

# Creative Communities in Spelthorne



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.



The community gets imaginative with materials using dust sheets and carrier bags for giant knitting. Working with Artist Rhian Solomon and Apprentice Nicole Line, extreme knitting begins to feature on the High Street.

## Extreme Knitting

Making Surrey in Spelthorne focused on Ashford, an urban community situated almost entirely within the borough but with a small part of the town falling within Greater London.

Pupils at local Thomas Knyvett College worked with plastic bags and electrical wiring to create their own knitted cosies to adorn Ashford High Street. The plastic bags were recycled from local supermarkets which involved diving into their giant skips to retrieve them and then packing a tiny car to the brim: quite a sight along the high street.

At £2 a kilo, electrical wiring became a favoured yarn for outdoor knitting as it is water resistant and comes in fantastic bright colours. Donning high visibility fluorescent jackets, members of the project team climbed mountains of wire at the local Car and Scrap Metal Recyclers to yank out metres of brightly coloured 'yarn'.

Other members of the community opted to work with dust sheets. The sheer size of the sheets made preparing the yarn a two person job and the team carefully folded them, cut them into strips and then tied them together like bed sheets before winding onto a giant reel.

The temporary exhibitions in Ashford High Street become a talking point and lead the way for the community's next project...

## Car Park Challenge

The community's sights turn to a concrete multi-storey car park on the high street which has the potential to act as a canvas for their work. The car park challenge is on. Links are made with construction students at a local college; students from Thomas Knyvett School take on an ambassadorial role and health and safety obstacles are overcome. Additional funding is sourced to enable the community to project their work onto the side of the car park and hold a community celebration on the car park roof.

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## Legacy

- Nicole's work features at unravel, Surrey's festival of knitting and her garments, knitted from bin liners and elastic bands, are spotted by a London Fashion Week journalist.
- Strong local partnerships are formed in Spelthorne which will continue beyond the project.



Electrical wire gathered from a local car and scrap metal yard is used as yarn for extreme knitting.



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Garments knitted from bin liners feature at Unravel, the national festival of knitting held at Farnham Maltings. Above apprentice Nicole Line (right) is helped into her outfit before hitting the catwalk.

## Key Figures

- 230 members of the community took part in the project
- 850 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 COULDN'T BELIEVE THE SIZE OF THE KNITTING NEEDLES AT FIRST BUT THINK WE CAN KNIT A FEW SURPRISES FOR ASHFORD HIGH STREET!”**

**DINKIE AND QUEENIE  
FORDINGBRIDGE DAY CENTRE  
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