



## Artist brief for WetlandLIFE



© Tim Acott

### Introduction

Perceptions of wetlands vary considerably – from disease-ridden ‘swamps’ that should be drained for farmland or housing, to wildlife havens generating local employment and enjoyment for thousands of visitors. Meanwhile, the mosquitoes that live in them are typically seen as a nuisance with no useful purpose – few people champion them for their aesthetic or intrinsic value, and their contribution to the resilience of wetland ecosystems remains largely unrecognised.

We are looking for artists whose work can contribute to our knowledge and appreciation of wetlands and mosquitoes. By this we mean artworks, in any medium, that seek to influence our awareness, understanding, attitudes, emotions, values or behaviour towards them, and the ecological and social interactions that have brought them into being. This might be done by communicating the findings of researchers about wetlands and mosquitoes to new audiences, challenging how we think about them, or changing how we feel about them – perhaps helping us connect with them in new ways. This is an exciting opportunity for artists to work alongside local communities and a diverse team of environmental researchers to show how art can influence how we value nature and ecosystem services.

## **Background**

WetlandLIFE is a three-year (2016–19) interdisciplinary project funded by the AHRC, ESRC and NERC through the Valuing Nature Programme.<sup>1</sup> With a particular emphasis on mosquitoes, the project uses perspectives from the biological and social sciences, humanities and the arts to explore how new knowledge about wetlands can help facilitate their use and management. The project studies the cultural, historical and economic values of wetlands alongside an ecological focus on mosquitoes now and in the past. The focus of work will be on the Somerset Levels, Humber Levels and Thames Estuary, although reference will also be made to a broad range of inland and marine wetlands across England to capture the diversity of these places.

A key outcome is the delivery of ecological guidance for wetland managers to help monitor and control mosquito populations as a means to enhance both human and wetland health and wellbeing. This will be conducted within the context of a place-based understanding of wetland values, which brings together contested values, meanings and narratives. Together, the team must negotiate a careful balance – drawing attention to the potential risks associated with mosquitoes, while ensuring public responses remain proportionate and grounded in scientific evidence – to avoid misrepresentation by the media or by political interests in struggles over land use change.

Among other outputs, the project will deliver a photographic essay on the material landscapes of wetlands, produce films using the ‘Community Voice Method’, and explore changing representations of wetlands through historical research. These aspects are being undertaken separately from the artist’s brief. It is hoped that commissioned work from artists will complement these approaches, and help start a creative conversation about the values and meanings of wetlands and mosquitoes. The project will culminate in a final touring exhibition, linked to workshops and other public events, providing a forum to showcase the artworks and move the dialogue forward with wetland communities, visitors, managers, researchers and decision-makers.

## **Opportunities for artists**

WetlandLIFE is seeking to commission new artworks relating to the three case study areas: the Somerset Levels, Humber Levels and Thames Estuary. We are open to artists from any artform working in a variety of mediums such as visual art, sound, text, animation, etc.

The overall WetlandLIFE project is using a co-creation research methodology involving a wide range of users and constituencies from the outset. We therefore will look to the artists to engage communities and users in the creation of the works.

We are offering three bursaries of £5,000 each (total of £15,000). Artists can apply for the total amount – and create work that relates to all three sites or to wetlands in general – or for one bursary worth £5000 – perhaps focusing specifically on one of the sites. We welcome applications from consortiums of artists working together to address all three sites. The

---

1 <http://wetlandlife.org/>

bursaries cover the artist(s) fees, accommodation and travel, and all costs associated with the production and display of the artworks.

The artworks need to be included in a final touring exhibition, planned in early/mid 2019, which will visit each of the three case study sites. The venues have not yet been identified, and will be selected partly according to their suitability to display the artworks effectively (or represent them through video or photography, etc.). Expenses for travel and accommodation to participate in the final exhibition – as well as some project meetings throughout the bursary period – will be funded separately by the project. We encourage applications with match funding secured from other sources to increase the scope or depth of the proposed artwork or associated community engagement work.

The bursaries will begin in August 2017 and finish with the final exhibitions in early/mid 2019.

The commissioned artist(s) are likely to collaborate closely with the WetlandLIFE research team, supported in particular by Dr Tim Acott (Principal Investigator, University of Greenwich), and Dr David Edwards (Social Scientist, Forest Research), and attending some of the project meetings and fieldtrips. The Artist(s) will be expected to report regularly to the WetlandLIFE co-ordinators and selection and production of final works for the exhibition will be subject to agreement.

It is anticipated that one or more publications will be produced by the artist(s) and researchers for different audiences to showcase the artwork(s), the story of its creation and its reception by different audiences.

### **Copyright and moral rights**

Ownership and copyright of the work created solely by the artist(s) shall remain with the artist(s). The artist(s) shall provide an exclusive, perpetual, unlimited, royalty-free license to the client, the funders and any consultants for the use of images, recordings and reproductions in any format and for any purpose of any and all artworks created by the artist(s) in association with the WetlandLIFE bursary. The artist(s) shall provide the client with exclusive rights to the exhibition of the work for two years from the date of the completion of the residency element of the programme. Such licence shall carry the right to grant sub-licences and shall be transferable to any third party.

### **Contracts, fees and payments**

A formal residency contract will be signed prior to work commencing. This will be a fixed sum agreement against the stages of the programme.

### **Insurance**

Artists will demonstrate that they have Public Liability Insurance (to £5 million) in place for the duration of the project.

## Health and safety

Artists will comply with any health and safety requirements, including undertaking any inductions required, when visiting any sites under the guidance of the project co-investigators.

## Criteria for selection

- Response to the brief (40%)
- Relevance of previous work and experience (40%)
- Experience of public engagement (20%)

## How to apply

To apply for one or more bursaries please submit an application by **5pm, Monday 10 July 2017** to: Chris Fremantle: [chris@fremantle.org](mailto:chris@fremantle.org).

The application should be formatted as a single PDF and include:

- An outline of your interest in the project, and initial ideas for your potential approach (max 500 words).
- A statement detailing your relevant experience (max 500 words).
- Curriculum vitae.
- Up to five examples of your work - either within the PDF or via links to Dropbox or similar. Time-based media should be limited to four clips, each no more than five minutes duration. These files should be a total of up to 10mbs.
- Names and contact details for two referees - references will only be requested if you are shortlisted.

## Selection

Candidates will be notified whether they have been shortlisted for selection by 4 August 2017, and invited to attend interviews in London on Friday 11 August (to be confirmed). Successful applicants will be free to start work from mid-August 2017.

Recruitment will be overseen by a small number of co-investigators from the project, supported by Chris Fremantle, an independent arts producer and researcher.

Unfortunately we are not able to offer feedback to artists who are not shortlisted for interview.

If you would like further information about this opportunity, or would like to discuss the suitability of potential applications, please contact: Chris Fremantle, e-mail: [chris@fremantle.org](mailto:chris@fremantle.org). Tel: 07714 203016.

