



Winter walks in the Surrey wilds

The darker mornings have closed in, and the clocks have gone back, so it's fair to say summer is officially over, and the cold season has begun. While the cosy evenings are one of the best bits about the colder months, staying in all day, every day – when a lot of people are working from home – can be a little bit draining. A brisk winter walk can be the perfect respite from the day-to-day routine, and it's great for both mental and physical health as well. In fact, cold weather can help the body fight infections, and it is really good for skin health as it tightens cuticles and pores!

With all that in mind, it's time to pop on the walking boots, pull on those winter woollies, and explore the stunning beauty of Surrey in all its frosty delight. There is no shortage of trails to discover, but to help any intrepid nature walkers get started, Berkeley Group has compiled their top 5 winter walks across the county.

1. Hindhead Commons and the Devil's Punch Bowl

To be genuinely amazed by the creations that nature can produce, you must visit the Devil's Punch Bowl at Hindhead Commons. The almost 700-acre natural amphitheatre is the biggest spring-formed feature in Britain; walk the 4.5-mile surrounding trail to be calmed by the streams and heather-covered slopes. Thanks to the Hindhead Tunnel, the road that was once the A3 is now covered with 200,000 trees and shrubs, providing perfect terrain for grazing cattle and wild ponies. Children will love exploring the wood for mini-beasts, while adults will be stunned by the incredible views from the top of Gibbet's Hill, the second-highest point in Surrey. On a clear day, the views even stretch all the way to Canary Wharf!



2. Winkworth Arboretum

Created by a local doctor whose goal was to preserve the nearby wooded hillside, Winkworth Arboretum has become one of Surrey's most stunning natural beauty spots. Located in Godalming, the area is now home to over 1,000 varieties of trees and shrubs and is celebrated for its changeable seasonal landscape. The Winter Garden boasts dazzling yellow mahonia's and vivid camellias during colder months to brighten up the day. Take the path down to the boathouse to find a peaceful sanctuary overlooking the magnificent lake or explore the woodland and take the Winkworth to Oakhurst 4km trail to try and catch sight of rare wildlife.



3. Hatchlands Park

Only 45 minutes from Greater London, Hatchlands Park offers those who live in the city a convenient winter escape. Open 363 days a year, this park is the ideal place for a snowy stroll, whether it be with your family, four-legged friend or simply for some much needed 'you' time. Set in 400 acres of magical woodland and glistening leaf-lined paths, choose from a number of trails to spot a range of birds and insects. When visiting with children, make sure to say hello to the recently fostered donkeys Callum and Morris or pop over to the Wizard Wix's Willow Warren, where kids can climb the treehouse or make their own den!



4. Reigate Hill

Reigate Hill, one of Surrey's most popular natural beauty spots, is not to be missed in winter. For incredible frost-laced views, take the 3-mile walk through crunchy grass and shimmering woodland to admire the extensive landscape of the Weald and South Downs. For a longer trail, take the 7-mile Reigate and Gatton Park walk for more stunning scenery and the chance to pop into a pub on the way. Alternatively, for the history buffs, pay a visit to the Inglis Memorial and Reigate Fort, once a 72-mile defence scheme to protect London from invasion.



5. Newland's Corner

Only four miles east of Guildford, Newlands Corner opens a wealth of walking and cycling trails and some of the best views of Surrey Hills. Also made famous as the place Agatha Christie memorably staged her short-lived disappearance in 1926, Newlands Corner offers a delightful place for a wintry escape in nature. Newland's Corner has something for everyone: empty fields for a pup to run around in, a challenging hike for the adventurous types, or even a scenic cycle ride for the next Sir Bradley Wiggins. There's even the perfect pit-stop to enjoy a tippie at either the Silent Pool distillery or Albury Organic Vineyard. If you are considering relocating to this magnificent part of South East England to enjoy some of the most beautiful landscapes, browse Berkeley Group's developments in Surrey for the latest opportunities.

Image Credits: 1. Hindhead Commons and the Devil's Punch Bowl: @Martingarnett_photography 2. Winkworth Arboretum: @Wakinguphere 3. Hatchlands Park: @sarahinsurrey 4. Reigate Hill: @Ilovereigate 5. Newland's Corner: @ordnancesurvey

Cycling for Motor Neurone Disease

Greg Culshaw of **Toyota's Epsom** Head Office (GB), has completed a gruelling 24-hour static bike ride, putting him on course to raise more than £40,000 for the Motor Neurone Disease Association. Greg is the General Manager, Customer, Network and Quality Support.

Greg began his challenge at 10am on Wednesday 17 November and was joined by a number of colleagues, including **Agustin Martin**, Toyota (GB) President and Managing Director, who completed stints on static bikes alongside him, to give him encouragement. Paralympic cyclist, **Jody Cundy**, and **Mark Chapman**, Director of Finance of the MND Association, helped cheer him on at the start of his marathon.

Toyota (GB) is halfway through a three-year partnership with the MND Association and has so far raised more than £78,000 for the charity, which focuses on improving access to MND care, funding research and campaigning on behalf of the MND community.

Greg was inspired to take on the challenge in memory of a Toyota colleague, **Rachel Rollason**, who died from motor neurone disease earlier this year. He commented: "Rachel and I spent four years working together in the Customer Services Division and it's fair to say that she made a lasting impression on me. Her boundless energy and devotion to getting things done were inspiring. She operated on 'no limitology' before I had even heard the phrase."

He added: "This has been a brutal challenge, but at the same time I've been focused on completing it for Rachel and the MND Association. The idea started in a conversation with Rachel and in her last text message to me, she told me how proud she was of me for taking it on. She continues to inspire me and in turn, made me proud of her."

To date, Greg has raised nearly £16,000 through his Just Giving page: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Greg24hrBikeRide>.



This will remain open for donations until the end of November.

Toyota (GB) has pledged to fund-match the total raised by Greg, which means the charity should receive around £40,000 to help it keep up the great work it does on its five key promises:

1. To make MND treatable and ultimately find a cure.
2. To ensure everyone gets the help they need, when they need it.
3. To make every day with MND count.
4. To ensure people with MND are heard
5. To ensure that nobody with MND faces it alone

Mark Chapman, Director of Finance at the MND Association, commented: "Greg's challenge is particularly poignant because he's doing it in memory of his colleague Rachel. It's brilliant to see so many staff members from Toyota rally behind him to honour her, knowing that every penny raised will make a huge difference to people living with and affected by MND.

Last year we provided £1.4 million of support grants for 2,479 people living with the disease.

The grants provided by the MND Association have helped people living with MND to maintain their independence and improve their quality of life, and we couldn't do this without partnerships with companies like Toyota."

Jody Cundy, eight-time Paralympic Champion (three swimming, five track cycling) commented: "It was a pleasure to join Greg for the first hour of his 24hour charity ride for MNDA. It was a tough challenge, but I hope my support and presence helped make it a little easier."

Agustin Martin said: "Watching Greg complete this challenge while we went about our daily business has been humbling for all of us at Toyota. We congratulate him for his for raising such a significant sum for the MND Association, our charity partner, and for helping to honour the memory of our much-loved colleague, Rachel Rollason."

24th November 2022



CRIME TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

Defence of Surrey M25 policing

November 23, 2022

M25 protesters acting as "dead weights" means they take longer to be arrested, according to Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner. Just Stop Oil activists brought parts of the M25 to a ... [READ MORE](#)



COUNCIL TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

Ewell Village to get an uplift?

November 23, 2022

High Street improvements to come in Ewell to revitalise the town and create spaces that are safer and more attractive? Surrey County Council's Ewell project team has worked closely with ... [READ MORE](#)



COUNCIL CRIME

Cllr Dalton leads street night light fight

November 22, 2022

Epsom and Ewell's Councillor Hannah Dalton (Residents' Association, Stoneleigh) said she lived in a zone five area, but when she got the last train home, she would still get the torch out ... [READ MORE](#)



COUNCIL PLANNING

Neighbouring crematorium plan goes up in smoke.

November 21, 2022

Reigate and Banstead borough council has shelved its plans for the area's first crematorium despite having spent £350,000 on the project so far. The facility could have brought in more ... [READ MORE](#)





FOOTBALL SPORTS

Wick burned at both ends

November 20, 2022

Wick FC 0-2 Epsom & Ewell FC. Saturday 19th November. Southern Combination League – Division One. A goal towards the end of each half was sufficient for our boys to ... [READ MORE](#)



ARTS

Locally trained artist's Ewell exhibition closes tomorrow

November 18, 2022

Ending Saturday 19th November your last chance to see selected works of the artist John Whurr at his solo exhibition in Bourne Hall Gallery. His work varies from pencil sketches ... [READ MORE](#)



CRIME

The dreadful price of dangerous speeding

November 18, 2022

A Woodmansterne man is facing 2 years and 8 months behind bars after making a reckless decision to show off his car in front of his friends by driving at ... [READ MORE](#)



COUNCIL HOUSING NEWS



Banding against Surrey's top value homes?

November 18, 2022

"Very expensive" houses on private estates in Surrey should be added to new council tax bands to make the collection process fairer, according to one councillor. As part of the ... [READ MORE](#)



COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

Epsom's Wells Plan has a hole in it

November 17, 2022

Re-opening of an Epsom community centre hits a 'surveyor-sized' funding hole. After its surprise closure in 2015, residents served by The Wells Centre, Epsom, began a pitched battle to save ... [READ MORE](#)



ARTS

Organic growth for Epsom Jazz Club

November 17, 2022

Epsom Jazz Club - Tobie Carpenter Organ Trio - Tuesday 15th November 2022 . The Tobie Carpenter Organ Trio delightfully entertained the Tuesday night audience with witty and inventive covers of ... [READ MORE](#)

COUNCIL ELECTIONS NEWS

Council's secret strategy on public resources?

November 17, 2022

Epsom and Ewell's powerful Strategy and Resources Committee went into secret session on four items of public interest at its meeting Tuesday 15th November. The four items were: INCOME GENERATING ... [READ MORE](#)





COMMUNITY CRIME

Tadworth Youth Club reduces crime

November 17, 2022

A youth club in one of Surrey's most deprived neighbourhoods is teaching children business skills, getting them birthday cakes and has seen kids queuing out the door to get in. ... [READ MORE](#)

Ewell Village to get an uplift?

High Street improvements to come in **Ewell** to revitalise the town and create spaces that are safer and more attractive? **Surrey County Council's** Ewell project team has worked closely with a group of residents who originally campaigned for change in the village. **Surrey County Council's** Cabinet is due to discuss £30 million of funding to deliver seven capital projects identified in the **Surrey Infrastructure Plan**.

The proposals for Ewell state:

Ewell Village currently suffers from significant levels of traffic passing through the village, with an imbalance between traffic and pedestrians, both in terms of space consumed and dominance exerted. Pedestrian movement in the village is notable, particularly that of children travelling to/from school, but resident feelings about road safety are poor given the high volumes of traffic.

This project will deliver improvements to the High Street that will support revitalisation of the village through restricting vehicular access to some degree along the High Street, bringing about more pedestrian-friendly spaces that are safer and more attractive. It will bring improvements to local environmental sustainability via new street greening in addition to reducing vehicle emissions, will enhance the economic resilience of existing and new retail outlets through the creation of more attractive spaces that encourage longer dwell times, and will enrich social cohesion by bringing about more opportunities for people to connect with one another.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) is committed to continued engagement with SCC to develop plans for the village and welcomes further collaboration with the community and community representatives to help shape the scheme.

The total scheme cost is approximately £2.5 million. SCC will be seeking a contribution of 50% from third party funding. Funding from EEBC will be determined once a preferred option is agreed.

Other proposals for the County include:

Projects include town centre and highway improvements, active and sustainable travel schemes, and flood alleviation schemes.

£8.64million of the funding would come from Surrey County Council, with the rest coming from external funding sources. These projects include the implementation of active and sustainable travel schemes to provide Surrey residents with greener options of travel, whilst improving air quality and creating healthier places to live. There are also town centre regeneration schemes to support economic growth and provide the necessary infrastructure for growing communities. These infrastructure projects are critical for the council to deliver its ambitions for the county now and into the future.

The seven capital projects are:

Town centre schemes

- High Street improvements in both Ewell and Horley to revitalise the town and create spaces that are safer and more attractive. The Ewell project team has worked closely with a group of residents who originally campaigned for change in the village and in Horley, investment is being made following the impact of Covid on how the town is used by residents.
- Town centre regeneration in Caterham through flood mitigation works, improved connectivity and improvement to public spaces in Caterham Valley and Caterham on the Hill.

Active and sustainable travel schemes

- Electric bikes (E-bikes) in Guildford – implementation of a town-wide bike share scheme to offer an alternative to car trips within the borough.



- Woking sustainable transport improvements - improvements for walking, cycling and bus infrastructure in the east of Woking, improving connections between Woking town centre, Sheerwater and West Byfleet. For this scheme Surrey County Council have submitted a bid for £12million to the Department of Housing and Levelling up as part of round two of Levelling Up funding.

Highway improvement schemes

- A320 North of Woking improvements - Plans to make all junctions and roads on the busy stretch between Chertsey and Ottershaw work well together to improve traffic flow. Improvements for walkers and cyclists, including new crossing points and wider foot and cycle paths and improved access to public transport.

Flood alleviation schemes

- Flooding Alleviation Programme 2023/24 - A mix of schemes and interventions focusing on flood resilience measures, flood risk reduction and protection against flooding.

Cabinet will also be reviewing the allocation of £2million funding to support the expansion of the on-street electric vehicle chargepoint roll-out. The funding required would support the installation of a comprehensive network of publicly accessible chargepoints right across the county. This is essential to support residents who don't have off-street parking to transition to electric vehicles. Surrey's Local Transport Plan has identified as one of its top priorities the reduction of emissions and increase in energy efficient vehicles, specifically to promote zero emission and smaller vehicles. Cabinet will also be discussing the appointment of a new supplier to deliver a wider roll-out of chargepoints across the county to meet the increased demand.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Economy, said: "Investment in infrastructure is essential for sustainable economic growth and to cater for the needs of Surrey's businesses and communities.

"The projects being presented to Cabinet take into consideration changing infrastructure requirements for our communities. Following the Covid pandemic, the way people live and work has changed. These projects consider new travel patterns and behaviours, whilst focusing on improving local places."

Surrey County Council News and with additional reporting on Ewell by Epsom and Ewell Times

Locally trained artist's Ewell exhibition closes tomorrow

Ending Saturday 19th November your last chance to see selected works of the artist **John Whurr** at his solo exhibition in **Bourne Hall Gallery**. His work varies from pencil sketches of birds and animals to watercolour landscapes and detailed pen and wash of well known buildings in London and elsewhere. Also included is a large collection of portraits in ink and pencil - WG Grace is portrayed at Lords Cricket Ground - the pop artist Rod Stewart in his early days - groups of famous racing drivers and rugby players. His gift for depicting people is incredible. I particularly enjoyed the picture of the actor Leo McKern playing the part of "Rumpole of The Bailey". In this one off incredible exhibition, colour paintings of classic cars, motorbikes and railway trains demonstrate John's wonderful skill in depicting shiny surfaces like metal and glass. Detailed pictures of buildings and cityscapes show his interest in architecture. A very modest and down to earth person - John has been awarded many accolades for his work but prefers to maintain a low profile.



John Whurr has always had an interest in drawing from an early age. He went to school in **Carshalton** and became chief draughtsman for Shell Coal and later worked for the BBC . He studied at **Sutton Art College** and spent time learning watercolour skills at the **Epsom Further Education Centre**. Over the years he has had several exhibitions alongside other artists at Bourne Hall and other places with many of his works going abroad from Australia to the USA and many European countries.



He was commissioned to provide five pictures for the cultural centre in Nagasaki, Japan. He loves sketching and his first love is architectural/coastal subjects but his interest in landscape will get him reaching for the paint palette. For many years his drawing has extended to caricatures and more recently portraits. John is a member of the Society of All Artists & The Molesey Art Society. He's enjoyed being 'artist in residence' at the Brooklands Museum Weybridge.



Reporting by Audrey Ardern-Jones

Epsom's Wells Plan has a hole in it

Re-opening of an Epsom community centre hits a 'surveyor-sized' funding hole. After its surprise closure in 2015, residents served by **The Wells Centre**, Epsom, began a pitched battle to save the community centre from demolition and redevelopment. In spring of 2022, after a seven-year tussle with Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC), the residents finally tasted victory as EEBC's Strategy & Resources committee voted unanimously to grant the residents - now formed into a registered charity, the **Epsom Wells Community Association** (EWCA) - a long term lease of the Wells Centre building and land. But now, seven months on, the work to re-open the centre faces a funding challenge.

More than a lick of paint

The centre has remained shuttered for much of the intervening time, and lack of use has not been kind to the building's infrastructure and surrounding land. To refurbish the centre to its former glory (or better, as EWCA hope) serious funding grants are being sought from the likes of Surrey County Council and The National Lottery. To access the six-figure funding to fully realise the site's potential and EWCA's ambitions, the funds require detailed surveyor and architectural plans. These plans don't come cheap, and thousands of pounds are still needed to allow EWCA to get the experts needed.

"It's a bitter irony that we need funding to get the funding to re-open" says **Vanessa Marchant**, EWCA's Chairperson. "Once we're open, the centre will start generating its own income, so the funding becomes less essential. But, to repair the building and put in place all we want to have - such as a welcoming cafe in the heart of Epsom Common - we need grants. And to get the grants, we need a surveyor and architect. And to get them, we need generous donations or a pro-bono offer of help. Re-opening is so tantalisingly close, but just out of reach unless we get help."

How you can help

As a charity, EWCA will always welcome donations of all sizes, but for the survey and plans large donations will be needed. Of even more value, would be the donation of time and expertise by local surveyors and architects. Any companies or individuals keen to help with this, should reach out to EWCA directly at contactewca@gmail.com.

History and unique location The Wells Community Centre is situated on The Wells Estate, a unique residential area within Epsom Common. Surrounded on all sides by woodland, the dwellings are only served by a corner shop and a single access road.

In the heart of the estate is the Wells Centre, a community building serving residents of Stamford Ward and beyond since 1997. A community hall had been on the site since WW2. The centre is just a stone's throw from the historic Epsom Well; site of the world-famous Epsom Salts and birthplace of the town.

A place for everyone



EWCA's ambitions are to run the centre for the community, by the community. A place where everyone in the Epsom & Ewell area (and beyond) can find something that will interest them, whether that's evening classes, a creche, hall space, or just dropping in for a cuppa after a long dog walk or cycle ride around one of the borough's most picturesque locations.

To find out more about EWCA's plans for the centre and story so far, at the EWCA website, on Facebook "Save The Wells Centre Epsom" or Twitter <https://twitter.com/SaveWells>

17th November 2022



COUNCIL HOUSING

Epsom to help meet children's homes bed shortage?

November 16, 2022

With improvements to be made to existing children's homes, and new ones being built in Epsom and Walton, Surrey County Council is addressing a shortage of up to 60 children's ... [READ MORE](#)



COUNCIL NATURE TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

July find of rare May fly in Surrey

November 16, 2022

The River Thames Scheme (RTS) has discovered a nationally rare mayfly (*Caenis beskidensis*), which hadn't been spotted in the UK for 49 years and has never been seen in the ... [READ MORE](#)



BUSINESS



Epsom Oracle awarded in the present

November 16, 2022

The prescient promotional powers of Epsom based PR firm Oracle recognised in National Property Press Awards. The annual Property Press Awards were held 14th November and saw The Oracle Group ... [READ MORE](#)

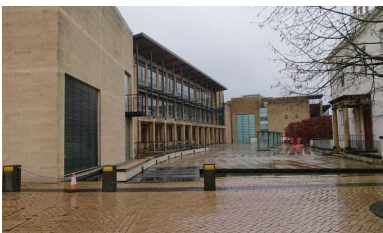


COUNCIL EDUCATION PLANNING

Campaign to save special Epsom school builds

November 16, 2022

Kingswood House School is asking local people to join hundreds of residents in opposing the school's landlord's redevelopment plan. Around 100 local residents turned out at a community meeting on ... [READ MORE](#)



COUNCIL NEWS

Surrey County pays asylum child £15,000

November 15, 2022

A "vulnerable", unaccompanied asylum-seeking child has been given £15,000 by Surrey County Council after years of failings in his care which led to him sleeping on the floor of a ... [READ MORE](#)



FOOTBALL SPORTS

Maverick win over the Salts?

November 15, 2022

Epsom & Ewell FC 1 - 3 Worthing United FC. Saturday 12th November 2022. Who said lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place? Last season we hosted Worthing United ... [READ MORE](#)



RUGBY SPORTS

Havant Heartbreak For Battling Black & Whites

November 14, 2022

SUTTON & EPSOM 27 - HAVANT 30. Saturday 12th November - saw the visit of a familiar foe in Havant. Last season the Hampshire club did the double over the Surrey ... [READ MORE](#)



COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Epsom and Ewell remembers...

November 12, 2022

Epsom and Ewell came together for the annual Remembrance Day service at Epsom's Clocktower, Friday 11th November. The Mayor's Chaplain reflected on the history of Remembrance Day. The first was ... [READ MORE](#)

July find of rare May fly in Surrey

The River Thames Scheme (RTS) has discovered a nationally rare mayfly (*Caenis beskidensis*), which hadn't been spotted in the UK for 49 years and has never been seen in the River Thames.

The invertebrate, which was last seen in Herefordshire in 1973, was discovered near Walton Bridge as part of the project's routine survey work. Historically, they have been found in small and medium-sized streams, but have not been seen since 1973, when last spotted in Herefordshire.

This is an incredibly exciting find for the scheme and demonstrates just how important the survey work that the scheme's ecologists do is. By establishing the value of the existing habitats living around the Thames the scheme will be able to put plans in place to protect them during the work and help them thrive for the future.

Speaking on the discovery RTS ecologist Jenny Stephenson said: "It is such an exciting discovery to identify something that hasn't been seen in British water since the 1970's. Now that we have discovered the *Caenis beskidensis* in the River Thames we will be able to monitor it and ensure the colony continues to thrive.

"The discovery of the mayfly, which was found in its nymph stage and part of its aquatic life cycle, represents a major expansion in both the distribution and habitat type the species has historically inhabited. We are confident that with the new habitats that the scheme will create we will encourage these may flies to breed further in the future."



Image of a generic mayfly in its adult form. Please note this is not *Caenis beskidensis* as due to its rarity no image is available.

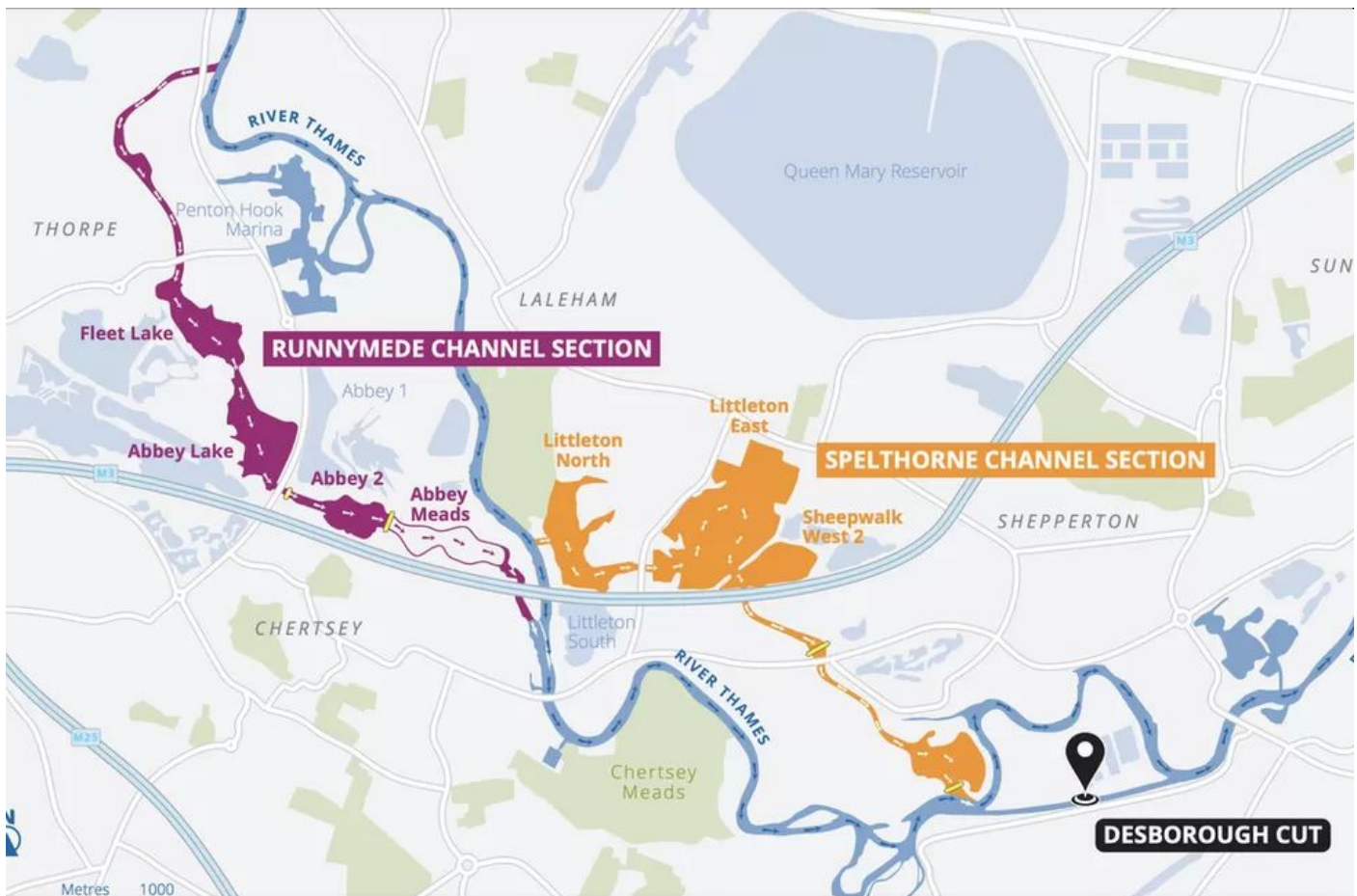
Mayflies form an important part of the river eco-system and are an important food source for fish and, once transformed into its adult form, insectivorous birds. Although the may flies have historically been found in small and medium sized streams they are also found in the upper areas of lowland rivers where they live in slow flowing shallow water. The RTS will create more of these river habitats so the team are hopeful new colonies will thrive.

As part of its work to understand the existing environment the RTS carries out hundreds of ecological and environmental surveys every year. A range of species have been targeted in these surveys, including bats (and their roosts), water voles, breeding birds, great crested newts, fish, invertebrates and species of reptiles.

Hannah Packwood, RTS environmental surveys project manager said: "It's so important that we understand the existing environment so we can continue to protect and where possible enhance it through the RTS. Finding rare and unexpected species is exciting, and we will continue to monitor the environment in our survey work throughout construction and the operation of the scheme".

A team of ecologists undertake the surveys by observing, measuring, taking notes and photographs, as well as soil and water samples. These surveys don't cause any significant disturbance to the environment or to land or property.

The RTS is currently holding a six-week public consultation for people to have their say on plans which includes a new flood channel whilst also providing habitat for wildlife and a new feature in the landscape for recreation. The consultation will run until **Tuesday 20 December 2022**. Full details of the consultation events, how to get involved, and to discover all venues that have brochures available to pick up please visit the website at www.riverthamesscheme.org.uk or call the Environment Agency National Customer Contact Centre on: 03708 506 506.



- The River Thames Scheme is being delivered in partnership between the Environment Agency and Surrey County Council.
- The scheme's wider partners are Elmbridge Borough Council, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, Runnymede Borough Council, Spelthorne Borough Council, Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, Thames Water, Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership, Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership.
- The River Thames Scheme is an integrated scheme which responds to the challenges of flooding, creating more access to green open spaces and sustainable travel, in addition to encouraging inclusive economic growth, increasing biodiversity and responding to the dual challenges of climate change and nature recovery.
- The project aims to deliver many benefits for local communities and businesses. The new flood channel will reduce the risk of flooding to homes, businesses, and infrastructure, while also providing habitat for wildlife and a new feature in the landscape for recreation.
- **The River Thames Scheme will include:**
 - a new river channel built in two sections - one section through Runnymede (between Egham Hythe and Chertsey) and one through Spelthorne (between Littleton North lake and the Desborough Cut)
 - capacity increases around the Desborough Cut and at the weirs at Sunbury, Molesey and Teddington
 - improved access to quality green open space and connections with wildlife, in addition to supporting a more sustainable travel network
 - a network of high-quality habitat to achieve a biodiversity net gain
- The River Thames Scheme will reduce flood risk to people living and working near the Thames, enhance the resilience of nationally important infrastructure, contribute to a vibrant local economy and maximise the social and environmental value of the river.



- There have been serious floods in this area over the past 100 years, namely in 1947, 1968, 2003 and most recently between 2013/2014.
- The new flood channel will reduce flood risk to over 11,000 properties and 1,600 businesses in Hythe End, Egham, Staines, Chertsey, Shepperton, Weybridge, Sunbury, Molesey, Thames Ditton, Kingston and Teddington.
- There will be increased capacity of the Desborough Cut and weirs at Sunbury, Molesey and Teddington by installing additional weir gates.
- Detailed planning and design are under way. The large scale of the project means the government has directed that it be treated as a project of national Significance. This requires a type of consent known as a 'development consent order' (DCO). A DCO removes the need to obtain several separate consents, including planning permission and is designed to be a quicker process than applying for these separately.

Surrey County Council News

Epsom Oracle awarded in the present

The prescient promotional powers of Epsom based PR firm **Oracle** recognised in National Property Press Awards. The annual Property Press Awards were held 14th November and saw The Oracle Group named as Property PR Agency of the Year, a momentous achievement showcasing the impressive work and capability of the company. The awards, organised by Property4Media, celebrate the work of professionals across the industry and for the first time, five PR categories were also included to recognise the crucial work of this sector.

Image: From left to right Oracle's Emma Holden, Zoe Murzell, Viv Onslow, Caroline Coskry, Bethan Millett, Annable Lewis, Joann Frame and Clare Sanderson.

As well as the triumphant win, The Oracle Group also celebrated two shortlisted entries with **Viv Onslow** named as a finalist in the PR Professional of the Year category and **Bethan Millett** as a PR Newcomer of the Year finalist. The successful agency sponsored the Influencer of the Year category which saw Property Tribes' Vanessa Warwick named as the winner. Caroline Coskry, Chairman of The Oracle Group, was also part of the judging panel alongside 20 other senior property executives, media editors, industry experts and personalities.

Caroline Coskry, Chairman at The Oracle Group comments: "This is the award which everyone wants to win as it signifies incredible teamwork which is what we are all about at Oracle. We were up against some very stiff competition which made this win even more significant for us. I am very proud of my team and thank them for all the hard work that has gone into being the best in class."

This year, the ceremony celebrated its twelfth anniversary which was marked by a gala dinner for the first time, at Hilton London Bankside, with property celebrity **Phil Spencer** returning to anchor the show for the third year running. The ceremony covered 18 media categories, 2 special recognition awards and 5 PR categories.

Based in **Epsom**, Surrey, The Oracle Group has been providing remarkable communication services to leading housebuilders, local organisations and others from the housing sector for over 10 years. With a team of industry experts, the well-established agency covers traditional PR, crisis communications, events, content creation, innovative campaigns and outstanding award writing.

For more information about The Oracle Group, please visit <https://theoraclegroup.co.uk/> or email bethan@oraclepr.co.uk

Campaign to save special Epsom school builds

Kingswood House School is asking local people to join hundreds of residents in opposing the school's landlord's redevelopment plan. Around 100 local residents turned out at a community meeting on 10 th November in support of Kingswood House School. The School's current landlords, the **Aczel brothers** who own extensive property in Epsom, have for many years made no secret of the fact, that they would like to replace the School with a housing estate.



The brothers have teamed up with local developer **Steve Curwen** and have confirmed that the plan is to get planning for a small school first and then apply to build houses on the remaining part of the site. With objections on the Council's website already approaching 200, local people have made their views abundantly clear.

The application to replace Kingswood House School, a registered charity, which local residents regard as a trojan horse to facilitate the building of a housing estate, was described by MP **Chris Grayling**, in a message of support as: "an example of the worst form of business practice". Grayling continued: "In reality this application is a sham. There is no known requirement for or plan to open a more limited facility like this on the site. Surrey County Council has said clearly that it has no intention of funding the development of such a school on the site, and there are no known private sector plans to do so."



Objectors, public, parents and school governors meet 10th November

A very high percentage of Kingswood House's 245 pupils have special needs and in recognition of its valuable work, the School has been made an Asset of Community Value by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council. Local residents heard first-hand about the difference the school makes as a former parent **Helen Beckman**, described in the most moving of terms, how the School supported her son who moved to it having suffered severe depression and mental anguish brought on by living through the tragic impact of Parkinsons on his father.

Headmaster **Duncan Murphy** explained that this was but one example of many similar cases within the School. If allowed, the new school would be a privately operated "for profit" venture aimed at 60 pupils with severe special needs for whom public transport would be out of the question, requiring travel to and from school to be by private transport. In order, to allow space for the housing estate on the current School's playing field, access to the new school would be via a new road from West Hill Avenue, currently a quiet residential road.

The findings of the independent traffic experts were shown to the audience and demonstrated that given the level of traffic required, total gridlock in West Hill Avenue and surrounding roads would ensue at drop off and pick up times. Additionally, at least four trees would need to be felled to allow sufficient visibility for traffic exiting the new school. Experts explained that the gridlock effect would be exacerbated if the housing estate were to follow. The application would appear to have been made without proper ecology reports having been undertaken.

Curwen's own ecology report submitted with his application, accepts that one of the buildings on the current site that is proposed to be demolished shows a high propensity as a bat habitat. As a protected species a bat survey should have been carried out over the summer months, but has not. It is understood that it is the Council's practice to require full surveys before considering any planning application.



Given the lack of demand locally for the new school, the school would be looking to attract pupils from outside the borough with Curwen Group themselves admitting that pupils will be travelling at least 40 minutes to get to the new school. As regards Kingswood House's pupils, none of them would qualify for the new school and all of them would need to find new homes. Given the special needs of many Kingswood House pupils and the scarcity of places locally, this is likely to pose a severe challenge.

Those wishing to object should endeavour to do so by 21 st November via the Council's website tinyurl.com/epsomewellplanning and entering the reference number 22/01653/FUL or by email to the case officer, Gemma Patterson at gpatterson@epsom-ewell.gov.uk (ref 22/01653/FUL)

See our earlier reports:

Battle for Epsom School continues....

Community Asset to be stripped?