



Are paper bottles the solution asks Surrey Uni

1 July 2025



There are few excuses left for polluting our environment with plastics – and the UK can lead the charge towards a more circular future, say researchers from the University of Surrey. The comments come as the Surrey team get ready to showcase three projects tackling plastic pollution at this week's Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition in London (1-6 July).

Surrey's interactive display will present various themes – from replacing petroleum-based packaging, to capturing microplastics before they enter our rivers and seas, to recycling mixed plastic waste that would otherwise end up in landfill.

One such project is SustaPack – a collaboration aiming to reduce the 1.9 billion plastic bottles produced globally every day by developing next generation paper-based alternatives. Backed by a £1 million EPSRC grant, the project is a partnership between Surrey and sustainable packaging company Pulpex Ltd. It combines AI, thermal imaging and advanced computer modelling to improve production processes, create a new biodegradable lining, reduce energy use, and extend product shelf life – bringing low-carbon, fully recyclable packaging closer to large-scale commercialisation.

Professor Joseph Keddie, Professor of Soft Matter Physics and Royal Society Industry Fellow, said:

"The high carbon footprint of plastic and glass packaging materials demands urgent change. This collaboration is about more than simply replacing plastic – it's about designing sustainable packaging that is truly recyclable, scalable, and with a low carbon footprint. It's a powerful example of how science and industry can join forces to address the urgent challenge of the environmental impacts of plastic."

Another project on display is addressing the recovery of plastic particles from our water systems. Some products such as sunscreens, cosmetics and disposable wipes can release microplastics, with the UK government considering restrictions or bans on certain items to reduce this form of pollution. On average, 50% of microplastics found in the world's wastewater treatment plants are fibres, mainly coming from laundry. If not captured, these tiny plastics can adsorb and carry pollutants circulating in the wastewater plant that are then ingested by marine life and ultimately enter the human food chain.

Surrey engineers are developing advanced membrane filtration technology designed to recover microplastics before treated wastewater is released into rivers and seas. By optimising membrane coatings and filtration conditions, the team is working to reduce clogging and improve long-term efficiency, paving the way for cleaner water and healthier ecosystems.

Professor Judy Lee, Professor in Chemical and Process Engineering, said:

"Microplastics are a serious and growing threat to water quality and human health. These tiny particles are difficult to remove once they're in the environment and can carry harmful pollutants. Our research focuses on practical solutions that can be deployed in wastewater treatment plants to stop these pollutants at the source."

To address the challenge of recycling plastics mixed with other materials, such as carbon fibre composites, engineers at Surrey are working to make the process more viable and commercially attractive. These composites are essential across various industries, including aerospace, transport and construction due to their lightweight, strong and versatile properties, but they are notoriously difficult to recycle.

Surrey's research focuses on developing new manufacturing routes and enhancing the thermal, electrical and mechanical properties of recycled carbon fibre, making second-life applications practical and commercially appealing. Reducing waste and using reclaimed materials also help to lower the demand for raw resources.

Dr Iman Mohagheghian, Associate Professor (Reader) in Mechanics of Materials at the University of Surrey, and EPSRC researcher in residence fellow of the National Composites Centre, said:

"Our goal is to make recycled composites a reliable, high-value option for industry. Enhancing their performance and reducing manufacturing waste is an important step towards building a truly circular economy for advanced plastics, supporting the wider journey towards net zero."

At the Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition, visitors can discover Plastic Alchemy – an outreach theme led by the University of Surrey's Circular Economy Group and Fellows from the Institute for Sustainability.

Epsom and Ewell parents taking on the child smartphone challenge

1 July 2025



Local parents are joining a national movement to delay children's exposure to smartphones, with a sold-out event next week highlighting local concerns.

Epsom & Ewell's Smartphone Free Childhood (SFC) group is hosting *The Hidden Impact of Smartphones on our Children* on Wednesday 3 July, 7.30-9pm, at St Martin's Junior School on Ashley Road. The event will feature contributions from local headteachers, youth speakers, and safeguarding experts.

The movement, which has already attracted nearly 150,000 signatories to its "Parent Pact" across the UK, encourages families to hold off giving children smartphones before age 14. Surrey parents have been among the strongest supporters of the initiative, which aims to reduce the mental health and online safety risks faced by children in a hyper-connected world.

Laura Baker, from Epsom & Ewell's SFC group, said:

"It's all about strength in numbers – if your child knows that other kids in their class won't be getting a smartphone for a few years either, the peer pressure instantly dissolves."



The event's speaker line-up includes:

- Mrs Donna Dove, Health and Wellbeing Lead and teacher at St Martin's, Epsom
- Mr Joe Hordley, Assistant Headteacher at St Andrew's, Leatherhead
- Mrs Rachel Hall, Associate Headteacher at Glyn School
- Health Professionals for Safer Screens
- Advisors from the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, addressing online safety and child protection
- Young people aged 13, 18, and 24 sharing personal perspectives on growing up in a digital age

Local MP Helen Maguire is expected to attend, and educators from more than ten primary and secondary schools across Epsom and Ewell are anticipated, reflecting the growing concern among school communities.

The organisers say school policies on smartphone use vary widely across Surrey, as staff attempt to manage the impacts of cyberbullying, mental health pressures, misogyny, and distraction in class.

Parents behind the initiative argue that urgent action is needed to protect children's wellbeing, rather than waiting for government regulation of Big Tech. The cultural conversation around children and screens has been driven by hard-hitting documentaries such as *Swiped* and dramas like *Adolescence*, adding momentum to calls for change.

Epsom & Ewell SFC hope the borough could follow in the footsteps of St Albans, Bromley, and Southwark in developing a "smartphone free childhood" community.

The event is free to attend, but places must be booked in advance. After an initial sell-out, a limited number of extra tickets have now been released.

Booking and further information:

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Epsom Picturehouse blossoms with Pride

1 July 2025



Picturehouse Epsom is proud to announce a powerful new partnership with Blossom LGBT to launch OUT — a year-round celebration of LGBTQ+ cinema.

Together, we're amplifying queer voices on screen and creating space for connection, reflection, and community — showing that Pride isn't just a once-a-year event, but an ongoing conversation and opportunity to build lasting community.

About Blossom LGBT

Blossom LGBT is a national non-profit supporting LGBTQIA+ young adults aged 16-30. Based in Surrey, their mission is to ensure that no young person faces exclusion — social or economic — because of who they are or whom they love.

They work to break down systemic barriers of discrimination, poverty, and disadvantage, empowering the next generation to thrive.

At Blossom, we are dedicated to creating a world where LGBTQIA+ young adults can overcome discrimination, thrive in safe and supportive communities, and access the tools and opportunities needed to succeed with dignity and purpose. We are designed for the community, by the community.

It's vital that young people see themselves reflected in film, not just to feel visible, but to know that their stories, identities, and futures matter. Representation can inspire confidence, spark ambition, and help young people imagine a world where they belong.

Our Venue: Epsom Picturehouse

Epsom Picturehouse is a brand-new six-screen cinema in the heart of Epsom Square. With a rich programme of arthouse and quality mainstream films, plus a stylish café and bar, it offers a perfect setting for inclusive, community-focused events.

We're excited to open our doors to OUT and host a variety of screenings, discussions, and gatherings that celebrate the richness and diversity of LGBTQ+ lives and experiences.

Joe Stroud from Epsom Picturehouse said:

"I'm delighted that, at the heart of all this, we're celebrating community. What better way to do that than by sharing powerful stories on screen and using them as inspiring conversation starters?"

What is OUT?

OUT is a long-running Picturehouse initiative that celebrates LGBTQ+ stories — from reclaimed classics to bold new voices. Now in its tenth year at Clapham Picturehouse, we're thrilled to extend this initiative to Surrey, helping local audiences build connections and community through film.

Clapham's OUT journey began in 2014 with a screening of *Dallas Buyers Club*, and has since included landmark titles such as Barry Jenkins' *Moonlight*, the historic Best Picture winner at the 2017 Academy Awards. Now, it's Epsom's turn.

Upcoming Events: Brokeback Mountain + Q&A Panel — 6 July

Join Blossom LGBT for a special 20th anniversary screening of *Brokeback Mountain*, directed by Ang Lee and starring Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal — a landmark film for the LGBTQ+ community.

Following the screening, we'll host an open and thoughtful Q&A with invited panellists, exploring the film's emotional journey — touching on themes of love, repression, and resilience.

Together, we'll reflect on how life for LGBTQ+ people has changed (and in some ways stayed the same), especially in rural communities. How do those experiences echo in today's legal battles and cultural conversations?



The evening will feature invited guests, including Outline, an organisation supporting people with their sexuality and gender identity through a helpline, website, and support groups. Also attending are the Mary Frances Trust (MFT) LGBT Peer Support Group, as well as Walk and Talk 4 Men — a free support group for men to come together, walk, talk, and support their mental health while enjoying some fresh air.

This event is for anyone seeking connection — whether you're exploring your own journey, supporting someone close to you, or simply curious to learn more. We invite you into a warm, inclusive space to listen, reflect, and be part of a growing community.

Mark your calendars for more upcoming events celebrating LGBTQ+ stories:

Sun 29 Jun

- reDiscover *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (15) at 17:10

Mon 30 Jun

- Out Queer Futures (Cert TBC) at 20:30
- reDiscover *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (15) at 19:45

Tue 01 Jul

- Discover — Preview *Hot Milk* (15) at 20:15

Wed 02 Jul

- *Brokeback Mountain* plus Q&A (15) at 18:30

Stay tuned for more film nights, conversations, and creative community events throughout the year. Whether you're a long-time advocate or new to the conversation, there's a seat here for you.

Let's make Pride more than a moment — let's make it a movement. See you at the cinema.

For more information about the organisers, visit blossom.lgbt or email Steph Elhaddad at Steph.Elhaddad@blossom.lgbt.

Ewell students cruise to new careers

1 July 2025



Cruise industry giants have teamed up with three colleges to highlight the sector as an exciting, rewarding career pathway for school leavers. This included 12 Travel and Tourism students at Nescot college in Ewell, who have just completed their first Cruise Career Springboard programme, allowing them to dip their toes into a potential career in the cruise sector by visiting several incredible ships, hearing from industry leaders and seeing head office and shoreside roles in action.

The Cruise Career Springboard programme was developed and masterminded by Edwina and Matthew Lonsdale at Mundy Cruising and has been supported by key industry figures, who have come together to invest in the next generation. This includes representatives from the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) and leaders from numerous operators including Royal Caribbean, Celebrity Cruises, Silversea, Norwegian Cruise Line, Oceania, Regent Seven Seas, Cunard, P&O, Princess, Seabourn, MSC Cruises, HX Expeditions, Uniworld, AmaWaterways, Windstar and Viva. Former Managing Director and Vice President of Celebrity Cruises, Jo Rzymowska, an inspirational speaker and Non-Executive Director at Hays Travel joined the programme to mentor the Nescot students. Participants have also benefited from the wisdom of former Managing Director of Regent Seven Seas Cruises UK, Graham Sadler, and Debbee Dale, leading trainer for the sector.

The course, which took place over nine weeks and included students from St John Bosco College in Battersea and Itchen College in Southampton, also aims to improve diversity and inclusion, introducing learners from varied backgrounds to the wide range of on-board and shore-based opportunities. This could be anything from engineering to entertainment, HR to health and safety and destination management to deck duties.

This year the students visited six cruise ships and learnt about the product offer covering expedition, luxury, mainstream and river cruise liners. They also undertook classroom work, visited and heard about operations at company headquarters and prepared for a final presentation to industry professionals where they will pitch the opportunities for career pathways in the sector. Plans are already in place to embed the learning and experience into Nescot's future delivery and to launch a Level 4 qualification in Travel & Tourism with a pathway in the cruise industry from 2026.

Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO at Nescot said: "This programme is very close to my heart as a cruise addict - I've recently returned from my latest fantastic adventure. It's wonderful to share my love for this sector with my students. University isn't always the right route for everyone at eighteen, particularly once the cost is factored in. With that in mind, we aim to be innovative at Nescot, working closely with businesses to show students there are other exciting options out there. This includes apprenticeships and entry level roles which can be inspiring and fun with exceptional progression pathways. The Cruise Career Springboard has offered once-in-a-lifetime experiences, expert mentorship and the chance to learn about and try roles beyond the course. It's clear that the Cruise industry offers students a world of opportunity and we're working together to help them grab it."

Edwina Lonsdale, Managing Director of Mundy Cruising and Cruise Career Springboard creator said: "Many young people look at the cruise sector and don't realise it could be a career option for them, so we set out to change that. We want a diverse, enthusiastic workforce, both at sea and shoreside so linking up with colleges made perfect sense. I've been blown away by the continued industry reaction and how many individuals and operators have come on board to help us. We're incredibly grateful, as with their support, the Springboard programme can launch more careers than ever. I have also been struck by the enthusiasm and participation of the students - they have a great future ahead of them."

Eva Williams, Travel & Tourism Student at Nescot said: "Nescot's partnership with the Cruise Career Springboard programme has been amazing! We were so lucky to visit all the different ships and have big names in the industry chatting to us. I was genuinely surprised by how many people work behind the scenes to keep everything running - whole teams making things happen without ever stepping on deck. I'd never really considered the cruise industry as a career option before, but it's definitely on my radar now. I love the idea of playing a part in helping people's dreams come true."

Working in the cruise industry allows young people to access a wide range of careers and utilise skills that cover a range of jobs and functions. As a global industry, it also offers opportunity to work with colleagues around the world and to travel. Many who join the cruise line industry might begin on ships, but then pivot into shore-based roles as their career develops, or family commitments make travel more difficult. The industry can provide a lifelong, varied and dynamic career.

Industry professionals interested in finding out more about the Cruise Career Springboard can contact Edwina Lonsdale - edwina@mundycruising.co.uk

In addition to Travel and Tourism courses, Nescot offers a wide range of college courses for school leavers and adults, including Animal Care, Business, Computing



and IT, Construction, Performing Arts, Childcare, Health & Social Care and Beauty Therapy. To find out more about studying at Nescot call 020 8394 3038, visit www.nescot.ac.uk or email adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk

Image: Students from Nescot, St John Bosco and Itchen Colleges are joined on Silver Spirit by Edwina Lonsdale - Mundy Cruising, Mentors Graham Sadler and Jo Rzymowska, Peter Shanks - Silversea Cruises and Julie Kapsalis - Nescot.

Great Get Together Got its Act together.

1 July 2025



Sunday, St Joseph's Church in Epsom was buzzing with laughter, music, and the spirit of community as residents gathered for The Great Get Together — a free, vibrant family event co-hosted by Good Company and Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network.

The event was officially opened by the Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, Councillor Robert Leach, and warmly supported by local MP Helen Maguire, whose presence reflected the significance of the day for the whole community.

From the moment the gates opened, visitors were welcomed into an afternoon packed with activities, entertainment, and delicious food — all completely free of charge. Families from across the borough came together to celebrate unity, diversity, and neighbourly spirit.

Children and adults alike were kept smiling with a variety of games and creative stations. Highlights included crazy golf, football, face painting, and colourful arts and crafts, all made possible by a team of tireless volunteers.

The entertainment line-up was a true showcase of local talent. Epsom's own Ukrainian Renaissance Choir moved the crowd with their stirring songs, while Freedom Pulse Brass brought rhythm and energy. Helin Konyar, a graduate of Laine Theatre Arts, delighted both children and adults with her joyful Disney song set.

No community celebration is complete without good food — and this one delivered. Lezzet Kitchen, Turkish cooks, served up their famous filled flatbreads, freshly made on-site, alongside Noah's pudding made by the Chickpea Project, thought to be the oldest dessert in the world.

One attendee summed up the day perfectly: "Today was truly unforgettable, filled with love, warmth, and a deep sense of safety. It was inspiring to see so many vulnerable refugee families brought together with the wonderful Epsom community."

Thanks to the dedication of countless volunteers, The Great Get Together was a heart warming success.

Image: Epsom and Ewell Mayor Cllr Robert Leach (RA) and Helen Maguire MP at Epsom's Great Get Together

Assisted Dying Bill Passes in Commons — Epsom MP Explains Absence

1 July 2025



In a historic moment for UK parliamentary debate, the Assisted Dying Bill passed its third reading in the House of Commons on **Friday 20 June 2025**, following a narrow but decisive vote. MPs voted **314 in favour** and **291 against**, a margin of just 23 votes, paving the way for the Bill's progression to the House of Lords.

The **Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill**, introduced by Labour MP Kim Leadbetter, proposes to legalise assisted dying for terminally ill adults in England and Wales who are medically expected to live for six months or less. Under the Bill's framework, individuals would be able to request life-ending medication, to be self-administered following a rigorous process of approvals.

That process would require sign-off by two independent doctors and a special three-member oversight panel comprising a legal expert, psychiatrist, and social worker. Earlier provisions for High Court authorisation were removed in the final draft to streamline implementation, a move both welcomed and criticised in equal measure.

Supporters of the Bill argue that it reflects modern values around personal autonomy and compassionate end-of-life care, allowing individuals the dignity of choosing how and when they die. They point to robust safeguards within the Bill — including mental capacity assessments, a residency requirement, and a mandatory waiting period — as protections for vulnerable people. Medical professionals would retain the right to opt out on grounds of conscience.

Opponents, including some religious leaders and palliative care specialists, argue that the Bill could open the door to pressure on the elderly, disabled or chronically ill to end their lives prematurely. They also warn that overstretched NHS and social care services might struggle to implement the regulatory framework effectively.

Among those unable to cast their vote was Epsom and Ewell's Liberal Democrat MP, **Helen Maguire**, who has consistently supported the Bill in previous readings. Ms Maguire issued the following full statement to the *Epsom and Ewell Times* explaining her absence:

"I am disappointed to have been unable to attend the vote. I have consistently voted for this Bill."

My absence on the voting date of Friday, June 20th, was due to a pre-planned parliamentary trip. This visit was scheduled before the voting date was confirmed and unfortunately could not be moved.

This is an issue I care about profoundly, and I gave serious thought as to whether I should be away. In the end, I was paired with another MP who was unable to attend as they hold a different view from me, which meant that our absences effectively cancelled each other out in terms of the final result.

While this did offer some reassurance to my conscience, I appreciate that my absence may still be disappointing to those who had hoped to see a vote recorded in person. Please know that I have made it a priority to attend all other sitting Fridays when the assisted dying bill was debated, precisely because of how important I



know these debates and votes are, particularly on such sensitive and personal matters."

With the Bill now heading to the House of Lords for further scrutiny, attention turns to whether peers will support what could become one of the most significant moral and legal reforms in recent decades. While some in the Lords remain sceptical, others are warning against frustrating legislation that has cleared the elected chamber by a democratic vote.

Whether or not the Bill survives its passage through the Lords, the June 20th vote represents a shift in the national conversation — one that brings the UK a step closer to joining countries like Canada, New Zealand, and parts of the United States in legalising assisted dying under carefully controlled conditions.

MP Slams 'Patchwork Repairs' as local Hospitals Face £150m Backlog

1 July 2025



Liberal Democrat MP for Epsom & Ewell, Helen Maguire, has criticised the government's response to the mounting repair crisis at Epsom and St Helier hospitals, warning that the very future of local NHS services could be at risk without urgent and substantial investment.

Speaking in the House of Commons this week, Maguire welcomed a recent £12.1 million allocation for Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust but described the sum as "a drop in the ocean" compared to the scale of need.

"Our current maintenance backlog alone amounts to £150 million," states the St George's, Epsom and St Helier Hospital Group (GESH), which manages the trust. "We estimate our backlog maintenance will rise by £180 million over five years — or £36 million per year."

During Health and Social Care Questions in Parliament on 17 June, Maguire challenged Health Secretary Wes Streeting to visit the hospitals and witness conditions firsthand. "Patients and staff deserve safe and modern facilities, not patchwork repairs," she told MPs.

Read the full exchange in Hansard

The Health Secretary acknowledged the scale of the challenge, saying both he and the Minister for Secondary Care, Karin Smyth MP, had met with local MPs about the issue. He cited a £207 million capital allocation to the NHS South West London Integrated Care Board — covering the broader region — and reiterated that the government was "reversing the trend" of underinvestment, blaming the previous Conservative government for leaving "a £37 billion black hole in NHS capital."

However, Maguire was left unimpressed by the response.

"It is disappointing that the Health Secretary ignored my invitation to come down and see firsthand the scale of the challenge at Epsom & St Helier," she said after the debate.

"If he spent a day in the shoes of one of our exceptional doctors or nurses, caring for patients amidst crumbling walls and leaking ceilings, I'm sure he too would share the grave concerns that I and my Liberal Democrat colleagues Bobby Dean MP and Luke Taylor MP have for our local hospitals.

"£12.1 million does not even begin to touch the sides compared with what our hospitals need right now."

The MP also stressed the importance of not placing all hope in the new specialist emergency care hospital planned for Sutton. "Alongside the new hospital building in Sutton to ease the pressure on Epsom & St Helier, patients and staff deserve safe and modern facilities wherever they go, not just patchwork repairs and more uncertainty from this Government."

A Local Crisis in Numbers

- **£150 million** - current maintenance backlog at Epsom & St Helier Trust
- **£36 million/year** - projected additional maintenance need over next five years
- **£12.1 million** - recent government funding allocated to the Trust
- **£207 million** - total capital funding to South West London Integrated Care Board

Background: New Hospital, Old Buildings

Plans for a new £500 million specialist emergency care hospital in Sutton — part of the controversial Health Infrastructure Plan (HIP) 1 scheme — have been met with both cautious optimism and concern that core services in Epsom and St Helier will be reduced.

Epsom and St Helier hospitals serve an ageing population, and the majority of the estate dates back to the early to mid-20th century. Campaigners have long pointed to leaking roofs, outdated infrastructure, and chronic staff shortages as urgent priorities.

While some capital funding is being made available for immediate safety needs, campaigners and local MPs argue that unless major investment is directed to the existing hospitals, they will continue to deteriorate, placing patients and staff at risk.

Photo: Maguire MP abseiling St Helier Hospital

Mental Health and Justice in Special Epsom Film Screening

1 July 2025



A powerful evening of film and conversation is coming to Epsom Picturehouse on Monday 23 June, as local mental health charity *Mary Frances Trust* teams up with national organisation *Women in Prison* to present a special screening of the acclaimed documentary *HOLLOWAY*.

The event, beginning at 7.30pm, will include a live Q&A with guest speakers exploring the intersection of trauma, mental health, and the women's prison system — themes at the heart of both the film and the work of *Mary Frances Trust*.

Directed by BAFTA Breakthrough Brit Daisy-May Hudson and Emmy-nominated filmmaker Sophie Compton, *HOLLOWAY* invites six women back to the now-closed Holloway Prison, where they form a women's circle to share deeply personal stories of incarceration and survival. The result is a compelling portrait of systemic failure and personal transformation, as the women trace the roots of their journeys through trauma and into healing.

Created through a trauma-informed, co-creative process, the film features contributions from Aliyah Ali, Mandy Ogunmokun, Sarah Cassidy, Lady Unchained, Gerrah, and Tamar Mujanay. It won the Audience Award at the BFI London Film Festival and has prompted vital discussions wherever it has been shown.

Following the screening, audience members will hear from a panel of guest speakers:

- **Karryn Robinson**, London Prison Services Manager at *Women in Prison*, who leads the Unsentenced Women project at Bronzefield Prison. Karryn has previously worked as a trauma specialist counsellor, Crisis Team Manager at MIND, and as a domestic abuse advocate within the Probation Service.
- **Megan Siarey**, Delivery and Strategy Lead for Co-Production and Community Engagement at *Mary Frances Trust*.
- **Sophie Compton**, Emmy, Grierson and BIFA-nominated director of *HOLLOWAY* and *Another Body*.

The evening promises to be a moving and enlightening experience for anyone interested in mental health, justice reform, and the power of community-led support.

Event details

Epsom Picturehouse

Monday 23 June, 7.30pm

Tickets available at: picturehouses.com

Watch the trailer and find more details via *Mary Frances Trust*:

<https://www.maryfrancestrust.org.uk/mft-co-hosts-special-screening-qa-holloway-at-epsom-picturehouse/>

Image: Contributor Mandy opens up about her early childhood trauma during the women's circle. Six women who had been imprisoned in Holloway Prison took part in the women's circle over 5 days, returning to the now-closed Holloway Prison to tell their stories.

Epsom Therapy Garden in the Running for BBC Green Award

1 July 2025



A tranquil corner of Epsom that has quietly blossomed into a hub of therapy and conservation has earned recognition in the BBC Radio Surrey Make a Difference Awards.

St Ebba's Therapy Garden, located on the former cricket ground of the old hospital site, has been shortlisted for the *Green Award*, which honours individuals or organisations that have made a significant impact on their local environment.

Developed through a partnership between Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Surrey County Council, Natural England and Surrey Wildlife Trust, the garden offers a sanctuary for people with complex mental health and neurodevelopmental needs. Many of those who benefit from the garden have found it difficult to engage with more traditional clinical settings.

Now a finalist for the BBC accolade, the garden's blend of therapeutic purpose and ecological design has struck a chord with both its users and supporters. Local businesses and volunteers—including those from a vocational programme for adults with learning disabilities—have also played a key role in shaping the space.

Therapists trained in nature-based interventions use the garden to support individuals coping with anxiety, depression, trauma and other conditions. Designed to nurture both human wellbeing and local biodiversity, the garden includes native hedgerows for birds and hedgehogs, pollinator-friendly plants for bees and butterflies, and sensory features such as grasses and scented geraniums.

A young person who receives therapy at the garden described it as "a nice, relaxed environment," adding, "The garden is a good place for me to calm down. I feel comfortable being there."

One parent shared how the outdoor space had transformed her daughter's ability to engage with therapy. "She loves the outdoors but is often too anxious to leave the house. This is a safe place for her to enjoy and it has hugely improved her wellbeing."

Another parent praised the impact on their autistic son, who volunteered to help build the garden. "He was nervous at first, but came back so proud of what he'd achieved. He's gained confidence—and we're so grateful he had the opportunity."

With the BBC Radio Surrey awards set to highlight community champions across the region, supporters of St Ebba's will be hoping the garden's unique combination of therapy and conservation will earn it the Green Award title.

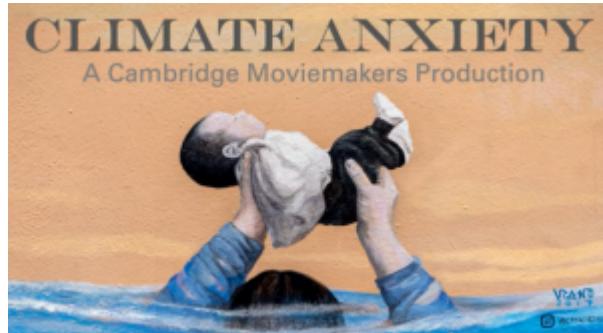
For more information about the services offered by Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, visit: www.sabp.nhs.uk

Follow them on Twitter: @sabpnhhs or Facebook: facebook.com/sabpnhhs



Green Thinking Takes the Spotlight at Epsom Picturehouse

1 July 2025



Cinema-goers in Epsom are being invited to watch, reflect, and act, as a national eco-film initiative gains local traction.

A new strand of community-focused cinema, "Green Screen," has arrived at Epsom Picturehouse, offering audiences more than just a night at the movies. Instead, it aims to foster conversation and local action around the pressing issue of climate change.

Following its Epsom debut on Earth Day earlier this year — hosted by The Woodland Trust and focusing on the conservation of Langley Vale Wood — the next Green Screen event is set for **Wednesday 9th July 2025 at 8pm**, this time in partnership with **Extinction Rebellion Epsom & Ewell**.

The evening features three short films tackling different aspects of the climate crisis. First up is *#ClimateScam?* (40 mins), a documentary from Cornwall Climate Care which addresses climate change denial and misinformation. It's followed by *Climate Anxiety* (17 mins), a film from Cambridge Movie Makers exploring the psychological toll of environmental collapse. Finally, *Plan Z: From Lab Coats to Handcuffs* (23 mins), produced by A2Y Productions, tells the story of scientists who risk their careers and freedom by engaging in direct environmental activism.

But it's not all on-screen. After the screenings, the audience will be invited to stay for a 40-minute panel discussion and Q&A featuring local voices — a doctor, a scientist, an engineer, and a community organiser — all bringing their perspectives to the urgent environmental questions raised by the films.

Joe Stroud of Epsom Picturehouse said:

"We're proud to see Green Screen take root in Epsom. It's a strand that thrives when communities take ownership — the films are the catalyst, but it's the community that brings together their perspectives, expertise, and passion."

The Green Screen series is a nationwide initiative by Picturehouse Cinemas, transforming theatres into spaces of environmental learning and grassroots conversation. Events across the UK have seen audiences inspired to take local action, supported by partnerships with schools, charities, businesses, and environmental organisations.

True to its ethos, the Epsom screening will extend the invitation to connect beyond the credits. Attendees are encouraged to continue conversations in the Picturehouse's meeting space over a free tea or filter coffee — if they bring a reusable cup.

Extinction Rebellion Epsom & Ewell, the local host for the July event, is part of the global climate action movement and is active in local campaigning and awareness-raising through non-violent action and community engagement.

Epsom Picturehouse itself is a relatively new addition to the town, having opened in June 2024. Located in Epsom Square, the six-screen venue blends modern programming with vintage touches and a strong focus on community. Its café-bar offers a menu of pizzas, toasties, cakes and drinks, helping turn cinema visits into a more social, immersive experience.

Anyone interested in organising a future Green Screen event in Epsom is encouraged to contact the venue at epsom.marketing@picturehouses.co.uk.

For more information about the 9th July event, readers can contact Warren Bunce of Extinction Rebellion Epsom & Ewell on **07539 069659** or by email at epsomewell@extinctionrebellion.uk.