

X-Ray vision wins Surrey Uni “spin-off” a prize

28 November 2024



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Professor Silva said:

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

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

Image: the Silveray team with the IoP award.

Epsom and Ewell Talking Newspaper talks about 50 years

28 November 2024



“I feel we are here today to pay homage to those good people who 50 years ago, established this splendid Charity and all those who have contributed ever since. On behalf of all the visually impaired Listeners over the past fifty years, I send a huge thank you to the Founders of Epsom & Ewell Talking Newspaper – EETN – and the multitude of Volunteers who have kept the free service operational for over half a century.” With these words, Judy Sarssam the present Chairwoman of EETN, welcomed the Worshipful Mayor of Epsom and Ewell (Charity’s President) Councillor Steve Bridger along with forty Volunteers and guests, to celebrate its Golden Anniversary on Thursday 21st November.

‘Our Volunteers are the shining stars,’ Judy continued, ‘because without them there would not be an Epsom & Ewell Talking Newspaper, whose function today is as valid as it was fifty years ago.’ Judy, herself visually impaired, went on to explain the importance of keeping visually impaired people feeling part of their community, as those with sight loss can so easily become isolated. Although technology has advanced in leaps and bounds since the early recordings, Judy was keen to emphasize that in a world now dominated by technology, isolation becomes more of an issue for those who are not technically adept.

During the celebration, messages of congratulations were read out, including from Mike Wood, President of The Talking News Federation, who acknowledged that 50 years of providing this regular, interesting and friendly service, recording more than 2390 editions, showed commitment by Volunteers and Listeners alike. Lionel Blackman, Director of Epsom & Ewell Times, said he was proud to be associated with EETN and was inspired by the dedication of its Volunteers. Councillor Clive Woodbridge, Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee for Epsom & Ewell said when he visited EETN as Mayor and presented long service awards to 15 Volunteers, he was impressed by the passion and hard work that goes into creating each edition.

Many of the Volunteers have been with the EETN for more than 10 years. Penny Dearing and Gwyneth Smith have been associated with EETN almost from its inception. Gwyneth joined as a Reader and her distinctive voice was well loved and remains melodic though Gwyneth is past her 90th birthday. She moved to Wales when COVID struck to join her family. A talented poet, she had planned to come to the celebration and read her 50th Anniversary poem. Sadly she was snow-bound in Wales, but emailed her wonderful poem which was read by MC of the day, James Dubois.

Following the messages from the many well-wishers, Penny Dearing, a former News Editor, Trustee/Committee member and Reader, told us her pleasure at working with those early pioneers. The EETN travelled from being recorded in Volunteers’ homes to a room in the Age Concern offices to a corridor at Swail House and eventually into a designated Studio at Swail House, which was the first site in the UK, designed specifically for visually impaired residents. During Covid full circle was reached as once more the EETN was temporarily recorded and produced in Volunteers’ homes until it was possible to return to the Studio once more.

A montage of Volunteers past and present caught everyone's eye, as they enjoyed the delicious anniversary cake which the Mayor Councillor Steve Bridger ceremonially cut after making a generous speech in praise of the free EETN service. The celebration provided a wonderful opportunity for Volunteers to share their pleasure in continuing to offer access to local news, entertainment and information for the visually impaired people of Epsom and Ewell. Judy closed the event praising once more the special, hard-working team of 2024.

EETN Golden Jubilee - Poem by Gwyneth Smith

For over thirty years it was my privilege and pleasure
To be one of the READERS and the memories I treasure.
When Covid lockdown was announced my son rushed down to Surrey
To take me back with him to Wales to save us all from worry.

Continuing injections for my macular condition
I've now become a LISTENER and welcome each edition.
When it arrives in yellow pouch, protected from the weather,
I'm grateful to the Post Office, and how much more to Heather.

Epsom born I did not leave until my ninetieth year
So Epsom news and local views I'm very pleased to hear.
The MAGAZINE has always been the choice of those who EDIT
The wide variety produced is greatly to their credit.

It gives the READERS much more scope for their interpretation
Verse old and new and humour too can be a revelation.
So well done all who have a share in making each RECORDING
I hope you find the jobs you do are suitably rewarding.

With SECRETARY, TREASURER and Judy in the CHAIR,
We're led by a COMMITTEE and we thank them for their care.
So happy Golden Birthday TALKING NEWSPAPER we say.
Let's give three cheers for fifty years and longer may you stay!

Gwyneth Smith, 2024

Photography by Steven McCormick.

Surrey strategist secures stardom in Space Science

28 November 2024



Renowned astrophysicist Professor Adam Amara, Director of Space Strategy and Head of the School of Mathematics and Physics at the University of Surrey, has been appointed as the UK Space Agency's (UKSA) new Chief Scientist.

While remaining at Surrey, Professor Amara will split his time between his space strategy role at the University and his new role at the UKSA, in which he'll offer independent expert advice and strategic guidance on all scientific areas within the Agency's remit.

Professor Amara said of his appointment:

"I am honoured to be appointed as the UK Space Agency's Chief Scientist during such an ambitious and exciting time for the UK's space industry and its contributions to the UK economy. My role is to work with the space community across academia, government, and industry to ensure the UK seizes the opportunities ahead."

Professor Amara will now oversee a broad range of disciplines, including astronomy, astrophysics, planetary science, solar physics, space weather, lunar and Mars exploration, International Space Station experiments, and Earth and climate science. In addition to building relationships across the UK space community, Professor Amara will also be working closely with global agencies, including the European Space Agency (ESA) and NASA, to promote the UK's space priorities.

Professor Tim Dunne, Provost and Senior Vice-President at the University of Surrey, said:

"I want to congratulate Adam on this exciting opportunity to lead the UK Space Agency's scientific work. His appointment highlights the University of Surrey's lasting strength and rich heritage in space sciences, centred on the discoveries, innovation and industrial impact of the Surrey Space Centre."

The Surrey Space Centre, founded in 1979 by Professor Sir Martin Sweeting, pioneered small satellite technology, which is credited with changing the economics of space and laid the foundations for much of today's space industry. The Surrey Space Centre led to the creation of the hugely successful spin-out company Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd (SSTL) in 1985.

As we look to the future, Surrey has ambitious plans for Professor Amara and his outstanding team of researchers and educators, to once again propel the institution to the frontier of space science.

Worcester Park's path to a healthier and safer life

28 November 2024



Hapkido: Master Sung's Dojang in Worcester Park and New Malden - More Than Martial Arts, It's a Path to a Healthier, Safer Life.

The quest for personal safety has become more pressing in an era of rising crime rates and uncertainty, especially around South London, including Epsom. That's what led me, in my forties, to take up Hapkido at Master Sung's dojang in Worcester Park—a decision that has since transformed my life. Though initially driven by self-defence concerns, I quickly discovered that Hapkido is much more than a means to protect oneself. With the recent opening of Master Sung's new dojang in New Malden, even more people can benefit from this remarkable martial art.

Starting Hapkido at my age wasn't without its challenges. Learning new physical skills in your forties has its hurdles, and progress can feel painstakingly slow. But in Master Sung's dojang, the sense of community runs deep. Here, we celebrate every achievement—whether it's a beginner mastering their first stance or a long-time student advancing in rank. Each step forward is shared with classmates who cheer each other on, making the journey one of friendship and mutual encouragement rather than solitary struggle.

Hapkido combines martial arts' physicality with a philosophy emphasising calmness, discipline, and respect. In my classes with Master Sung, we focus as much on learning techniques for self-defence as we do on building resilience and mental strength. This is invaluable for adults and children, women, and anyone wanting to gain confidence and self-control.

Originating in Korea, Hapkido blends various elements: striking, joint locks, throws, and weapons training. But its focus on defensive tactics makes it particularly effective—and safe. Practitioners learn to redirect an opponent's energy rather than relying on sheer strength. This makes it ideal for everyone, regardless of size, age, or physical condition.

Master Sung's classes emphasise practical, real-world applications, making Hapkido especially appealing to women and parents of young children. While the latest crime rates have driven many adults like me to seek some form of self-defence, parents are increasingly looking for ways to teach their children the skills and confidence needed to navigate life safely.

Hapkido is not just about learning to defend yourself; it's a complete lifestyle that brings countless physical and mental benefits. Since joining Master Sung's class, I've felt more agile, fit, and mentally balanced. The physical routines in Hapkido work the entire body, improving cardiovascular health, flexibility, and strength. These are intense sessions, but each movement also demands focus and discipline—qualities that seep into everyday life.

And beyond the physical, Hapkido has been a boon to my mental well-being. Master Sung incorporates meditation and breathing exercises that help reduce stress, making each class feel like a journey toward inner peace.

One of the most unexpected rewards of my Hapkido journey has been becoming part of a community united by shared goals and mutual respect. Master Sung has built an inclusive environment where people of all ages and skill levels come together. His teaching style is patient and personalised, ensuring that everyone feels comfortable while still being pushed to their limits. With the new location in New Malden, this sense of community is only growing, reaching more people and making Hapkido accessible to even more Londoners.

Joining Hapkido has been a profound experience that has armed me with skills for self-protection and taught me the deeper values of discipline and balance. This art may be rooted in ancient Korean tradition, but its relevance and benefits are as essential today as ever.

If you're considering taking up martial arts, or even if you're just looking for a positive way to challenge yourself, Master Sung's dojang in Worcester Park or New Malden is the perfect place to start. After all, the journey of a thousand miles—or perhaps just the journey toward personal growth—can begin with a single step onto the mat.

Find out more about Hapkido: <https://self-defence-classes.online/master-sung/>

Live Classes for new students: SKMA Hapkido & Kummooyeh New Malden, 16 Malden Rd, New Malden KT3 6DD, Tel: 07771 886319

Planning buses not missing them says Epsom's MP

28 November 2024



Dear Editor,

Thank you to Stuart Gosling for his contribution and for highlighting the important issue of transport links in relation to the new hospital development.

Has Epsom's new MP missed the bus to a new hospital?

I completely agree that good transport connectivity is essential for the success of this project, and I want to reassure residents that we have already considered this as part of the planning process.

New transport links will be introduced once the hospital is built, and discussions around the best way to serve the site with appropriate public transport will take place as we progress along the development timeline. It's important to note that transport infrastructure often needs to be developed alongside the new services and demands that arise from it.

I'll be at the forefront of ensuring that the new hospital is well-served by transport, and I'm committed to ensuring that Epsom and Ewell's needs are fully met. The process may take time, but I'm confident the results will be worth the wait.

Yours faithfully,

Helen Maguire MP

Ashtead school opens hearts to child refugees

28 November 2024



Christmas cheer filled the halls of City of London Freeman’s School (CLFS) as over 90 guests, pupils, staff, and friends from the Refugee Buddy Club gathered for a heartwarming Seasonal Celebration dinner. The event, held in partnership with the Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network, celebrated friendship and marked the spirit of the festive season.

This joyful evening also highlighted the success of the Refugee Buddy Club, which has been running at CLFS for two years. The club provides an invaluable space for refugee children and their families, offering not only practical support but also vital friendship and connection. Students at CLFS are paired with refugee children as “buddies,” helping them with homework, fostering confidence, and most importantly, creating genuine bonds.

“Many refugee children face challenges making friends at school and often experience isolation and bullying,” said Jo Sherring of Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network. “The Buddy Club is a safe and welcoming environment where these young people can form meaningful relationships with peers who are eager to support them. The impact is profound.”

The Refugee Buddy Club also runs English classes for parents, making it a family-centered initiative. Transportation is provided to ensure all families can attend, reflecting the school’s deep commitment to inclusivity. The programme supports families from Afghanistan, Ukraine, Syria, and other conflict-affected countries.

The Seasonal Celebration dinner was a true testament to the power of community, showcasing how collective efforts can transform lives. The Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network expressed their gratitude to CLFS for their unwavering dedication to fostering hope and friendship among refugee families.

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

28 November 2024



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

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

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

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

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

Nescot is a hub of innovation, with the Sussex and Surrey Institute of Technology hosting robotics, AI, and cyber security facilities. The college is part of the AI in Education initiative, with Principal and CEO Julie Kapsalis sitting on the Strategic Board. AI in Education aims to support and advise schools and colleges so they can maximise the benefits of AI and minimise the risks.

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

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

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

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

Surrey carers getting digital support

28 November 2024



Surrey County Council is rolling out additional support for tens of thousands of unpaid carers living in the county as part of a new digital service.

At least 90,000 people in Surrey provide unpaid care for friends, family members or neighbours. Through the new initiative, these unpaid carers will gain access to a wide range of free on-demand services, aimed at supporting individuals with the day-to-day realities of caring.

The initiative is being delivered by Mobilise – a carer-led digital community – in partnership with Surrey County Council. It will provide a complementary layer of added support that can be accessed remotely via an online hub by anyone caring for a loved one in the county. New digital support services which carers in Surrey are set to gain access to include:

- **An online peer community** of thousands of fellow carers from across the UK – with the chance to share advice and experiences through a community forum and during regular events, such as the ‘virtual cuppa’
- **Easy-to-use, self-service tools** outlining the different forms of support which carers may be entitled to – including Carer’s Allowance – and guidance on how to navigate eligibility criteria and access various benefits, for example
- **Tailor-made support guides** on everything from how to balance caring with full-time work, to managing personal health and wellbeing while looking after someone else
- **Information on carers’ rights** and relevant social care law, in line with the latest government guidance

An AI-powered ‘assistant’ is also available to help carers quickly and easily find the specific information, resources or support that they need.

Martin, a carer from Surrey who looks after their partner, said: *“I’m delighted to have come across Mobilise. It’s great to know that there is a wide community of carers who can, without judgement, share their honest views and experiences on such a wide range of topics. It’s reassuring to know that there are like-minded people out there and that we’re not alone.”*

Suzanne Bourne, Co-Founder and Head of Carer Support at Mobilise, commented: *“An increasing number of us are taking on caring responsibilities, with one million additional carers set to emerge in the UK over the next ten years. The reality of caring will look different for each of these people – including the 90,000 people who are looking after their loved ones in Surrey.*

“For some, it will start with needing to check in with family members more frequently, with caring responsibilities increasing over time. For others, it might be a case of having always needed to support relatives with their medication, self-care, and appointments, or even full-time care. But in each and every case, having the right support is vital.

“That’s why we’re proud to be partnering with Surrey County Council to deliver additional support for carers living in the county. Through our community of carers – the largest of its kind – carers in Surrey will gain access to a powerful peer support network, as well as round-the-clock advice, resources, and guidance from experts. We’re delighted to be able to work to connect carers in Surrey to this added support and to each other.”

Sinead Mooney, Surrey County Council’s Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, said: *“Carers play a crucial role in families and in our local communities by supporting people who would otherwise struggle to cope alone which is why it’s so important for us to make sure carers themselves are cared for.*

“We’re pleased to be partnering with Mobilise to reach more carers across Surrey and support them in new and different ways. I’d encourage anyone who looks after a family member or friend to visit the Mobilise online community and explore the additional support available.”

Vicky Stobbart, Director of Long Term Planning Delivery and Senior Responsible Officer for Carers at Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Board, added: *“This initiative with Mobilise is a wonderful way for carers across Surrey to gain additional, digital support with their day-to-day caring duties. We’re delighted that it’s being rolled out and look forward to seeing the benefits as our carers start to use it.”*

For more information about the support now available in Surrey, visit Surrey’s Mobilise community. To start accessing support, the Mobilise app can be downloaded via the Apple App Store or Google Play, with more information available on Mobilise’s website.

Surrey’s focus on independent lives is “good”.

28 November 2024



Surrey County Council’s adult social care services have been rated as ‘good’ by a health watchdog – despite some inconsistencies. In the local authority’s first ever overall rating, the Care Quality Commission found SCC ‘good’ at keeping people independent for longer in communities.

The new report, published November 20, comes from the CQC’s new responsibilities to assess how local authorities meet their duties under the Care Act. The watchdog assessed SCC in nine areas, including how the local authority works with people, safeguarding and leadership.

The CQC’s report found one of the county council’s strengths was that a “variety of measures were in place to prevent, reduce and delay people’s needs”. People could access information and advice where needed but improvements could be made to streamline this further.

CQC assessment teams reported 70 per cent of the service’s provision should be rated “good”. The report did highlight some areas that needed improvement, which the council said it would be working on.

Sinead Mooney, Surrey County Council’s Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, said: “The dedication of our staff shines through the report and I’d like to thank them publicly for their hard work making a positive difference to the lives of thousands of people in communities across Surrey.

“Our ultimate goal is to deliver the best possible services for Surrey residents and this ‘good’ outcome will help instil confidence in the services and support we are providing and that we are on the right path to making further improvements.”

Partners with SCC gave positive feedback about how the authority worked with them to support people’s independence, according to the report. Data for Surrey showed 86% of people who have received short term support didn’t need ongoing longer-term support which is positive compared to the England and regional average of 78%.

Inspectors praised Surrey for their “ambitious” plans to increase supported living by at least 500 spaces to help encourage people’s independence, choice and control. The council is also working to keep people in their homes for longer and avoid unnecessary hospital admissions, reducing pressure on A&E departments.

Good, but inconsistent

However, the CQC found there was room for improvement. Although a lot of the feedback seemed positive in the report, inspectors noted experiences of receiving care and support in Surrey varied.

The report said: “One person was assessed and felt listened to, achieving the outcome they wanted, which was to return to live at home. Other people had similar good experiences with staff focusing on what people wanted plus their future wishes, people described staff as being empathic and showing them respect.”

Safeguarding was judged to be effective, slightly above the national average, but has some shortcomings. Staff and partners raised concerns about some new safeguarding processes that were not yet fully embedded with knowledge and understanding of some staff.

Staffing challenges were also flagged as an issue, leading to some reviews not carried out in a timely way and leading to a backlog. Partners working with SCC told inspectors the cost of living crisis had affected people on low incomes, and Surrey was an expensive place to live, making it hard to recruit and retain staff and then impact on care services, the report said.

But the report noted SCC has long-term plans to address recruitment challenges which had been created with staff. The local authority stated they were making improvements to manage risks until staffing levels had improved, by making better use of existing resources.

James Bullion, CQC’s chief inspector of adult social care and integrated care, said the county council “should be proud of this assessment and the foundation they’ve created on which to build improvements and further innovation”.

He added: “The local authority was very aware that although Surrey is an affluent county, there are pockets of deprivation where residents have high levels of need and disadvantage. The authority knew of these very differing needs of its population and were doing some creative work to meet those needs and help people keep their independence.”

Commenting on the report’s feedback for improvement, Mrs Mooney said: “As we celebrate this achievement, we also recognise that there are areas where we need to learn and develop and we are actively working to address all feedback from the CQC through comprehensive improvement plans. Our new director of adult social services recently started with us, so we’re well-placed to build on this result to further raise the bar for our residents.”

Photo: Sinead Mooney, Surrey County Council’s Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care (*second from right*), pictured with people who draw and care and support alongside staff from the provider Dramatize, which supports adults with learning disabilities after they leave education, offering a wide range of activities including day provisions and employment and life skills programmes.

Surrey University Launches UN-Affiliated Centre to Tackle Climate Change

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Drastically improving the UK’s ability to address climate change is the grand challenge that the new United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)-affiliated CIFAL centre at the University of Surrey will tackle.

CIFAL Surrey will be officially launched on Monday, 25 November, with a ceremonial UN flag raising, a Signing Ceremony and a panel event. In attendance will be a senior delegation from UNITAR, including Alexander Mejia, Head of the CIFAL Global Network and Director of the Division for People and Social Inclusion at UNITAR, other UNITAR delegates, Zöe Franklin, M.P. for Guildford, alongside a range of the university’s collaborative partners in business and government.

Drawing on the University’s strong research heritage and active engagement in sustainability, the new CIFAL Centre (Centre International de Formation des Autorités et Leaders), known as ‘CIFAL Surrey’, will work with UNITAR (the UN’s training branch) and the CIFAL Global Network among other stakeholders to lead both training and capacity-building initiatives in sustainability. In doing so, CIFAL Surrey will make a unique and much-needed contribution to empowering climate leadership through enhanced climate literacy within and beyond Surrey.

As part of its activities, CIFAL Surrey will work in partnership with national and local government, industry, civil society, and beyond, developing sustainable economic practices, and helping to advance action towards the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.

Situated within the University’s Institute for Sustainability, CIFAL Surrey will draw strongly on multi-disciplinary expertise in delivering both training and capacity building on a wide range of sustainability challenges, to help facilitate knowledge exchange among leaders in government, the private sector, and civil society – locally, nationally and internationally, as well as UK-based international organisations.

Professor Amelia Hadfield, the University of Surrey’s Associate Vice President for External Engagement, and the new Director of CIFAL Surrey, said:

“Sustainability is far more than just a philosophy limited to net zero here at the University of Surrey. For us, and our community, sustainability reflects our deep, shared commitment to rebuilding a thriving planet for future generations. From the fundamentals of climate change to advanced policy implementation, CIFAL Surrey will provide hands-on training and resources to national and local government, businesses, and community groups, helping them deliver on the demands for a more sustainable future.

“Focused on knowledge sharing, skills building and decision-making, CIFAL Surrey will connect local expertise with global insight, fostering collaboration across government, the private sector, civil society, and the United Nations system to drive sustainable progress. As CIFAL Surrey Director, I’m delighted to be working with our own Institute for Sustainability, other CIFAL centres around the world, and UNITAR itself to deliver these critical goals.”

CIFAL Surrey is the second UN-affiliated centre on campus, following the 2023 launch of the Centre of Excellence for Ageing, which appointed its first cohort of Fellows in June 2024.

Nathalie Hinds, co-founder of the Institute for Sustainability at the University of Surrey, said:

“If the UK is to be a leader on sustainability, leaders need more than just an awareness of net zero – they need the skills to create real change. CIFAL Surrey’s training gives leaders hands-on experience with sustainable practices and governance, focusing on systems thinking and breaking down silos across sectors. Alumni of CIFAL Surrey will leave not only with world-renowned accreditation but they will also be part of a global network of alumni, gaining access to our Sustainability Innovation Hub for insights, research partnerships, and ongoing support.”

Mr Alex Mejia, Division Director at United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), said:

“We are honoured to inaugurate CIFAL Surrey, hosted by the University of Surrey, a renowned global institution at the forefront of innovation and learning. This new centre will mark an important step in our mission to advance sustainable development and capacity-building worldwide. It will serve as a vital hub for fostering collaboration, innovation, and knowledge exchange across the United Kingdom and beyond.”

Deputy Leader and Lead Councillor for Regeneration at Guildford Borough Council, Cllr Tom Hunt, said:

“We are proud to support the launch of CIFAL Surrey and be a key partner in the project. This initiative will play a big role in driving sustainable development. It will give us the chance to work together to share knowledge, improve skills and deliver practical solutions for our communities. One of our key priorities as a council is to create a more sustainable borough. Our partnership with CIFAL gives us a unique opportunity to work alongside local, national and international experts to ensure a bright, sustainable future for Guildford.”

Councillor Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth at Surrey County Council, said:

“It’s a pleasure to be able to welcome the team from the United Nations to launch this new international centre in the heart of Surrey. The CIFAL centre will play a key role in promoting sustainable development at home and abroad while also opening up opportunities for our communities. It also reinforces the region’s global reputation for innovation, research and knowledge exchange.”