



## **OPEN CALL: Artists Walk for Chelmsley Woods**

**Artists Fee £2000**

**Application Deadline: 5pm, Sunday 9 February 2020**

**Project Dates: February – June 2020**

Artists, poets and writers based in the West Midlands are invited to submit an Expression of Interest to develop an Artists Walk which takes people on a journey from Marston Green train station into Chelmsley Wood, uncovering new and unexpected stories, animating the area and encouraging residents and visitors to look at where they are from a different perspective.

The Artists Walk project aims to support communities to tell their own stories and collectively re-imagine the places in which they live. Taking 'The Green Estate' as a starting point, the selected artist will work in partnership with Eastside Projects and local host organisation The B37 Project who will connect them with local residents and groups who are interested in ecological and environmental concerns - environmental activists, allotment holders, bat lovers, tree counters, ornithologists, conservationists, Forest Schoolers, domestic gardeners and biologists (for example). In collaboration they will develop a participatory Artists Walk which can be shared locally and across the West Midlands Railway network.

The selected Artist will produce a guide or map which residents and visitors can use to navigate the area. As they will develop relationships and explore Chelmsley Wood through the lens of their own practice, the form this takes will be led by the artist, in conversation with Eastside Projects. The Artists Walk will be launched with a public event in June 2020.

A second Artists Walk for Chelmsley Wood is being devised in collaboration with Fordbridge Primary School.

### **Timescale & Key Dates**

**Application Deadline: 5pm, Sunday 9 February 2020**

#### **February 2020**

Selection and interviews – the artist will be selected by a panel of community members and The B37 Project and Eastside Projects representatives.

## **March - April 2020**

Site visit, community meetings, research and development

## **May 2020**

Design and production

## **June 2020**

Project Launch

## **Budget**

The artist will receive a fee of £2000 paid in two instalments £1500 at the start of the project, and £500 at the project end.

There is a budget of up to £1,750 for production, to include making the guide/map.

## **How to Apply**

Please email the following to [submissions@eastsideprojects.org](mailto:submissions@eastsideprojects.org) by 5pm on Sunday 9 February 2020

Please write "Artists Walk" in the email subject line

1. Your contact details (name, address, email, phone number)
2. An expression of interest outlining:
  - Why you are applying for the opportunity
  - How you would approach developing an Artists WalkYou can submit this in writing (up to 500 words) or as a video (up to 5 minutes)
3. Examples of your work
  - A link to your website
  - OR Up to ten images with image list detailing title media, date, size etc.
  - OR A link to a showreel (up to 5 minutes)
  - OR A link to work on sound cloud (up to 5 minutes)

We welcome applications from Midlands based artists, writers and poets with different experiences and backgrounds who are interested in working with communities.

## **About Eastside Projects**

Eastside Projects Makes Art Public. Eastside Projects is an artist run multiverse based in a public gallery in Birmingham. We make art, curate exhibitions, programme events, produce public art projects, and create structures to support artists locally, nationally and internationally. We believe in working collaboratively towards change and do so to support the cultural growth of Birmingham. We aim to create opportunities for deep engagement where citizens are able to contribute and co-produce, rather than simply consume culture.

We have been working in Chelmsley Wood in different ways since 2017, partnering with organisations including MAPA and The B37 Project.

### **About The B37 Project**

The B37 Project is a grassroots community group, delivering and supporting others to deliver local projects in the arts, food and environment, with the aim of encouraging greater enjoyment and stewardship of green space. Its flagship programme, "The Green Estate", aims to plant 10000 wildflower bulbs and 1000 trees, create 100 public artworks, enhance 10 community green spaces and establish one community owned green social enterprise by December 2021.

### **About Link + Shift**

[Link + Shift](#) is a programme of Artists Residencies and Artist Walks supported by West Midlands Railway developing high quality arts opportunities and experiences connected to the West Midlands Railway Network.

### **About Chelmsley Wood**

Chelmsley Wood is a neighbourhood, civil parish and a large housing estate within the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull, England, with a population of 12,453 (2011 Census). Located near Birmingham Airport and the National Exhibition Centre it lies about eight miles east of Birmingham City Centre and 5 miles to the north of Solihull town centre.

When first developed in the 1960's Chelmsley Wood was one of the largest housing developments in Europe. To enable redevelopment of Birmingham city centre a slum clearance programme had to be put in place and to meet demand new houses had to be built in large numbers and estates, like Druids Heath, were built within the city boundaries. By the 1960s there was insufficient land left to accommodate further large-scale developments and in November 1963, Birmingham City Council took the decision that would lead to the building of the Chelmsley Wood estate. A public enquiry was held in May 1964, with strong objections being raised by Meriden Rural District Council and Bickenhill, Castle Bromwich and Coleshill Parish Councils. Despite this, permission for the development was granted and it was named Chelmsley Wood in February 1965, taking its name from the existing 'bluebell wood'.

Chelmsley Wood was built on ancient woodland which was part of the Forest of Arden. Before the estate was built people would come to picnic at Chelmsley Woods, particularly on Bank Holidays, arriving from Birmingham by train at Marston Green station.

Land was compulsorily purchased and construction of the 15,590 dwellings (including 39 multi-storey blocks of flats) began in 1966 and was completed in 1970. Although the area became part of Solihull in 1974, Birmingham City Council retained control of their houses until they were officially transferred to Solihull MBC on 29th September 1980.

The emphasis of the design brief for the town centre was the separation of cars and pedestrians in a 'Radburn layout' that resulted in a back to front layout with housing backing onto streets whilst front doors opened onto semi-private and public spaces.

Attention was paid to the site of buildings in relation to the prevailing winds to ensure that a tunnelling effect with the wind was not created. However, the descriptions of life in Chelmsley Wood by Lynsey Hanley in her book *Estates* would indicate that the wind tunnel effect wasn't completely avoided.

Landscaping was to act as a transition between the roads and buildings, in some cases to relieve the hardness of the buildings, and in others to stimulate interest and add to the visual pleasure of the area. Buildings were designed to evoke some sense of unity and harmony through good proportions and a simple use of materials. High-rise flats were developed with pockets of open space. Housing densities were high but a uniform system of development evolved, lacking in character, identity and diversity.

With the decline in manufacturing industries in the area and difficulties in developing the skills required to access new jobs, unemployment increased. As a result, the area has suffered from physical, social and economic deprivation. In 2005 a 15 year regeneration project began in and around Chelmsley Wood which aimed to bring improvement to the lives of 40,000 people. The redevelopment has included the demolition of some buildings, building of new and loss of some green spaces.

'The Wood' has a close and well-established community and there are key individuals and organisations like Meriden Adventure Playground, Three Trees Community Centre and The B37 Project who are working to develop localised and ambitious development projects to build positive community relationships.

Despite most of the area being considered one of the most deprived areas nationally, it does have a surprising amount of green space and local nature reserve, which can be better leveraged off to improve general health and well-being. The river Cole and its tributaries thread through Chelmsley Wood, linking Marston Green with Alcott Wood, Meriden Park, Cole Bank Local Nature Reserve and Babbs Mill Local Nature Reserve. These provide a network of wildlife corridors and different habitats supporting a diverse range of flora and fauna. There is an interest within the community in local wildlife, but this has yet to be fully realised in terms of their enjoyment, sense of ownership and stewardship. The work of The B37 Project and its associate groups aims to reconnect its community with their local environment.