

# Epsom and Ewell's MP champion's Friends of Horton Cemetery mission on "Time to Talk Day"

6 February 2026



On the edge of Epsom lies Horton Cemetery — quiet, overgrown and easy to miss. More than 9,000 people are buried there. Most never had headstones. Many never had visitors. Almost all were patients of the former Epsom Cluster of psychiatric hospitals, men and women whose final resting place reflects how society once viewed mental illness: something to be hidden, managed and ultimately forgotten.

In 2026, on Time to Talk Day, [5th February] Horton Cemetery forces us to ask an uncomfortable question: how far have we really come?

Horton Cemetery was created to serve what was once the largest cluster of psychiatric hospitals in Europe. At its height, the Epsom hospitals housed thousands of people with severe mental illness, learning disabilities and complex needs. Those who died without family or money were buried together anonymously. This was not ancient history. Horton Hospital closed in 1997. Some of those buried there lived into the late twentieth century — into the era many of us think of as modern and progressive.

Sites like Horton Cemetery challenge us to ask not just whether we are talking more openly about mental health, but whether we have truly confronted the stigma that shaped places like this, and whether we are prepared to protect the dignity of those still buried there.

Today, the cemetery has been sold to a private owner, with hopes of future development. Like many historic pauper burial sites nationwide, it sits under pressure from land values and planning decisions. I have urged the government not to grant exhumation licences at Horton Cemetery and to properly safeguard similar sites as places of remembrance, not obstacles to development. These are not empty plots. They are graves. How we treat them matters, because how we remember the dead reflects how we value the living.

Friends of Horton Cemetery, families, and Professor Alana Harris of King's College London have worked tirelessly through initiatives such as the Lost Souls Project, which seeks to recover the names and stories of those buried anonymously in former asylum cemeteries. Their work is a quiet act of justice — restoring identity where the system erased it, and dignity where stigma once prevailed.

But local efforts can only go so far. That is why there are growing calls for a national memorial to those who lived and died in Britain's historic mental health institutions. Such a memorial would not rewrite history, but it would acknowledge it, signifying that now is the time to talk.

Time to Talk Day is often framed around everyday conversations — a coffee and a chat, a poster on a train reminding us to check in on loved ones. These things matter. They help chip away at silence and shame. Horton Cemetery asks us to go further.

Epsom tells the story of how this country has treated mental illness. It was once the centre of a system built on isolation and control. Today, it hosts the headquarters of the Samaritans — an organisation rooted in compassion and listening. That journey should give us hope. But it also gives Epsom, and Horton, a responsibility. If we are serious about confronting mental health stigma, this is one of the places where that conversation must begin.

Because today, people with severe mental illness still face some of the deepest inequalities in our society. Recent data paints a stark picture: those facing the longest waits for mental health care are now waiting nearly two years — an average of 658 days — more than twice as long as people waiting for elective physical health treatment. The consequences are devastating. Adults living with severe mental illness, including bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, have a life expectancy 15 to 20 years lower than the general population.

These are not abstract statistics. They reflect lives cut short, needs unmet, and a system that still too often talks about people with severe mental illness rather than listening to them.

The Government now has the opportunity — and the responsibility — to show that mental health reform means more than warm words. Safeguarding sites like Horton and recognising the historic mistreatment of people with mental illness would be a powerful signal that dignity is not conditional and remembrance matters. I look forward to discussions with ministers about how we protect Horton Cemetery and similar sites across the country — not as relics of an uncomfortable past, but as places of reflection and learning.

Time to Talk Day should not only ask whether we are speaking openly. It should ask who we are hearing, whose voices are still missing, and whether, finally, we are willing to restore dignity to those whose voices were never heard.

Horton Cemetery is a quiet reminder that stigma thrives in silence. In 2026, are we ready to listen to what it is telling us?

Helen Maguire MP



For further information about the work of the charity The Friends of Horton Cemetery visit their website [HERE](#)

Image: Horton Cemetery with former patients photos

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## The New Year view from Westminster

6 February 2026



From Epsom and Ewell Member for Parliament - Helen Maguire

The new year often brings a quieter moment. A chance to take stock once the noise and festive chaos of December fades. This year, that moment felt especially important to me.

Politics in Britain feels deeply unsettled right now, and the wider world even more so. One day brings news of geopolitical relationships breaking down in violent and inhumane acts; the next, warnings of democratic fragility from our neighbours across the Atlantic. It can all feel relentless. I don't blame anyone who feels disillusioned, or let down by establishments and leaders that are meant to provide stability and reassurance. I feel that frustration myself at times.

When that sense of turbulence sets in, I remind myself where my focus belongs. My responsibilities are not abstract; they are here. My priorities and primary interest are with the people of Epsom and Ewell, my community. That clarity matters. It keeps my work grounded, and it shapes what my work in Westminster will be this year.

One tangible example of that focus is recent progress on the issue of pavement parking. Residents have raised this issue with me consistently since before my election in July 2024, and for good reason. Obstructed pavements are not just a minor inconvenience; they affect people's safety. Parents with pushchairs, wheelchair users, people with visual impairments, and older residents are often the ones forced into the road just to get by.

After sustained campaigning, both locally and in Parliament, we are finally going to see meaningful change. This month, the Government gave councils new powers to tackle problematic pavement parking. What this means is that councils, not the police, can act where pavements are clearly blocked or unsafe, without long, street-by-street processes every time. Here's what it doesn't mean: this is not a blanket ban. Councils can still allow exemptions on narrow or busy residential streets where pavement parking is genuinely needed.

This is an important change that puts safety and accessibility first. I'm proud of this progress, not just for the outcome, but for what it represents: local voices being heard and practical problems taken seriously. I was pleased to receive recognition of my campaigning in a letter from Lilian Greenwood MP, the Minister for Local Transport, announcing the changes, and this year my priority will be ensuring that this change is implemented properly and consistently.

Another issue that comes up repeatedly is antisocial behaviour. This can take many forms, from vandalism and loud noise to the misuse of shared spaces. These issues can quietly have a real impact on our community and sense of belonging.

One specific concern constituents raise with me regularly is the growing problem of illegal or unsafe e-scooter use. I hear from parents worried that pavements or public pathways are no longer safe, and from older residents who no longer feel

confident on their quick walk to the shops. One parent described a moment where their young child was mere millimetres from being knocked over by an e-scooter travelling far faster than it should have been, on a pathway it had no business being on. I dread to think what kind of irreparable damage could have been done if it weren't for just a few millimetres of space.

When e-scooters are used responsibly and legally, they can have a place in society. But reckless riding and a lack of coordinated enforcement create real and costly risks. Last year I worked with campaigners, police and transport partners to push for a more cohesive, joined-up response to the problem. This isn't about targeting young people or stifling new technology; it's about, as with the pavement parking issue, ensuring our public spaces are safe for everyone who uses them.

For anyone doubting just how much devastation an electric scooter can bring to someone's life and family, I would encourage them to read about Jacob's Journey, and the powerful work his mother Carly is doing as a result.

My work as Primary Care and Cancer spokesperson continues alongside my constituency campaigns, and the two remain closely intertwined. I will continue to fight for better healthcare across the constituency, whether that is through better access to GP appointments or timely treatment for cancer patients.

If there is a running thread through my priorities this year, it is a belief in the value of steady, practical action that is tangible for every single member of the Epsom and Ewell community. In the uncertain times ahead, the basics matter more than ever: safe streets, responsive public services, and a more affordable cost of living. I will continue to work hard delivering this for our constituency.

Helen Maguire MP



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## Planning buses not missing them says Epsom's MP

6 February 2026



Dear Editor,

Thank you to Stuart Gosling for his contribution and for highlighting the important issue of transport links in relation to the new hospital development.

Has Epsom's new MP missed the bus to a new hospital?

I completely agree that good transport connectivity is essential for the success of this project, and I want to reassure residents that we have already considered this as part of the planning process.

New transport links will be introduced once the hospital is built, and discussions around the best way to serve the site with appropriate public transport will take place as we progress along the development timeline. It's important to note that transport infrastructure often needs to be developed alongside the new services and demands that arise from it.

I'll be at the forefront of ensuring that the new hospital is well-served by transport, and I'm committed to ensuring that Epsom and Ewell's needs are fully met. The process may take time, but I'm confident the results will be worth the wait.

Yours faithfully,

Helen Maguire MP

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## Our Health Deserves Better

6 February 2026



I want to take this opportunity to thank those who voted for me at the general election. There is much to do to improve our situation in Epsom & Ewell and I am committed to help achieve this for all the residents of Epsom, Ewell, Ashted and Leatherhead.

Having visited Epsom Hospital only this week I reflect on the recent statement by Chancellor Rachel Reeves and find it impossible not to feel a deep concern for the future of our local healthcare infrastructure.

The Chancellor’s announcement, which hinted at potential cuts to various infrastructure projects, including the ambitious plan to deliver 40 new hospitals, has left many of us in a state of unease. Among the projects at risk is the new emergency care hospital at Sutton, a critical facility that promises to alleviate the pressures on Epsom and St Helier hospitals. As the newly elected Liberal Democrat MP for Epsom & Ewell, I find this prospect deeply troubling.

Our community has been waiting far too long for this vital investment. The new hospital at Sutton is not just another building; it’s a beacon of hope for many. It’s designed to be a centre of excellence, equipped with state-of-the-art facilities for the most serious emergency cases. Without it, our local healthcare services will continue to struggle with sub-standard conditions at Epsom and St Helier. These facilities, already stretched beyond their limits, cannot continue to bear the brunt of our community’s healthcare needs without significant improvements.

The situation is dire. The buildings at Epsom and St Helier are overdeveloped and outdated. They desperately need the relief that the new Sutton hospital would provide. This isn’t just about buildings; it’s about the quality of care and the well-being of our staff and patients. Our community deserves better, and we cannot afford to wait any longer.

The Chancellor has offered a meeting with the Health Secretary for MPs representing affected constituencies. I eagerly anticipate this opportunity to voice the concerns of Epsom, Ewell, Ashted, and Leatherhead residents. Our message must be clear and resolute: the Conservative party’s economic mismanagement has left our public services in disarray, and we cannot allow their broken promises to cost us our much-needed hospital.

For years, the Conservatives have failed to deliver on their promises, leaving our local health services to languish. The proposed hospital at Sutton represents a crucial lifeline, not just for today but for the future of healthcare in our region. It is a promise of better days, of healthcare services that our community can rely on.

As your MP, I am committed to fighting for this project. We must ensure that the funding for the new Emergency Care Hospital at Sutton is protected. The people of Epsom, Ewell, Ashted, and Leatherhead deserve nothing less than a healthcare system that meets their needs and supports their well-being. The time for waiting is over. It’s time for action, and I will not rest until our community gets the healthcare investment it has been promised and so desperately needs.

Image: Maternity Unit at Epsom Hospital. Left to right; James Blythe CEO; Liz Cullen, Head of Midwifery; Helen Maguire MP

## Lib Dems’ Helen Maguire - “Getting Things Done”

6 February 2026



Epsom and Ewell Times is publishing the appeals of the Parliamentary Candidates standing in the General Election for the constituency of Epsom and Ewell. This is the appeal from **Liberal Democrat** candidate **Helen Maguire**.

My Army training gave me focus, my police work gave me a determination to maintain good order, while being a working mum of three in Claygate taught me a great deal about my local community.

It’s these and other aspects of my career that led me to become a Liberal Democrat and to stand for Parliament to serve my local community - and to get things done to make the constituency of Epsom & Ewell a better place.

While there are many issues the Liberal Democrats want to tackle in the next Parliament, there are three big issues in

Epsom & Ewell close to my heart. I want to see them fixed. I have been campaigning on these for the last 18 months and I want to take them to Parliament as your local representative and get them resolved.

My first concern is health and social care. Previous Conservative governments have run the NHS into the ground, and as far as Epsom & Ewell is concerned, have consistently failed to resolve one of our biggest issues, which is the overcrowding at Epsom and St Helier hospitals.

Our health care professionals across Surrey came up with an exciting and practical plan to build a third hospital which would be designed to treat the most difficult emergency cases, so that local people could get world class care in an emergency. The building of this new critical care hospital at Sutton would then free up Epsom and St Helier to be upgraded to significantly better district hospitals, caring for all other aspects of medical care.

The Conservatives have consistently promised to build the critical care hospital, but nothing has happened. As a result, our pressurised NHS workers are having to deal with overcrowding and poor facilities - even getting into Epsom to park can be an issue!

At the most basic level successive Conservative governments have failed on health and social care. So many people can't get to see their GP when they need to. The Lib Dems want to give everyone the right to see a GP within seven days, or within 24 hours if they urgently need to - and we'll train another 8,000 more GPs to deliver this.

Finding NHS dental care can be as difficult as finding hen's teeth. The running down of NHS dentistry is causing great concern and so the Lib Dems will guarantee access to a NHS dentist for urgent and emergency care, putting an end to the dental deserts we see emerging across the country.

Mental health services need shaking up so we will push for mental health hubs for young people. We also must produce better results in terms of cancer survival rates and want to introduce a guarantee that all patients will start treatment for cancer within 62 days for urgent referral.

Successive Conservative governments have promised to do more to resolve the social care crisis, but nothing of any substance has happened. We have come up with a raft of fully costed measures aimed at making people's lives much easier than they are now. We want to introduce free personal care based on the model we introduced in Scotland in 2002, so that provision is based on need, not ability to pay.

We also want to establish a Royal College of Care Workers to improve recognition and career progression and introduce a higher Carer's Minimum Wage. We want to establish a cross-party commission to forge a long-term agreement on sustainable funding for social care. A subject very close to our leader Ed Davey's heart is to give unpaid carers a fair deal so they get the support they so desperately need, including paid carer's leave and a statutory guarantee of regular respite breaks.

Everyone in Epsom and Ewell will benefit from better healthcare provision, but perhaps even more fundamentally is the need to build a stronger economy enabling us to shake off the cost-of-living crisis. One of the greatest opportunities is in the booming 'green economy' where the Liberal Democrats want to invest in renewable power and home insulation to drive a strong economic recovery, bring down energy bills, and create clean, secure, well-paid new jobs.

This means we need to develop an industrial strategy that will give businesses certainty and incentivise them to invest in new technologies to grow the economy, create good jobs, and tackle the climate crisis. In Epsom & Ewell we need to boost small businesses and empower them to create new local jobs, including abolishing business rates and replacing them with a Commercial Landowner Levy to help stimulate our high streets.

The mismanagement of our economy and public services by the Tories extends to the inability of government to sort out the water companies who have been for too long polluting our rivers and waterways with raw sewage. Instead, they have pandered to the water companies in whose interests are best served by doing nothing other than the bare minimum about pollution.

I, and my fellow Liberal democrats, will hold the water companies to account by giving them a duty to protect the environment, including banning water companies from dumping raw sewage into rivers, lakes and coastal areas. Trashing our environment is totally unacceptable.

We want to make homes warmer and cheaper to heat. We will introduce a ten-year emergency upgrade programme, starting with free insulation and providing low-cost heating - heat pumps for those on low incomes.

We want to extend this to solar generation by expanding incentives for households to install solar panels. We will invest in renewable power so that 90% of the UK's electricity is generated from renewables by 2030.

All these issues can be resolved providing we plan well for the future and elect politicians whose life experiences are about taking on problems and solving them, this is what I have been trained to do, and I wish to do so to the benefit of everyone who lives in Epsom, Ewell, Ashted & Leatherhead.

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The other candidates:

Conservative who promises to serve "with integrity"

The Green promises

A True and Fair view of the world

Reform candidate for Epsom and Ewell

Mark my words for Labour candidate

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## Harriers Polish Medals

6 February 2026



**Epsom & Ewell Harriers** older runners are back in the UK having picked up medals at the world indoor athletics championships in Torun Poland.

**Lisa Boland** W40 (40-44) competed in the 60m and the 200m. Her 60m race saw her gain a PB of 7.82sec winning her a silver medal, she also won a Bronze medal in the 200m with a time of 25.85sec. If this wasn't enough, she also won a silver medal in the W40 4 x 200m relay.

**Anne Nelson** W70 (70-74) competed in the 60m, finishing with a bronze medal with an astonishing time of 10.19sec. To add to this medal, Anne also secured 3rd position and a bronze medal in the 200m with a time of 35.69sec.

Top photo: Lisa and Anne with their medals.

After a year of training, they were ready for the World Master Athletics Indoor Championships 2023 in Torun, Poland. Lisa and Anne train with Epsom & Ewell Harriers at the Harrier Centre, Poole Road. **Simon Bean**, President of Epsom & Ewell Harriers commented "We are so proud of Lisa and Anne, they have worked so hard throughout the year, to come away with so many medals is an incredible achievement."

The World Masters Indoor Championships enables athletes from across the world over the age of 35 to continue to compete in the sport they love. A celebration of athletics with age categories spreading right up to 85+ years of age.

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Other news from Epsom and Ewell Harriers:

Epsom & Ewell Harriers shine through in the East Surrey Amateur Athletic League 2022/23. The recent third and final of the 3 East Surrey Amateur Athletic X-Country races took place at the Harrier Centre, Poole Road, Epsom. The 5-mile race was a 2-lap course with a mixture of on and off rd. Epsom & Ewell Harriers won 3 of the 4 team events, they were the overall team winners in the girls, men's and women's categories. Simon Bean, President of Epsom & Ewell Harriers said "this is an incredible result for the Club." In addition, there were some amazing individual Epsom & Ewell Harrier successes as follows:

Women

- U17 Women: 1st **Sophie Glencross**, 2nd **Lily Brown**
- U20 W- 1st **Georgina Winder**
- Women overall: 2nd **Helen Maguire**, 3rd **Georgina Winder**
- W35-44: 1st **Helen Maguire**

Men

- U13 Boys: 2nd **Oliver Henderson**
- U20 men: 2nd **George Hannay**, 3rd **Alex Rodriguez**
- M45: 1st **Gary Coleman**
- M50: 1st **Steve Winder**
- Men overall: 1st **Alex Gurteen**, 2nd **Steve Winder**

Epsom & Ewell Harriers welcomes new runners of all standards whether you've run before or not. For more information about our training sessions see here: <https://eandeharriers.weebly.com/>