EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

19th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

EPSOM & EWELL TIMES

Up to £1 where sold

100 years campaigning to keep Surrey Green

26 January 2026



Dear Surrey,

The countryside is your greatest achievement. A beautiful masterpiece built by centuries of collaboration between people and nature. From meadows and woodlands to rivers, coasts, and the green spaces that bind us together, the countryside connects and sustains us all.

For a century, the Campaign to Protect Rural England has been its guardian. Despite the relentless, growing pressure on our landscapes, we've stood up for the countryside and helped give the people who love it a voice. That will never change.

Many of the pressures facing our countryside today were familiar to our founders – not least the challenge of providing homes, infrastructure and prosperity on a small island. But new pressures have emerged with more catastrophic impacts on the land we love. Nature is in freefall and climate change threatens to alter our landscapes for good.

Now more than ever, decisions about how we use our land are leading to the needless loss of landscapes and everything they support. Without drastic action, much of what makes our countryside unique and beautiful will be lost.

Wherever we live, we rely on the countryside for clean air, home grown food, thriving wildlife and resilience in the face of climate change. Yet these foundations are being chipped away. Too often decisions are shaped by profit, not what's needed most – and the countryside pays the price.

Here in Surrey, we have even been faced with a series of major housing developments, access roads, 'solar farms' and 'battery energy storage systems', in Green Belt countryside. Many of these sites are on the edge of the Surrey Hills National Landscape itself.

Now, as 2026 dawns we are now battling a growing number of planning applications which rely on councils downgrading Green Belt land to so-called 'grey belt', as well as excessive and unsustainable housebuilding targets imposed on local communities.

Our centenary vision is for a countryside that's greener, more resilient and protected for future generations. There is a better way – one we're calling for, and one everyone can be part of:

• Stop the loss of countryside. Let's protect what we love and do everything we can to make sure green fields and woodlands aren't needlessly lost.

• Improve the quality of the countryside for future generations. That means thriving communities, clean rivers, healthy food and resilient landscapes rich in nature.

• Inspire more people to care for the countryside. A countryside for all where more people take action to enjoy and protect it.

Across the country, people are already showing what's possible – restoring hedgerows, rethinking development and sustainable farming, and making space for nature.

As we begin our centenary year, we're sending this message to everyone: love your countryside and be part of its future. This is just the beginning – and we all have a part to play in shaping what comes next.If you share this vision, join the movement today, add your name to this letter and stand with us.

Yours faithfully,

Andy Smith

Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (Surrey)

Photo: Surrey Hills Credit Aleksey Maksimov CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 DEED

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY