



# Greenland Music - an introduction

Greenland Music is a project based at the Grade II\* listed Greenland Fishery building in King's Lynn, now home to the composer Stevie Wishart.

Inspired by ways to revive and celebrate this special building, the project exists to build a creative eco-system around composition and early and contemporary music by listening to nature and thinking about how we can sustain it.

Greenland Fishery, 29 Bridge Street, King's Lynn PE30 5AB



## About Greenland Music

Greenland Music, based in the Grade II\* listed Greenland Fishery building in King's Lynn, is a project that includes a physical centre that will enable established composers and musicians to find an inspirational and peaceful space to develop their practice as well as an organisation to connect with other groups involved with music and nature and a sustainable environment. It will also enable residencies, workshops, courses, small concerts and collaborative projects to take place within a heritage building in King's Lynn. Integral to the ethos of the project will be the mixture of composers, musicians, naturalists and scientists working together from their varying disciplines to listen and to create new work.

Greenland Music and its founder, composer and musician Stevie Wishart, will also instigate and facilitate collaborative projects with partners in the UK, Europe and further afield using professional connections within the music, academic and environmental fields.

The Greenland Fishery building will be an inspiring place for musicians and composers to stay in a comfortable live-work environment to develop new work and consolidate their practice.

The building will also be available for hire for workshops, teaching, practice and small concerts (subject to appropriate noise control and licences).

Its first year will be concerned with renovating the building and making relationships and connections to ensure that Greenland Music fits well into its home ground of King's Lynn and West Norfolk. The team is small and will need input and support from others that would like to see it succeed as a new cultural asset in King's Lynn and West Norfolk.



## About Stevie Wishart

Stevie Wishart is an experienced, mature and well-respected musician, composer and improviser with a wide network of connections both in the UK and internationally. Over the years, she has worked on many collaborative projects, both in early music and contemporary composition. When the opportunity to purchase the Grade II\* listed Greenland Fishery building King's Lynn arose, she saw the chance to fulfil an idea that had been brewing for some time, ie to build a music community around early and contemporary music linked to a sustainable environment and the celebration of nature.

Exploring music's unique ability to express ideas on a level which transcends other routes of communication is what motivates Stevie's work as a music composer and improviser. She is a master of the hurdy-gurdy and also sings and plays piano and violin, often explaining to the curious public how this medieval instrument works and is relevant to contemporary music.

Stevie grew up in Cambridge and East Anglia. She was educated at the University of York, the University of Oxford (MLitt) and the Guildhall School of Music. Studying informally with **John Cage** in Edinburgh, Stevie's early career was playing with leading free jazz improvisers in London, Berlin, New York and with **Machine for Making Sense** in Australia, while also launching her own medieval music ensemble **Sinfonye** which won the MAfestival competition in Brugge. She has taught composition for the Dartington International Summer School, and also had a visiting fellowship in composition at the University of Cambridge, as well as being a judge for the Brugge and York early music festivals, and for the Paul Hamlyn Foundation's composer awards.

She has performed and had her compositions played at major venues including the Queen Elizabeth Hall and Festival Hall in London, the Sydney Opera House and St Peter's Basilica Rome. She has recorded for **Decca**, **Hyperion**, **Glossa** records and **Splitrec** as well as for her own and other indie labels. More recently she has collaborated with **Alice Oswald** (Oxford Professor of Poetry), composed for the **Hermes Experiment** at The Barbican, the pianist **Joanna MacGregor**, the **Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment** and for the contemporary music **Ensemble Variances** directed by Thierry Pecou with whom she had a Residency at Britten Pears Arts in Snape, Aldeburgh.

Concern for the environment is a natural extension of Wishart's creativity: she is a member of **Fo.am** and a founder member of the **Ecotones Network**, with Hyelim Kim, with whom she performed improvisations and conducted children's workshops listening to trees at the 2023 Timber Festival, funded by a National Forest Arts Grant. Endangered birdsong is heard as themes in recent orchestral, chamber and vocal works, and her future commission for the Ipswich Choral Society (2025) for whom she is honorary vice-president, is inspired by the subtleties in the sound of different types of leaves.

Dedicated mainly to composing, she also occasionally gives concerts such as at **Wintersound** in Canterbury, at **GroundWork Gallery** in King's Lynn, at the **First Light Festival** in Lowestoft and at **EA Sustain** (May 2024). She is a violinist who also performs on the hurdy-gurdy, a stringed keyboard instrument going back to medieval times, its strings sounded by the rim of a wheel. This instrument gives a unique 'old-and-new' sound, which resonates in Stevie's music cutting a sonic groove between spontaneous improvisation and carefully crafted composition.

Currently Stevie is concentrating on publishing her large body of work so that more people can perform her many compositions, and setting up Greenland Music as a base and a resource for musicians and composers.

## Other projects

### Dance collaborations

Wishart's music has been used by numerous choreographers including **Pina Bausch, Michèle Noiret, Myriam Gourfink, Tess de Quincey and Wayne McGregor**. Collaborations with other artists include the Australia cult band **The Necks, Fred Frith, Rhodri Davies**, sessions for **John Peel**; 'Le Son de Nous' for the designer **Philippe Stark**, and she has been a member of **Fo.am** (an international network for creating sustainable futures) in the EU since 2000.

### Ecology and nature

There is an increasing ecological element to Wishart's creativity which she calls 'Ecotones' and includes a special group of works inspired by the natural soundworld, including 'The Last Dance?'. Writing for voices and birdsong, 'Voicing the Dawn' was premiered in Ex Cathedra's Summer Music by Candlelight concerts in 2019 and was revised to inhabit the garden and trees of the Gezellehuis (Guido Gezelle Museum) and along with 'Murmuration II', commissioned by the Concertgebouw Bruges for the Bruges Triennial in 2021. She is also the composer for ,and on the core network of, a research project 'Ecotones - soundscapes with trees', which won an ESRC award, directed by Prof Amanda Bayley (Bath Spa University) which includes partners and speakers such as Won Sop Shin, Professor of Social Forestry at Chungbuk University and President of the Society of Nature and Forest Medicine in South Korea, biologist and tree author David Haskell and Forest Research (research agency of the Forestry Commission).

### Composing with birds

Looking deeper into birdsong is 'Gardez La Distance', which uses the process of a blackbird learning to sing to compose a new work for flute, piano, clarinet, and was commissioned by Ensemble Variances, premiered at Le Shed in Rouen, November 2021 and Bristol New Music. Her ongoing collaborations with poet Alice Oswald were performed for the 200-year anniversary of the Oxford Botanical Gardens in July 2022. Her process of composing with bird song is included in the recent publication 'Songs of Time and Place - Birdsong and the Dawn Chorus in Natural History and the Arts' published by Cornerhouse.

Recent examples of her work which draw on the above ideas about history, music and ecology are: a [BBC Proms commission](#) bringing together a Baroque orchestra and the song of the endangered hooded grebe, and an intermezzo for Bach's 6<sup>th</sup> Brandenburg Concerto using 13 blackbird songs, which will be recorded by the BBC at Wigmore Hall in June 2025.

## Aims of Greenland Music

### **1. Build a music community around early and contemporary music linked to the environment**

Subject to successful funding bids, the aim of Greenland Music is to renovate and revitalise Greenland Fishery as a music community inspired and guided by what is distinctive and unique about the building.

The direction of its development would take into account its heritage as a merchant's house dating back to 1605 and also its location in the historic centre and conservation area of King's Lynn and overlooking — and within earshot of — the river and Ouse Valley Way, a gateway to the natural wilderness of the Wash National Nature Reserve NNR. This would not only save the building from ongoing decline and disrepair but also bring it back into the fabric of the town and region's cultural life, not seen since it closed as a museum many years ago.

Integral to the artistic vision for Greenland Fishery is the recreation of the old garden with trees at the back of the property. The old garden was covered in gravel and converted into a car park, and one section of the land at the back of the house is now an unused part of a Council car park. The aim is to purchase this small plot of land, if possible, and open up the back of the house to create a green space with trees to attract wildlife and birds, and for visitors to enjoy, especially children. Tree planting will be coordinated with the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council tree specialist and the NGO Tiny Forests. This will bring birdlife back to the property that will link up with future musical work.

The Greenland Music community would be, for example, for composers who want to work with historical instruments such as the lute, and lute players who want to bring music composed today into their Renaissance repertory: Greenland Fishery is a perfect nest for them to work together (with guidance as needed) and subsequently to share their resulting work with the local community as an informal talk and concert organized by Greenland Music and also linked to local and regional cultural networks, organisations and events such as the King's Lynn Festival, Heritage Open Day, King's Lynn Civic Society, GroundWork Gallery and EA Sustain.

The founder of Greenland Music, Stevie Wishart, is a mature composer with a parallel career in historic music, who has forged very personal and divergent artistic path following a relatively long and fruitful career in the UK as well as in Europe as a freelance musician and composer. This gives her access to a very wide network of music professionals and potential funding sources which would benefit hugely from being associated with a building of this nature.

### **2. Music and the Hanse Union anchored at Greenland Fishery.**

As a working musician Stevie is very aware that Europe and especially Germany, are important

sources of cultural support, especially now that the UK has less access to EU funds and urgently need to rebuild trust and spark new ways to collaborate. Greenland Music hopes to collaborate and build on the associations that the King's Lynn Festival has already made with the Hanse Union, but more specifically to develop content which draws specifically on this heritage looking out to sea as a means of international cooperation, rooted in the very rich musical repertoires of the 13th to 15th centuries. For example, to develop musical events (combining old and new repertoires and old and new ideas about bringing music to the public) so that a composer might work with a soloist on a Hanseatic programme of Renaissance and new music which would revive Greenland Fishery's history in a contemporary context in a way that enriches both — perhaps even a Hanseatic music guild based at Greenland Fishery. The first port of call with this idea would be Lübeck ([hansegilde@hanse.org](mailto:hansegilde@hanse.org))

Since part of Stevie's career is in Belgium (she is a UK and Belgian national [https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stevie\\_Wishart](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stevie_Wishart)) there is the potential to bring her Flemish network (ie institutions such as the Concertgebouw, Brugge) and individuals such as Barbara Raes - whose art centre is in the port of Antwerp - into this Hanseatic cohort. Anchored to a prestigious and historically relevant centre like Greenland Fishery, would help the chances of attracting links between commercial and cultural interests to generate funds for these cultural events. Wishart is very familiar with working in a European context.

### **3. Composition courses/artists-in-residence**

Greenland Fishery would be an ideal home for a 'composing winter-school' and related artist residences, both to support and enhance Wishart's own practice and teaching, but also to help to bring in funds to help maintain and care for the building.

The composition course would be extremely unusual (if not unique) in drawing on Greenland Fishery's rare advantage of being on the frontier of a historic city and a natural wetland wilderness, and its creative urge would spring from the need to protect and sustain the ecologies of both. Wishart would build on her wide network and her ongoing collaboration with Ensemble Variances, <https://ensemblevariances.com/en/programs/human-non-human>, with the Ecotones network (founded with myself and Professor Bayley in 2021), with the CollinGoto Studio and poet Alice Oswald (holder of University of Oxford's prestigious Professor of Poetry), Freerange Orchestra and more locally, GroundWork Gallery and EA Sustain. An example of this practice would be to teach connections between Greenland Fishery and musical and ecological content at all levels of learning. This is something Wishart started while teaching composition for the Dartington International Summer School and

continued this year with a National Forest arts award and the Timbre Festival. So in the context of Greenland Fishery an example would be to draw on the content of the building's first floor historic frescos such as the river goddess — presumably the goddess of the Ouse, the whalebones, the endangered Curlew songs and winter-river soundscapes — all part of the building and waiting in the wings to be used as meaningful themes for listening and musical creativity specific to Greenland Fishery.

#### **4. Open up Greenland Fishery to artists-in-residence and rent out spaces for purposes that are related to music, dance and listening.**

This is a more general example of how to generate funds for running costs, such as hosting writer groups, rehearsal space and so forth but in ways that could be mutually enriching due to the nature of Greenland Fishery as a community linking early and contemporary music. Guided spaces to develop composition skills are rare.

#### **5. Becoming part of the music and cultural landscape of King's Lynn and West Norfolk**

There is a currently a lack of a music development centre of this kind in Norfolk and yet the pedigree of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, signified by the potential connections with the King's Lynn Festival and St George's Guildhall, the Minster and St Nicholas' Chapel shows the potential for becoming a significant cultural asset in King's Lynn. Further into Norfolk, the Music in Norwich & Norfolk network brings together the North Norfolk Music Festival, The Yorke Trust headed by founder of the Nash Ensemble Rodney Slatford, Chaos Collective and many more across Norfolk. The MiNN network is run by Greenland Music supporter and experienced cultural development specialist Marion Catlin who can link Greenland Music to many organisations across the cultural landscape. There are also more recently established creative organisations such as Crea CIC, the Local Cultural Educational Partnership PEACH and the College of West Norfolk all of which offer opportunities for the development of young musicians as well as those more established.

#### **6. Set up Greenland Music as a CIC or Charity with a local and environmental focus**

Currently an unconstituted not-for-profit project, in time, Greenland Music will become a CIC or Charity as its mission and needs clarify.

With its special environmental focus, Greenland Music will become a counterpart and partner of director Veronica Sekules and GroundWork Gallery ([www.groundworkgallery.com](http://www.groundworkgallery.com)) in King's Lynn, Britain's pre-eminent art gallery dedicated specifically to art and the environment. Other key local partnerships would include a special relationship with local schools to provide primary and secondary school children with the opportunity to explore the building and gardens, and to connect with early classical music connect to King's Lynn's medieval history, and to making new music with nature and especially birdsong.



## **7. Inclusion, diversity and equality**

Dr Carolyn Williams, (based in King's Lynn) is a specialist in inclusion, diversity and equality ([www.linkedin.com/in/carolyn-h-williams](http://www.linkedin.com/in/carolyn-h-williams)). As part of the team she will work to develop a clear IDE strategy and policy that will guide Greenland Music's philosophy, culture and activities, taking into account the local and regional context of King's Lynn and the East of England.

There are already collaborators with ideas for future projects including Maureen Wolloshin, chair of Free Range Orchestra in Canterbury and John Kramarchuk director of CREA CIC, heritage architect Hugh Pilkington and a number of musicians who are waiting for the opportunity to visit and engage.

## **8. Public performances**

In time, once it is suitably provided with better access and appropriate licences, Greenland Fishery would be opened up for small bespoke music performances. These, and indeed all public engagement, would be organised with a specific commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion to ensure access to and the involvement of those not usually connected to classical music. The large 'music room' would be the centre for this.

The overall intention is to make Greenland Fishery sustainable in ways that are adapted to modern use with the special historical, architectural, environmental and community context of the building and gardens being firmly at the heart of its activities.

## **9. Engagement, capacity building and consultation**

Before work commences and to make sure that Greenland Music and the Greenland Fishery building makes the best impact on its surrounding community and the wider music partnerships, the intention is to run a series of 'soirées' or open evenings to show people the building, its potential and to explain the vision and aims of the founder Stevie Wishart and her supporters to date.

There will be a wide invitation list as the intention is to create a feeling of openness and opportunity from the outset. There will be an opportunity for people to volunteer help and resources to work towards the vision if it inspires them.

It is a balancing act to fulfill the needs of the community and potential funders with vision and inspiration of the founder. This building has not been available to the public for many years and Greenland Music hopes to bring it back into the eyes and ears of the town and surrounding area, as well as those that will travel to hear special music. However, Greenland Music is new-born and tiny at present and will need to support to grow organically to achieve its full potential.

## The Future

Bearing all of the background in mind, the future is the important thing.

We are right at the beginning of a journey, a voyage if you will. The purchase of the building is very recent and the first priority is to make it practical and comfortable for use as a music development centre. As an organisation committed to environmental sustainability it is vital to address the state of the building including damp prevention, insulation, economic and environmentally friendly heating as well as correction of previous treatments of the building such as cement render on the outside. Musical instruments cannot be stored and used in damp conditions and need good temperature control. The team will be seeking advice on retrofitting for effective carbon reduction

The interior needs some decoration but also fitting out with facilities (shower-room and kitchen) to enable residencies and overnight accommodation for musicians and artists-in-residence. In time, it is hoped to open up and join the two separated sides of the building to enable full access to the heritage features which are currently only available to the public on Heritage Open Days and by appointment on special occasions.

The garden needs reshaping and planting to cultivate a green and natural environment to work in and to inspire visiting musicians and artists, and to rewild an area of King's Lynn that has become over-dominated by car parking and hard landscaping. Trees and green planting will help to screen noise from road traffic drifting across the river whilst encouraging birds and wildlife to settle and improve the environment for local residents.

The building itself is an inspiration to all that visit it with incredible potential and is important to the history of the town of King's Lynn. It is treasured across the town by the citizens and civic societies and its character and story will inform creative activity and responses.

Founder Stevie Wishart and team of supporters is bringing a wealth of experience, connections and collaborators as well as an extraordinary musical talent and ability to connect nature with music, both contemporary and early, orchestral and vocal. Her reputation has the potential to attract visitors, audience and other creative people to the area through music, increasing the cultural profile of King's Lynn alongside GroundWork Gallery.

Greenland Fishery has an impressive and important history. Greenland Music aims to make its future just as significant, influential and bright, bringing the love, light and music back into this treasured building.



Stevie Wishart playing her hurdy-gurdy at Colourscape in Kent



Stevie Wishart at the first soir e at the Greenland Fishery



**Greenland Fishery in the 1970s**

**Greenland Music Team**

Stevie Wishart : Founder and composer

Maureen Wolloshin : Music development

Dr Carolyn Williams : Diversity, equality and Inclusion

Dr Veronica Sekules : Visual art, ecology and environment

Marion de Mello Catlin : Cultural development, engagement and communications

[www.stevewishartmusic.com](http://www.stevewishartmusic.com)