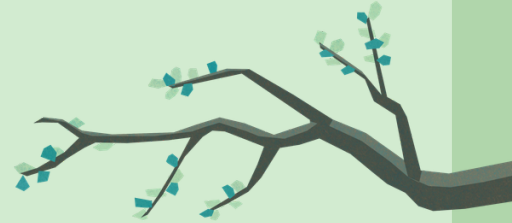


# Taking part in the Field Study Day

We don't want to be too prescriptive about how the field study day unfolds, and the structure will be informed in some way by who takes part. To support your investigations, Artillery has engaged Sharon Drew and Michael Holland to support artists in their creative processes and understanding of the ecology of the Ching. We will also be joined by the Wildways project lead for the field trip.

## We ask you to...

- Join us at the start time.
- Bring the art materials you'll be working with.
- Be equipped for a day outdoors including water bottle & packed lunch.
- Join us for the follow up sessions.
- Create an artwork or work in progress for the September exhibition.
- Be punctual with submitting info and artworks for the exhibition.
- Be responsive to our communications.
- Take this opportunity to connect with creative peers participating in this project.
- Join this creative investigation in the spirit of the collective approach of the entire Wildways along The Ching project.
- Be respectful of the natural environment, communities and facilities in the spaces we visit, use and creatively investigate.
- Complete participant surveys for Waltham Forest Council and the Mayor of London's Green Roots Fund.



We're asking you to prepare a brief Expression of Interest so that we can be sure we can accommodate your creative approach and allow for a really inclusive, diverse peer group. Open to artists 16yrs and over at all stages in their creative career.

## Why are artists part of Wildways along the Ching?

Wildways along the Ching is an ambitious project underway to enhance river habitats, river health and climate resilience around sections of the River Ching. The Wildways along the Ching team welcome artists to find inspiration in this river and this programme of change. Artist responses may help us envisage what an urban river is, how we live alongside one, how we can be custodians of it and help it to thrive?

Artillery would like to (with artists' permissions) document your sketches and creative notes on the field trip and at the debrief to create a digital record (format to be decided) as a treasure trove of inspiration for the general public, project partners and future community collaborations. We hope your creative responses will inspire you to create new work for the exhibition and be part of bringing the Wildways along the Ching project to life for local residents.

# How to express your interest...

Please send to [wildways@artillery.org.uk](mailto:wildways@artillery.org.uk) by 10am Thursday 21 May.

## Please include

- Your contact details
- 1-2 paragraphs (or a 1-2 minute spoken whatsapp message to 07947 275774\*) about what you want to get out of the day
- A couple of lines about your creative practice
- A couple of lines summarising your connection to the area
- Links to your relevant work (insta / website / articles)
- Confirmation that you are available for all dates given in the "What's Involved and Schedule" section.

\*IF you are sending a spoken WhatsApp message please ensure you give your name in the message and send an email with all other details

## We're especially interested to hear...

- Why you are interested in being part of this creative investigation of the River Ching.
- Which site or sites along the River Ching you are most interested in investigating as an artist.
- What medium or mediums you anticipate creating R&D and any final pieces in.
- How is this relevant to your wider art practice.

## Why get involved?

Connect and learn with a creative peer group.

Field trip support from artist facilitators Sharon Drew and Michael Holland.

Insights from specialists in urban wildways and river habitat ecology.

Opportunity to exhibit your resulting work in a group show at Hale End Library [tbc 4 Sept - 4 October]

Inspire each other, project partners and local residents with your artistic perspective. Inspiration for participants in future co-created artwork.

You are welcome to produce artwork for sale - 0% commission on any sales

This 5 month programme is the first of three creative initiatives for Wildways along the Ching.

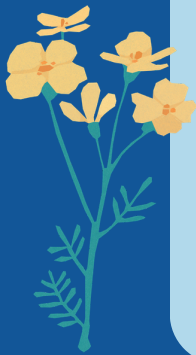
Your participation and work will be supported and celebrated by Artillery and Wildways partners.

More about Artillery <https://www.artillery.org.uk/track-record>



# Background Information

## About Sharon Drew



Sharon describes herself as an artist, eco-warrior and a London-based painter searching the landscape for momentum, space, colour and shifting light. She's an abstract painter for whom the natural world is always present in her mind - as anyone visiting her studio will testify having leafed through her library of sketch books. For the last 5 years she's been running outdoor Green Sketching sessions in Epping Forest which focus on a connection to the natural world. Sharon is a mentor to BA Fine Art students at University of Arts London, and before being a full-time artist, she was an art tutor in Further Education.

Sharon spends much time creating space for nature in her own garden and have also set up a Bee Friendly Street, co-instigated the community pollinator-friendly Flower Garden and is currently campaigning to save rewilding land from development outside of the borough. "I'm hugely excited at the Wildways project helping to renature the River Ching."

<https://www.sharondrew.com/about>

[https://www.instagram.com/drew\\_sharon/](https://www.instagram.com/drew_sharon/)

Michael is an ecologist, author and London National Park City Ranger with a long-standing passion for helping people notice, understand and feel connected to the natural world around them. He's collaborated with Artillery over many years on a range of creative, community-led projects that bring ecology and art into conversation. His work spans writing award-winning books on plants and nature for families, leading walks and workshops, and supporting people to explore their local environments with curiosity and care.

"The River Ching is especially close to my heart: my own garden backs directly onto it, so its seasonal changes, wildlife & footpaths are part of my everyday life. I'm excited to share that perspective and support artists in discovering their own connections to this small but vital waterway."

<https://www.growingunderstandings.co.uk/about>

[https://www.instagram.com/pond\\_dipper/](https://www.instagram.com/pond_dipper/)

## Introducing Michael Holland



# Background Information

Wildways along the Ching is a Waltham Forest Council project. It is one of 26 projects funded by the Mayor of London to ensure that the urban ecosystems in our city are thriving habitats for nature longterm. Building on years of determined grassroots eco-activism and robust citizen science monitoring by resident groups including the Ching Action Group and Highams Park Snedders, project partners also include East London Waterworks Park, OrganicLea, TCV, The Hive and Thames21. Together with Waltham Forest Council's Climate Action, Housing, and Green Spaces teams, these project partners are addressing pollution, flood risk and habitat management for this fragile, natural asset.

The team making this happen include civil engineers, tree surgeons, ecologists, educators, food growers, citizen scientists and conservation volunteers.

Whilst the core focus of the Wildways project is on three key locations: Wadham meadow, the banks of the Ching and Aldriche Way Estate; there will also be smaller interventions and activities on other nearby housing estates, allotments and schools. Together these create "stepping stones" connecting nature between Walthamstow Marshes and Epping Forest.

## **Wildways along the Ching project page**

<https://talk.walthamforest.gov.uk/wildways-along-the-ching>

## **Green and Blue Spaces in Waltham Forest and their strategy informing this project**

<https://talk.walthamforest.gov.uk/hub-page/green-blue-spaces-strategy>

## **Article on the River Ching Action Group - Flow State**

<https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/stories/flow-state>

## **Summary of GLA Green Roots Round 1 awardees**

<https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/environment-and-climate-change/parks-green-spaces-and-biodiversity/green-roots-fund/round-one>

## **Listen to the River Ching**

A new musical composition by Ellie Wilson launched on 6th May 2026

<https://www.elliwilsonmusic.co.uk/listen-to-the-river-ching>

## **Artillery's Wildways Research padlet**

Artillery's digital scrapbook, regularly updated with relevant links

<https://padlet.com/artillery/projects/wildways>

