





Main image: Westminster Bridge as it now looks following illumination. Above: the completed underside of Waterloo Bridge

Regular readers of *Lighting Journal* will be well aware that we have been keeping a close eye on the **Illuminated River** public art project, ever since in fact it was first announced back in December 2016 (*Waterborn*, January 2017, vol 82 no 1).

During that time, the project has seen ILP volunteers getting hands-on and up-close to the project (*Spanning the moment*, June 2019, vol 84 no 6). They have worked alongside architects Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands and Leo Villareal, the American light artist whose vision is at the heart of the ambitious scheme to illuminate up to 15 bridges across the Thames and create the world's longest public artwork.

Even a worldwide pandemic has not stopped the scheme from progressing, as Jonathan Gittins of Atelier Ten explained to us last year before the start of the latest phase of the project (*I'll be in a boat annoying the abseilers*, November/December 2020, vol 85 no 10).

That second phase was completed in April, the **Illuminated River** Foundation announced, in the process more than doubling the number of bridges that have now been illuminated.

The first phase artwork encompassed London, Cannon Street, Southwark and Millennium bridges. This latest phase has brought in five additional bridges: Blackfriars Road Bridge, Waterloo, the Golden Jubilee Footbridges, Westminster and Lambeth.

The aspiration is that eventually, funding permitting, the project will extend from Albert Bridge in the west of London through to Tower Bridge in the City.

USE OF STREAMING TECHNOLOGY

One intriguing detail of this latest phase of the project is how technology enabled Villareal, who was stuck in his New York studio because of pandemic restrictions, still to drive the project forward.

He used 'LiveU' streaming technology to view and adjust the light sequences in real time from the studio.

As the foundation puts it: 'This provided a precision and accuracy almost equal to physical proximity, transmitting footage with less than a second in time delay and allowing Villareal to fine-tune the artwork as if "en plein air" [or completing the artwork out of doors]. **Illuminated River** is the first completed art project in the UK to use LiveU streaming technology from a remote location.'

Of the newly illuminated bridges themselves, the foundation describes them as thus: 'A gentle combination of rosy colours extends across the arches of Blackfriars Road Bridge, citing the warm-hued remaining columns of the now removed old railway bridge. Waterloo Bridge, the longest bridge in central London, has been enhanced by a simple line of light, introducing pastel washes of colour to illuminate its central spine.'

By contrast, a monochromatic scheme

has been used on the Golden Jubilee Footbridges, mirroring Villareal's approach to the other pedestrian bridge in the artwork, Millennium.

The project then illuminates Westminster Bridge's latticework undercrofts in soft green tones 'referencing the benches of the debating chamber of the House of Commons', according to the foundation. 'The red glow adorning Lambeth Bridge is a nod to the benches of the House of Lords and mirrors the red accents of the bridge's railings and arches,' it adds.

ACTIVITIES AND TOURS

With so much of the project now complete, free self-guided audio tours have been developed for anyone who wants to walk the length of the scheme so far and learn more about the bridges and their illumination.

Guided tours of the artwork also started in late April, running from Blackfriars to Lambeth bridges and led by City of London and Westminster guides, and can be booked online.

The 90-minute tours (with a maximum of six people) take place on Tuesdays and comprise a gentle evening stroll along the river accompanied by a professional guide.

More details on the project and how it is progressing can be found at <https://illuminatedriver.london/> with information about activities and tours available at <https://illuminatedriver.london/whatson>