

# Creative Communities in Mole Valley



Making Surrey connected craft makers with 8 disadvantaged communities across the county during 2011-2012. The project was community-led, acting as a catalyst in each neighbourhood. All the craft produced during Making Surrey was co-created with the communities.



Artist Ruth Wheeler and Apprentice Belinda Kelland work with the communities of North Leatherhead and West Hill Special School to embed craft within a thriving garden.

## Craft in a Community Garden

Back in spring 2011, craft maker Ruth Wheeler arrived in North Leatherhead to view a patch of grass. The land had been donated by West Hill, an outstanding special school, and the community's aspiration was to create a garden, in partnership with the school.

Ruth was able to advise on design, encouraging the community to think about how the space would be used. Craft became embedded within the garden both aesthetically (with a willow sculpture providing a central focus) and practically (with handmade plant supports and baskets).

Within six months the garden is thriving, with its first harvest of fresh produce; chutney bubbling away in the on site kitchen; a new poly-tunnel and onsite composting. Six chickens arrive and soon start laying eggs. Ruth has also guided the community in making hand carved seating overlooking the planting beds and in designing and making their own sign for the Leatherhead Community Garden.

Over one hundred people celebrate the end of the first season with an on site BBQ and outdoor disco.

## See How Your Garden Grows

Ruth's time in the garden draws to a close but the project is now in the capable hands of a core group of the community who set up a garden steering committee. The garden is open to the public each weekend and begins to be represented at external events, selling its produce and hand-crafted items to fund ongoing activity.

West Hill School is delighted with the progress of the garden and donates additional land for the community to create an orchard. International firm, Cargills, based in the district, donates £20,000 to create an outdoor classroom. The garden is buzzing each week - whatever the weather - with members of the community making scarecrows, planting new beds, weaving willow and planning.

For more information about the garden visit [www.leatherheadcommunitygarden.org.uk](http://www.leatherheadcommunitygarden.org.uk) or join their Facebook page.

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## Legacy

The Leatherhead Community Garden Group is now constituted and is run by a passionate and committed group of local residents.

- The garden is open to the community every Saturday.
- A sustainable social enterprise is born, with the community able to sell craft and produce to fund the continuation of the garden.
- Surrey Police now send young offenders to work in the garden.
- Additional land has been donated by West Hill School so that the team can create an orchard. Watch this space for North Leatherhead apples and cider!
- Funding of £20k has been donated by international firm Cargill's who have an office in the district. This will be used to create an outdoor classroom on site for use by West Hill School and the local community.



The Garden is featured at the Festival of Crafts which takes place each year at the Farnham Maltings attracting over 1,700 visitors. The garden sells out of produce, chutneys and handcrafted items.

## Key Figures

- 416 members of the community took part in the project
- 2,285 people saw the project at shows, exhibitions and festivals
- For each pound invested by local authorities in Making Surrey, a further three pounds was levered in from external funding sources.

**“WE HAVE SO MANY IDEAS – I HOPE WE DON’T RUN OUT OF TIME TO DO THEM ALL!!”**

**COMMUNITY MEMBER  
(AT THE START OF THE SEASON)**

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