

Talking shawl is the last word in luxury garments

WITH all the glamour of a mink stole but the PC softness of Shetland wool, this shawl may already sound like the last word in luxury.

However, not even the richest society ladies in the days when real fur was fashionable could boast a wrap that also whispered sweet nothings in their ear.

The whiSpiral, brainchild of designer Elena Corchero, contains a series of tiny digital recording chips.

When the shawl is put on or nuzzled by the owner, special sensors trigger the playback of short messages saved by friends or loved ones.

The whiSpiral was among several inventions showcased at yesterday's Digital Future Conference at Aviemore Highland Resort in Inverness-shire.

Also on display were 17 prototype teddy bears which can monitor and record the activity of patients in hospitals and nursing homes, as well as recognising their voices.

Lanzarote-born Miss Corchero, a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has a background in fine arts and design.

She said: 'The whiSpiral came about when I was trying to find out how I

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could integrate technology and clothing. It is a very personal, loving garment. Your loved ones are right there with you at any time, no matter where you are in the world.

'It is the same concept as a greetings card. When you are going away, your friends will write a card for you with appropriate messages and you will have these messages forever.

'The shawl has nine recorders around it and your friends will record their messages before they give you the present.'

At the moment, there is only one whiSpiral in existence - though Miss Corchero said she could make one to order. She added: 'I would need to make it specially so it would be very expensive, like buying a work of art.'

When whiSpirals do reach the shops, they are likely to cost about £200.

The 'huggable' bears will be ready later in the summer.

Calum Davidson, head of knowledge economy with event organiser Highlands and Islands Enterprise, said: 'This conference gives everyone a glimpse of their own future.'



Sweet nothings: Elena Corchero models her whiSpiral which records messages from friends