Walton Golf Club's dismissal of one-in-hole unfair

A greenkeeper who had worked at a Surrey golf course for almost 40 years has won a case for "unreasonable" dismissal after he was sacked when his digger fell into a hole. An employment tribunal found the disciplinary action taken against the 58-year-old had "snowballed" before alternative options were considered.

Michael Hayne's digger had to be hauled from a ditch at Walton Heath Golf Club, in Tadworth, after the machine had tumbled into a hole, cab-side down while the driver was not warring a seatbelt. The deputy course manager initially dismissed the accident as minor because no harm was done, and so did not formally report it in an accident log book.

But his bosses at the golf club viewed it as a significant incident and Mr Haynes was later dismissed for gross misconduct. The managers argued it was a "serious breach" of health and safety rules that the accident was not reported, and could cause more incidents.

Mr Haynes argued that he was sure he told Mr Mann about the accident at the time and considered he did not need to write up the event in the health and safety book.

The report, published December 23, 2024, detailed that the golf course had two diggers weighing 7.5 tons and 2.5 tons. Mr Haynes had been externally trained on how to use the diggers since around 2005, and his certification was updated every five years- although his current renewal had been overdue.

During a staff training session in November 2021, the instructor reportedly told course manager at the time, Michael Mann, that Mr Haynes was "very lucky with his accident that he hadn't been seriously hurt or worse". But Mr Mann said he did not know about the digger incident.

After some initial investigation, the Surrey club launched a disciplinary hearing against Mr Haynes, accusing him of "gross misconduct" for failing to comply with health and safety standards.

In a letter before the disciplinary hearing in November 2021, Mr Haynes wrote: "I have been a faithful employee of this Club for nearly 40 years. I love this Club and have spent my life in its service. I have a clean disciplinary record.

"If I were to be dismissed, not only would I lose my livelihood but also my wife and I would lose our home. I can assure this meeting that I have learned a lesson and will never fail to report any incident again. I would welcome any additional training that is felt necessary."

Mr Haynes was dismissed without notice, and escorted off the site. The Chief Executive, Mr Woodward, had decided his explanation was "unacceptable" and the "trust and confidence placed" in him had been "completely undermined". He added further dangerous incidents could have been avoided if Mr Haynes had reported the initial accident.

In desperation, Mr Haynes appealed the dismissal twice and provided photographic and video evidence of incidents not reported by other members of staff. However, this appeal was rejected both times.

However, the employment tribunal has now found Mr Haynes' dismissal was "procedurally unfair". It said there was no real evidence that any of the decision-makers weighed up the possibility of an alternative sanction for the Claimant.

The report stated there were "flaws" with the golf club's investigation process such as "exaggerating and maximising the seriousness of the incident". For instance, inconsistencies in describing the final position of the digger as "tipping over" and "almost horizontal".

The tribunal still found Mr Haynes "culpable" for failing to report the digger incident in the accident book as he was involved. Employment Judge Leith said: "His failure to [report it] was rendered considerably starker because of his [senior] role [...] he should have known better."

Concluding the case, the tribunal ruled that Mr Haynes' compensation will be reduced by 50 per cent because of his failure to log the accident. The report did not disclose the amount.

Walton Heath Golf Club has been contacted for comment.

Special case for VAT exemption for special education needs?

Private schools are "not a lifestyle choice but a necessity" for children with special educational needs (SEN), argues the headteacher of an independent school in Reigate.

Tuition fees are expected to soar from Wednesday January 1, 2025 as the government is scrapping the tax exemption on private schools across the country. The tax is expected to bring £1.7 billion a year, according to the Treasury.

But Mrs Michelle Catterson, head of Moon Hall School, a Specialist Dyslexia school, said: "If you can afford to pay, you should. But there should be exemptions for SEN kids."

Around 200 children between the ages of seven and 16 attend Moon Hall School- all of whom have been diagnosed primarily with dyslexia, a learning condition that can cause difficulty with reading, writing and spelling. Moon Hall provides a student-to-staff ratio of about 12:1 so pupils get extra support and adapt to meet their learning needs.

Mrs Catterson explained her students with SEN, 70 per cent of whom have an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP), often cannot have their needs met locally in state schools, so there is "no viable alternative" for education. The Local Authority, like Surrey County Council, will pay for specialist provision in these instances.

"We offer local authorities good value for money," Mrs Catterson claimed, with most of the school's GCSE results boasting higher than average.

The head teacher said she believed "100 per cent of the kids [at the school] have SEN" but because of long and complicated process of applying for an EHCP, many parents often "give up" on the process. Instead, around 30 per cent of students pay for the specialist education.

Fees used to start at £7,505 per term for a child in year 7, according to the school's prospectus. But now, parents could be set back £10,424. The Department for Education has said it does not expect school fees to increase by 20 per cent as schools do not pass VAT onto parents. But as tuition fees is Moon Hall's only source of income, Mrs Catterson argued that they have no choice. "Small, specialist settings like [Moon Hall] simply cannot absorb the additional costs imposed by VAT," she said.

Most Children with EHCPs have their needs met within the state sectors, according to government officials. If an EHCP assessment concludes a child can only be supported in a private school, the local authority funds that child's place and can reclaim the VAT they pay.

Despite the expensive tuition fees, the headteacher claimed Moon Hall is "not an affluent school" and the government will find "no swimming pools" on the grounds. As a charity, any extra income is put back into the school by spending on staff to help the students, according to Mrs Catterson.

Impact on the parents

"It's really short-sighted," said Mrs Catterson. The head claimed adding VAT to SEN private school fees will mean more parents will apply for an EHCP, causing further backlog and creating extra costs to the government, which will need to provide for those needs.

Alternatively, some parents take on two jobs to fund their children through private school. Mrs Catterson stressed it would be an "awful situation" if a "settled, happy child, making good progress" was moved to the state sector where their needs cannot be supported.

Chris Coghlan MP for Dorking and Horley, said: "Moon Hall provides an outstanding education for children with special educational needs in Surrey. Adding VAT to school fees will place an unbearable strain on families who already make significant sacrifices to afford them. The Government must exempt specialist schools like Moon Hall from VAT to ensure children with special needs can continue to access the support and education they deserve."

"Punish independent schools"

Built in 1863, Moon Hall is a grade II-listed building which was purchased by the founders of the dyslexic school and repurposed as an educational building some forty years ago. Although a grand historical building, repairs and maintenance costs to the site are almost constant- Mrs Catterson said the roof needs replacing which is expected to cost £1.6m, even before pricey specialist

chimney repairs.

Not only is the school facing the VAT axe, Moon Hall will have to wrestle with changes in national insurance and minimum wage increases like many other charities. The head told SurreyLive she "still doesn't know what the true figure will do" to the school and where it can find the extra money. Mrs Catterson said: "It feels like the Labour government is trying to punish independent schools."

Rebuilding "confidence and trust"

A government spokesperson said: "Ending tax breaks on private schools will help raise additional funds to break down barriers to opportunity and support the 94 per cent of pupils who attend state schools to achieve and thrive including those with SEND.

"Pupils with the most acute needs will not be impacted by this policy. Work has already begun to rebuild families' confidence in and reform the broken SEND system we inherited. The Budget invested £1b extra in day-to-day provision and earlier this month £740m was directed to support local authorities in creating more specialist places in mainstream schools."

They added: "We are committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, and ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs, restoring parents' trust that their child will get the support they need."

Related reports:

Surrey Tory MPs against school fees VAT

Taxing question for Surrey's private schools

Image: Outside Moon Hall School, Reigate. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)

Epsom business contact with the King warranted

Epsom based since 2013 **Cirrus**, the leading provider of contact centre software, is proud to announce it has been granted a Royal Warrant of Appointment by His Majesty **King Charles III**. The grants were made to 386 companies previously holding a Royal Warrant of Appointment from Queen Elizabeth II, as well as 7 companies with an established and ongoing trading relationship with HM Queen Camilla.

This prestigious recognition marks a reappointment for Cirrus, building on the acknowledgement previously granted by Her late Majesty The Queen for its outstanding service to the Royal Household.

Cirrus has built a strong reputation for providing innovative, cloud-based contact centre solutions that help organisations improve customer engagement and service delivery. This Royal Warrant recognises the company's continued excellence in supporting the Royal Collection Trust.

Jason Roos, Founder and CEO of Cirrus, shared: "It's an immense honour for Cirrus to receive this recognition with a Royal Warrant. This achievement reflects the hard work and dedication of our team. We've always focused on delivering solutions that make a real impact, and this recognition from His Majesty's Household validates that effort in the most meaningful way."

The Royal Warrant of Appointment is awarded to businesses that have supplied goods or services to the Royal Household for at least five years. This announcement also highlights Cirrus' ongoing commitment to supporting local communities, while maintaining the highest environmental standards. Cirrus joins the ranks of household names such as BT and Samsung.

"Looking back, it's incredible to see how far we've come. And looking ahead, we're more motivated than ever to keep pushing the boundaries of what we can achieve. This Royal Warrant is a recognition of our daily efforts, and we're excited to continue collaborating with fantastic partners and clients," Roos added.

In the past year, Cirrus has continued to thrive, securing new clients across sectors such as public services, healthcare, and retail. The company's solutions are trusted by organisations including Nisbets, Premium Credit, and Northern Ireland Water.

An Epsom and Ewell education in water shortage

The residents of Epsom, Ewell, Stoneleigh, and surrounding areas have been grappling with a significant water supply crisis over the past 48 hours, following a major failure in the infrastructure of SES Water. The disruption, which began on Monday afternoon, has left families struggling with basic necessities, businesses hampered, and schools forced to close early for the Christmas break.

What Happened?

SES Water has attributed the disruption to the failure of a critical valve in their network. Ian Cain, Chief Executive of SES Water, stated that the issue is being addressed by teams working around the clock. While efforts are being made to restore supplies, the company has warned that normal service may take another 24 hours as water quality tests are conducted to ensure safety.

Despite these reassurances, the community has expressed frustration with what many perceive as vague and inconsistent updates from the water provider. Bottled water stations have been set up at four locations, but long queues and limited access have left some residents resorting to supermarket purchases to meet their needs.

Impact on Residents

For many, the water outage has caused significant upheaval in their daily lives. Basic tasks such as showering, cooking, and cleaning have become a challenge.

Rebecca Johnson, a mother of two from Epsom, shared her experience:

"It's been incredibly difficult. We've had to rely on bottled water for everything, even brushing our teeth. My youngest has eczema, and not being able to bathe him properly has made it worse. This isn't just an inconvenience; it's affecting our health."

Local businesses have also been hit hard. A café owner in Sutton lamented the loss of customers:

"Without water, we can't wash dishes, cook, or even make coffee. We've had to shut our doors during what should be a busy pre-Christmas period."

School Closures

One of the most striking consequences of the outage has been the early closure of Nonsuch High School for Girls. Headteacher Mrs. Williamson-Jones described the decision as unavoidable:

"With no water for toilets, heating, or cooking, it was impossible to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff. This disruption will have a lasting impact on the education of 1,500 girls."

Parents have expressed concern about the loss of learning days and the difficulties of last-minute childcare arrangements.

Political Response

Local MP Helen Maguire has taken a firm stance, labelling the situation "completely unacceptable." In her press release, she detailed her ongoing communication with SES Water, including discussions with Ian Cain, and criticised the company's lack of transparency.

"Families deserve clear and timely updates, and this has been sorely lacking," she stated. Maguire has also raised broader concerns about the resilience of the local water infrastructure and called for an investigation to prevent future crises.

A Global Perspective

While the situation in Epsom has highlighted the vulnerabilities of local water infrastructure, it also serves as a stark reminder of the global water crisis. According to the United Nations, 26% of the world's population—around 2 billion people—lack access to safe drinking water in their homes.

In countries such as Yemen, Ethiopia, and India, millions face daily struggles to secure clean water for drinking, cooking, and washing. Prolonged droughts, overextraction of groundwater, and pollution exacerbate these challenges. The World Health Organization estimates that 829,000 people die annually from diseases caused by unsafe water, sanitation, and hygiene.

The water shortage in Epsom and Ewell, while temporary, offers a glimpse into the hardships endured by billions worldwide. It underscores the importance of robust infrastructure and efficient resource management to ensure equitable water access.

Calls for Accountability

For Epsom and Ewell residents, the immediate concern is the restoration of their water supply. However, the crisis has also raised questions about SES Water's preparedness and reliability. Recent increases in water bills have further fuelled dissatisfaction, with many questioning whether they are getting value for money.

Local resident Mark Stevens voiced the concerns of many:

"We're paying more, but the service keeps getting worse. This outage has shown just how fragile our water system is. SES Water needs to be held accountable."

Helen Maguire MP has pledged to continue pressing the company for answers and solutions. She has also urged SES Water to prioritise vulnerable residents and ensure that support reaches those most in need.

Moving Forward

As the community waits for normal service to resume, there is a growing demand for action. Residents and businesses alike are calling for a thorough review of SES Water's operations, improved communication during emergencies, and long-term investments in infrastructure.

The local water crisis has been a sobering experience for many, highlighting both local vulnerabilities and global inequalities in water access. While the immediate challenge is to restore supply, it is clear that the lessons learned must inform future planning and policy to prevent similar disruptions and ensure water security for all.

Surrey first in image AI

Surrey announces world's first AI model for near-instant image creation on consumer-grade hardware

A groundbreaking AI model that creates images as the user types, using only modest and affordable hardware, has been announced by the Surrey Institute for People-Centred Artificial Intelligence (PAI) at the University of Surrey.

The model, NitroFusion, represents a world first and has been made open source by its developers - SketchX, a lab within PAI - a move that fundamentally transforms access to AI-enabled image creation models for creative professionals.

Professor Yi-Zhe SonG, Director of SketchX and Co-Director of PAI, said:

"NitroFusion represents a paradigm shift in making AI accessible to everyone, eliminating the need for large compute resources and the long waiting times between prompt and result that are common with most image generation platforms."

Typically, similar technology is available only to corporate giants with vast computing resources. However, NitroFusion runs on a single consumer-grade graphics card – marking a decisive step forward in bringing advanced AI capabilities to individual creators, small studios, and educational institutions. The almost instant creation of images allows rapid artistic iterations and greater control over the generated imagery.

Dar-Yen Chen, the PhD researcher who helped to develop the project at PAI, said:

"NitroFusion leverages a novel dynamic adversarial framework that works like a panel of specialised art critics, each evaluating different aspects of the generated image to ensure high quality in a single step. The system's flexible architecture allows users to optionally use between one to four refinement steps, providing direct control over the balance between generation speed and image quality."

Professor SonG added:

"With NitroFusion, we're not just releasing another image generation model - we're pioneering an entirely new approach which democratises AI interaction.

"Following our DemoFusion release last year, which provided a new way to upscale AI-generated images, this innovation further establishes our position at the forefront of making powerful AI technology accessible to all."

This breakthrough delivers multiple leaps for the users and industry:

■ Instant image generation that responds as users type - a first in the field - enabling rapid iteration, greater control

and better experimentation

- Improved sustainability through greatly reduced energy consumption
- Consumer-grade affordable hardware requirements (e.g. a single high-performance GPU) that mean individuals and small studios can create imagery affordably
- Open-source availability enables global innovation, adaptation and variations
- No cloud dependencies or subscription fees.

Professor Adrian Hilton, Director of the Institute for People-Centred AI at the University of Surrey, said:

"We believe we're the first in the world to achieve interactive image generation at this scale and efficiency. This opens up access to state-of-the-art AI for image generation and is just the beginning of our commitment to democratising creative AI tools. Our Institute will continue to develop open-source, groundbreaking technologies that put professional-grade AI capabilities into the hands of creators everywhere.

"We're particularly proud of the great work that our SketchX Lab, creating new concepts and advancing the science of generative AI. Our research is focused on ensuring that the future of creative AI technology is inclusive, responsible and accessible to all, and we're keen to continue to work with organisations that share this ethos."

The technology is available immediately through https://chendaryen.github.io/NitroFusion.github.io/, with comprehensive documentation and community support resources.

Small Business is my business says Epsom's MP

Helen Maguire, MP for Epsom and Ewell, has announced a new survey for local businesses and will spend time working alongside staff at three local establishments in the lead-up to **Small Business Saturday** on 7th December.

Small Business Saturday is an annual campaign aimed at encouraging the public to support local businesses and raise awareness of their contributions to the community and the economy.

Ms Maguire is set to visit Fatima's Hair Boutique in Epsom, All Things Nice Café in Ewell, and Lavender Flowers in Ashtead, where she plans to engage directly with staff and customers. According to her office, these visits are intended to provide her with a better understanding of the challenges faced by small businesses in the constituency.

The MP, who has previously run a charity fundraising consultancy and a fitness business, has highlighted her personal experience as a former small business owner. She says this gives her an insight into the pressures and demands local entrepreneurs encounter.

Ms Maguire's survey, available on her website, invites business owners to share their experiences and concerns. She says the results will help her advocate for better support for small businesses in Parliament.

Speaking about her initiative, Ms Maguire said:

"Local businesses like All Things Nice and Lavender Flowers are integral to our community, providing not just services but also fostering a sense of connection and vibrancy. I look forward to working alongside them and learning more about how I can help."

The MP also criticised the government's proposed National Insurance hike, stating:

"Small businesses here in Epsom and Ewell have faced rising costs and reduced support in recent years. The planned National Insurance increase will place even more strain on them, and I'll continue to press for this to be reconsidered."

The Liberal Democrats have stated that they oppose the National Insurance rise, which they claim will adversely affect small

businesses nationwide.

Ms Maguire's visits will take place tomorrow and Friday.

What is Small Business Saturday?

Small Business Saturday, now a well-established event in the UK, promotes awareness and support for independent businesses. In 2022, shoppers were estimated to have spent £1 billion at small businesses on the day. The campaign encourages consumers to shop locally and highlights the broader contributions of small enterprises to communities and economies.

Small Business Saturday is an independent initiative that runs across the UK, with more details available on its official website.

Helen Maguire's Small Business Survey can be accessed here.

Surrey pharmacies need a better financial prescription

Pharmacy owners in Surrey say "enough is enough" as they complain working 12-hour days and barely breaking even. One pharmacist said it has to dispense just over 6,000 prescriptions a month to just about balance the books.

Over the last decade or so, the funding community pharmacies received from the government and NHS have been cut by 40 per cent, with 1,500 closing in the last 10 years.

The government announced a £26 billion boost for the NHS and social care in the budget. A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said: "We are committed to working with the pharmacy sector and we will set out further details on allocation of funding for next year in due course."

Asma'a Al-hindawi has worked at her family-owned pharmacy in Horley, after graduating from university in 2010. What used to be a family passion, is now a tough grind. She said: "It's a lot of hard work. Sometimes me and my sister have to work 12-13 hours a day, six days a week, and still we're only breaking even."

Pharmacies are paid on a piecemeal basis for dispensing prescriptions issued by GPs. This makes up most of the community pharmacies' income. In 2012, the piecework fee was £2.75 per item; but now, despite inflation, the fee stands at £2.18 per prescription dispensed.

Despite her family business making a loss, Asma'a said: "I feel I have a moral obligation to work this hard to keep the pharmacy running and to help the community with their healthcare." She explained the pharmacy is a "community service" which he has stuck by despite often getting verbal abuse.

She said the NHS "doesn't catch up with the prices of the market" when the market cost of medicine increases. Sometimes items are out of stock so the pharmacy has to buy more expensive branded products, but the pharmacy still only receives the £2.18 fee.

"It's an ethical dilemma," said Asma'a, "because you can't tell a patient you cannot sell the medicine otherwise you will make a loss." Speaking to the Local Democracy Reporting Service in a bustling pharmacy, with shelves high of medicine, Asma'a said: "If the pharmacy is this busy, it should be making a profit."

Dorking & Horley MP Chris Coghlan (Liberal Democrat) said: "We really need to make sure our pharmacies are paid properly for the work they're doing so they can survive and keep helping the community."

John Bell, who runs South Street Pharmacy in Dorking, started his own mini campaign in protest against the funding situation. He turned off the lights of the pharmacy and posted a note on the window stating: "Why are the lights out in pharmacies? Find out more inside."

He started the campaign to raise awareness that 500 community pharmacies have closed across the country over the last year. "There comes a point when enough is enough," said John, explaining pharmacies can't afford to keep pouring money into a business just to keep it afloat.

The Dorking pharmacist said he makes "zero money" from the main pharmacy business and has to subsidise it with selling the extra hair accessories, sun cream and glasses on the shop floor. Already running at a "skeleton staff", John said he is dreading the increase in employers' National Insurance contributions. He said staffing costs have gone up by 50 per cent in 10 years.

Mr Coghlan has written to Wes Streeting, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care , to "stop the decimation of independent pharmacies". He wrote: "It's unacceptable that pharmacies are subsidising NHS work out of their own pockets while being expected to take on more responsibilities."

In his letter, the Lib Dem MP has urged Mr Streeting to review and increase NHS reimbursement rates to reflect the "true cost" of dispensing and running a pharmacy. Mr Coghlan also asked for employers' national insurance rise to be "halted" to prevent a "further financial blow" on pharmacies and health providers.

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said: "Community pharmacy has been neglected for years, but it has a vital role to play in the shift of care from hospital to the community as we reform the health service through our 10 Year Health Plan.

"We commend the hard-working pharmacists working to support their communities across England and there is never a justification for threatening behaviour."

Image: MP Chris Coghlan (left) visiting Asma\'a (right) at her family-run pharmacy in Horley. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)

The Essential Guide to Maintaining Clean Carpets and Upholstery in Woking

Sponsored article: Maintaining a clean and inviting home is a priority for every homeowner. Among the most overlooked aspects of cleanliness are carpets and upholstery, which, if left unattended, can accumulate dirt, allergens, and stains over time. For residents of Woking, finding reliable carpet and upholstery cleaning services is key to ensuring your home remains a sanctuary. In this article, we'll explore the importance of regular cleaning, practical tips, and professional solutions to help you keep your carpets and upholstery in pristine condition.

Why Regular Cleaning Matters

Your carpets and upholstery are subjected to daily wear and tear, whether from foot traffic, spills, or pet accidents. Over time, these materials can trap dust, bacteria, and allergens, which can negatively impact indoor air quality and trigger allergies or respiratory issues. Regular cleaning not only prolongs the life of these furnishings but also ensures a healthier living environment for your family.

Signs Your Carpets and Upholstery Need Professional Attention

While routine vacuuming and spot-cleaning are essential, there are clear indicators that your carpets and upholstery need expert care:

- Persistent Stains: Stubborn marks from coffee, wine, or ink often require specialized treatments to remove without damaging the fibers.
- Unpleasant Odors: Lingering smells can indicate deeply embedded dirt or mildew.
- Fading Colors: A dull appearance is a sign of accumulated grime and wear.
- Allergy Symptoms: Frequent sneezing, itchy eyes, or a runny nose indoors could be caused by allergens hiding in your soft furnishings.

Professional Carpet Cleaning in Woking

For residents looking for high-quality Carpet Cleaning Woking services, enlisting a trusted provider is the best solution. Expert

cleaners use advanced techniques like hot water extraction, dry cleaning, and stain removal to restore carpets to their original beauty. Not only do they tackle visible dirt, but they also eliminate deep-seated bacteria and allergens.

Don't Overlook Upholstery Cleaning

Your sofas, armchairs, and other upholstered furniture also deserve attention. Regular professional cleaning can preserve their texture and appearance, preventing premature wear. Companies specializing in **Sofa Cleaning Woking** and **Upholstery Cleaning Woking** offer tailored solutions for different fabric types. From delicate silk to durable microfiber, professional cleaners ensure the process is safe and effective.

DIY Tips to Maintain Cleanliness Between Professional Services

While professional cleaning provides a deep refresh, here are some DIY steps you can take to maintain cleanliness:

- 1. Vacuum Regularly: Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter to remove surface dust and debris.
- 2. Address Spills Immediately: Blot (don't rub) spills with a clean cloth and apply a gentle cleaning solution.
- 3. Rotate Furniture: Prevent uneven wear by changing the position of rugs and furniture periodically.
- 4. Use Protective Covers: For high-traffic areas, covers can shield your upholstery and carpets from dirt and stains.

Why Choose Professional Cleaning Services in Woking

Professional cleaners combine expertise with cutting-edge equipment to deliver exceptional results. Whether it's your carpets or upholstery, services in Woking provide customized solutions to suit your needs. With eco-friendly cleaning agents and meticulous attention to detail, they ensure a hassle-free experience and a fresher home environment.

Conclusion

Carpets and upholstery are significant investments that deserve regular care. By combining routine maintenance with professional services, you can enhance your home's appearance and promote a healthier living space. Don't wait for stains and odors to become a problem—schedule a professional cleaning today and enjoy the benefits of a spotless, inviting home.

X-Ray vision wins Surrey Uni "spin-off" a prize

Silveray, the digital X-ray film company and Surrey spinout, wins coveted Institute of Physics award with a new approach to X-ray imaging

Innovation in X-ray technology could be key to detecting cancer more accurately than ever before, says the CEO of a startup that has won this year's Institute for Physics Business Startup Award.

Silveray, a spinout from the University of Surrey, has invented a flexible, reusable, and cost-effective Digital X-ray Film (DXF) that is transforming industrial radiography for weld inspection. In the long term, the ground-breaking technology offers the promise of more accurate diagnostic X-ray imaging at lower radiation doses for earlier and more accurate tumour detection, leading to better patient outcomes.

Silveray's nanoparticle-based material for X-ray imaging is made of a semiconductor ink that is coated on to a flexible electronic backplane with pixels that captures the X-ray image. Unlike the current X-ray market status quo, Silveray's technology enables enhancements in image quality on a physically flexible medium at a cost-effective price point.

Dan Cathie, CEO and Co-Founder of Silveray, said:

"The X-ray imaging sector has seen relatively few revolutionary innovations since the advent of digital imaging. Our vision at Silveray is to develop technology that disrupts this way of thinking by creating financially sustainable, reusable, physically flexible Digital X-ray Film (DXF).

"We know there is more to be done but this award from the Institute of Physics is a recognition of the valuable potential of our technology for the industrial non-destructive test (NDT) market. Furthermore, our vision is to become game changers for mammography and other areas of X-ray imaging with our high-sensitivity, high-resolution, Digital X-ray Film invention.

"This award comes as fantastic recognition for the team at Silveray following the close of our recent funding round, led by Northern Gritstone."

Silveray was founded in 2018 by Professor Ravi Silva, Director of the Advanced Technology Institute (ATI) at the University of Surrey. Since then, Silveray and the ATI have painstakingly worked on the technology that incorporates high-Z elements (heavy atoms known for their ability to absorb X-rays) into semiconductor polymer materials, creating flexible X-ray detectors that are both sensitive and adaptable to curved surfaces.

Professor Silva said:

"Traditional indirect conversion X-ray detectors are stiff, costly, and inherently force a trade-off between image quality, speed, and dose, but our innovation at Silveray changes that.

"Our direct conversion technology is flexible, reusable, and closely mimics human tissue, making it perfect for medical uses like accurate diagnosis for early tumour detection. Because it doesn't require complicated processing, this could make a real difference in improving medical X-ray imaging and radiotherapy."

Image: the Silveray team with the IoP award.

The real world visits the virtual world at Ewell's NESCOT

Principals and teachers from across the world visited Nescot (North East Surrey College of Technology) College in Ewell, Surrey last week, to try out its brand-new virtual reality (VR) immersive classroom. Delegates from Brazil to Bulgaria and South Africa to Singapore joined a visit arranged by global education network ORT for a masterclass on artificial intelligence (AI), chatbots, and the use of immersive technology in education.

The Nescot immersive classroom is packed with state-of-the-art technology, including an Igloo (a pod with a 360-degree projection system), immersive room, vehicle simulators, and VR headsets. The international delegates were able to try these out and found themselves virtually transported to different spaces, driving diggers on a construction site, and exploring hazards in a health and safety simulation. Students from across the curriculum at the college use the room to gain skills and experiences they couldn't easily access elsewhere.

The visit to Nescot was part of ORT's Hatter technology seminar programme, where professional educators from around the world explore the latest developments in science, technology, engineering, and maths teaching and learning.

Somayyeh Clifton, Head of Quality Improvement & Innovation at Nescot, who led the masterclass, said: "It's been so fantastic to welcome delegates from across the globe to Nescot to share ideas, experience, and knowledge on AI. It's also been brilliant to give them a demo of our incredible equipment, which makes learning exciting, interactive, and fun. Working with other education professionals like this is so valuable, with different perspectives helping to inspire our work going forward. We're all working to give students the best education, which will lead to fulfilling careers in the modern world. Our excellent facilities at Nescot have been a game changer."

Leor Harel, World ORT Learning Development Manager, said: "Nescot's VR classrooms are a groundbreaking approach to education and immersive technology. This visit was a perfect opportunity for our group of global education experts to see first-hand a world-leading provision. We are delighted that our teachers will go back to their schools and apply the principles and learnings from their time at Nescot."

Nescot is a hub of innovation, with the Sussex and Surrey Institute of Technology hosting robotics, AI, and cyber security

facilities. The college is part of the AI in Education initiative, with Principal and CEO Julie Kapsalis sitting on the Strategic Board. AI in Education aims to support and advise schools and colleges so they can maximise the benefits of AI and minimise the risks.

The funding to create the immersive space was provided from the Government's Local Skills Improvement Fund, a project which aims to support local people into work. As well as being beneficial for education professionals and Nescot students, the college is encouraging local businesses to get involved by using the technology to train staff. Partnerships with business and enterprise are invaluable for both parties, as organisations get to access cutting-edge training and learning resources, plus a pool of talented, experienced students who can enter the workforce via apprenticeships, work placements, and post-college recruitment.

Nescot offers college courses for school leavers and adults, with a wide range of career-focused vocational courses including Animal Care, Business, Computing and IT, Construction, Performing Arts, Childcare, Health & Social Care, and Beauty Therapy.

To find out more, call 020 8394 3038, visit www.nescot.ac.uk or email adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk.

Local businesses interested in using the immersive classroom for training, or working with the college on apprenticeships, work placements, or recruitment should contact businesscentre@nescot.ac.uk or call 020 8394 8593.