

Beyond Bricks Case Study One

Welcome to Waverhill Park

Soho Finger and Gib Heath Neighbourhood Management Area

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Artist, Julie Edwards of Planet Art strongly believes that art has an important role to play in our society.

"We are part of the visual and spiritual fabric of society, when we are allowed and encouraged to participate art can really make a difference."

Julie was commissioned by Beyond Bricks to create a piece of sculpture to enhance Waverhill Park and celebrate the diversity of the local community.

The park had been plagued by antisocial behaviour problems and was not being utilized by the local community; *"It had become a bit of a no go area. Neighbours to the park had flagged up problems. People were sleeping rough in the park, there was anti-social drinking and litter too."*



Julie's approach was twofold; to gather ideas and inspiration from the local community for the sculpture and to work alongside the Soho Finger and Gib Heath Neighbourhood Team to stop the antisocial behaviour and to get accommodation for the people that were sleeping in the park.

Julie knocked on residents' doors, held workshops in local schools and at Handsworth Library with over 800 people to gather their ideas; *"The design is inspired by the local area. The Lunar Society used to meet at Soho House plus the globe represents the diversity of the area - everyone from all around the globe lives in Soho. At the Party in the Park in the summer people were able to vote on the winning design. There was so much praise for all the designs. It was great to see such positive feedback."*

Local resident, Sue Goodrich who worked alongside Julie was very enthusiastic about the project and knowledge that she'd gained as a result; *"It's been great to work with Julie on this project and it's been a chance for me to understand what a piece of community art involves. She has taken real time to get to know local residents of all ages. I have thoroughly enjoyed going around door knocking with her asking people's opinions and talking about issues in the park."*

The grand unveiling of the Globe took place in November 2010. *"We've got our park back!"* exclaimed one excited local resident. *"You can see across the park now because the hedges have been cut back - it feels a lot safer."*

The new planting around the Globe has been a key part of the project. Julie worked alongside Andrew Simons, an environmentalist commissioned by the Neighbourhood

Manager, Colin Hanno, to develop designs for the planting areas of the park; *“Julie and I ran many of the design workshops together so the designs for the Waverhill Park planting schemes and sculpture complemented each other. It’s been a fantastic opportunity for myself and local people to work with an artist on site and develop ideas as a community. I feel this has been an important and invaluable project which has given real connection and developed understanding.”*

The project has increased the aesthetics of the park and made it a safer place to be. It has increased local people’s sense of ownership over the park and their pride in the local area. Julie is clear that the success of the project has been as much about the process of making the park’s sculpture as it has about the end result; *“The strengths of the project are not only for the end product. We have created a fantastic visual legacy for all to see but it’s also about the things that are not tangible and can’t be viewed. Better communication with the neighbours surrounding the park, understanding the needs of the community, working alongside the Police, working with local schools on a proper art project which GSCE students can add to their portfolio.”*

Mr Singh at Benson School agreed; *“Our year 5 groups have really loved this project and have become really involved and attached to the work. The concepts and ideas they came up with were so inventive and inspired and there’s a great outcome of a sculpture which we can visit and talk about. It’s been a very valuable experience for both staff and students – and it fits the OFSTED learning outcomes for working with the community.”*

For Local Neighbourhood Manager, Colin Hanno, the project has resulted in both community and personal achievements; *“The project sparked lots of spin offs and unexpected outcomes such as the formation of the Friends of the Park group and mobilized local residents to see the bigger picture and take ownership and pride in the park . At the Soho Oscar Awards the project was highly commended for its partnership work and I also picked up an award for my partnership work for the Park from the West Midlands Police!”*

After the unveiling Councillor L. Chaman wrote to Colin Hanno; *“I was very impressed by the enthusiasm of the local school children to design a very impressive Sculpture which is a glowing testimony of the excellence in our young people. I would like to say that this was a successful event due to good Neighbourhood Management in the Soho Ward bringing the Public and the Private partners together to work together in the best interest of the local people and the local environment. I would like to thank them all for their support.”*

