

WILD EAST LONDON

IMAGINARIUM

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON • 18 JULY 2026

East London is wilder than you think.

Between the wetlands and the warehouses, the marshes and the megaprojects, something is happening to this city's 'wild spaces' — ecologically, culturally, politically.

A free public event bringing together environmental scientists, creatives, ecologists, activists, policymakers and communities to ask: *what does 'wild' mean in East London? Who gets to decide? And how do we imagine better sustainable futures?*



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Ken Worpole

with additional guest speakers

FILM SCREENING

River's Return

An award-nominated documentary written and presented by Dr Tony Sampson, CERG. Produced by Jellyfielder Studios for UDC.

Wild East London Imaginarium Room G.17, USS Campus, Stratford

University of East London, Stratford E15 1NF
Saturday 18th July 2026 — 12 to 5pm

Free refreshments provided

A Cultural Engine Research Group & Sustainability Research
Institute event

**FREE EVENT — REGISTER VIA EVENTBRITE:
[LINK TO FOLLOW]**



<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/wild-east-london-imaginarium-tickets-1993022679485>



Painting by Rob Reed; reproduced with permission

PROGRAMME FOR THE DAY

SATURDAY 18 JULY 2026 · 12 – 5PM

- 12.00 pm** Welcome to the Wild East London Imaginarium
- 12.15 pm** **Keynote**
Ken Worpole
- 1.00 pm** **Panel 1 · Creative Engagement with Nature**
Chaired by Dr Naida Redgrave, featuring Wanderers of Colour and Jessica Pearce
- 1.30 pm** **Refreshments**
- 1.45 pm** **Film Screening · River's Return**
Presented by Dr Tony Sampson
- 2.15 pm** **Panel 2 · Local Democracy and the Mezzo-Level**
Giles Tofield in conversation with Tim Aldcroft, Newham Council
- 2.45 pm** **Panel 3 · Sound and Emotion**
Chaired by Andrew Branch, with David Callahan & David Chapman in conversation
- 3.15 pm** **Refreshments**
- 3.30 pm** **Panel 4 · Community Activism**
Chaired by Tony Sampson, featuring Blanc Sceol
- 4.15 pm** **Plenary**
- 5.00 pm** **River Walk →**
A closing walk along the water



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SPEAKERS & CONTRIBUTORS

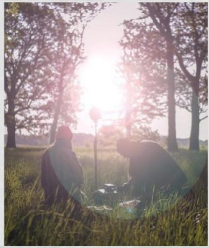
SATURDAY 18 JULY 2026 · UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON



Tim Aldcroft

PANEL 2 · NEWHAM COUNCIL

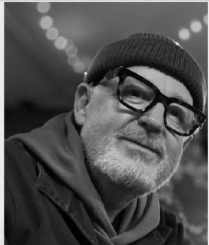
Tim Aldcroft is a Youth Service Manager at Newham's Youth Empowerment Service, specialising in youth participation, strategic partnerships and London-wide sector development. With over 25 years' experience in youth and community work — spanning disability youth work in Hackney and Wandsworth, pan-London LGBTQIA+ community development with Centred, and inclusive participation work in Newham — Tim brings deep expertise in designing accessible, creative structures that centre diverse young people's experiences.



Blanc Sceol

PANEL 4 · COMMUNITY ACTIVISM

Blanc Sceol — Stephen Shiell and Hannah White — are an artist and musical duo whose work expands into deep listening and ecological activism. Their work is a spiral within the space-time continuum: their compositions, interventions and performances express situated experiences of Place, with deep commitments to reimagining landscapes and ecologies.



Andrew Branch

CHAIR, PANEL 3 · CO-DIRECTOR, CERG

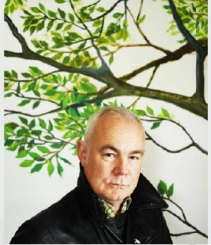
Dr Andrew Branch's teaching and research are invested in making sense of the workings of the creative industries, held up as drivers of progressive social and economic change by successive governments intent on superintending them. Drawing primarily on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Andrew is interested in how workers in these industries negotiate the complex relations between commercial imperatives and creative practice, situating this in the wider context of how subjectivities are formed, embodied, negotiated and captured discursively. The impact of this research is realised through his public-facing work as Co-director of the Cultural Engine Research Group (CERG), which works with marginalised communities at the mezzo-level, securing funding to study how specific sites of incubation frame emotional attachment to place.

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David Lance Callahan

PANEL 3 · SOUND AND EMOTION

David Lance Callahan is a musician and ecologist with a long recording career taking in the bands The Wolfhounds and Moonshake, as well as three recent solo albums that seamlessly blend folk, world music and post-punk forms into something wholly his own. He is also well known among birdwatchers for his writing in the national magazines Birdwatch and Bird Watching, as well as the international journal BirdLife.



David Chapman

PANEL 3 · SOUND AND EMOTION

Dr David Chapman is a filmmaker, sound artist and musician based in East London. Through film and audio installations he investigates the sonic mediation of the natural world, the durational exploration of place, and historical and cultural issues. David was awarded a PhD for research on sound, place and perception.



Jessica Pearce

PANEL 1 · CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH NATURE

Jessica Pearce is a Multi Disciplinary Artist and tutor from Essex. Two recent participatory art projects 'There Be Giants' and 'Legendary Essex' (2025) co-created art and environments celebrating local myth, legends and heritage with residents of all ages. Her practice spans installation, printmaking and painting exploring ritual, time and place. For the last 5 years Jessica has taught in SEN, mainstream schools and with adult groups workshopping art that 'can't be marked'.

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Naida Redgrave

CHAIR, PANEL 1 · CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH NATURE

Dr Naida Redgrave is a Senior Lecturer in Digital Media and Communications. Her research and writing explore the prospect of decolonised approaches to screen/writing practice and how these methodologies can be accurately articulated. Her current work examines the suitability of the term 'conscious collaboration' (Hingorani & Redgrave, 2023) to describe a conscious undoing of the colonial gaze when writing and creating narratives of 'othered' or underrepresented identities. Her research and screen/writing practice frequently gravitate towards unearthing and representing the lives of Black and othered womxn, with works including Middle Grade biographies of Mary Seacole (2019) and Shonda Rhimes (2017), and TV drama development for Lonesome Pine / Channel 4 (2019).



Tony D. Sampson

CHAIR, PANEL 4 · CO-FOUNDER, CERG · RIVER'S RETURN

Tony D. Sampson is a Reader in Digital Communications at the University of Essex Business School. His interdisciplinary research spans the felt experiences of digital life, and impactful community engagement with culture, heritage, and natural environments. His books, including *Virality* (2012), *The Assemblage Brain* (2017), *A Sleepwalker's Guide to Social Media* (2020), and the forthcoming *Birth, School, Work, Death* (2027) have established him as a leading voice in critical digital theory. As co-founder of the Cultural Engine Research Group (CERG), he leads civic engagement initiatives including the Imaginarium. His work reaches broad academic and public audiences through international speaking engagements and regular media contributions.



Giles Tofield

CHAIR, PANEL 2 · CO-FOUNDER, CERG

Giles Tofield is Director of the Cultural Engine CIC, an Essex-based social enterprise that supports public and third-sector organisations to develop social, cultural and environmental projects, secure funding and build locally-relevant strategies. He has worked in regeneration across London and Essex for over 20 years, operating at the intersection of government policy, local planning, economic development and cultural strategy. He is a co-founder of the Cultural Engine Research Group (CERG), working on research and civic engagement including the Imaginarium programme.

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Wanderers of Colour

PANEL 1 · CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH NATURE

Wanderers of Colour creates a community for people of colour interested in the outdoors, nature and travel, centring people's experiences in an empowering, educational and intersectional way. The group aspires to increase the number of people of colour who access the outdoors and travel — developing skills and knowledge, and organising group activities to build confidence and motivation. Representing them on the panel is Jess, Facilitator & Social Events Coordinator: an interdisciplinary artist, workshop facilitator and peer support worker, and a lover of bryophytes, communal cooking, resource sharing, craft workshops and sensory walks. Their motto: 'to survive by living kindly'.



KEYNOTE · 12.15PM

Ken Worpole

WRITER & PUBLIC POLICY ANALYST

Ken Worpole is the author of books on architecture, landscape and public policy. He was a member of the UK Government Urban Green Spaces Task Force (2001–2002) and an expert adviser to the Heritage Lottery Fund's Urban Parks Programme. Recent books include *Modern Hospice Design* (2009), *Contemporary Library Architecture* (2013), *The New English Landscape* (2014, with photographer Jason Orton) and *New Jerusalem: the good city and the good society* (2015).

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