

## Box Hill keeps its pie and mash

13 March 2025



The iconic Surrey Hills will keep its classic English pie and mash shop after plans were approved for the takeaway in Box Hill. Posha's Pie and Mash Shop, in the rural Box Hill Road, Tadworth, was given the go-ahead at the second time of asking despite traffic officers again recommending its refusal. Surrey Highways said in January that the shop should be refused permission over concerns of cars reversing onto the main road, and the application was deferred to allow the owners to make the needed changes.

The new plan removed the on-site parking that had caused concern, but Surrey Highways was still unimpressed, saying cars would now park in the nearby streets, clogging roads and pavements. Councillors disagreed and thought the shop should be encouraged as it would bring trade to the area as well as much-needed food options. Councillor Paul Potter (Liberal Democrat; Brockham, Betchworth, Buckland Box Hill and Headley) said the parking and traffic issues were overstated given the generally low levels of cars using Box Hill Road. He said: "(The pie and mash) is a vital part for a lot of people up there. For a lot of residents in the mobile homes, they walk there, they don't drive - there are hundreds of mobile homes up there. It's a vital thing for the community."

Cllr Simon Bud (Conservative; Brockham, Betchworth, Buckland Box Hill and Headley) added: "It's a rural business in a rural area, that's what this is. They're trying something quite different from what you normally see, and how good that is to see in a rural area on a rural road. How refreshing to see a car-free development. I cycle here, and if more of us did, we wouldn't have this problem, would we? It's really great to see a business that's going forward and making it car-free."

The site has been used as a pie and mash takeaway with a seating area since August 2023. The application was to formally change its use from the old dog grooming parlour. The Wednesday, March 5 meeting of Mole Valley District Council heard from one speaker against the proposal. She told the meeting that Porsha's advertised on social media, which would draw in people from outside Box Hill. She said: "Cars park up on the pavement outside our house, which is the only pavement by the pie and mash. Indiscriminate parking narrows the road and interferes with the free flow of traffic and prohibits pedestrians from using the pavement. We also have a lot of teenagers who do their Duke of Edinburgh awards and walk along where the cars are parked with two wheels on the pavement. It is dangerous."

The plans were ultimately passed with the unanimous backing of the committee.

Image - Credit Google Street view May 2023 the business's food van

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## Surrey services get fire e-bike removed from Amazon

13 March 2025



A dangerous e-bike battery that caused a house fire in Surrey has been successfully removed from sale on Amazon, thanks to the proactive efforts of Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and Trading Standards.

The fire, which occurred recently in a Surrey home, was caused by an unsafe Unit Pack Power battery pack from a converted e-bike while it was being charged. This incident highlights the risks posed by substandard and unsafe lithium-ion batteries.

Following the fire investigation, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service's Fire Investigation team worked closely with Surrey Trading Standards to assess the safety of the battery pack. Their findings led to Amazon removing the product from sale, helping to prevent further incidents and protect consumers.

Matt Perry, Fire Investigation Officer at Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, said: "This fire serves as a stark reminder of the dangers associated with unsafe e-bike batteries."

“We are committed to keeping Surrey residents safe, and I am pleased that our partnership with Trading Standards has resulted in the removal of this hazardous product from the market. We strongly urge the public to be vigilant when purchasing batteries and always choose reputable retailers and manufacturers.”

Surrey Trading Standards has also warned consumers about the risks of purchasing unregulated or non-compliant lithium-ion batteries online.

Amanda Poole, Assistant Director for Trading Standards at Surrey County Council, added: “Unsafe lithium-ion batteries pose a serious fire risk, and we are pleased to have taken swift action alongside Surrey Fire and Rescue Service to have this product removed from sale.

“Consumers should always check that batteries and chargers meet UK safety standards and be cautious of cheap or unbranded products sold online.”

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service continues to raise awareness through its #BatteryWise campaign, which provides essential guidance on the safe use, storage, and disposal of lithium-ion batteries.

For more information on battery safety, visit Surrey Fire and Rescue Service’s website and social media channels. If you have concerns about a potentially unsafe product, you can report it to Trading Standards via Citizens Advice.

Image: Credit AVD Fire - CC BY-NC 4.0 [illustration and not the case in question].

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## Toyota Epsom donates electric carriers to local hospital

13 March 2025



Epsom HQ based Toyota UK has strengthened its support for the local community by providing two Proace battery-electric people carriers to the Queen Elizabeth’s Foundation for Disabled People (QEF). The Leatherhead-based charity, which helps disabled individuals achieve greater independence, will use the vehicles to enhance its transport services.

The electric people carriers will assist QEF’s retail teams across its network of 15 charity shops and at The Grange in Kent, where residents with learning disabilities will benefit from group outings. The donation is part of a wider strategic partnership between Toyota and QEF, aimed at improving mobility for disabled people.

Toyota’s commitment extends beyond vehicle provision, with plans to collaborate on fundraising events, volunteer opportunities, and awareness campaigns. Proceeds will support QEF’s Mobility Services, which help individuals increase their independent mobility through driving assessments, lessons, and mobility advice.

Michelle Giles, QEF’s Mobility Services Manager, expressed her gratitude for Toyota’s contribution: “The electric vehicles will enable supported individuals to enjoy outings and engage more with their local communities. They will also make our retail operations more sustainable by reducing vehicle emissions.”

She added: “This partnership will make a significant difference to those who rely on our Mobility Services, whether for driving assessments, mobility advice, vehicle adaptations, or accessible transport.”

Scott Thompson, President and Managing Director of Toyota (GB), highlighted the importance of the collaboration: “Improving mobility for all is at the heart of what we do at Toyota. It’s wonderful that QEF, a charity close to our head office in Epsom, will benefit from our Proace Verso electric people carriers. We look forward to continuing our support for QEF as one of our dedicated charity partners.”

QEF, a Surrey-based charity with 90 years of experience, provides expert services to nearly 10,000 disabled people annually. Its work includes mobility services, neuro rehabilitation, specialist assistive equipment, and residential care for people with learning disabilities. The partnership with Toyota marks another step in enhancing the charity’s ability to support those who rely on its services.

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## THE STATION, IN STONELEIGH, REOPENS FOLLOWING MAJOR SIX-FIGURE INVESTMENT

13 March 2025



**SPONSORED ARTICLE:**

Popular Stoneleigh pub, The Station, on The Broadway, has reopened to the public following an exciting six-figure renovation designed to revitalise the existing site and give it a brand-new look and feel.

The Station closed its doors in January and is now reopening following completion of major works both inside and out, reaffirming the popular pub as a central community space.



The inside of the pub has received a complete makeover to create a modern, welcoming atmosphere with new refreshed décor and an open plan layout divided into zones for various occasions, including a cocktail area, a TV-free restaurant/dining area, and a sports bar, with plentiful TVs including ones situated in the new outdoor pergola.

Customers will find comfort and convenience at the pub with the new layout, including bookable booths and a champagne table, providing a cosy and private space to enjoy time with friends and family. The pub can cater to gatherings of varying sizes in its revamped function room and the refurbished toilets offer improved facilities for all.

**Anna Carrier, General Manager of The Station said:** “Our brilliant team at The Station, are excited to showcase our new and improved pub to the local community. We’re looking forward to welcoming both new and old customers!

“The renovation has given the pub a new lease of life, and we’re confident that customers will love our improved facilities, whether they’re looking for a drink with friends, a meal with the family, are booking a party, or enjoying a sporting event, there really is something for everyone!”

The stunning gardens have undergone a huge transformation too and now offer a variety of comfortable seating from booths, high seats to normal tables, along with mood lighting and heating. The outdoor areas now offer even more space for relaxation or to dine and drink with friends whilst watching the sport on new outdoor TVs.

The pub offers Sky and TNT Sports, showing all major matches throughout the year, so sports fans need never miss a second of the action. The venue is also registered on the Greene King Sport App for countless deals.

Alongside seasonal events, The Station will host a regular programme of activities, including bingo every Tuesday, Thursday quiz nights, and live entertainment every Friday.

The Station reopens with a delicious menu, with many deals including irresistible small plates, perfect for sharing, priced at three for £15, or five for £22.50. Plus, there is a dedicated kids’ menu, a Lunch Club menu, and a fabulous weekly Steak Thursday ensuring there’s plenty of variety for everyone to enjoy. A Sunday menu is also available serving traditional roasts for all the family.

The investment has provided multiple job opportunities to the local community and the pub team has grown, offering

around 10 new jobs for locals.

The Station reopened on the 21 February and is located on The Broadway, Stoneleigh, Epsom, KT17 2JA. For more information visit: <https://www.greeneking.co.uk/pubs/surrey/station>

# Epsom and Ewell Leads South East in Small Business Growth

13 March 2025

Region	% Growth in Small Businesses (2023 to 2024) in the Region	Top Authority	Small business number 2023	Small business number 2024	% Growth in Small Businesses (2023 to 2024)
East Midlands	-1	Dadby and Wigston	2060	2155	4.63
East of England	0.4	Harlow	3215	3260	4.51
West Midlands	-1.35	Solihull	7815	8145	4.22
London	0.55	Camden	33930	35290	4.01
<b>South East</b>	<b>-0.09</b>	<b>Epsom and Ewell</b>	<b>3470</b>	<b>3570</b>	<b>2.88</b>
North West	-0.53	Fylde	3250	3330	2.46
South West	-0.24	Trowbridge	4180	4290	2.39
Scotland	0.36	Nairn-Gairn-an-Siar	1170	1195	2.14
Northern Ireland	0.85	Mid and East Antrim	4960	5065	1.9
Wales	-1.72	Site of Anglesey	2610	2650	1.53
North East	-0.77	Stockton-on-Tees	5285	5350	1.23
Yorkshire and the Humber	-1.51	Elkies	15070	15070	0

Epsom and Ewell has emerged as the fastest-growing local authority in the South East of England for small businesses, according to new data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) analysed by BusinessFinancing.co.uk. The borough gained 100 new small businesses in 2024, representing a 2.88% increase—the highest growth rate in the region.

This growth is particularly significant given that the South East as a whole experienced a slight decline in the number of small businesses, with a recorded drop of -0.09%. Epsom and Ewell’s performance stands in contrast to this regional trend, highlighting the borough’s resilience and business-friendly environment.

The latest analysis was conducted by BusinessFinancing.co.uk, which examined data from the ONS to determine small business growth rates across local authorities in the UK. Their study identifies the areas where entrepreneurial activity is thriving, despite the economic challenges of recent years, including Brexit-related trading difficulties and the lingering impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The strong performance of Epsom and Ewell may be attributed to its strategic location, well-connected transport links, and the continued support for local enterprise initiatives. Business owners in the borough have also benefited from improved access to credit, as financial institutions report an increase in successful loan applications for small firms.

Local business leaders have welcomed the findings, seeing them as an encouraging sign that Epsom and Ewell remains an attractive destination for entrepreneurs. “It’s fantastic to see our borough leading the South East in small business growth,” said **Richard Excell** of Epsom based **Excell Design & Marketing** and the **Epsom Business Club**, “This reflects the hard work and resilience of our local entrepreneurs who continue to drive innovation and employment in our community.”

BusinessFinancing.co.uk has also created a nationwide map showcasing their findings across the UK, which illustrates the varying rates of small business growth. Their analysis highlights Aberdeen as the UK’s leading city for small business expansion, with a 1.95% increase.

With Epsom and Ewell bucking the regional trend and proving to be a hub for entrepreneurial activity, the future looks promising for small businesses in the borough. Continued investment in local infrastructure and support networks will be key to sustaining this momentum and ensuring long-term prosperity for the area’s business community.

# An Epsom 17th century pub to become supermarket?

13 March 2025



A 17th century pub could be transformed into a Sainsbury’s Local. Plans have been submitted to refurbish the Grade II-listed drinking establishment, on Dorking Road in Epsom, to a convenience store.

If approved, a Sainsbury’s convenience store would take over the ground floor of the historic building and install an ATM

machine outside. Plans also include resurfacing and reducing the car park to just 13 spaces, four of which will be reserved for delivery vehicles.

The former White Horse Public House was converted into Lava Lounge, a restaurant and cocktail bar, in 2020. Lava Lounge closed in January 2024, having been on the market for at least two years according to planning documents.

Used for centuries for drinking, the former purpose of the pub is no longer viable according to Sainsbury's. "Given the wealth of drinking establishments in Epsom, not just in the town centre, it is unlikely that the loss of a facility which has already been closed for a year could be considered a detriment," the application said.

Serving a specific catchment area, the proposed Sainsbury's is said to be conveniently located for nearby residents, visitors and employees at Epsom hospital as well as passing trade. The development will also create around 20 new jobs, a mixture of full and part-time.

"Very little appears to have survived" from the 17th-18th century on the ground floor, planning documents state, perhaps only the thick walls around the chimney breasts. The timber framed structure at first floor level appears to be correctly placed for a historic building but, the report says, the timbers appear to be modern.

Sainsbury's heritage statement states the proposals would have a "neutral effect" on the special interest of a listed building. The report says the vast majority of the building's internal heritage value has been lost from modern adaptations.

Planning documents read: "The core of the building has a hipped slate roof and is of timber framed construction, some of which is evidently modern, but which may form the altered remains of the 17th or 18th century building referred to in the Listing description. The pub has a parapeted brick frontage which likely dates from the middle of the 19th century."

The scheme proposes removing the replacement of the Victorian-style sash window, as well as reconfiguring and refurbishing the insides of the former pub. Demolishing the covered yard at the back of the site, Sainsbury's plans to build an extension to form a 'back of house' for the convenience store.

Minor modifications to the historic part of the building are needed to use the original pub building for the back office part of the shop. The application clarifies the historic part of the building is not being used for a sales area.

Neighbours can comment on the application on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's website. No decision date has been listed yet.

View outside the Lava Lounge, and former White Horse Pub, in Epsom. (Credit: Sainsbury's/ Epsom and Ewell Planning Documents)

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## Poundland saving itself pennies in Elmbridge

13 March 2025



Poundland has been told to "show some local pride" and repair its broken shop front window and remove the graffiti from its East Molesey store.

The low-price chain, which serves up to seven million customers every week nationwide, has been issued with a community protection warning by Elmbridge Borough Council after ignoring multiple requests to address the eyesores.

Elmbridge Borough Council says it works with business groups and community volunteers to keep its high streets, villages and parades thriving and to bring that sense of civic pride.

One group, from Manor Road, takes care of the planters along Walton Road to "lift up the high street".

Initiatives in the last year have been designed to make a positive impact on the community, such as new bins, flower planters, deep cleans and pavement works.

It's part of a move to get businesses, volunteers and the council working together in support of the borough's high streets.

That work has been undermined for "almost a year" as Poundland left temporary wooden panelling and unsightly graffiti, in place.

A spokesman for Elmbridge Borough Council said: "Despite multiple requests to address the graffiti and damage at Poundland in East Molesey, sufficient action has not been taken.

"The store has tried to clean the windows professionally but could not get the graffiti removed.

"In support of local residents, we have issued this Community Protection Warning hoping that Poundland will now

undertake the necessary repairs and support our high streets.”

Under Community Protection Warnings, £100 fines can be issued in the first instance. If no action is taken, prosecutions can begin. If convicted the maximum penalty is a fine up to £20,000.

Councillor Steve Box (Conservative: Molesey East) said: “Almost a year has gone by without action and they are giving the impression they are not bothered as long as the money continues to roll in.

“When we have got Manor Road residents caring for the planters so brilliantly and doing their best to lift up the high street, we need this retailer to show some local pride too.

“The council has issued a community protection warning against Poundland which gives the company 28 days to fix the shop front or face a fine.

“Hopefully this formal action will now mean the company move forward and deal with shopfront issues.”

Poundland was approached for comment.

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## Funding for new apprenticeships now available to Surrey businesses

13 March 2025



Businesses can grow their workforce and boost productivity in just a few clicks by getting an apprenticeship funded by Surrey County Council.

As part of the Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Scheme, small and medium enterprises across the county can get fully funded support to train local talent.

Apprenticeships are widely recognised as a cost-effective way to recruit, improving diversity and filling skills gaps. In time, they can also help businesses grow, improve employee retention and support the wider economy.

Funding is available to pay for the training of dozens of new apprenticeships across the county. It is open to all businesses in Surrey and allocated on a first come, first served basis - meaning those interested should apply swiftly via the Surrey County Council website.

For those unsure of the process, a free 45-minute webinar will be hosted by the Council’s Business Surrey service on February 26. Reserve your space today to discover more about modern-day apprenticeships and how businesses can access funding.

One Surrey organisation that has benefited already from the scheme is Sight for Surrey, a charity that provides specialist support for people in Surrey with sensory loss. Diane Smith, Head of Adult Services says:

“We have used the levy to support internal succession for those wanting to pursue a career in Social Work from the Deaf Community. More recently we used the levy to support three new apprentices in roles that are recognised to be under resourced across the sector nationally as well as in Surrey.

“The process of completing the Levy Transfer scheme was simple and smooth due to the responsive support from the Council. Our Deaf Services Social Worker has recently graduated from Kingston University and our three new apprentices are settled and progressing well in their new careers! All making an impact for residents of the Surrey community.”

The call comes in National Apprenticeship Week (February 10 to 16), which is a national celebration of the opportunities presented by the training schemes.

According to government figures, benefits of apprenticeships include:

96% of employers report benefits to their business

employers make a net gain of between £2,500 and £18,000 per apprentice during their training period

80% of businesses see a significant increase in employee retention

Almost two-thirds of all UK apprenticeships in the last year have been funded by the apprenticeship levy.

This is a pool of funding made available by large employers, such as the Council, to make apprenticeships more accessible to SMEs. The Council wants as many local residents and businesses to benefit from the scheme as possible - which is why the online process can be completed in a matter of minutes.

Matt Furniss, the Council’s Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport, and Economic Growth, emphasised the council’s commitment to providing opportunities for all. He said: “Apprenticeships are a proven cost-effective way to recruit which benefit businesses and employees, as well as the broader economy. As an organisation we are committed to providing opportunities to all of our residents, which includes creating a skilled workforce for the future. “The levy transfer scheme

is a fantastic way for SMEs to access funding to develop and grow their workforce - which is why I encourage them to discover more about this fantastic opportunity.”

For more information on how to apply for the Apprenticeship Levy and to start the process of recruiting talented apprentices, visit [https://www.businesssurrey.co.uk/workforce/apprenticeship\\_levy/](https://www.businesssurrey.co.uk/workforce/apprenticeship_levy/)

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## Surrey Uni leads research to replace plastic with paper for liquids

13 March 2025



A multimillion-pound research project, called SustaPack, aims to overcome manufacturing challenges for the next generation of sustainable, paper-based packaging for liquids. Backed by a £1 million grant from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) as part of UKRI’s co-investing programme, packaging technology company Pulpex Ltd has joined forces with the University of Surrey to refine its manufacturing processes to provide a viable solution to plastic pollution.

Contributing matching support towards the project, Pulpex has already made significant strides in the development of its patented technology, which produces degradable bottles made from natural wood fibres. The packaging offers a sustainable alternative to traditional plastic materials and can be recycled in existing paper waste streams.

However, designing the next generation of production technology and materials requires novel and fundamental research to address current limitations, including new analytical techniques to improve product quality, optimising performance and reducing in-process imperfections.

Scott Winston, CEO at Pulpex, said:

“We’re excited to strengthen our existing collaboration with the University of Surrey to enhance our technologies and processes. Our SustaPack partnership will help us advance safe, sustainable packaging solutions, enabling brand owners to meet Net-Zero targets. It gives consumers sustainable choices, delivers answers for brand owners, and enables supply chains and retailers to deliver their carbon footprint reduction goals - a priority for all.”

A key feature of the packaging is its multi-layered barrier coating, which prevents contained liquid from leaking, as well as inward oxygen permeation, maintaining high-quality products for consumers. To create a step-change in the energy usage in methods used to apply these coatings, the researchers plan to develop innovative processes that consume less energy and water while increasing the shelf life of packaged goods.

Professor Joseph Keddie, from the University of Surrey’s School of Mathematics and Physics, and Fellow of the Institute for Sustainability, said:

“Over the past couple of years, I have forged a close relationship with Pulpex as a Royal Society Industry Fellow, and I am enthusiastic about strengthening our ties through our SustaPack Partnership.

“Our aim here is to combine novel coating processes, mechanistic modelling, computer vision and artificial intelligence (AI) to establish a ‘dry’ spray coating process that deposits food-safe, degradable coatings. This technology, which isn’t yet commercially available, will not only drive the next generation of packaging technology but will also contribute to a significant reduction in plastic pollution and lower carbon emissions from manufacturing.”

A multi-disciplinary team of researchers will explore the feasibility of using thermal imaging to detect defects in wet coatings as they occur, enabling immediate corrections using AI. Multi-scale mechanistic models of the coating process will be employed to identify the sources of imperfections and non-uniformities and then eliminate them to ensure optimal packaging performance.

By applying innovative computer vision techniques powered by AI, the project aims to identify production defects in real-time, optimise materials and processes, and achieve 100% reliability in the manufactured products.

The outcomes of the project could set new standards for environmentally friendly packaging, helping brand owners reduce their environmental impact amidst ever-increasing environmental regulations - while offering consumers eco-friendly options to help fight against plastic pollution.

*From left to right: Dr Hui Luo and Professor Robert Dorey (University of Surrey’s School of Engineering); Professor Joseph Keddie (University of Surrey’s School of Mathematics and Physics); Scott Winston, CEO at Pulpex; Barrie Harvey, COO at Pulpex; Dr Simon Hadfield (University of Surrey’s Centre for Vision, Speech and Signal Processing); Professor Charley Wu (University of Surrey’s School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering).*

# Epsom & Ewell households drowning as water bills rise?

13 March 2025



## Epsom & Ewell Residents Face Sharp Water Bill Hike as Regional Disparities Emerge

From April 2025, households in Epsom & Ewell will see a substantial increase in water bills, with Thames Water implementing a 31% rise. This means an additional £151 annually per household, increasing the average bill from £488 to £639. The rise places Thames Water among the highest increases across England, sparking significant concern among local residents and political representatives. Thames Water provides water and waste water services.

## Local MP Slams Government's Inaction

Helen Maguire, the Liberal Democrat MP for Epsom & Ewell, has criticised the government's failure to regulate water companies more effectively. In a statement, she said:

*"This is an outrageous bill rise. Instead of tackling Thames Water or taking them to task, the Government has given them free reign - and residents in Epsom & Ewell are paying the price. It's a disgrace that water companies have been able to hike our bills - a third of which goes on servicing debt - while they fail to fix leaks and pollute our rivers and streams like the River Mole and the Hogsmill."*

Maguire and the Liberal Democrats have urged the government to introduce a single social tariff to support vulnerable customers struggling to meet rising water costs.

## Neighbouring Areas See Water Bill Decrease

In stark contrast, Sutton and East Surrey Water (SES Water), which serves areas including east Surrey, West Sussex, west Kent, and parts of south London, will reduce water bills by 2%, bringing the average bill down from £254 to £249. The decrease raises questions about why some suppliers are able to manage costs effectively while others, like Thames Water, continue to impose steep increases.

SES Water has not provided a detailed explanation for the reduction, but such adjustments typically stem from operational efficiencies, regulatory decisions, or improved cost management. SES provides water only services.

## Where Thames Water Stands in the Rankings

According to a national comparison of 22 water companies, Thames Water ranks 5th in terms of the highest increase, making it one of the worst affected companies for bill hikes. The highest increase recorded is from Southern Water, while Sutton and East Surrey Water sits at the bottom of the list with the only decrease.

## Continued Concerns Over Water Pollution

The significant bill increase for Thames Water customers comes amid growing concerns about water pollution in the region. In 2024, the River Mole suffered over 2,000 additional hours of pollution compared to 2023, worsening environmental and public health risks. Critics argue that rather than prioritising investment in infrastructure improvements, Thames Water's rising bills are being used to manage corporate debt and executive pay.

## Thames Water on the Brink of Collapse

The sharp rise in Thames Water bills comes as the company teeters on the edge of financial collapse. The UK's largest water supplier, responsible for 15 million customers, has been struggling under a £15 billion debt burden and recently warned it could run out of money by May 2025. In an attempt to stabilise its finances, Thames Water had sought approval from the regulator, Ofwat, to impose a 59% bill increase over the next five years, far exceeding the 31% increase ultimately permitted this coming year. Meanwhile, the government has ruled out a public takeover of the company, despite growing concerns that a full-scale collapse could lead to severe service disruptions. The situation has reignited calls for tighter regulation of the water industry, with critics arguing that customers should not be forced to foot the bill for corporate mismanagement.

## What Can Residents Do?

With these price hikes looming, residents are encouraged to explore available financial assistance options. Social tariffs, designed for low-income households, may offer some relief, though the inconsistency in eligibility criteria across different water providers remains a pressing issue.

Social tariffs are discounted water rates designed to assist low-income households in managing their water bills. Thames Water offers a social tariff program called **WaterHelp**. This scheme provides up to a 50% discount on annual water bills for eligible customers. Eligibility is determined by comparing the customer's water bill to their net household income and considering the number of occupants in the property. If the water bill exceeds 5% of the household's net income, the customer may qualify for the discount.

Additionally, Thames Water participates in the **WaterSure** programme, which caps bills for metered customers who meet specific criteria. To qualify, customers must receive means-tested benefits and either have a medical condition requiring increased water use or have three or more children under 19 living at home. For the 2024/25 period, the bill is capped at £471, ensuring that eligible customers do not pay more than this amount, regardless of actual water consumption.

These programmes aim to make water services more affordable for vulnerable customers, especially in light of rising water bills. Residents are encouraged to contact Thames Water directly or visit their website to assess eligibility and apply for these support schemes.

Local campaigners continue to push for greater accountability from water companies and regulatory bodies. The debate over water affordability, pollution control, and corporate responsibility is likely to remain a key issue for Epsom & Ewell residents as the April 2025 changes approach.

Related reports:

[Surrey's LibDem MP majority take on Thames Water](#)

[Thames Water's reputation going down the drain](#)

[Thames Water left human waste to fester](#)

[Thames Water rebate](#)

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## Surrey village to suffer a lot more Heathrow flights

13 March 2025



Residents could suffer “an unacceptable amount of noise” from an airport as flight directions change, meaning the number of landing planes could increase from 36 to over 300 a day in a Surrey village.

Heathrow Airport is proposing to change its flight patterns to share noise more equally to communities around the site. This involves alternating between the southern and northern runways when the airport operates flights eastwards.

Most of the time (70 per cent) the airport runs on westerly operation, meaning planes take off and land towards the west as the wind favours the west direction at Heathrow. From 7am-3pm, planes land on the northern runway and depart on the southern runway. Halfway through the airport's day, at 3pm, Heathrow switches runways to give neighbouring residents a break.

This is because of the Cranford Agreement in 1952 which restricted departures over Cranford. But the government ripped up the Cranford agreement in 2009 to bring more equal noise distribution in the residential areas around Heathrow.

As planes are now allowed to take off over Cranford (to the north-east of the airport) Heathrow is proposing to make changes to the airfield to allow for easterly operations of planes taking off and landing from the east. These include: building a noise barrier, up to seven foot high, near Longford, as well as changing the taxiways where planes turn on the runway to reduce ground noise.

The applicant states the redistribution of noise around Heathrow Airport will result in lower noise effects in some locations and higher noise effects in others, but it will enable noise from aircraft operations to be more fairly distributed around the airport than it is currently.

Despite the overall aim meant to have a more even spread of noise, Spelthorne council's noise officer has objected to the changes as it will adversely impact Spelthorne and especially Stanwell Moor.

Currently only 36 planes arrive over Stanwell Moor on an easterly operation but if plans go ahead it could skyrocket to

328 landing a day, according to council documents. Councillor Joanne Sexton (Independent Spelthorne Group/ Ashford East), leader of Spelthorne council, said it was “quite a shock” to see the dramatic increase.

Heathrow submitted a planning proposal to Hillingdon Borough in October 2024, which is now in the consultation stage. Councillors wholeheartedly voted to object to the scheme, citing unacceptable noise impacts on the borough, at an environment and sustainability council meeting on January 14. These comments will be passed on to Spelthorne’s planning committee.

Only Cllr Paul Woodward (Conservative/ Ashford Town) approved Heathrow’s proposal, arguing: “Landing is the quietest part of the operation until you put the airbrakes halfway down the runway.”

Stanwell Moor runs directly parallel to Heathrow’s southern runway which leaves residents with a “constant stream of aircraft noise” for half the day, according to council documents. But if the airport uses full easterly alternation, the noise officer said this would “significantly increase the noise and frequency of overflights and significantly affect [Stanwell Moor] residents”.

Although Cllr Sexton raised concerns of Ashford becoming increasingly louder with plane noises, the noise officer said the changes would not harmfully impact Ashford or Sunbury.

Applauding the council for objecting to the project, Cllr Sue Doran (Labour/ Stanwell North) said: “It doesn’t matter which way [the planes] fly, the noise is terrible all the time.” Cllr Doran said she had lived in Stanwell for 15 years and said there is noise “virtually 24 hours a day”.

Heathrow Airport is aiming to introduce easterly runway alternation by 2028. Currently there is no proposed increase in the number of flights taking off or landing from the airport, just changes in the direction.

A Heathrow spokesperson said: “We know that noise is an important issue for local communities which is why we have published clear reduction targets in our Noise Action Plan. Our noise footprint has reduced by 41 per cent since 2006 and we expect to see further reductions. Easterly alternation is aimed at delivering predictable noise respite to more communities and is coupled with our ongoing work to install noise insulation for our nearest neighbours.”

Heathrow Airport. Credit Heathrow Airports Limited.

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## Walton Golf Club’s dismissal of one-in-hole unfair

13 March 2025



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 wearing 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.