

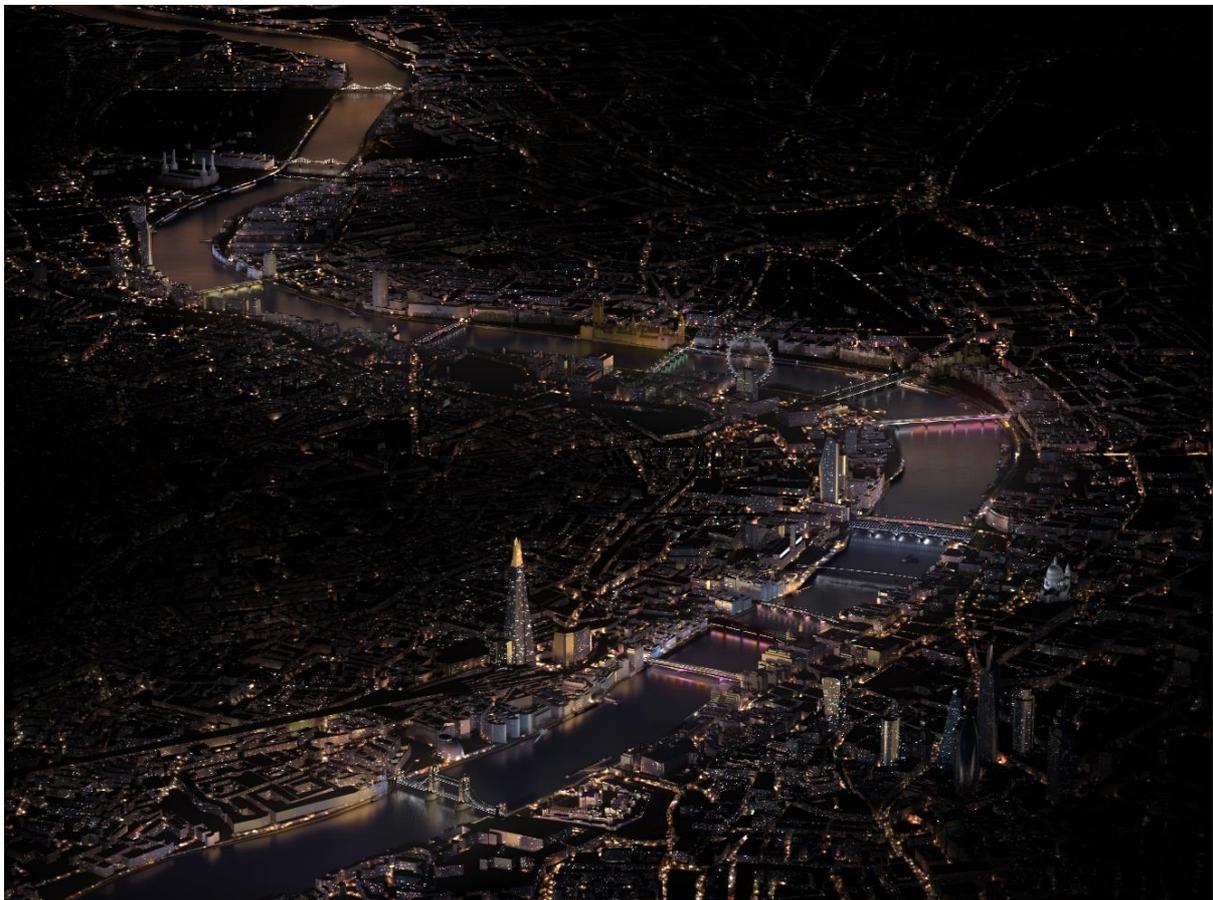
# ILLUMINATED RIVER

PRESS RELEASE

## Transformative public artwork, *Illuminated River*, applies for planning to light London's bridges from Albert to Tower

- *Estimated to be the longest public art work in the world, Illuminated River celebrates the momentous history of the River Thames*
- *30 planning applications submitted for 15 bridges to seven central London Planning Authorities*
- *US artist Leo Villareal and architecture practice Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands leading on the vision, design and creation*

[illuminatedriver.london](http://illuminatedriver.london) / [@illuminatedriv](https://www.instagram.com/illuminatedriv) / [@illuminatedriver](https://www.instagram.com/illuminatedriver) #illuminatedriver



*Final Design Concept © Leo Villareal Studio*

**London, Tuesday 8 May 2018** – The Illuminated River Foundation today submits 30 planning applications and 18 applications for Listed Building Consent across seven riverside authorities for a major public art installation that will bring light and colour to the heart of London. The scheme has been developed in consultation and collaboration with over 50 organisations on and around the river, including the Port of London Authority and Historic England.

The design team, led by acclaimed American artist Leo Villareal and award-winning British architecture practice Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands, was announced as winners of a public

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competition that saw submissions from 105 design teams in 20 countries around the world, by London Mayor Sadiq Khan in December 2016. The existing lighting schemes in and around the 15 bridges within the project currently vary greatly from bridge to bridge. *Illuminated River* will light up spaces which are currently under lit, while reducing excess light spill in others, bringing a practical solution to the needs of London while creating a major public artwork that will define the bridges of central London as sculptural and symbolic links between the city's diverse communities.

Using energy efficient LEDs and innovative, customised software, the public artwork *Illuminated River* will unite all consecutive bridges from Tower Bridge to Albert Bridge with sequenced patterns of light, inspired by the natural and social activity of the river and surrounding embankments. The Illuminated River Foundation has also created the first ever digital [Interactive Environmental Summary](#) to support its planning applications.

Freely accessible for the public and financed through philanthropic sources, *Illuminated River* can be in place for at least ten years, creating a new emblem to unify London, while opening up public space on and around the Thames. Connecting north and south, the project will bring more opportunities to enjoy and explore the river, Thames Path, the bridges and local amenities.

Estimated to be the longest public art commission in the world at 2.5 miles in length – along 4.5 nautical miles - the work will be installed in phases, with London, Cannon Street, Southwark and Millennium bridges as the first four to be illuminated in Spring 2019. Completion of the project is due in 2022 and the subsequent illumination phases will be announced later in the project. The submissions prepared by Montagu Evans LLP include applications for listed building consent and when fully installed, *Illuminated River* will encompass nine listed bridges.

Whilst each bridge will be lit differently, the artwork is designed to unify the 15 bridges. *Illuminated River* is rooted in classic artistic practices, using colours and light treatments inspired by the work of Impressionist masters and English Romantics, who were repeatedly drawn to the beauty and urban vitality of the Thames. By interpreting the unique environment of each bridge, collecting moments of discovery and translating them into artwork, the work will subtly change, unfolding through light and colour.

*Illuminated River* will enrich the experience of travelling along and across the Thames, promoting the river and riverbank as a means of transport for Londoners, commuters and tourists. The project puts environmental impact at the heart of all its decisions, and as part of its extensive planning programme has explored and addressed light pollution, impact on wildlife and energy efficiency in the city. From the outset, the project team has committed to the use of directional lighting to minimise light spill - including no direct lighting of the River Thames, while the Illuminated River Foundation has worked in close partnership with a number of groups to ensure the environmental objectives of the project are met, including the Zoological Society of London and the London Wildlife Trust.

The Illuminated River Foundation has proactively engaged with the diverse communities along the river to meet and present the proposed artwork and installation with local residents, community groups, historians, walkers, runners, rail commuters, river users, politicians and many other community, business, political, and cultural stakeholders. It has staged drop in public events held from Battersea in the west to Shad Thames in the east and undertaken over 80 meetings with community groups.

The project aims to be a model of best practice and collaboration for culture in the urban realm, demonstrating how multiple private and public organisations and bodies can work together to support cultural initiatives that improve public space in the city for everyone. Conceived as a privately funded project, *Illuminated River* has been commissioned by the Illuminated River Foundation, which is

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committed to raising the funds for the project from private and philanthropic sources. Generous support has been received to date from Peter Baldwin and Lisbet Rausing through the Arcadia Fund, and from The Rothschild Foundation.

Illuminated River is supported by the Mayor of London, and governed by an independent board of trustees which is chaired by Neil Mendoza, Chairman of the Landmark Trust and Non-Exec Board Member of DCMS.

**Sarah Gaventa**, Director of the Illuminated River Foundation, comments, *“Illuminated River will refocus our attention on the historic bridges of central London and help reveal their individual architecture and stories. We are working closely with many partners and consulting with local communities to understand their relationship to the river and its bridges to ensure our project supports other initiatives along the Thames and responds to issues such as improving the quality of the public spaces around the bridges and creating a better environment for wildlife. We hope the project will encourage Londoners, commuters and visitors alike to use and enjoy London’s bridges and their surroundings. By using more environmentally sensitive and subtle illumination we can create an inspiring artwork that respects the beauty and the environment of the Thames. When complete Illuminated River be the longest public art work in the world.”*

Chair of the Board of Trustees, **Neil Mendoza**, said: *“Illuminated River is a gift to London and will be publicly accessible to all. London is renowned for its cultural distinctiveness – and Illuminated River is an ambitious example of a large-scale collaboration to create public art. We have commissioned a world class artist and architecture team who are leading on the lighting design, technology and engineering. They have devised a project that offers lasting benefit to the city. It will create more opportunities for people to enjoy and explore the river, the river paths, the bridges and local places and businesses. We are proud to be supported by the Mayor of London who, like us, will ensure that the project fits into the wider cultural context of the Thames – it links to the capital’s artistic heritage and will inspire Londoners, visitors and river users alike.”*

Artist **Leo Villareal** commented: *“My vision for Illuminated River is luminous and gently kinetic with an emphasis on abstraction, motion, and beauty. The concept engages with the site of each bridge, referencing the history of the structures and drawing on the natural and social activity of the surrounding embankments. The work is rooted in classic artistic practices using colours and light treatments inspired by the palettes of Impressionist masters who painted the Thames. Once complete, I want the artwork to respond to the cultural creativity of the city, each bridge forming a unique layer in the urban landscape, creating a sense of discovery and revealing the river as a continuous living system.”*

**Alex Lifschutz**, director of Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands, said: *“We are very excited that this extraordinary project is now moving forward to a planning application having gained added depth and interest by incorporating the many positive suggestions received from our public consultations. The scheme addresses fresh challenges never before encountered in addressing the riparian environment and its ecology; respect for the context of the river and the many listed bridges that cross it. It is at the same time a wonderful piece of art by a hugely gifted artist and also a quintessential public space project, one that tilts the balance of the Thames away from the domination of cars and street lighting to allow Londoners to appreciate their city literally in a new light.”*

The acclaimed American artist Leo Villareal, a pioneer of LED light sculpture, creates intricate light installations for both gallery and public settings. He came to international prominence through his project, *The Bay Lights*, which illuminated the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge in 2013. Initially conceived as a two-year display, the popularity of *The Bay Lights* led it to be transformed into a permanent installation, now an iconic visual element of San Francisco’s landscape. Villareal’s practice addresses art historical references and engages the constant changes in technology, using LED lights that perform

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elaborate choreographies, responded to computer code created by the artist himself. Villareal's work is represented by Pace Gallery and is in the permanent collections of many major museums including MoMA in New York and the National Gallery of Art Washington.

Award-winning architects, design consultants and urban planners, Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands, have worked on major projects across London including the Golden Jubilee footbridges and have a 25-year relationship with communities and businesses in London's South Bank, having created the area's urban design strategy and worked with the Coin Street Community Builders to regenerate the area through the development of co-operative housing, and commercial ventures to support new urban realm initiatives.

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**ENDS**

## **Editors' Notes**

### **About Illuminated River Foundation**

The independent charity, the Illuminated River Foundation was set up to deliver the major public artwork, Illuminated River. The Foundation is committed to raising private funding for the installation and maintenance of the project, and has already received generous funding from Peter Baldwin and Lisbet Rausing through the Arcadia Fund and from The Rothschild Foundation.

<http://illuminatedriver.london/>

### **About Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands**

Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands (LDS) was established in 1986 and operates from a Grade II listed building in West London, formerly the home of Island Records. Its portfolio encompasses residential, workplace, urban design and master planning, interior design, retail and restaurants, as well as education and community buildings. Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands are currently the Architects' Journal Architect of the Year and has won over 80 awards including the RIBA 'London Architect of the Year' in 2015, the 2016 Mayor's Housing Design Award, a 2017 RIBA National Design Award for its Paradise Gardens project and the Best New Public Space, 2017 at the London Planning Awards. Further LDS project include the Institute of Future Living, the first phase of the new campus for UCL in East London. As well as an established reputation for innovative design, the practice is known for its creative adaptation of historic buildings, from the Oxo Tower refurbishment of the 1990s to more recent interventions, notably the acclaimed transformation of Foyles Bookshop's flagship store and auctioneer Bonhams New Bond Street Headquarters.

[www.lds-uk.com](http://www.lds-uk.com)

### **About Leo Villareal**

Leo Villareal (b. 1967, Albuquerque, New Mexico) works with LED lights to create complex, rhythmic artworks for both gallery and public settings. He focuses on identifying the governing structures of systems, and is interested in base units such as pixels and binary code. His installations use custom, artist-created code, which constantly changes the frequency, intensity, and patterning of lights through sequencing. Villareal has created temporary and permanent light works and sculptures for public spaces and museums including the Morris and Sophie Chang Building, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C; Rice University, Houston, Texas; and the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. Villareal's winning submission for the 2016 Illuminated River International Design Competition, will use light and color in an integrated composition to enliven the bridges of the River Thames in London.