



## Watching out for tomorrow's film talent in Epsom and Ewell

17 December 2024



Creative Media students from North East Surrey College of Technology (Nescot) were joined by their tutors, family and friends for the premiere of their short film, 'The Watching' which was screened at Epsom Picturehouse last week.

'The Watching' was filmed on location in the South Downs in November by Nescot's Level 4 and HND Creative Media students as part of their domestic filming project. Written by and starring former student, Charlie McCarthy, 'The Watching', is a psychological drama, exploring themes of identity, state control and the human cost of forgetting, set against the desolate beauty of an isolated coastline.

Louise Gaskin, Head of Curriculum for Creative Industries at Nescot said, "A huge well done to our cast and crew. We are so proud of their efforts and hard work on this project which has resulted in, I think, one of the best films we've made as a department. Thank you to Epsom Picturehouse and Satisfied Eye International Film Festival for supporting our students, we were thrilled to be able to showcase our students' film on the big screen."

Abigail Partington-Moran, Creative Media tutor at Nescot added, "The students have worked really hard on this filming project and enjoyed themselves too. They've taken the early starts, late nights, cold weather and countless unit moves all in their stride. The project has given them the real-world experience of working on set, and alongside the technical film-making skills, they've also learnt team work, problem-solving and time management skills."

After the film screening, key cast and crew members involved in the filming took to the stage for a Q&A session with Creative Media tutor demonstrator, Alex Marshall. They included, former student, Charlie McCarthy, Script Writer and Actor, and Sam Gower, Actor; HND student, Hannah Lealan, Producer; Level 4 student Frankie Hamley and HND student Nathan Elford, Directors and Level 4 student, Amani McKenzie, Script Supervisor.

Former student Charlie was part of Nescot's Gold Medal winning Creative Media team at WorldSkills UK 2023. He said his inspiration for the script was the filming location, "I liked the idea of writing something satirical with reference to the beach. Everyone involved was brilliant and so dedicated all of the time. We had lots of fun making this film and I do hope audiences enjoy it."

HND student, Nathan, who had the role of Director along with Level 4 student Frankie said, "We all worked really well together, there were no arguments which was great! Both Frankie and I collaborated to bring together the visual aspects of the film. The whole production was very professional. The experience has given me an idea of the job role I'd like to get into."

"Even though it was stressful at times, it was good stress and taught us how to problem-solve. We have learnt a lot from this whole production. It has made us ready for the film-making industry," added Frankie.

HND student, Hannah who had the role of Producer said, "We were essentially two different classes, working together. We turned a challenge from never having worked with someone before into an opportunity to develop, work and learn from each other. We had lots of fun on set between takes which made the experience enjoyable."

Level 4 student Amani explained that as part of his role as Script Supervisor, he had to ensure there was continuity through the whole production from props to the actor's lines, to make sure everything ran smoothly. "It's been an amazing experience and has prepared us for handling industry-related situations. We are ready!" he said.

Nescot Creative Media alumnus and industry professional, Luke James was present for the screening. Addressing the students, he reminisced about working on a similar filming project nine years ago when he was a student at Nescot and offered them key advice. He said, "Filmmaking is a labour of love and there are endless opportunities in this industry. The opportunity to make something like this film is just so valuable, and you may not feel it now, but you should all be extremely proud of yourselves."

'The Watching' has been entered into the Student Short (UK) category for the 2025 Satisfied Eye International Film Festival

Nescot's Level 4 and HND Creative Media students on location for the filming of 'The Watching'. Credit NESCOT

## Plant-based meat alternatives might be depressing

17 December 2024



There is mounting evidence suggesting that ultra-processed foods (UPF) are bad for our health, but if you stick to a vegetarian diet, is that still the case? Plant-based meat alternatives (PBMA) are considered to be ultra-processed foods and may be associated with similar harms.

In the first study of its kind, published in *Food Frontiers*, researchers from the University of Surrey found that vegetarians who consumed PBMA had a 42% increased risk of depression compared to vegetarians who refrained from PBMA.

The study analysed data from the UK Biobank and found no notable differences in intake of sodium, free sugar, total sugar, or saturated fatty acids between those vegetarians who ate PBMA and those who did not.

The researchers did find, however, that those who eat PBMA had higher blood pressure and C-reactive protein (CRP) levels, a marker of inflammation, and lower levels of apolipoprotein A, a protein associated with HDL, a "good" cholesterol; PBMA consumption was, however, also linked to a reduced risk of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) by 40%.

Professor Nophar Geifman, from the School of Health Sciences at the University of Surrey and senior author of the study, said:

"The overall findings are reassuring, suggesting that plant-based meat alternatives may be a safe option when they are part of an overall balanced diet. However, the potential link between these types of food, inflammation and depression warrants further investigation."



The study presented some limitations due to the data collected, which was predominantly from a white population in the UK, and dietary information only being gathered at the beginning of the study, not accounting for potential changes over time.

Professor Anthony Whetton, co-author of the study from the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Surrey, said:

"Ultra-processed plant-based meat alternatives can be a useful way for people to transition to a vegetarian diet effectively, and that helps with sustainable agricultural practices. Further research, including longitudinal studies and trials with more diverse populations, is necessary to confirm these findings and the relationship between vegetarian foods and mood."

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## Surrey first in image AI

17 December 2024



### 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.

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## Epsom Symphony Orchestra: A Cornerstone of Local Musical Excellence

17 December 2024



The Epsom Symphony Orchestra, a cherished fixture in the town's cultural landscape, has been delighting audiences since its founding in 1951. Over its decades-



long history, the orchestra has shared the stage with numerous esteemed soloists, including pianists Phyllis Sellick, Eileen Joyce, and Semprini, clarinettist Gervase de Peyer, and, more recently, the internationally acclaimed pianist Benjamin Grosvenor.

Currently under the direction of its long-serving musical director **Darrell Davison**, the orchestra performs four concerts annually at the **Epsom Playhouse**. Mr. Davison, who has led the orchestra since 1981, brings an impressive musical pedigree to the role. A scholar of both Charterhouse and St Catherine's College, Cambridge, Davison began his career as the principal cellist of the Ulster Orchestra before transitioning to conducting. A winner of the Sir John Barbirolli Conducting Competition in 1979 and a prize winner at the inaugural Leeds Conducting Competition in 1984, Davison has conducted major ensembles across England, including all four London orchestras, and has appeared at venues such as the Royal Festival Hall.

The Epsom Symphony Orchestra comprises a blend of professional musicians and dedicated amateurs, creating a vibrant and inclusive musical community. Among its members is leader **Julia Burkert**, a German-born violinist who studied on scholarship in Canada and Scotland before establishing a successful freelance career in London. The orchestra's ethos of collaboration and shared passion for music resonates strongly with its members, many of whom describe it as a "musical family."

The orchestra recently performed its annual Christmas concert to a packed audience at the Playhouse. The festive program featured interactive elements that encouraged audience participation, adding to the warm and lively atmosphere. This year's Christmas concert continued a tradition of welcoming celebrity narrators for musical pantomimes, with past guests including Johnnny Morris, Wayne Sleep, and Lionel Blair.

Looking ahead, the orchestra's next concert on 23rd March promises a compelling program of classical masterworks. Highlights include Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet Overture*, Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* with Cypriot pianist Christos Fountos as the soloist, and Shostakovich's emotionally charged Fifth Symphony. Mr. Fountos, born in Nicosia in 1997, began his piano studies at the age of five and made his orchestral debut at 17 with the Cyprus Symphony Orchestra.

The orchestra's commitment to nurturing local talent and delivering high-quality performances continues to enrich Epsom's cultural life. It is also actively seeking new players of a good standard to join its ranks, ensuring its legacy endures for years to come. For more information, prospective musicians and concertgoers are encouraged to visit the orchestra's website. <http://www.epsomsymphony.co.uk/>

Related report:

Spanish fiesta came to Epsom

## Surrey pharmacies need a better financial prescription

17 December 2024



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)



## Epsom and Ewell low-income crisis support

17 December 2024



The **Household Support Fund**, provided by the Department for Work and Pensions, offers short-term financial support to households struggling to afford essentials. Distributed by CAEE on behalf of **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council**, this fund is available until **31st March 2025**.

### Who Can Apply?

You may be eligible if you:

- Are on benefits
- Live in a low-income household
- Require crisis support that could otherwise lead to financial hardship

### Who Can CAEE Help?

CAEE provides support to:

- Families
- Pensioners
- Disabled people
- Those in financial crisis

### What Can the Funds Cover?

The Household Support Fund can help with:

- Utilities
- Food
- Essential goods
- Crisis support to avoid financial hardship

### How to Access the Fund

- **Online:** Complete an application via our website: [www.caee.org.uk/household-support-fund/](http://www.caee.org.uk/household-support-fund/)
- **Phone:** Call us on **01372 300777**
- **In Person:** Attend a drop-in session:
  - **Monday & Tuesday:** 10 am - 1 pm
  - **Thursday:** 10 am - 3 pm

### Message from Lisa Davis, CEO of CAEE

"We have been given more Household Support funds to distribute to those who are tipping into financial crisis. From June to September, we assisted 161 clients, including families, older people, and those with disabilities or long-term conditions. We provided essential help such as energy or supermarket vouchers and direct utility payments.

We saw first-hand the significant positive impact this support had on our community, alleviating financial pressure and anxiety.

Examples of crises we can help with include:

- Repairing an essential family car to get to work
- Providing support equipment to prevent a disabled person from falling into hardship
- Covering costs for new school uniforms
- Assisting with utility bills

Get in touch with us as soon as possible - we can help.

Unhappy couple. Photo by Timur Weber: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/discord-between-man-and-woman-8560374/>

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## Call to address mental health of health workers

17 December 2024



Only a system-wide overhaul of the NHS that invests in staff wellbeing can address the psychological ill-health crisis amongst healthcare workers, according to research led by the University of Surrey in partnership with the University of Exeter. The research, which is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), focussed on nurses, midwives and paramedics who are disproportionately affected by psychological ill-health, which leads to significant consequences for both individual wellbeing and patient care.

The study found that whilst high-pressure environments, heavy workloads, and chronic staff shortages are key drivers of stress and anxiety among healthcare professionals, it is the features of the work environment, such as lone working and career stage, such as being newly qualified, that can be key. The NHS staff survey reports that almost half of all NHS staff reported feeling unwell due to work-related stress in the past year (47%), with many experiencing unrealistic time pressures and inadequate staffing levels.

The researchers identified several key findings, including:

- An underlying blame culture undermines staff psychological wellness by creating a toxic work environment.
- A prevalent “serve and sacrifice” culture prioritises institutional needs over individual wellbeing.
- Healthcare professionals often experience moral distress and emotional exhaustion due to the tension between upholding professional values and the realities of clinical practice.
- A more comprehensive approach is needed to address the cumulative effects of workplace stressors rather than only focus on individual-level strategies and acute stressors.
- Developing effective psychological wellbeing interventions for diverse healthcare workers is complex.

Professor Jill Maben OBE, Professor of Health Services Research and Nursing at the University of Surrey, said:

“By addressing these systemic issues, the NHS will not only improve the psychological health of its workforce, but will also enhance the quality of patient care and reduce costs associated with turnover and absenteeism”.

A series of recommendations emerged, aiming to improve staff wellbeing and create a healthier workplace culture. First and foremost, prioritising staff wellbeing is crucial. This involves addressing essential needs such as providing access to food and hydration, break rooms, staff parking (including disabled parking), and financial security.

A holistic and collaborative approach to staff wellbeing is also recommended. By focusing on both prevention and intervention, organisations can adopt a systems-level strategy to promote and protect wellbeing effectively.

Other key recommendations include:

- Normalising and proactively managing psychological ill-health: Recognising that psychological stress and burnout are common challenges in healthcare is essential.
- Giving equal consideration to psychological safety alongside physical safety within the healthcare workplace.
- Developing compassionate leaders for the future: Investing in leadership development fosters a compassionate and supportive work environment.
- Fostering a learning culture and encouraging open communication: Creating a psychologically safe environment where staff feel empowered to speak without fear of retribution is vital.

Professor Cath Taylor, Professor of Healthcare Workforce Organisation and Wellbeing, said:

“We have produced a comprehensive guide to assist NHS leaders and staff in implementing our recommendations. This resource provides practical advice on how to address poor psychological wellbeing in nurses, midwives and paramedics to create a more supportive healthcare system, allowing staff to thrive and deliver excellent care for patients”.

For more information, and to view the guide, visit: <https://workforceresearchsurrey.health/projects-resources/cup2/>

This project was supported by the NIHR HS&DR programme with grant number 129528. The views and opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the HS&DR programme, the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.

## Surrey History Centre throws light on Epsom's hospitals

17 December 2024



Epsom Surrey had more mental hospitals than most English counties and, at Surrey History Centre, we are justly proud of the quantity and quality of surviving records we hold. These range from the early private asylums of the late eighteenth century through to the county asylums of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Many of these records were rescued by our archivists when the institutions were closed down in the 1990s, and they include the records of some of the ‘Epsom Cluster’ of hospitals. In 1896 the newly created London County Council, faced with the need to provide for huge numbers of the mentally ill, purchased the Horton Manor estate at Epsom and built five large hospitals. The Manor opened in 1899; Horton in 1902; Ewell Epileptic Colony, later St Ebba’s, in 1904; Long Grove in 1907; and West Park in 1924.

Among the extensive archive of The Manor hospital at Surrey History Centre is a wonderful collection of glass plate negatives of individual male and female



patients dating back to 1899. The patients were photographed on admission to the hospital and many who recovered after treatment were often photographed again on discharge, showing a marked improvement in their demeanour.

These glass plates had been languishing in our strong rooms so, earlier this year, we started creating digital positive copies of some of the plates that are over one hundred years old. Once digitised, the images were identified by matching them to the photographic prints in the Manor Hospital patient case books. Sadly a few of the case books had not survived, so a number of images remained unidentified, but more of this later. Thanks to our volunteer, Brenda, we have now successfully digitised over 500 images which can be viewed by researchers in our searchroom. The names of the patients whose photographs have been identified are also available on our online catalogue.

This digitisation project was actually prompted by the work of the Epsom based **Friends of Horton Cemetery**. Their Out of Sight, Out of Mind project explores and commemorates the lives of some of the 9,000 Epsom Cluster patients buried in unmarked graves in the disused cemetery. More information about this fascinating project can be found on the Horton Cemetery website.

This has truly been a collaborative undertaking. Also working in partnership with Surrey History Centre and the Friends of Horton Cemetery is multimedia artist and medic, Dr Eric Fong. His work spans film, photography, sculpture, and installation, often exploring themes of the body, identity, and vulnerability. His moving and haunting Cyanotype Apparitions exhibition, using some of the Manor Hospital patient glass slides, won the London Independent Film Awards' Best Experimental Short October 2024 award.

And here's a fitting postscript: last month saw the recovery of one of the long-lost Manor Hospital patient case books, filling an important gap in the hospital's record collection at Surrey History Centre. Discovered in an attic, this remarkable volume, spanning May 1900 to July 1901, records the medical histories of 250 women, complete with their personal details and poignant photographic portraits. And importantly, it has allowed us to identify some more of the unnamed glass plate images.

For more news from Surrey History Centre - read more [here](#).

Image: glass plate negative of Caroline Appleton and William Smith

Surrey History Centre

Related reports:

[Attic find fills gap in Epsom local asylum history](#)

[Portraits of pauper patients in Epsom's Horton Cemetery, inspires artist](#)

[Petition to reclaim Horton Cemetery from property speculator](#)

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## Epsom Teen Selected as Duke of Edinburgh's Award Youth Ambassador

17 December 2024



A young woman from Epsom is amplifying young people's voices after being chosen as a UK Youth Ambassador for The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE).

Kalina Hristova, 17, joins a select group of 35 DofE Award holders aged 16-24 from across the UK. These Youth Ambassadors will advocate for young people by sharing their insights on key issues, speaking at events, meeting decision-makers in Parliament, and contributing to the DofE charity's direction.

Originally from Bulgaria, Kalina has lived in the UK for ten years and credits the DofE with helping her socially. She began her DofE journey at the Silver level when she joined a new school, finding it a great way to meet people outside her classes.

### Kalina said:

*"Starting a new school in Year 10 is quite daunting, so I joined DofE to make new friends and learn new skills. I'm glad I did, as I've met some of my best friends through DofE, and I've been able to dedicate my time to something I want to achieve."*

For her Volunteering section, Kalina coached netball, leading sessions for younger students, running drills, and planning fun games. This not only improved the students' skills but also enhanced Kalina's communication abilities.

For her Physical section, she focused on fitness, tracking her progress through her Apple Watch. An avid sportswoman, she joined a gym to start weightlifting. *"Sometimes I found it a bit intimidating, as it can be a male-dominated environment, but the more I progressed, the easier it became,"* Kalina added.

She also participated in the London Vitality 10K race, raising awareness and funds for the DofE. *"I would never have run a distance like this if not for the DofE. I was not a runner before, but with all the work I put in for my Physical section, I knew I could do it,"* she said.

As part of her Gold Volunteering, Kalina became her school's DofE ambassador, supporting Bronze and Silver participants, organising expeditions, and teaching skills like map reading and food planning.

For her Residential section, Kalina attended a three-week summer programme in Pennsylvania called Leadership in the Business World, which inspired her to consider studying Economics or Finance at university. *"DofE has been so much fun, and it's way more than just an Expedition. I applied to be a Youth Ambassador to apply the skills I've learned through DofE to the real world,"* she explained.

### Empowering Young Leaders

Funded by The Gosling Foundation, the Youth Ambassador programme places young people at the heart of shaping the DofE's work. Ambassadors have met Ministers, spoken at high-profile events, represented the DofE at international forums, and influenced key decisions across the charity.

**Ashley Williams, UK Youth Engagement Manager at The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, said:** *"Kalina is one of many young people who have achieved incredible things through their DofE. As a charity, we're determined to put young people at the heart of everything we do and give them opportunities to make a positive impact on the issues they care about."*

*"It's not an easy time to be a young person, with the after-effects of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. Opportunities like the DofE allow young people to have fun, grow in resilience and self-belief, and develop vital skills they can't always get in the classroom."*

Young people aged 14-24 who participate in the DofE choose activities in four sections: Physical, Skills, Volunteering, and Expedition. Along the way, they gain confidence, discover new talents, and work toward a highly respected award.



## Ewell village set to improve

17 December 2024



Earlier this month Epsom and Ewell Borough councillors met to agree their contribution of £1.25m Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding toward the Ewell Village improvement project. This funding will match the £1.35m that Surrey County Council have committed to the project.

This is an important milestone for the Ewell Village project and will ensure the improvements go ahead as planned in 2026. The improvements, which include the introduction of new pedestrian crossings, greenery, improvements to footways and the public realm and a 20mph speed limit in the village, aim to improve safety along the High Street and make Ewell a great place to live, work and visit.

The plans were finalised earlier this year, following several public exhibitions and an online engagement, in which over 1400 responses were received from local people. The results of the engagement helped decide the way forward and plans were approved by Surrey County Council's Infrastructure Board and Capital Programme Panel in August.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, Surrey County Council said, "It's great news that Epsom and Ewell Borough Council have agreed their funding contribution to this important project. Now that all necessary funding is in place, we are in a good position to deliver this work as planned in 2026. Delivering these improvements to Ewell Village will bring about much needed safety enhancements to the High Street, whilst still allowing vehicle access. We know this was important for many local people and believe the plans deliver necessary change, whilst reflecting what the community want in their village."

Councillor Clive Woodbridge, Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, said: "I'm very pleased that we can support this substantial infrastructure project which will hugely benefit residents, businesses, and visitors to Ewell Village.

This project shows partnership working at its best. I would like to thank Surrey County Council for working so diligently with our residents and businesses to ensure that the planned improvements are tailored to their needs, and that Ewell Village maintains its unique, and historical, characteristics for many years to come, whilst improving accessibility and safety throughout the village."