

Will Surrey potholes outwit AI?

15 January 2025



Surrey County Council will now use AI to detect potholes to help speed up road repairs across the county.

Computer vision cameras fitted to dashboards inside highways vehicles will spot and photograph potholes which will then be automatically recorded for repair. Future enhancements will see other defects such as missing signs and foliage overgrowth also programmed for repair.

Highways Inspectors will no longer need to step onto the road to manually carry out inspections which will make the process safer and more efficient. Potholes that don't need immediate attention will also be regularly tracked to ensure they are dealt with when needed.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said, *"We have some of the country's busiest roads and we're working incredibly hard to improve them, with nearly £300m allocated to repairing and improving Surrey's roads and pavements over the next five years (2023 - 2028).*

"Adopting this technology will mean we can proactively log and fix potholes, helping to ensure we have well-maintained roads across the county for our residents.

"We're also resurfacing more roads and pavements than ever with 100 miles of roads and 30 miles of pavements resurfaced by our highways teams from April - December 2024 alone. This will make our highway network more resilient which will reduce the number of potholes that develop on our roads in the first place.

"I'm also pleased that we are pioneering AI technology to detect potholes as championed by the government just this week."

Connell McLaughlin, CEO of Route Reports said, *"We're thrilled to formalise this long-term partnership with Surrey County Council, who were among our earliest supporters and collaborators in developing Route Reports' AI road maintenance platform.*

"Their feedback and hands-on involvement played a key role in refining our defect detection technology to ensure it meets the real-world needs of the community. This partnership exemplifies how innovative solutions and local expertise can come together to make roads safer, more efficient, and more sustainable."

Surrey County Council is the first local authority in the UK to move away from manual inspections and solely use video and AI technology to log and programme pothole repairs. The council has worked with provider, Route Reports, to trial and develop the software.

Residents can also report and track road and pavement issues on **Surrey County Council's website**.

Image: Pothole in Woodcote Road Epsom

Surrey carers getting digital support

15 January 2025



Surrey County Council is rolling out additional support for tens of thousands of unpaid carers living in the county as part of a new digital service.

At least 90,000 people in Surrey provide unpaid care for friends, family members or neighbours. Through the new initiative, these unpaid carers will gain access to a wide range of free on-demand services, aimed at supporting individuals with the day-to-day realities of caring.

The initiative is being delivered by Mobilise - a carer-led digital community - in partnership with Surrey County Council.



It will provide a complementary layer of added support that can be accessed remotely via an online hub by anyone caring for a loved one in the county. New digital support services which carers in Surrey are set to gain access to include:

- **An online peer community** of thousands of fellow carers from across the UK - with the chance to share advice and experiences through a community forum and during regular events, such as the 'virtual cuppa'
- **Easy-to-use, self-service tools** outlining the different forms of support which carers may be entitled to - including Carer's Allowance - and guidance on how to navigate eligibility criteria and access various benefits, for example
- **Tailor-made support guides** on everything from how to balance caring with full-time work, to managing personal health and wellbeing while looking after someone else
- **Information on carers' rights** and relevant social care law, in line with the latest government guidance

An AI-powered 'assistant' is also available to help carers quickly and easily find the specific information, resources or support that they need.

Martin, a carer from Surrey who looks after their partner, said: "I'm delighted to have come across Mobilise. It's great to know that there is a wide community of carers who can, without judgement, share their honest views and experiences on such a wide range of topics. It's reassuring to know that there are like-minded people out there and that we're not alone."

Suzanne Bourne, Co-Founder and Head of Carer Support at Mobilise, commented: "An increasing number of us are taking on caring responsibilities, with one million additional carers set to emerge in the UK over the next ten years. The reality of caring will look different for each of these people - including the 90,000 people who are looking after their loved ones in Surrey.

"For some, it will start with needing to check in with family members more frequently, with caring responsibilities increasing over time. For others, it might be a case of having always needed to support relatives with their medication, self-care, and appointments, or even full-time care. But in each and every case, having the right support is vital.

"That's why we're proud to be partnering with Surrey County Council to deliver additional support for carers living in the county. Through our community of carers - the largest of its kind - carers in Surrey will gain access to a powerful peer support network, as well as round-the-clock advice, resources, and guidance from experts. We're delighted to be able to work to connect carers in Surrey to this added support and to each other."

Sinead Mooney, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, said: "Carers play a crucial role in families and in our local communities by supporting people who would otherwise struggle to cope alone which is why it's so important for us to make sure carers themselves are cared for.

"We're pleased to be partnering with Mobilise to reach more carers across Surrey and support them in new and different ways. I'd encourage anyone who looks after a family member or friend to visit the Mobilise online community and explore the additional support available."

Vicky Stobart, Director of Long Term Planning Delivery and Senior Responsible Officer for Carers at Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Board, added: "This initiative with Mobilise is a wonderful way for carers across Surrey to gain additional, digital support with their day-to-day caring duties. We're delighted that it's being rolled out and look forward to seeing the benefits as our carers start to use it."

For more information about the support now available in Surrey, visit Surrey's Mobilise community. To start accessing support, the Mobilise app can be downloaded via the Apple App Store or Google Play, with more information available on Mobilise's website.

Surrey University Launches UN-Affiliated Centre to Tackle Climate Change

15 January 2025



Drastically improving the UK's ability to address climate change is the grand challenge that the new United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)-affiliated CIFAL centre at the University of Surrey will tackle.

CIFAL Surrey will be officially launched on Monday, 25 November, with a ceremonial UN flag raising, a Signing

Ceremony and a panel event. In attendance will be a senior delegation from UNITAR, including Alexander Mejia, Head of the CIFAL Global Network and Director of the Division for People and Social Inclusion at UNITAR, other UNITAR delegates, Zöe Franklin, M.P. for Guildford, alongside a range of the university's collaborative partners in business and government.

Drawing on the University's strong research heritage and active engagement in sustainability, the new CIFAL Centre (Centre International de Formation des Autorités et Leaders), known as 'CIFAL Surrey', will work with UNITAR (the UN's training branch) and the CIFAL Global Network among other stakeholders to lead both training and capacity-building initiatives in sustainability. In doing so, CIFAL Surrey will make a unique and much-needed contribution to empowering climate leadership through enhanced climate literacy within and beyond Surrey.

As part of its activities, CIFAL Surrey will work in partnership with national and local government, industry, civil society, and beyond, developing sustainable economic practices, and helping to advance action towards the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Situated within the University's Institute for Sustainability, CIFAL Surrey will draw strongly on multi-disciplinary expertise in delivering both training and capacity building on a wide range of sustainability challenges, to help facilitate knowledge exchange among leaders in government, the private sector, and civil society - locally, nationally and internationally, as well as UK-based international organisations.

Professor Amelia Hadfield, the University of Surrey's Associate Vice President for External Engagement, and the new Director of CIFAL Surrey, said:

"Sustainability is far more than just a philosophy limited to net zero here at the University of Surrey. For us, and our community, sustainability reflects our deep, shared commitment to rebuilding a thriving planet for future generations. From the fundamentals of climate change to advanced policy implementation, CIFAL Surrey will provide hands-on training and resources to national and local government, businesses, and community groups, helping them deliver on the demands for a more sustainable future.

"Focused on knowledge sharing, skills building and decision-making, CIFAL Surrey will connect local expertise with global insight, fostering collaboration across government, the private sector, civil society, and the United Nations system to drive sustainable progress. As CIFAL Surrey Director, I'm delighted to be working with our own Institute for Sustainability, other CIFAL centres around the world, and UNITAR itself to deliver these critical goals."

CIFAL Surrey is the second UN-affiliated centre on campus, following the 2023 launch of the Centre of Excellence for Ageing, which appointed its first cohort of Fellows in June 2024.

Nathalie Hinds, co-founder of the Institute for Sustainability at the University of Surrey, said:

"If the UK is to be a leader on sustainability, leaders need more than just an awareness of net zero - they need the skills to create real change. CIFAL Surrey's training gives leaders hands-on experience with sustainable practices and governance, focusing on systems thinking and breaking down silos across sectors. Alumni of CIFAL Surrey will leave not only with world-renowned accreditation but they will also be part of a global network of alumni, gaining access to our Sustainability Innovation Hub for insights, research partnerships, and ongoing support."

Mr Alex Mejia, Division Director at United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), said:

"We are honoured to inaugurate CIFAL Surrey, hosted by the University of Surrey, a renowned global institution at the forefront of innovation and learning. This new centre will mark an important step in our mission to advance sustainable development and capacity-building worldwide. It will serve as a vital hub for fostering collaboration, innovation, and knowledge exchange across the United Kingdom and beyond."

Deputy Leader and Lead Councillor for Regeneration at Guildford Borough Council, Cllr Tom Hunt, said:

"We are proud to support the launch of CIFAL Surrey and be a key partner in the project. This initiative will play a big role in driving sustainable development. It will give us the chance to work together to share knowledge, improve skills and deliver practical solutions for our communities. One of our key priorities as a council is to create a more sustainable borough. Our partnership with CIFAL gives us a unique opportunity to work alongside local, national and international experts to ensure a bright, sustainable future for Guildford."

Councillor Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth at Surrey County Council, said:

"It's a pleasure to be able to welcome the team from the United Nations to launch this new international centre in the heart of Surrey. The CIFAL centre will play a key role in promoting sustainable development at home and abroad while also opening up opportunities for our communities. It also reinforces the region's global reputation for innovation, research and knowledge exchange."

£12 million bus boost for Surrey

15 January 2025



Surrey County Council has been allocated £12,074,800 from the Department for Transport, to further improve and protect local buses.

The council will work with bus operators to allocate the funding, which is likely to generate more frequent buses on popular routes, protect services in rural areas and improve punctuality.

The investment will also be used to help Surrey bus services grow their passenger numbers and to support people who rely on them to make essential journeys.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Growth at Surrey County Council said, “I’m delighted that Surrey will benefit from this essential funding which will help us to build upon our own significant investment and encourage more people to take the bus.

We’ve recently added 54 new zero emission buses to our fleet, invested £6.3m in more ultra-low and zero emission community transport minibuses, £9m in bus priority measures to ensure Surrey buses turn up on time, and £1.4m in improving information for passengers at bus stops.

Our Surrey LINK card gives young people half-price bus travel and we’ve expanded our on-demand Surrey Connect bus services to cover areas where there are limited fixed bus routes, giving more options to travel by bus for all residents right across Surrey, particularly supporting our rural areas.”

26 million journeys were made by bus in Surrey during 2023.

Surrey showing true grit for winter roads

15 January 2025



Surrey’s team of gritter drivers are now available 24/7 to help keep residents moving during the colder months.

Our 39 state-of-the art gritting vehicles are ready to grit the county’s busiest routes before and during severe weather, using the 10,000 tonnes of salt stored at our four Surrey depots.

Winter arrangements typically begin in October and run until the end of March although this period can be extended depending on weather conditions.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth said, “We’re committed to keeping drivers safe here in Surrey and investing in our roads.

“When temperatures plummet, our highways teams across the county will be ready to work around the clock to keep traffic moving on our primary routes using our new, efficient gritters.

“Keeping our roads safe this winter is part of a series of highways improvements we’ll be making across our busy network.”

Surrey needs more foster carers

15 January 2025



Fostering can mean everything to those involved; that is the message of a powerful new fostering film from over 100 councils.

'Everything', a new fostering recruitment film, will have its Surrey premier at a private screening and fostering information session at Nova Cinema, Woking, on Thursday 14 November.

As well as celebrating our existing community of Surrey foster carers, the event will offer residents who may be considering fostering the opportunity to learn all about the fostering journey. A panel discussion with foster carers, care experienced young people and fostering staff will provide the opportunity for questions, as well as to hear directly from those with first-hand experience of the power becoming a foster carer has to transform lives. Not just those of children being fostered, but of the foster carers and their families too.

Highlighting the need for more foster carers in Surrey, **Councillor Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning**, said;

"At Surrey County Council we have over 1,000 children in our care and we currently have just under 400 foster families. We want children to live and thrive in homes within the county, where this is in the right thing for them. While 42% of fostered children in Surrey live with our foster carers within the geographical borders of the county, our aim is that by 2030 that number will be up to 65%."

"The 'Everything' project has given our fostering service an amazing film that shows the long-term impact that fostering can have, with relationships between carers and children lasting well into adulthood. Every council wants to recruit more foster carers, and by collaborating to produce this emotionally powerful film, we can show people how rewarding and life-changing being a foster carer can be."

"The message is the same for all of us - we need more people to step forward and become foster carers. 'Everything' will help us to reach more people in our communities and encourage them to find out more about this really rewarding role."

"We are committed to giving the vulnerable children and young people we care for the best chance to thrive, and for the vast majority of them that would be to live with a local fostering family. Our ambition is for at least 30 new foster families across Surrey to join us by the end of March 2025."

Children who enter the care system have often experienced trauma and instability in their lives, and a caring, stable foster family can make a significant difference in their wellbeing and development.

Nationally, there are currently over 70,000 children living with around 56,000 foster families in the UK. However, there is still a significant shortage of foster carers, with around 9,265 new foster families needed in the next year alone.

To learn more about fostering for Surrey, **register online for your free place** at our fostering information session on 14 November, or visit **Fostering - Surrey County Council**.

The 'Everything' film

'Everything' is the seventh film produced by a growing partnership of councils and children's trusts to promote local authority fostering. The 'Everything' project is the largest collaboration yet, with participants from Cumbria to Devon and Lancashire to Essex.

'Everything' follows foster carer Mike and his family on a journey through time with two of the children they have looked after, who are now adults. A surprise 60th birthday party for Mike gives Will and Zara a chance to reflect on how being fostered made a difference to their lives, thanking him for everything.

Thanks to footage shot on a genuine old camcorder, we are taken to the 1990s, to see how Will settles into the family. We also jump back to the 2010s, when a young Zara is being taught to play the guitar by Mike, something that comes full circle when she performs a song at the party. Mike's son Chris is involved throughout, showing the important role the children of foster carers play.

The concluding message of the film is that what you do with your life could forever change someone else's - encouraging people to foster in order to make that change.

The film was developed with the input and insight of foster carers and people with care experience, was produced by Reel TwentyFive and project managed by public sector media partner CAN/Rachel Brown. Project Director, Rachel Brown describes the main message of the film: *"Many people don't realise how common it is for relationships made through fostering to last well beyond the 'official' caring role. This has a huge impact on the lives of those who have been fostered, giving them stability and security well into adulthood."*

"We also wanted to reflect how the children of foster carers make a difference to children when they come into care, helping them to feel part of the family."

"Having over 100 councils taking part in the project, the film will reach a very wide audience, encouraging people to find

out more and take the steps towards becoming a foster carer.

“Fostering with your local council or children’s trust means you can better support local children and young people who need a safe and nurturing home where they can grow and thrive.”

Sarah Thomas, chief executive of the Fostering Network says: *“The Fostering Network has been proud to support the collaborative film projects since ‘Giants’ in 2017. It’s great to see local authority fostering services pooling resources to produce another amazing film. ‘Everything’ will help to amplify their message about the chronic shortage of fostering households, encouraging more people to come forward and foster.”*

Surrey support for the “financially challenged”

15 January 2025



Surrey County Council welcomes the extension by government of the Household Support Fund in this year’s Autumn Statement, after 86,000 Surrey households were supported by the fund last year.

In addition to the Household Support fund this autumn and winter, the council will continue to support residents with financial help, support and information. The council has, alongside partners, established a priority focus on 21 key neighbourhoods identified as having the highest levels of disadvantage, aligning with the organisation’s aim to enable as many people as possible to access the right support.

Councillor Mark Nuti, Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Public Health said: *“We recognise times are still financially challenging for both Surrey residents and local government. As an organisation we commit to do the best we can with the resources we have available to us – working with system-wide partners across Surrey to ensure No One Is Left Behind. We therefore welcome the continuing support the Household Fund provides us to help Surrey’s most vulnerable residents and organisations such as SGN who have once again supported us with funding.”*

Other support available to residents includes:

- Continued provision of the **Surrey Crisis Fund**. Thanks to funding from SGN, the council is able to offer the continued provision of the Surrey Crisis Fund. The Surrey Crisis Fund provides financial help to Surrey residents who have nowhere else to turn in an emergency or following a disaster. It also can provide assistance to set up a home in the community where no other funds or resources are available.
- **Warm Welcomes** launch again in November across the county as places where residents can enjoy a safe, warm, friendly environment to have a hot drink, read a book, socialise with others and receive energy saving information and advice.
- Surrey County Council have been working with **Citizens Advice** who can provide free advice and support on benefits, housing, debt and a range of other problems that people might be experiencing.
- The online **Financial, Welfare and Health and Wellbeing Hub** has been updated with the all the latest information to help with everyday living expenses surreycc.gov.uk/welfare.
- Free online **Energy Advice Tool** for information and advice on a range of topics including debt relief grants and fuel vouchers.
- Surrey County Council is working in partnership with FurbNow to launch a Home Energy Improvement ‘One-Stop Shop’ offering **subsidised ‘Home Energy Plans’** and hassle-free energy saving measure installations.
- Continue to work closely with the **Voluntary Community Social Enterprise** sector to ensure the right support gets to Surrey’s most vulnerable residents.
- 52 **Libraries** across Surrey continue to provide face-to-face support in communities for those who may be struggling. Providing a space to meet others, offering free Wi-Fi, access to computers, digital upskilling, volunteers who can help with digital support.
- Surrey Fire and Rescue Service **Safe and Well** visits out in the community often identify vulnerable residents and where they think appropriate, they can provide winter essentials, heaters, fuel vouchers and electric blankets thanks to our partnership with SGN.

- Working with the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People to provide a number of cost-of-living initiatives to support disabled residents with rising energy bills.
- In October, as part of the organisation's ongoing priority of ensuring No One Is Left Behind, Surrey County Council signed the Good Company's End Poverty Pledge - **Surrey County Council signs the End Poverty Pledge | Surrey News**

The Community Helpline is also available to talk to someone to help residents check that they are getting all the financial support they are entitled to and maximising their income. The Community Helpline is available on **0300 200 1008** 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday except bank holidays.

Photo by Timur Weber

Surrey smokers quitting for free

15 January 2025



Ex-smoker Councillor Mark Nuti, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, and Public Health, visited the One You Surrey stop smoking service to find out how we're supporting smokers to quit.

Around 12% of adults in Surrey smoke, and from personal experience Mark knows that it can be tough to give up smoking. When he visited Stop Smoking Advisors Lottie and Tutua from the One You Surrey Stop Smoking Service, he found that there is lots of support available to help people in Surrey make this life-changing choice.

One You Surrey offer a free quitting service, to help residents make the first step towards a healthier and smoke-free life. With access to free quitting aids, including e-cigarettes, nicotine replacement patches and gum, as well as encouragement and support to guide smokers through their quitting journey, One You Surrey are there every step of the way. One You Surrey offer a personalised service, including 1:1 sessions and online support. Whether this is someone's first shot at quitting smoking, or whether they feel like they've tried it all, the advisors at One You Surrey are here to find what works. Smokers who quit with the help of a stop smoking service are 4 times more likely to quit for good, as Mark found.

Mark told us: *"The benefits of quitting smoking make this challenging journey well worth it!" After just 72 hours, you will already be able to breathe better and will have more energy. Your sense of taste and smell will improve, and quitting can boost your mood and help you to feel less stressed. And you could save close to £2000 a year, enough for a holiday or towards a new car."*

Smoking Cessation Lead Tutua shared: *"Last year we were able to support over 1500 people in Surrey to successfully quit smoking. I love seeing the benefits our clients gain through their time with us, from the positive financial impact of quitting right through to people being able to run around with their children or grandchildren without getting out of breath as easily."*

To find out how One You Surrey can support you, or someone you know, in your smoke-free journey, visit <https://oneyousurrey.org.uk/programmes/stop-smoking/>. It's well worth it!

Surrey schools greenest in England

15 January 2025



Surrey County Council is proud to announce that it continues to lead in England in environmental education, boasting the largest number of Eco-Schools Green Flag awards for the second consecutive year. There are over 170 schools working on the Eco-Schools programme, with 98 schools across the county having earned this internationally recognised accolade, Surrey is at the forefront of fostering a sustainable future through education.

The Eco-Schools programme, the largest education programme globally, provides a structured framework for embedding sustainability into schools.

Surrey's achievement represents the active participation of over 52,000 pupils who are part of a Green Flag school.

Approximately 2,200 of these students have played a direct role in their schools' journey to achieving the Green Flag status.

Activities that have taken place include:

- Running switch off campaigns to save energy.
- Growing fruit and vegetables on their school grounds.
- Building new ponds to increase biodiversity.
- Planting trees to encourage more wildlife and improve air quality.
- Making signs for bins to make sure people use the correct bins, to help increase recycling.
- Installing water butts to collect rainwater.
- Monitoring energy use, water use and sustainable transport practices to see where they can improve.
- Following national campaigns such as Walk to School Week and Recycle Week.

The projects have engaged over 52,000 pupils and are already reaping benefits which include:

- Saving a total of 1,196,638 kwh of electricity
- Diverting 90,645 tonnes of waste from landfill
- Creating 12,584 (m2) of natural habitat
- 7,400 pupils participating in walking and cycling initiatives
- Over £10,000 has been raised for environmental projects in schools
- Over 30,000 pupils have taken part in a curriculum based environmental lesson

Marisa Heath, Cabinet Member for Environment at Surrey County Council, said: *"We are very proud to have the most schools with Eco-Schools Green Flags in England, and this is a testament to the hard work of those schools. It is vital to ensure the next generation understands how we can look after our environment and is prepared to make informed, environmentally aware choices. Many young people are passionate about the environment from recycling to air quality, and Eco-Schools provides them with a proven platform to make a real difference in their school and local community."*

Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning adds: *"The Eco-Schools programme empowers students to take the lead in environmental action, encouraging them to become champions of positive change both now and in the future. It's fantastic to see this acknowledgement of their efforts from a globally recognised awards programme."*

More information about Eco-Schools in Surrey, including how to sign up can be found **Surrey County Council's website**.

Image: St Peters CofE Primary in Farnham were recently awarded Green Flag status with support from Surrey County Council

Surrey's one stop shop to save energy

15 January 2025



Surrey residents can now receive support to upgrade their homes with energy saving 'retrofit' measures including insulation, heat pumps and solar panels through an innovative Home Energy Improvement 'One-Stop Shop' pilot scheme.

Surrey County Council (SCC) is working in partnership with Furbnow, specialists in home energy improvements, to help people make the transition to a lower energy and better performing home.

The service is for households that are looking to invest in their home's energy performance but need help to get their home energy project planned, designed and installed. Eligible Surrey residents can access 60% off the cost to plan, design and manage their home energy project.

Marisa Heath, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Environment said: *"I am delighted that we are working with Furbnow on such an innovative and important pilot to support our residents to install energy saving measures."*

“We know that cost plays a huge part in residents being able to self-fund improvements to their homes, but this could be a way for everyone to reduce their bills for the long-term.

“As well as saving money, and making your home more resilient and future proofed, residential energy use accounts for over 30% of Surrey’s emissions so improving the energy performance of as many of our homes as we can makes a huge difference in achieving our goal of being Net Zero Carbon by 2050.”

All Surrey residents can receive support from Furbnow’s team via their website, and the first 245 homes can access a subsidised whole house assessment and Home Energy Plan, if they live in one of the 300,000 Surrey homes that have poor energy performance.

Becky Lane, CEO of Furbnow, added: *“We’re thrilled to partner with Surrey County Council on this groundbreaking initiative. The Home Energy Improvement One-Stop Shop is designed to simplify the often-complex process of home energy upgrades. By providing expert guidance, quality assurance, and streamlined service from planning to installing, we’re empowering Surrey residents to make their homes more energy-efficient, comfortable, and valuable.*

“This not only benefits individual homeowners through reduced energy bills and improved living conditions but also contributes significantly to Surrey’s carbon reduction goals. We’re excited to see the positive impact this pilot will have on the community and the environment.”

All Surrey residents can receive support from Furbnow’s team via their website, and the first 245 homes can access a subsidised whole house assessment and Home Energy Plan, if they live in one of the 300,000 Surrey homes that have poor energy performance.

A Home Energy Plan, after the in-person survey, outlines recommended energy efficiency improvements for a home, detailing, the benefits, estimated costs, impacts, and suggested installation order. This can reduce their energy consumption and their bills, and improve the respiratory health of their household, and perhaps even increase the value of their homes. Furbnow also manage the design and installation of any energy efficiency improvements to your home to take the hassle out of your project.

It’s free to register and there is no obligation to go ahead with a Home Energy Plan or the installation of measures.

For more information about the One Stop Shop scheme, visit www.furbnow.com/surrey.

Surrey’s 3 Unis and Council leaving no one behind

15 January 2025



Surrey County Council, in partnership with Surrey’s three leading universities – Royal Holloway, University of London; University for the Creative Arts; and the University of Surrey – is proud to announce the launch of a new Civic Agreement for Surrey.

This groundbreaking initiative defines a shared commitment for these organisations to work collaboratively in the interests of the wider Surrey community: ensuring that no one is left behind.

By pooling resources and expertise, the partners believe they are better placed to address local needs, drive innovation, and create a more inclusive and resilient Surrey by 2030.

The Civic Agreement will be formally signed at an event in Woking today (Friday September 20, 2024).

It will serve as a public commitment to working together to bring about real and positive change to the people who live, learn and work in our communities across the county

Details are set out in a 32-page formal document which defines shared priorities, objectives, programmes of work and future ambitions.

All will be delivered against four shared priorities, which are:

- Growing a sustainable economy so everyone can benefit.
- Tackling health inequality.
- Enabling a greener future.
- Empowered & thriving communities.

Tim Oliver OBE, Leader of the Council, Surrey County Council, said: “Surrey’s universities are engines for regional

innovation, with a profound impact across all four strategic priorities. The partners are committed to ensuring our residents, communities and businesses can easily access and benefit from our range of innovation organisations, assets, and networks. These all play a part in addressing the four objectives of our agreement, and ensuring that no one is left behind.”

Prof. Max Lu, President and Vice-Chancellor of University of Surrey, said: “The University of Surrey has a proud track record of collaborating with local government and university partners to address issues that matter to Guildford and the wider Surrey community. One recent example is the Games and Innovation Nexus Project, partnering with University for the Creative Arts, Surrey County Council and Warwick University. Other examples include our Centre for Doctoral Training in AI for Digital Media Inclusion, in partnership with Royal Holloway University of London. We welcome the strengthening of these ties through the Civic Agreement for Surrey, ensuring the breadth and depth of our expertise from our Institutes for Sustainability and People-Centred AI, and all our schools, and companies on our Surrey Research Park continue to enable our community to grow and thrive.”

Prof. Julie Sanders, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Royal Holloway, University of London, said: “As a University of Social Purpose, we want to take a proactive role in tackling societal changes, enabling sustainable social and economic growth, and improving skills and opportunities for those in our community. Our inclusive education and research has a focus on achieving positive benefits for and with our local community, and our collaboration with academic partners, community groups, schools and local government brings investment, jobs and opportunity to Surrey. As well as through the Centre for Doctoral Training with the University of Surrey and its emphasis on digital inclusion, this effort is integral to the CoSTAR project, which seeks to ensure the UK’s screen and performance industries have the infrastructure, research and innovation skills to compete globally. Declaring our public agenda through the Civic Agreement for Surrey will amplify the positive role the university can play in the region.”

Prof. Jane Roscoe, President and Vice-Chancellor, University for the Creative Arts, said:

“As a leading creative university, the University for the Creative Arts plays a pivotal role in driving innovation across the arts, technology and business. Through our partnerships with local government, businesses and fellow academic institutions, we are committed to ensuring that creativity remains at the heart of Surrey’s economic and social growth. Our involvement in initiatives like the Games and Innovation Nexus (GAIN) project, alongside Surrey County Council and our university partners, is just one example of how we can harness creative thinking to solve real-world challenges. The Civic Agreement for Surrey reflects our dedication to fostering a creative and inclusive environment that empowers individuals, enriches communities and drives regional innovation.”

Today’s launch of the Civic Agreement for Surrey is very much the first step in a long-term collaboration that includes every part of Surrey.

We welcome further engagement from community stakeholders, businesses, and residents who share an interest in advancing the shared priorities and objectives set out in our civic agreement.

Details on how the community can get involved will be shared in the coming months.

A video explaining the commitment is also available on each of the partners’ websites.

For more information on the Civic Agreement for Surrey and how you can get involved, contact: civicagreement@surreycc.gov.uk

Will Surrey reporting tool fill the pot-holes?

15 January 2025



Surrey County Council’s new ‘FixMyStreet’ online reporting tool will now make it easier for residents to report potholes, faulty traffic signals and other street defects, following its launch today (Tuesday 17 September).

FixMyStreet allows people to quickly and simply report issues in their area which need fixing, cleaning or clearing. Accessed via **Surrey County Council’s website**, residents are also able to see issues which have already been reported, to sign up for local updates and to track the progress of repairs using their mobile phone or other device.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth said, “We’re very aware that well-maintained roads are highly important to our residents. This is why here in Surrey, we’re investing nearly £300m in repairing and improving Surrey’s roads and pavements by 2028.

“Introducing the ‘FixMyStreet’ platform is another example of our continued investment in our vital highways service. This new reporting platform will make it easier for people to report potholes and other defects, and to check the progress of all repairs in their local area.

“Keeping Surrey’s busy road network moving and investing in improving our roads continue to be top priorities for Surrey

County Council.”

To report an issue and see existing reports in your area, visit <https://tellus.surreycc.gov.uk/>

Related reports:

Don't blame us for potholes say Surrey's highway authority.

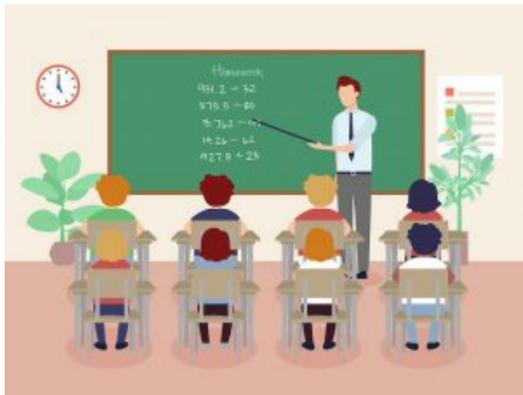
90% of Surrey road hole damage claims go to pot

Prevention costs less than cures.....

Image: Pothole in Woodcote Road Epsom. Copyright Epsom and Ewell Times

Surrey multiplies to subtract innumerate numbers

15 January 2025



Free, flexible Multiply courses are now available for Surrey residents who would like to improve their confidence using numbers.

Around half of the UK working age population don't have strong numeracy skills, or don't feel confident about working with numbers.

Now Surrey residents can do something about it without having to go back to the classroom, (unless you want to). Multiply courses are a diverse range of free, flexible courses that have been created to help plug the numeracy gap.

They come in many different shapes and sizes, so if classrooms aren't your thing, and you'd rather do some cooking or gardening, that's absolutely possible. Or if you need it to fit in around your work and home life, that's possible too, with flexible online courses available. There's a Multiply course to suit everyone - from those who just want to feel a bit more confident with numbers in their everyday life, to those who want to get a new qualification, get a better-paying job and further their career.

Multiply courses are funded by the UK government and delivered by a range of providers overseen by Surrey County Council. Courses range from a couple of hours online, to several weeks with in-person tutoring. With a total of 15 providers and over 35 courses available (with more being added soon), there's something to suit everyone.

Individuals can sign up for a Multiply course to suit their needs, and businesses can also nominate staff who would benefit from improving their numeracy skills. The full range of courses can be seen on the Surrey County Council website with many created to fill the needs of specific industries, such as construction, healthcare and early years.

Clare Curran, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member Children, Families, and Lifelong learning, said: *"Multiply courses are another tool from our skills toolbox to help improve economic outcomes for residents and businesses in Surrey. Strong numeracy skills are essential to help residents reach their potential, and businesses whose workforces are number confident can boost productivity, increase profits, and improve employee retention."*

"Supporting local people to improve their numeracy skills is not only beneficial at the individual level, but also good for our communities and our economy - leading to a better quality of life for all, ensuring no one is left behind."

Courses are starting now and will run until the end of March 2025. To qualify, learners must be based in Surrey, aged 19 or over, and not currently have a GCSE (or equivalent) in Maths.

Multiply courses can also be used by local businesses to upskill current employees, at no cost to either the learner or the business.

A full list of courses and start dates can be found on **the Surrey County Council website.**

Register your interest at <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/multiply>

Image: Preply.com Images licence

A question of Surrey’s future budget

15 January 2025



Surrey County Council (SCC) are currently seeking feedback from residents on how the council uses its financial resources. These views will help inform the draft budget for the 2025/26 financial year.

Each year, the council is required to balance its budget so that spending does not exceed income from council tax, grants and other sources.

Cllr **David Lewis**, Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources, said: “Although Surrey’s finances are well managed, the council is still facing huge challenges that are affecting the local government sector and society more widely.

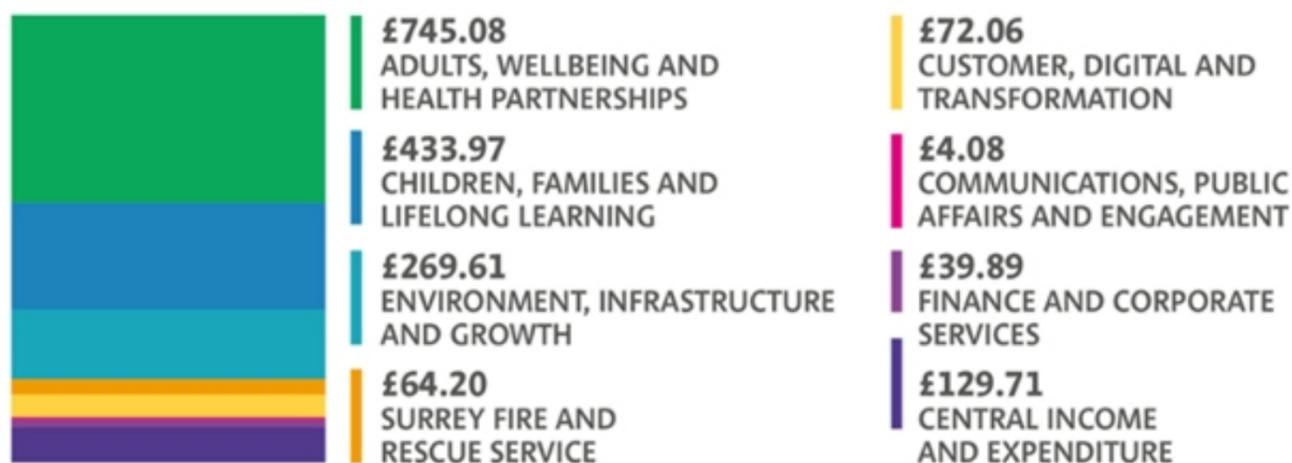
“Higher costs, reduced funding from central government, and rapidly rising demand have all increased the cost of providing vital services to residents. As a result, the way in which we use our financial resources is becoming more constrained.

“Feedback from residents is essential in informing decision-making and making sure that the budget is spent on the right things.”

Most of the council’s budget is spent on looking after those people who need us most, through Adults Social Care and Children’s services.

A significant portion is also allocated to keeping people safe and preventing or responding to serious incidents, particularly across Surrey Fire & Rescue Service, Trading Standards, and environmental services.

The diagram below shows how the budget is allocated across all the services that the council provides for the 2024/25 financial year. The figures are based on the average Band D Council Tax per year of £1,758.60.



Some areas funded by specific grants are not reflected in these statistics.

Residents are encouraged to complete the consultation survey and have their say by Monday 30 September 2024. Responses are anonymous and the survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

Consultation feedback will inform a draft of the budget, which will be considered by the council’s Cabinet in November 2024. If the draft is agreed, SCC will consult further over the winter on proposals for balancing the budget in 2025/25. In February 2025, the council will then agree the budget for next year and the medium term financial strategy covering the next five years.

Surrey Business Leaders Forum re-booted

15 January 2025



Businesses across Surrey now have a much greater voice in guiding the growth of the county's economy thanks to the relaunched and revitalised Surrey Business Leaders Forum.

Just weeks after the government handed Surrey County Council greater strategic powers to support economic development across the county, steps have been taken to ensure the private sector has a stronger voice and is right at the heart of local decision-making.

The Surrey Business Leaders Forum brings together close to 40 individuals representing a diverse range of businesses – from SMEs to Surrey-based multinationals, and including businesses from Surrey's priority sectors alongside employer representative bodies.

The Forum will be a driving force to help raise awareness of local business and economic needs and act as a local business champion to ensure businesses have a voice in decision-making that impacts the local economy. Acting as an independent advisory group, the Forum will ensure businesses can input, challenge, and guide the Council's approach to growing the economy.

The revamped forum met for the first time in May, and this week took part in a workshop to support the development of a new economic strategy for Surrey.

Matt Furniss, the Council's Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said: *"Surrey has a fantastic economic story to tell, with more than 110,000 businesses generating over £50 billion to the UK economy.*

We know there is more that we can do to work with our private sector to deliver real benefits to our residents and communities, so we've taken steps to move quickly to make the most of the new powers from government, including creating Business Surrey, which provides free and accessible support to all Surrey businesses.

"Ensuring businesses are at the heart of our decision-making process can only strengthen that approach. I look forward to working with businesses to deliver on our priority to grow Surrey's economy in a sustainable way, while ensuring no one is left behind."

Chris Hurren, the Chair of the Business Leaders Forum and partner at RSM UK, a leading provider of audit, tax and consulting services, said: *"The Surrey Business Leaders Forum brings together an exciting and diverse group of local business leaders who want to be a driving force in shaping Surrey's economic future and be a voice for all businesses in Surrey.*

"Their knowledge and experiences from the private sector will play a key role in helping shape local decision-making."

The Council took the role as Surrey's strategic economic leader in April this year, a role that was previously held by the county's two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), Enterprise M3 and Coast to Capital.

The change has seen the council positioned well to lead on an enhanced, county-wide oversight and delivery role in driving sustainable economic growth across the county, a role which Surrey County Council wants to translate into actual economic benefits for residents and businesses.

It has absorbed formal responsibilities to deliver business support through the new Surrey-wide Growth Hub and deliver government-funded programmes focused on skills.

This new offer is presented via the Council's Business Surrey service, which acts as a single gateway for all Surrey businesses to access support and advice. For access to all Business Surrey's support and advice visit the Business Surrey website.

Related reports:

Epsom's leader welcomes more power for Surrey County Council

Surrey County Council on the level.

Mixed reaction to Hunt's budget in Surrey

Surrey roads get better marks

15 January 2025



Nearly £2m will be spent this year on improving road markings across the county, with over 48 miles of line painting already completed.

Surrey County Council has substantially increased its funding for this and coming years to make the county's roads safer and improve their visual appearance. This is in addition to the largest ever surface dressing programme which will see over 100 roads improved across Surrey to help prevent potholes.

The programme of works will see white and yellow road markings refreshed on roads across the county, with busy roads and those most in need of refreshing prioritised. This will also include major motorway junctions including the M25 J6 (Godstone), J8 (Reigate), J9 (Leatherhead) and M3 J1 (Sunbury Cross).

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said: *"We're very aware that well-maintained and presentable roads are highly important to our residents. This is why here in Surrey, we're investing nearly £300m in repairing and improving Surrey's roads and pavements by 2028.*

"Our increased investment in line painting will improve the safety and appearance of many roads across our highway network, along with our surface dressing programme which will significantly strengthen 85 miles of the county's busiest roads, preventing deterioration in years to come.

"Our highways teams are also continuing to trial new products which can complete these works in half the time, whilst also using more sustainable equipment."

Residents can keep up to date with works in their local area by signing up to our weekly highways newsletter here: **Your Highways Update landing page ([surreycc.info](https://www.surreycc.info))**.