

## Epsom's University of the Creative Arts new boss

10 November 2023



**The University for the Creative Arts (UCA) has begun a new chapter in its illustrious history, with the appointment of Professor Jane Roscoe as its incoming President & Vice-Chancellor.**

With a campus in **Epsom**, UCA is defined by creativity, world-leading research, and innovation. Professor Roscoe joins a specialist university where students build real solutions to human problems, staff are acclaimed for their top teaching quality, and the courses are highly respected among the creative industries.

Professor Roscoe, who has an extensive career in both higher education and the broadcasting industry, will take up the role in February 2024.

*"I am delighted to be joining an institution with such a long history of arts education and am looking forward to helping it build a new legacy within the creative industries both here in the UK and around the world," said Professor Roscoe. "I'm excited to get started and to be working with UCA's tremendous staff and talented students."*

Professor Roscoe comes to UCA from the University of Greenwich, where she has been Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Chair in Creative Industries since 2021. Before this she held leadership roles at the University of the West of England, Bristol, and the London Film School. Outside of academia, she has also shaped the schedules for television across Australia, as Head of Channels and Head of International Content at SBS (Special Broadcasting Service).

Together with her career history, Professor Roscoe is a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts, a member of BAFTA, the Royal Television Society, the Academy of Arts and Sciences and the International Design Organisation. She also has almost 60 published works, and multiple commissioned research projects, to her name.

This wealth of experience and expertise made her the perfect fit for UCA's next chapter, according to **Jeremy Sandelson, Chair of the Board of Governors:**

*"We were hugely impressed by Professor Roscoe's experience within higher education and the creative industries, and her track record will not only complement UCA's values and ambitions but enhance them further. We are excited to usher in a new era with Professor Roscoe. Her vision for the University will be fresh, inclusive, and ambitious."*

**UCA's interim President & Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nick Foskett, said:** *"The University is looking forward to working with Professor Roscoe to deliver its ambitious plans for the future."*

## Surrey Borough flushed with pride

10 November 2023



Toilets in Waverley have reclaimed their thrones as some of the country's best bogs after inspectors released their results from unannounced lavatory visits.

Two watering closets in Waverley Borough Council's parks have achieved Loo of the Year status.

Broadwater Park, in Farncombe and Frensham Great Pond and Common have been awarded platinum status – honours they held from 2017 and 2019 respectively. The Waverley washrooms were the only in Surrey to have secured nominations.

Councillor Steve Williams, Waverley Borough Council's portfolio holder for environment and sustainability, said: "Clean, well-managed toilets are very important for those visiting our sites and I would like to say a big thank you to our contractors and staff who do such a great job keeping them up to such a high standard."

According to Loo of the Year organisers, the awards encourage the highest possible standards in all 'away from home' washrooms and inspectors make unannounced visits to toilets across the UK and Ireland to judge them.

Acceptable toilets are graded silver, gold, platinum or diamond and are held up against a number of criteria, including décor, cleanliness, hand washing equipment and accessibility.

The awards have run since 1987 and are considered the 'washroom standard' with overall winners across the 61 categories announced on Thursday, January 18.

Related reports:

The Cost of Spending a Penny: a review of Epsom and Ewell's public toilet provision.

## AI training hub coming to Surrey

10 November 2023



Surrey is set to become home to a high-quality training hub in Artificial Intelligence (AI), a move which could have transformative impacts in the way vulnerable residents engage and access public services.

Government announced last week that the **University of Surrey and the StoryFutures unit at Royal Holloway, University of London (RHUL) will be the home of a new Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) in AI for Digital Media Inclusion.**

The funding will help establish a unique creative industry hub for high-quality training in responsible AI, inclusive design, and creative skills within the county.

In addition to creating 80 PhD posts, the centre will look at using AI to transform digital media into intelligent content that adapts to individual preferences, such as age, language, and sensory and physical abilities.

The ambition is to place Surrey – and the UK as a whole – as a world leader in media inclusion.

Surrey County Council is proud to back the bid and keen to work with the new centre to establish how public services could be made more accessible to its 1.2 million residents.

**In a letter of support, Cllr Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, said:** *“We are excited by the Centre for Doctoral Training’s (CDT) proposed approach to responding to the national need for a new community of experts who individually and collectively will deliver resilience for our digitalised Critical National Infrastructure.*

*“We recognise and support the CDT’s aim to develop the underpinning research, training, community-building, and knowledge exchange, contributing 80 highly skilled and connected resilience experts to the workforce.*

*“The funding bid and subsequent CDT and associated research and expertise will have a significant positive impact on our organisation’s ability to deliver high-quality and sustainable services for all.”*

Cllr Oliver added the local authority was interested in exploring how new technology could improve the way its most vulnerable residents accessed its services.

There was also potential to look at increasing engagement with businesses, fire prevention, community safety services, and greener futures and net zero.

The Surrey hub will be one of 12 Centres for Doctoral Training in AI across the country that will benefit from £117 million of funding through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

It was **announced at the global AI Safety Summit held at Bletchley Park last week.**

Cllr Oliver added that Surrey County Council has an established track record of working successfully with the county’s universities to drive innovation and economic growth.

Last week the local authority’s cabinet agreed to investment £3 million to support the establishment of a new **CoSTAR (Convergent Screen Technologies and performance in Realtime) satellite studio and incubator space** on the RHUL campus.

The new centre for the creative industries – which will have direct links to the national lab based a short distance away at Pinewood Studios – will create 300 jobs, support 200 businesses and contribute £30 million to the Surrey economy.

The Council was also partner in a **successful bid by Surrey’s Guildford Games Cluster and Warwickshire’s Silicon Spa for £1.5 million from Research England.**

The funding will support two of the UK’s biggest gaming clusters to work with higher education to drive innovation, invest in infrastructure and support growth in the wider regional economy through the Games and Innovation Nexus (GAIN) project.

**Cllr Matt Furniss, Surrey County Council’s Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said:** *“The games industry is one of Surrey’s real success stories, showcasing our county and its talented workforce on a global stage.*

*“This funding has the potential to take this growing, innovative sector to new heights, creating high-quality jobs and generating inward investment into our communities – both of which would be good news for our residents.”*

## Famous 16th Century Surrey pub saved, for now?

10 November 2023



A 16th century pub in the heart of the **Surrey Hills** has been saved from developers after plans to convert one of the last remaining Abinger watering holes into houses, holiday-let pods, and a new bar area were thrown out.

**Mole Valley Borough Council’s** planning committee met on Wednesday, November 1 to hear proposals from developers, **JPW Osprey,** to turn the Volunteer pub in Sutton Abinger, near Dorking into self-catered holiday lets.

The plans were voted down eight to six as councillors sided with resident groups, formed to save the pub, as well as **Abinger Parish Council** which had lodged formal objections.

Addressing the meeting was **Paul Clever** who was part of a community group that had raised £600,000 in a failed bid to purchase the pub and save it. He said: “The aim of this application is to close the Volunteer, replace it with an unviable alternative which gets through planning. The new entity will last as long as needed to prove that it is not viable and the developer will then sell the asset for multiples of what it cost.”

He added: “The Volunteer is being closed and the new layout and proposed service will ensure the new venture in the new area will fail. The planning application and the planning report refer to the pub being unviable and that is simply not true. The Volunteer Community Group has proof of this for the year preceding the sale, during the worst trading conditions ever for publicans.

“The Volunteer is viable and very precious to its community, known far beyond the boundaries of Surrey. It should not be allowed to go the way of so many other pubs near and far, especially when there are so many people willing and able to make it work as a public house and community facility.”

The pub sits on the western side of Water Lane within the hamlet of Sutton Abinger, close to the boundary with Guildford. The land is designated Metropolitan Green Belt, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Area of Great Landscape Value.

The surroundings, the officer report said, “lend the pub an engaging verdant setting and areas of the garden afford views over rolling wooded countryside to the south taking in attractive historic properties, some of which are listed.”

The Volunteer had been owned and operated by the Dorset-based brewery, Hall and Woodhouse, until 2022 when it closed and sold to the applicant.

In November 2022 the pub was listed as an Asset of Community Value having been nominated by the Abinger Community Pub Group as a building that furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community.

Speaking on behalf of the the application was **Simon Best** who told the meeting it was the best way of bringing the pub back in use. He said: “Change is not always a bad thing and it is clear from previous failures that diversification is needed to ensure the Volunteer can run as a viable entity. Holiday lets will support and enable the pub to continue.”

Councillor **Margaret Cooksey,** who moved that the plans be rejected said: “If they kept the public house building as is and used what is going to be the extension



as accommodation that would have made much more sense. They have got it the wrong way round. It would have been better a different way round and hope they take note of that and come back with a better proposal next time round.”

She added: “They’ve got it horribly wrong”.

Image: The Volunteer Pub ( Mark Davison)

## Bourne Hall Ewell celebrates LGBTQ+

10 November 2023



Mental health is still quite a taboo subject and breaking down those barriers to talking openly remains quite a challenge but one group in Surrey is hoping to get those conversations going this weekend. **End Stigma Surrey** is a campaign to raise awareness and reduce stigma around mental health. As well as providing support, training, and raising awareness, End Stigma Surrey are launching an event called **Love Without Labels** to celebrate and support LGBTQ+ people in the community. It’s a free event of music and presentation hosted by drag queen **Tiana Biscuit** and a headline performance by **Surrey Rainbow Choir**, Surrey’s only dedicated LGBTQ+ choir, all taking place this Saturday 4th November afternoon at **Bourne Hall in Ewell**.

More details on Epsom and Ewell Times event page [HERE](#)

Organiser **Joe Stroud** said “isolation can be a problem for a lot of people who may be intimidated to approach groups and organisations trying to look for support. We’re hoping this event will give people confidence and boost our collective sense of community spirit”.

The aim is to create an environment to spotlight LGBTQ+ groups in the community and celebrate this with an uplifting day of pop tunes from David Bowie, Madonna, Billie Eilish and more. A strong focus on the day will be the wellbeing and the mental health of our community with the relaunch of Outline, an LGBTQ+ listening service, but it’s also a great opportunity to meet people and socialise with several Surrey community groups who are taking part.

**Oscar Hoyle** from Blossom LGBT says, “we are predominantly focused on empowering LGBTQ+ people to live meaningful empowered lives where they don’t face discrimination or the fear of discrimination”.

End Stigma Surrey is commissioned by Surrey County Council Public Health and delivered by three well established not for profit organisations in Surrey, Catalyst, Mary Frances Trust (both of whom run Community Connections in Surrey) and Acting Out Productions which provides drama-based training and awareness raising.

Love Without Labels, a day of celebration and community in support of LGBTQ+ Mental Health! This project is part-funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and supported by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. Free tickets can be applied for [here](#)



<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/lgbtq-celebration-and-wellbeing-day-tickets-738080788507?aff=oddttdtcreator>

## Surrey College fraud probe leads to housing plan

10 November 2023



Warnings a failed subcontracted apprenticeship scheme was a “major risk” were ignored leaving a Surrey college with a £25million financial time bomb that it now hopes to solve by selling land for 320 homes.

**Brooklands College** in Heath Road, Weybridge, borrowed a large sum from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) with the money given to SLC Security to run apprenticeship programs at the school between 2011 and 2019.

When SLC Security collapsed, a formal review was launched by the Department for Education’s further education commissioner – and soon after Scotland Yard began its own three-year fraud investigation which closed in May with no arrests – leaving the college holding the can.

The school’s solution has been to look to sell land to developers Cala Homes for a £45 million project to cover the money it owes to the ESFA and a modernisation of its campus. The planning application is due to be decided by Elmbridge Borough Council in November, potentially drawing the saga to a close.

In the months leading up to SLC’s collapse concerns of the school’s financial health had already caught the attention of the Department for Education and the college’s “capacity and capability” to get out of the mess, questioned.

The commissioners said the subcontract was a “major risk” and recommended the college “undertake further work to understand the risk associated with this contractor and to immediately review subcontracted provision”.

The school’s governors, on the other hand, told commissioners they had been given “numerous assurances” by the principal and chief executive over the college’s financial stress testing and auditing of its subcontractors which “showed no issues regarding eligibility, existence of learners or their employment status”.

At no point had any thought had been given by governors to develop a Plan B should the investigation find the college financially liable for any failings, the report read.

The college’s senior leadership team and governors at the time believed “they had undertaken all necessary and appropriate checks and due diligence on all sub-contracted SCL Security provision and from the work they have done, believed that the risk of clawback was low” according to the commissioners’ report.

A spokesperson for the Department for Education said it does not comment on individual cases but that colleges are required to ensure any education subcontractors adhere to regulations.

They added: “In all cases where apprenticeship provision does not meet the funding regulations it is standard procedure to recover those funds.”

A liquidators’ statement for SCL Security published on January 4, 2023, revealed that colleges and the ESFA have claims worth £22.5 million against the company. However, it shows there is only about £6.5m available, far short of how much the college must return to the ESFA.

Brooklands College also plans to seek damages for breach of contract, although this will require “further work” to adjudicate.

A spokesperson for the Metropolitan Police said: “In June 2020, the Metropolitan Police received an allegation of fraud relating to a college based in Heath Road, Weybridge, Surrey. The allegation related to financial transactions between 2011 and 2019. An investigation was undertaken which included assessing all available evidence and speaking to staff at the college. No arrests were made in connection with the investigation. In May 2023 a decision was taken to close the investigation and the college has been informed of this outcome.”

A three-year repayment plan is now in place between the college and the ESFA. The college has also put in place a new leadership team and is working with Cala Homes on a joint planning application. The £45million scheme, the college says, will enable its Grade II listed mansion to be refurbished and restored, open 12 hectares of woodland to the public, provide a community-accessible sports centre, as well as the 320 homes – 128 of which will be classed as affordable housing.

The public consultation into the plans closed on October 23 with 235 people voicing their support for the project against 22 letters of objection.

A spokesperson for the college said: “A new leadership team and a revitalised Board of Trustees have been focussed on putting the college on a solid, long-term, financial footing and have developed a plan to repay the debt and safeguard the college’s future. Our plan will upgrade our teaching facilities to create a modern learning environment that will meet future educational needs, inspire the next generation of students, and secure a sustainable future for Brooklands College in our community.”

Image: Visualisation of completed Brooklands College campus site (Cala Homes/Elmbridge BC)

## New home needed for disability theatre group

10 November 2023



A performing arts charity that won the Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service has been made homeless after crumbly concrete was found in the hall it had called home for the past 17 years.

**Freewheelers** in **Leatherhead** is on the lookout for a new base – ideally one suitable for its disabled theatre and media company members.

On Tuesday, October 17, the group was forced out of its **Bridge Centre** base after the dangerous Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) which can collapse in an instant and without warning was discovered throughout the building’s roof.

For safety reasons, the building cannot be used nor accessed by any groups, according to **Surrey County Council**.

Posting to Facebook, the Freewheelers charity said: “We are homeless and sending out an SOS!

“Freewheelers are looking for a new home in or around Leatherhead. Do you know of an accessible space or spaces, suitable for our disabled theatre and media company members? We need spaces for dance, drama, film making and music on Mondays, Tuesdays and Friday mornings.”

“We are a diverse and creative company of people with disabilities based in Leatherhead, Surrey. We work alongside directors, producers, composers, artists and writers, to co-create and produce engaging, thought-provoking, funny, joyous and highly entertaining theatre, dance, film, and music.

For over thirty years we’ve been a force for change and artistic excellence in the world of Disability Arts.”

Freewheelers website.

Survey work is being carried out at the Clare Crescent site and Surrey County Council has confirmed that it is also actively helping the search for a new suitable location for the group while the centre is closed.

A spokesperson for the county council said: “We have been in constructive dialogue with the Freewheelers Theatre and Dance Company this week so that we fully understand their requirements. We are currently working at pace alongside Freewheelers to help find a suitable location for them to use while the Bridge Youth Centre is closed.”

They added: “The closure of the youth centre will allow further investigations to take place so that we can be assured the building is safe. We understand that the short notice closure of the Bridge Youth Centre may be challenging for groups that use the building and the residents they support. However, as residents would expect, safety is our top priority.”

Other groups who regularly use the Bridge Youth Centre have been offered temporary alternative accommodation, the council said adding that they were working to ensure anyone who may need to access equipment or items stored in the building will be able to do so safely.

They said “At present, as the discovery of RAAC in the building is very recent, we need to carry out further inquiries before we can provide any details on proposals to deal with the RAAC or timelines for re-opening.”

Image courtesy: Freewheelers

## Chitty Chitty Bang Bang in Epsom

10 November 2023



Following a successful run of Little Shop of Horrors last November, **Leatherhead Opera Society** have been busy preparing for their next musical production,



and it's a big one!

The title character in this show holds the record for the most expensive stage prop ever, and with "Chitty Hire" on board, this production certainly won't disappoint. This November, LOS proudly present a dazzling production of the beloved musical "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" at the Epsom Playhouse. This amateur production is set to captivate the hearts of audiences young and old with its enchanting story, memorable tunes, and the sheer excitement of live theatre.

The musical, with a book by Jeremy Sans and music by Richard and Robert Sherman, is based on the classic 1968 film, which follows the adventures of the eccentric inventor Caractacus Potts (played in this production by Joe Black) as he rebuilds a magical car and sets off on a whirlwind journey with his children Jeremy and Jemima. They are joined along the way by Truly Scrumptious (played by Charlotte Fisher) and together they must outwit the villainous Baron & Baroness, as well as the evil Child-catcher - prepare to experience heart warming moments, daring escapades, and the power of imagination throughout!

The Leatherhead Operatic Society's cast and crew have been hard at work for the last few months under the watchful eye of director John Harries-Rees, and are perfecting this production with their talent, dedication and passion, which is sure to shine through in every performance. With musical direction from Sam Fisher, and choreography by Louise E. Wilson, this production features a talented ensemble of local actors, singers and dancers, all coming together to create a show that promises to be a 'fantasmagorical' treat for the whole family.

"Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" boasts a memorable score, with songs including "Truly Scrumptious," "Hushabye Mountain," and of course, the hugely popular "Me Ol' Bamboo". Audiences can expect top-notch musical performances that will have them humming the tunes long after the show has finished!

This production is a must-see for all ages, and the Epsom Playhouse is the perfect venue to bring this timeless tale to life. Don't miss this chance to experience the magic of "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" with your friends and family. Tickets are on sale now and selling fast, so make sure to secure your seats early!

Performance Details:

Dates: November 21st - 25th, 2023

Venue: Epsom Playhouse, Ashley Avenue, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 5AL

Tickets can be purchased from [www.epsomplayhouse.co.uk](http://www.epsomplayhouse.co.uk) or by calling the Box Office on 01372 742555.

The Leatherhead Operatic Society started way back in 1904, and since then have staged hundreds of musicals old and new, including Beauty and the Beast, Hairspray, South Pacific, Oklahoma, My Fair Lady, Camelot, Guys and Dolls, Oliver, Fiddler on the Roof etc.

Image - Chitty Chitty Bang Bang in the Epsom Market Square

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## A bridge closed too far?

10 November 2023



In a saga that has left many residents scratching their heads, a seemingly routine footbridge closure in Epsom has morphed into an unexpected and prolonged headache. The bridge, over the railway line connecting **Castle Road** to **Epsom Common**, which was initially shut down at the end of February, has confounded locals with its persistent downtime, offering more questions than answers.

Initially, the bridge's closure seemed to be prompted by some mysterious "movement," which had caught the attention of passersby and authorities alike. However, the reasons behind this decision were left shrouded in mystery.



Castle Road bridge to Epsom Common - Google Earth

A brief flurry of activity was seen shortly after the initial closure, with residents hopeful that the issue would be resolved. But this optimism was short-lived. Fast forward to late July, and the mystery deepened as news surfaced that the bridge had been closed due to the discovery of an electricity cable. Many were left



puzzled as to why such a discovery had not been anticipated in the first place, leaving the community without their bridge connection.

Since August, the situation appeared to be inching towards a resolution, as services crossing the railway were reportedly lifted and temporarily attached to the bridge's parapet. Work was ongoing, although without any obvious sense of urgency. In late September, Surrey County Council dropped a bombshell, renewing the closure order for an additional six months, prolonging the ordeal for beleaguered locals.

**Chris Grayling** MP, brought some semblance of hope when he announced that Network Rail expected the bridge to finally reopen in November. However, skepticism lingered, and residents continued to endure the inconvenience of the ongoing closure.

The closure's ramifications have rippled through the community, prompting discussions between the **Epsom Common Association** and **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council**, although the influence of both parties on the situation remains in doubt. Notably, the footpath diversions on the bridge's north side have proven problematic, especially as they traverse areas that traditionally transform into quagmires during the winter months.

In an effort to mitigate these challenges, the community proposed an extension of rubber mats to cover all unpaved sections of the diversion route. Though the Council has been in contact with contractors to address this issue, it offers little comfort to those who rely on the bridge for daily crossings.

Adding a twist to this already puzzling tale, Cllr **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley Vale) has stated "Following excavations on site, the understanding of how dire the condition of the bridge has started to come to light. Due to the extent of the movement of the bridge and the size of the cracks visible only beneath the surface, it was deemed not safe to excavate further with machinery."

Engineers were brought to the site to investigate the matter further, and their conclusion was nothing short of alarming – the bridge, it appears, is in such a precarious state that it must be demolished and replaced. This revelation has shaken the community, as further ground investigations are planned to determine suitable foundations for the new bridge.

In light of this troubling development, it seems that the footbridge will remain inaccessible until further notice, casting a shadow of uncertainty over the community's daily routines.

Image courtesy Epsom Common Association

## Warm Wednesdays return to Epsom

10 November 2023



Last winter **Epsom Methodist Church**, in the heart of Epsom, opened up its premises every Wednesday as a place where people could come to keep warm, enjoy hot drinks and a lunchtime bowl of soup and have a friendly chat with others. In the afternoons Warm Wednesdays hosted an after-school club that included children's entertainment and an evening meal for all the family. Everything was free of charge and the initiative proved very popular, with an army of volunteers making and serving over 1,000 meals during the course of the winter.

From 1st November through to 13th March 2024 Warm Wednesdays is back and from 10am to 6pm will be making the same offer available as last year. On the first Wednesday (November 1st ) students from the nationally acclaimed Laine Theatre Arts will be coming to the after-school club to lead a Disney-themed entertainment session.

In an exciting new development Warm Wednesdays will this winter also include a weekly one-stop advice cafe. The church has partnered with a range of local organisations including Citizens Advice, The Mary Frances Trust, Epsom & Ewell Employment Hub, The Good Company, Surrey Community Action and Surrey County Council, to offer advice and support on:

- ☐ Mental health and wellbeing
- ☐ Benefits, welfare rights, housing and rents
- ☐ Energy saving in the home and dealing with energy suppliers
- ☐ Finding a job and accessing training
- ☐ Budgeting and managing your money
- ☐ Getting help in a crisis

**Robert Hill**, one of the organisers of Warm Wednesdays explained: "No appointments are required – just drop in, grab a free hot drink and have a chat to one of the friendly advisers. One week the advice café will operate in the morning from 11.30am until 1pm and the next week in the afternoon from 3.30pm to 5.15pm.

"We know life is tough for many people at the moment. Some people just want to be part of a friendly community where they can stay warm and make new friends. Others have particular worries and pressing concerns. And some will simply welcome somewhere where they and their children are entertained and catered for in a relaxed environment.

"We look forward to welcoming back many of those who joined us last year as well as making lots of new friends this winter."

Further details and a map of Epsom Methodist Church's location can be found at

[https://www.epsommethodistchurch.org.uk/Groups/409512/Warm\\_Wednesdays.aspx](https://www.epsommethodistchurch.org.uk/Groups/409512/Warm_Wednesdays.aspx)