New timetable for ticket office consultation

Train operators are extending the time available to respond to a consultation reviewing "how tickets are sold" at stations by an extra five and a half weeks. It means passengers will now have until 1 September to complete the consultation, which they can do online on their local train company website or by visiting www.transportfocus.org.uk or Londontravelwatch.org.uk Operator information about the consultation will be made available in accessible formats.

In increasing the time available, train operators are "listening to feedback and hope that more people will have the opportunity to have their say in to changes to how tickets are sold at stations".

The **Rail Delivery Group** added: "Together with the extensive and on-going engagement with accessibility groups, as well as the independent passenger watchdogs scrutinising the proposals, the responses will shape final plans so that all passengers are supported as railway retailing is updated for the smartphone era. In addition to these proposals, the rail industry continues to roll out improvements to ticketing such as pay as you go and single leg pricing."

"Although local plans vary, overall the proposals aim to bring staff out from behind ticket office windows to provide more support for customers buying tickets and navigating stations, as they move in to new, multi-skilled 'customer host' roles.

"An estimated 99% of all transactions made at ticket offices last year could be made online or on ticket vending machines (TVMs). Where needed, TVMs across the network will be upgraded to sell a greater range of tickets and in rare cases where customers are unable to buy the ticket they need at a station, they would be able to buy on their journey, at a ticket selling facility en-route or at their end destination. Across the network as a whole, many ticket retailing facilities will remain open at busy interchanges, smoothing the transition.



Rail union, RMT hits back and declared today the consultation extension on the future of rail ticket offices is wholly inadequate and called for the whole "disastrous closure programme to be abandoned".

Following mass campaigns by RMT, disabled and passenger groups, the train operators and their "paymasters in government have been forced to extend ticket office closure consultations until September 1."

According to the RMT over 1,000 ticket offices are due to be closed with the loss of over 2,000 railway station staff.

RMT General Secretary **Mick Lynch** said: "Campaigning by our members on stations across the country alongside tenacious disabled peoples groups and passenger bodies has forced rail bosses and ministers to admit the original consultation was not fit for purpose and must be extended.

"Although our pressure has forced their hand, it is still a deeply flawed and a wholly inadequate consultation process which we are considering challenging legally in the courts.

"Our campaign to save ticket offices, protect our members jobs and look out for the best interests of all rail passengers will only intensify in the coming weeks.

"20,000 rail workers will walk out on 29 July in pursuit of a negotiated settlement on job security pay, conditions and saving ticket offices."

Would you like to see ticket offices at Epsom, Ewell East, Ewell West and Stoneleigh stations closed? Write in your view to Epsom and Ewell Times.

Image: Epsom Railway Station ticket office today.

Contractors occupying the high-ground

Ewell school benefits from local highway contractors' social value activities.

Milestone Infrastructure, a part of M Group Services, is committed to supporting the communities in which it operates and was delighted to volunteer its services to **West Ewell Primary School** recently by helping to clear a large, abandoned area of the school playground containing a disused swimming pool and outbuildings.

Milestone Infrastructure is the street lighting contractor for Surrey County Council and, as part of its commitment to undertaking social value activities and events throughout the year, the team formed a Social Value Alliance with the council and other highways contractors including Yunex, Atkins, Ringway and Surrey Skill Mill.

A team of 36 volunteers representing the Alliance met onsite to help remove the old swimming pool and outbuildings surrounding it and cut back overgrown foliage to make the area safe and accessible for the school children to use in future.

Once the ground has been cleared and the overgrown vegetation removed, the area will provide an accessible space for the children to use and enjoy in future.

Vikki Kelly, Strategic Improvement Manager at Milestone Infrastructure, said: "Building social value into what we do and giving back to the local communities where we work is a large part of what we do. It was a rewarding day and, together with our alliance partners, we managed to achieve everything we needed to onsite and more."

James Joyce, Business Manager at West Ewell school, said: "We would like to thank Milestone Infrastructure who organised the event but also the other companies that attended: Surrey County Council, Yunex Traffic, Atkins, Surrey Skill Mill and Ringway. On the day they achieved more than you could expect for a day volunteer event and transformed the area, giving the school a regenerated space that can now be used."

Mia Bennett, Head teacher at West Ewell school, added: "We really appreciate the time, effort and resources your teams invested in making this project a reality. The cleared area is now a blank canvas which we plan to transform info a flourishing wildlife area and outdoor classroom which all our pupils can enjoy, while learning about nature, biodiversity and developing a deep appreciation for our environment."

Milestone's focus on social value is an essential element of M Group Services' environmental, social and governance (ESG) commitments.

Zoë Johnston Corporate Communications Manager | M Group Services

Thames Water among worst in country

Standout levels of pollution and poor monitoring has left Thames Water languishing joint last among the country's "very disappointing" water and sewerage companies.

The damning verdict was delivered in a report by the **Environment Agency** which measured the performance of the nine companies operating in England.

It found that there were 2,026 "pollution incidents" from sewerage and water supply – up from 1,883 in 2021 leading to the EA's chair, **Alan Lovell** to describe the situation as "simply unacceptable". Worse, he said, was that early unconfirmed data for 2023 suggests there has been no improvement this year either.

The report, published July 12, found that for serious pollution incidents four companies performed significantly below target – and none more so than Anglian Water and **Thames water**.

In total there were 44 of the serious incidents – and 38 per cent of those were from Thames Water alone – its worst performance since 2013. Of the six worst polluting incidents, half were from Thames Water.

The beleaguered company, which has faced calls to be renationalised in recent weeks, also led the way in the number of category 3 incidents that caused minor impacts to air, with four.

For planned environmental improvement schemes, 99.5 per cent were completed as part of the Water Industry National Environment Programme however three companies failed to meet all requirements and Thames Water, with its red rating, performed the worst.

In 2019,regulators **Ofwat** set the prices water companies could charge and developed environmental programmes for each firm to follow.. Thames Water was the only one to have performed "significantly below target" due to 12 water-quality schemes not meeting requirements within planned deadlines.

The EA also expects water companies to report pollution to the body first as "without a rapid response, the impact of pollution can escalate and the opportunity for mitigation measures can be lost." The report said that Thames Water was one of four companies to fall below this target, the others being Anglian Water, South West Water, and Yorkshire.

According to the EA, water companies must also install monitoring devices on their storm overflows to capture how often and how long they are used. Thames Water again came last among the utility companies with 61.8 per cent coverage compared with market leader Severn Trent Water which had 99.6 per cent coverage.

Thames Water scored well for satisfactory sludge use and disposal, as well as for its compliance with permits to discharge treated wastewater.

Concluding, the report read: "The sector as a whole needs to improve in order to achieve and sustain expected levels of regulatory and environmental performance. The majority of water companies are not meeting basic environmental requirements. Although we have acknowledged some improvements, these results cannot be taken in isolation. They are set against the backdrop of poor and inconsistent results over recent years.

"We are concerned that some companies will not or cannot change. Anglian Water and Thames Water repeatedly dominate serious incident numbers." It added: "These water companies in particular need to make radical changes now, but all water companies have areas to improve."

A spokesperson for Thames Water said: "Protecting the environment is fundamental to what we do and we recognise our performance in preventing pollutions is still not good enough. We're committed to turning this around and our shareholders have approved additional funding into the business so we can improve outcomes for customers, leakage and river health.

"Alongside implementing our pollution reduction plan to deliver these changes, we have plans to upgrade over 250 of our sewage treatment works and are striving every day to reduce the discharge of untreated sewage into our rivers. This is a key part of our River Health Action Plan to radically improve our position in order to protect and improve the environment, as we strive to eliminate all incidents in the future."

The company has also announced that shareholders agreed to provide an additional £750m to "further improve operational performance and financial resilience".

Related reports:

Local sewage uploaded

"Garden of Eden" coming to West Ewell as Wetlands Plan is approved. Will this stop pollution?

River "Bogsmill" blights Borough

An alternative view from Labour

Capital punishment for local businesses?

South East businesses are being forced to put the brakes on growth plans, as 97% of companies admit difficulty in accessing capital is impacting their business.

According to BDO LLP's bi-monthly Economic Engine survey of 500 mid-market businesses, one in five regional companies are struggling to finance expansion plans, with 30% finding it difficult to invest in the technology or software they need to improve the business. Nearly a quarter (23%) admit that a shortage of funding means they're struggling to recruit new staff with the right skills and experience.

The survey by the accountancy and business advisory firm, also highlighted the ongoing challenges facing South East businesses. Over the next six months, increased operating costs will continue to blight regional companies, with a third (33%) saying rising energy bills, rent, and the cost of recruitment are some of their top concerns. Supply chain disruption, including delayed deliveries, stock shortages and cost increases, also continues to dominate for a third of South East companies (33%).

As businesses in the region contend with a growing list of problems, the task of upskilling and retaining their existing workforce is one of the top business priorities for almost half of regional companies (43%), with a further 30% also looking to invest in research and development and new technologies. In addition, more than a quarter (27%) intend to raise new finance from existing sources of funding, such as loans and re-mortgaging property, as South East companies look to take action over the next six months.

Phil Cliftlands, Regional Managing Partner at BDO in the South East, commented: "As a result of the tough economic conditions that continue to hamper regional businesses, companies are facing a real and immediate need to raise funds within the next 12 months, in order to kick-start their growth plans.

"Against a challenging backdrop, South East businesses are having to explore every option when it comes to raising additional finance, with many struggling to access the capital they need. For a third, the equity capital markets are the most appealing source of funding, with private equity and investment trusts also high up on the list."

Mid-sized companies, which employ eight million people and provide around a quarter of UK jobs according to further research,[1] are now calling on the Government to support them with rising costs and improve access to capital to make the UK a more appealing place to do business.

Cliftlands added: "So far, mid-market businesses in the South East have shown real grit and determination to fend off the challenges that continue to rain down on them.

"However, many are reaching tipping point. The need for greater capital is critical for a significant proportion of businesses, not just to finance growth plans, but also to address key issues such as investing in staff retention, repaying debts, improving salaries and, importantly, recruiting new employees with the right skills and experience.

"South East businesses cannot tackle these challenges in isolation. Business leaders in the region believe more can be done to address their concerns, to help to drive growth, and to ensure the UK remains an attractive place to do business."

Emma Ordridge

Gatwick to get 2nd runway?

Gatwick Airport's bid to double its capacity to 78 million passengers and effectively create a second Heathrow will cause a "bigger impact locally than Horse Hill" oil drilling, a local councillor has claimed.

The international airport submitted plans to the Planning Inspectorate last week (July 6) for a second runway, in which its CEO Stewart Wingate said the proposal is vital to its the long-term future and economic prosperity.

Opponents in Surrey impacted by the plan say airports cannot be expanded at the same time as trying to hit net zero carbon emission targets – and campaigners have so far raised more than £5,000 to launch a fight against the airport through the courts.

Jonathan Essex, Surrey County Councillor (Redhill East, Green Party) urged inspectors to listen to the Government's climate scientists and told the LDRS: "This is a big deal. This blows Horse Hill out of the ground and it will make a bigger impact locally. This expansion will mean 100,000 extra flights and a million tonnes of extra carbon. If you accept you need to deal with climate change and we need to do it now, you need to stop expanding airports."

The existing northern runway is mostly used as a taxiway and the application proposes repositioning it 12 metres north to allow dual runway operations – like Heathrow.

According to Gatwick's website, operating as a two-runway airport would "unlock new capacity and allow for a more efficient and resilient operation. If approved the £2.2 billion privately financed plan would be one of the largest capital investment projects in the region for decades. And it would help the airport meet future passenger demand by serving around 75 million passengers a year by the late 2030s."

Gatwick Airport currently serves 32.8million passengers. Heathrow is used by between 70 and 78 million people.

Sally Pavey, chairperson of the Communities Against Gatwick Noise Emissions group said it is crowdfunding for a long legal battle as they didn't believe planners would reject the application. "This benefits Gatwick, there are very few for the local communities. Gatwick is saying it will bring jobs and economic benefits but aviation and low-cost airlines are going towards automation. The jobs are decreasing.

"People really need to wake up to the fact that this is a second runway through the back door. It really slaps in the face of what we are all trying to do which is to cut our carbon footprints."

According to the airport an expanded airport would 'boost' the region's economy by £1billion and generate 14,000 new jobs.

The proposals also feature infrastructure work to improve the main access routes to the airport, but campaigners said the wider impact on the smaller roads would be huge.

Gatwick Airport chief **Mr Wingate** said: "The northern runway plan will help secure the long-term future of the airport and economic prosperity for thousands of families, businesses, and future generations across the region. If approved, our plan will also improve airport resilience, meet future passenger demand, and increase competition in the London airport market, by providing vital new international connections to support 'Global Britain'.

"The consultation and engagement activity over the past two years has been hugely valuable in shaping our plans to ensure they best meet the needs and requirements of local people, as well as our airlines, passengers and other stakeholders. We are confident that our plans are both economically and environmentally robust."

Applications of national importance are dealt with by planning inspectors and signed off by the relevant government departments. Construction could start in 2025 and be ready for operational use by the end of the decade, the airport said.

Image: Mike McBey - Gatwick Airport CC BY 2.0 $\,$

Epsom and Ewell High getting fitter

Lifestyle Fitness and Bourne Education Trust have announced they will be working together to provide the leading sports facilities at **Epsom & Ewell High School** to the local community.

Lifestyle Fitness will begin operations at the site from 1st September. Development of this facility will see Lifestyle Fitness take over management of the existing sports amenities, which include outdoor pitches, tennis courts, a brand-new sports hall, and even a sprinting track, whilst also developing a Lifestyle Fitness gym, studio space, and group fitness classes. This combination of sports facilities, fitness suite and group exercise studios will make the club the perfect hub for fitness and wellbeing for students, teachers, and the community.

"We're so thrilled to be opening our 25th site and working in partnership with the Academy to provide these facilities to the community" said Lifestyle Fitness Managing Director, **James Lawrence**. "The facility will be the perfect location for the town's fitness needs, whether it be to play football or tennis outdoors, or to take a group exercise class or get a workout in at the gym."

The facility, which is situated within Epsom & Ewell High School, forms part of the planned growth and development of both Lifestyle Fitness and the Bourne Education Trust, who currently have a partnership at another school site, located at The Matthew Arnold School in Staines. Students of all ages will benefit from use of the facility during the school day, with the gym floor and sports facilities opening from 4:30pm for the wider community on weekdays, and 9:30am to 5:00pm on weekends.

"After working with Lifestyle Fitness for many years at The Matthew Arnold School in Staines, I am delighted to welcome them to Epsom & Ewell High School to manage the sports facilities on our behalf." said **R. Davey**, Bourne Education Trust Sports Director. "I look forward to seeing the benefit this will have on the local community and surrounding areas in the coming months. We have collaborated with numerous schools and educational trusts over the last forty years."

James continued. "Their positions as vital hubs in the local community that connect students, teachers, parents, and the wider town allow us to do what we do best: create healthier and more active communities, with a focus on well-being. With facilities like these, we can take fitness and wellness to an even wider audience in the local area."

You can follow lifestylefitness.co.uk/club/epsom for any more information and updates on the club's progress. Anyone wishing to join the club ahead of its opening can also do so now online, with memberships from as low as £14.99 per month when using the promotional code 'EARLYBIRD'.

Morgan Kimbel

Accountant's fees in dispute

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's external audit fees, provided by **Grant Thornton UK LLP**, are in the region between £50,000 to £60,000 per annum for an annual budget in the region of £8.5 million. Another Surrey council with a budget in the region of £11.5 million is facing auditor fees between about £160,000 and £245,000. **Emily Coady-Stemp** reports:

A Surrey council will challenge its auditors over a staggering 479 per cent increase in fees for the work it did on two years of the authority's accounts.

Standard fees for the audits, which relate to accounts for 2019/20 and 2020/21, were set at £36,000 per year. But **Tandridge District Council** has now been hit with a bill for additional fees totalling £345,000, a difference which officers say represents three per cent of the council's annual budget.

Mark Hak-Sanders, the district council's chief finance officer, told the meeting that officers were in the early stages of discussing fees with **Deloitte** and would undertake the first stage of challenging them.

Should they not be able to reach an agreement with the auditors, which he said was a "distinct possibility", the challenge would be escalated to the **Public Sector Audit Appointments**, the body responsible for setting the standard scale fees.

Meeting documents set out the reasons for the increase in fees charged, which stood at an additional £136,000 for 2019/20's account and an additional £209,000 for 2020/21.

Deloitte's submission said: "The scale fee is based on assumptions about the scope and required time to complete our work, and does not reflect any additional audit issues for the year, or the increasing scope of work required due to new auditing requirements and regulatory requirements."

Quality or preparation issues led to the largest additional fees in both years, and documents showed that compared to around 700 hours of work built in to the scale fee, the total time spent on the 2019/20 audit was around 4,600 hours and in 2020/21 around 5,800 hours.

The meeting heard that some level of variation was expected, though not as high as this, and Mr Hak-Sanders said officers would report back to the committee on the progress of the challenge.

Additional work on the audits included more detail requested by the Financial Reporting Council, new assets being bought in a year which were not included on original figures, and in one case a delay of five months for a document to be passed on to auditors by the council.

Mr Hak-Sanders said any increase in the fees should not impact on the council's service delivery for the coming financial year but there nonetheless was a risk associated with the increase which needed to be managed. He told the meeting: "As with any risk,

the council has contingency set aside to manage it and so it wouldn't affect frontline spending decisions as such. In the long term, any money that we spend on audit is money that's either less in reserves or less to spend on front line delivery."

After the meeting, Mr Hak-Sanders said: "The accounts for 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 were produced before a complete transformation of financial management at Tandridge District Council.

"The transformation of the council's finances has put us in a much stronger place to meet challenges such as reduced funding, inflation and the cost of living crisis, as well as strengthening our approach to financial reporting and accounts

ULEZ driving old cars to Epsom market

Epsom has the highest number of second-hand cars for sale per 10,000 people, followed by Winsford and Preston. Hatchbacks are the most common type of second-hand car, accounting for 38% of all listings. The Ford Fiesta, VW Golf and the Ford Focus are the most common second-hand car models.

New research reveals the UK towns and cities with the highest number of second-hand cars for sale.

The research, commissioned by car finance refund experts Undisclosed.co.uk, looked at more than 400,000 used car listings from AutoTrader, in order to find the areas of the UK with the highest number of second-hand cars per 10,000 people.

With The Mayor of London's Ultra Low Emission Zone expanding to **Epsom and Ewell**'s London Borough borders with Sutton and Kingston many local residents are changing cars to avoid the charge.

Comfortably in first place, with 549 second-hand cars listings per 10,000 residents, is Epsom. The Surrey town sits at the top of the list, cementing itself as the second-hand car capital of the UK. The data shows that there are 1,729 second-hand cars for sale in Epsom.

With 498 second-hand cars for sale per 10,000 residents, Winsford is close behind in second place. The data shows that the Cheshire town boasts 1,699 second-hand cars for sale.

In third place, is the Lancashire city of Preston, with 348 second-hand cars for sale per 10,000 residents. The first city to appear on the list, Preston has a total of 3,955 second-hand cars for sale.

Fourth place belongs to Peterborough, with 318 second-hand cars for sale per 10,000 residents, and ranking in fifth place with 294 is Stirling.

The remainder of the top ten features Wakefield in sixth place (253), Oldham in seventh place (236), Canterbury in eighth place (234), Blackburn in ninth (231).

Rounding off the list in tenth place is Stafford, with 227 second-hand cars listings per 10,000 residents.

Hatchbacks were found to be the most common type of used car, accounting for 38% of all listings (164,910 listings), while SUVs were the second most popular, accounting for 33% of listings (143,842 listings).

Rank	Place	Second-hand cars for sale per 10,000 residents
1.	Epsom	549
2.	Winsford	498
3.	Preston	346
4.	Peterborough	318
5.	Stirling	294
6.	Wakefield	253
7	Oldham	236
8.	Canterbury	234
9.	Blackburn	231
10.	Stafford	227

A spokesperson for Undisclosed.co.uk commented on the findings, saying:

"This research offers valuable insight into the areas of the UK which see a disproportionately high number people trying to sell off their vehicles. The more saturated the second hand car market is in a given area, the more tricky is to be to sell, with many potential buyers being less willing to travel further afield in order to secure a slightly better deal."

Related reports:

Can you beat the ULEZ charge?

Challenge to ULEZ gaining grounds

Many Surrey motorists will be paying the ULEZ charge.

Surrey Council's ULEZ talks ongoing with TfL

Image: Wilsons car dealers in Kiln Lane Epsom. One of the country's largest second-hand forecourts.

Surrey's "Tugs in Space!"

Thanks to £250,000 of government funding announced today, a new type of electric space propulsion system will be developed by the **University of Surrey** in partnership with the University of Leicester. The new thruster would be used to service and reposition satellites in space via agile space tugs.

The **PLAsma TOrch Rocket** (PLATOR) project will fill a gap in current propulsion options, offering a balance between the high thrust typical of chemical propulsion engines and the propellant efficiency of electrical propulsion ones.

The project has been awarded £250,000 from the UK Space Agency's Enabling Technologies programme.

Dr Andrea Lucca Fabris, Senior Lecturer in Electric Propulsion at the University's Surrey Space Centre and project lead, said:

"Our PLATOR rocket could be used as the main way to move spacecraft after launch, or it could be used in space transportation vehicles, or space tugs, for delivering satellites to specific orbital slots, refuelling satellites to prolong their service life and removing space debris."

As well as designing the propulsion system, the project will explore potential uses for PLATOR through flight dynamics simulations, identify the optimal size and design of space tugs and, in partnership with researchers at the University of Leicester, develop a piloting system.

Dr Nicola Baresi, Lecturer in Astrodynamics at the University's Surrey Space Centre and project co-Investigator, added:

"PLATOR will increase the options available to mission planners and could be particularly useful when the UK develops its own launch capability. UK launches will only be able to reach high-inclination orbits, but our proposed space tugs could hopefully expand their reach, opening the door to new and exciting mission opportunities from the UK soil"

Surrey Space Centre is where the era of small, low-cost satellites began with the successful spin-out company SSTL. Today, Surrey Space Centre is a world-leading academic centre of excellence for space engineering research and education which regularly leads on experimental orbital payloads. Surrey Space Centre is globally renowned for its Space Engineering education courses at Masters and Undergraduate level. It is part of the Space South Central regional cluster.

The PLATOR project will make the most of the advanced vacuum facilities and instrumentation in the Space Propulsion Laboratory at Surrey Space Centre.

Image: An artist's impression of PLATOR: Oliver Hitchens, University of Surrey.

Surrey University Press Office

Surrey County Council co-stars in national CoSTAR lab

Surrey is to be the home of brand new state-of-the art facilities for the UK's creative industry sector, thanks to a successful bid involving **Surrey County Council**.

A partnership team, led by Royal Holloway University of London (RHUL), and involving Pinewood Studios, disguise, BT, Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership, University of Surrey, Abertay University and National Film and Television School, alongside the county council, has been announced as the preferred bidder for the 'Convergent Screen Technologies and performance in Realtime (CoSTAR)' national lab.

The successful bid will create hundreds of new jobs and add tens of millions of pounds to Surrey's economy.*

The national CoSTAR lab and three regional R&D labs will ensure the UK has the skills and infrastructure to stay on the cutting-edge of new virtual production techniques in film, TV and live events which involve using computer-generated imagery (CGI), augmented reality and motion capture to create 'virtual sets'. Instead of adding visual effects and CGI in post-production, virtual production allows filmmakers and theatre directors to create large-scale digitally-generated environments using LED panels that performers can interact with in real-time, as a quicker and less expensive alternative to green screens. The technology has been used in the ABBA Voyage live concert and the Batman and Minecraft immersive experiences in the UK, as well on Disney's hit show The Mandalorian.

The £51m funding application was submitted in February 2022 by **StoryFutures** at Royal Holloway, University of London on behalf of the wider bid team. The application focused on establishing a CoSTAR national lab at Pinewood Studios, alongside associated facilities and programmes to drive innovation and creativity in the UK's screen and performance industries.

Surrey County Council's proposed contribution includes a capital commitment of £3m to fund the establishment of a CoSTAR satellite studio and incubator space on the RHUL campus in Surrey. It's hoped these facilities will provide a sizeable boost to Surrey-based creative industry businesses, with over 200 expected to benefit.

The Surrey-based Satellite Studio Facility is also projected to create 350 jobs over six years, and make a net contribution of c£35m gross value added to Surrey's economy. Both facilities aim to open in early 2026.

The announcement yesterday came as part of the government's **Creative Industries Sector Vision**, which aims to maximise the potential of the UK creative industries and grow the economy.

Along with the national lab, the government also announced that three regional research labs will be based in Yorkshire, Dundee and Belfast. All of these facilities will work closely with Surrey's new CoSTAR satellite studio and incubator space to be located on RHUL's campus in Egham.

Together, these facilities will ensure the UK has the skills and infrastructure to stay on the cutting-edge of new virtual production techniques in film, TV and live events.

Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Growth, Matt Furniss, said: "I'm delighted that our joint bid for the national CoSTAR lab has been successful.

"These facilities will bring huge technological advantages to UK creative industries and their global competitiveness and it's fantastic that Surrey will be home to them.





"It's also hugely exciting to think of the local benefits that will come from our proposed CoSTAR Satellite Studio and Incubator space. These will bring about local jobs and investment and provide invaluable support for our local businesses, helping to deliver the skills and opportunities for Surrey's economy to thrive.

"I'd like to thank all of the partners involved in the bid for their hard work in securing this great outcome for Surrey."

*Today's announcement of the preferred bidders for CoSTAR is subject to internal government approvals processes, and where relevant, commercial discussions with external partners. Partner organisations such as BT, the National Film and Television School, Vodafone, Studio Ulster and Screen Yorkshire have today announced they will invest at least £63.3 million in CoSTAR.