

University of Lincoln students' production of Nickelodeon's *The SpongeBob Musical*

Recycled costumes in a student theatre setting

At a glance

Location
Lincoln Arts
Centre

Reused and
recycled costume



Third-year students from the Technical Theatre and Stage Management course at the University of Lincoln set out to make their production of *The SpongeBob Musical* at Lincoln Arts Centre as sustainable as possible, embracing a creative theme centered around recycled materials.

Costume Designer and Wardrobe Manager Holly Oldham led the costume initiative, collaborating closely with the wider team to develop a plan that prioritised reusing and repurposing items. A clothing donation drive brought in a substantial amount of garments, fabrics, and cardboard. Holly then pieced together costumes by "Frankensteining" materials—combining donated items and supplementing any gaps with second-hand pieces sourced from Vinted. This approach allowed the team to avoid using fast fashion, offering an innovative solution to the common challenge that costume stores, especially university collections, often contain mostly period pieces with limited contemporary options.

Holly began her design process with a clear vision for each character but remained flexible, adapting her ideas based on the materials that became available. Despite having only three months to complete the production, the team worked intensively and successfully maintained their commitment to sustainability.

The eco-conscious approach extended beyond costumes. The props master employed papier-mâché techniques to achieve the show's playful, cartoonish aesthetic, while the set was constructed using elements from previous productions and recycled cans.

Following the production, many of the costumes were added to the university's costume store for use in future shows. Reflecting on the process, Holly offered this advice for sustainable costume design: Keep an open mind. Just because something doesn't exactly match your original vision doesn't mean it won't work. Ideas can evolve.

Photo Credit: Andrew AB Photography

