

Volunteers Tackle Plastic Waste in Epsom Town Centre

7 July 2025



Plastic waste is a global menace that often ends up closer to home than we think. According to recent studies, the average person could be consuming up to five grams of microplastic every week — equivalent to the weight of a credit card — through food and drink. With plastic present in around 70% of consumer products, and evidence of its harmful impact on marine life and ecosystems, managing our plastic footprint is becoming increasingly urgent.

On Sunday 29 June, local volunteers from ASEZ WAO UK, a community group with a focus on sustainability, staged a “Rethink Plastic” event around Epsom’s Clock Tower. Around 40 volunteers, joined by members of the public, took part in a litter pick, public awareness presentations, and an upcycling workshop to highlight practical solutions to plastic waste.

Their efforts drew the support of the Mayor of Epsom and Ewell, Councillor **Robert Leach** (RA Nonsuch), who questioned the scale of modern packaging waste and praised the volunteers for helping to keep the town clean. Councillor **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley Vale) also lent his backing, commenting, “Wouldn’t it be great if people just used the bins?”

In total, volunteers collected around 35 bags of rubbish from the town centre. Under a pop-up gazebo, families were invited to transform discarded plastic bottles into creative items such as phone stands, piggy banks, toy cars and flowers — demonstrating how waste materials can be given a second life. A young mother taking part with her daughter described the workshop as “really good, really fun — a great idea.”

Upcycling — the process of turning unwanted materials into something of higher value — is gaining traction as one response to the growing problem of plastic pollution. However, recycling still faces challenges. For example, items such as greasy pizza boxes and disposable coffee cups often cannot be recycled through normal household collections, highlighting the importance of checking local guidelines to avoid contaminating recyclable waste streams.

Littering and plastic waste remain significant problems in the UK. The charity Keep Britain Tidy estimates that local councils spend nearly £700 million each year cleaning up litter, much of which includes plastic packaging. With plastic pollution known to damage habitats and harm wildlife, local action is seen as a vital part of tackling a wider environmental crisis.

ASEZ WAO UK says it plans to continue its local campaigns and is encouraging residents to get involved in future events. More information about their activities is available online or from volunteers active in the community.

For those inspired to act, it’s a timely reminder: our throwaway habits may have far-reaching consequences — and tackling them starts on our own doorstep.

Image: Cllrs McCormick and Leach speak out against plastic waste

Great Get Together Got its Act together.

7 July 2025



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Epsom and Ewell Youngsters Join Thousands for Day of Outdoor Adventure

7 July 2025



Over 2,000 Beaver Scouts and Rainbows take part in Surrey's Bazzaz event

Young adventurers from Cuddington, Epsom, Stoneleigh, and Ewell were among more than 2,000 Beaver Scouts, Rainbows, and volunteers who gathered at Merrist Wood in Guildford last weekend for *Bazzaz* – Surrey's flagship activity day for 6- to 8-year-olds.

Held every three years, *Bazzaz* offers a rare opportunity for children to immerse themselves in over 100 action-packed activities, ranging from caving and rock climbing to tomahawk throwing, circus skills, go-karts and inflatable obstacle courses. The event aims to build confidence, teamwork, and resilience through fun and challenge.

Despite soaring temperatures, participants were well-prepared with sun hats, sunscreen and plenty of water. A midday highlight was an unexpected treat as the **Red Arrows flew overhead**, returning from the King's Birthday celebrations in London.

Feedback from the young participants was as bright as the weather:

"I had lots of fun and I liked the train ride," said Sam, aged 7, from Epsom.

"Caving was the best because it was challenging and I made a new friend," added Matthew, 7, from Guildford.

Emily, aged 5, from Woking, said: "It was awesome! I enjoyed climbing because I haven't tried that before."

Milly, 6, from Haslemere, shared: "I liked making my dad a Father's Day card."

And Noah, 7, from Banstead, summed it up simply: "I liked doing all the activities with my friends."

The event was supported by an army of adult volunteers, without whom such experiences would not be possible. Richard, a Beaver Scout leader from Surrey, said: "It was a brilliant day for everyone. Some activities were pure fun, others focused on building #SkillsForLife — all of them gave the children something special to take away."

About Beavers and Rainbows

Beaver Scouts (ages 6–8) and **Rainbows** (ages 5–7) are part of the UK's long-established Scouting and Girlguiding organisations. Together, they offer thousands of children a safe and inclusive environment to learn through play, develop life skills, and enjoy the outdoors.

Nationally, the Scout Association offers over 200 different activities — from abseiling to coding — supported by more than 100,000 volunteers. But demand continues to outpace capacity, with nearly 30,000 young people currently on waiting lists across the UK.

To find out more about volunteering with Scouts in Surrey, visit surrey-scouts.org.uk

Epsom Joins National 'Great Get Together' Inspired by Jo Cox's Legacy of Unity

7 July 2025



A celebration of community spirit and shared humanity is coming to Epsom on Saturday as part of a nationwide initiative inspired by the late MP Jo Cox.

Hosted by local charity *Good Company (Surrey)*, the free event—branded *The Great Get Together*—will take place in Epsom and promises an afternoon of food, music, games and family entertainment. The day will begin with a formal welcome from the Mayor of Epsom and Ewell, Councillor Robert Leach, accompanied by the Mayoress.

The event is one of hundreds taking place across the UK this weekend to honour the message of Jo Cox, the Labour MP for Batley and Spen who was murdered in 2016. Cox is remembered for her powerful maiden speech in Parliament, in which she said: "*We are far more united and have far more in common than that which divides us.*" Her words have since become the cornerstone of an annual campaign celebrating unity and community cohesion.

In Epsom, the programme includes live performances from the Ukrainian Choir, a Disney singalong, and the Freedom Pulse Brass Band. Children will be kept busy with games, crafts, a treasure hunt, and even Crazy Golf. There will also be henna hand-painting and a showcase of artisan goods.

Jo Sherring, who leads the *Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network*, said the day is about bringing people together:

"Hosting a community event like The Great Get Together allows us to bring people from all walks of life together in a spirit of unity, friendship and shared humanity. It's an opportunity to celebrate our diversity, forge new connections, and show that Epsom is a place where everyone belongs."

Good Company (Surrey), the charity behind the event, also operates the Epsom & Ewell Food Bank, the local Refugee Network, and community pantries in Epsom and Banstead.

While the event is free to attend, organisers ask that attendees book tickets in advance via the QR code on promotional flyers or the charity's website, where a full afternoon timetable is also available.

The *Great Get Together* campaign is run by The Jo Cox Foundation and aims to encourage people across the UK to bridge divides and build stronger, more connected communities. The Foundation states: "*Change starts at the community level; we all have the power to make a difference.*"

Further information about the national initiative can be found at:

□ <https://www.jocoxfoundation.org/our-work/stronger-communities/great-get-together/>

Contact for local event:

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Epsom Red Cross Volunteer honoured by King

7 July 2025



A British Red Cross volunteer from Epsom who has spent 40 years with the organisation has been awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) in the King's Birthday Honours.

Jon Richards, 61, followed in his mum's footsteps as a volunteer with the British Red Cross and has worked across a number of different services during his four decades with the charity.

Jon enjoys helping individuals and families, having attended numerous callouts across the South East as well as helping at rest centres. This included an incident in 2014 when Jon volunteered for four days straight, supporting people caught up in severe flooding in London and Brighton, and in 2017, when he supported the response at Grenfell Tower.

Jon, who also met his wife through the British Red Cross, said: "It's a real honour to be given a British Empire Medal in the King's Birthday Honours for my time volunteering with the British Red Cross.

"We work hard to help people who face the most difficult challenges in life and I'm very proud to be recognised with this award."

Described as a modest and quiet man by his colleagues, Jon's knowledgeable, methodical, and calm approach builds trust with both service users and partner agencies. On one of his most recent callouts, Jon supported in a case of hoarding, where the member of the public would not allow firefighters or social services into their home, but felt comfortable allowing Jon in to discuss alternative accommodation options.

Jon added: "It's important to show kindness and compassion whenever you're carrying out volunteering duties and having met so many brilliant colleagues over the years at the British Red Cross, I know that everyone here will do everything they can to help those in need.

"Throughout the last 40 years, I've worked in so many different areas of the British Red Cross and had a chance to see how big an impact the work we do can have on communities."

British Red Cross Chief Executive Béatrice Butsana-Sita said: "Jon is an incredible ambassador for the British Red Cross and a fantastic example of the brilliant staff and volunteers that support our vital work.

"For 40 years he has been a huge figure in our Surrey services, giving up his time to support people when they need it most.

"I am delighted to see Jon rewarded for his work with a British Empire Medal in the King's Birthday Honours list and would like to congratulate him on this amazing achievement."

23 Epsom Dads take on Welsh mountains for charities

7 July 2025



A group of 23 dads in their 40s and 50s from the Epsom area will take on their 2025 hike - the 'Carneddau to Coast' challenge across the rugged mountains of North Wales.

The Epsom Trailblazers are back for their fifth charity hike. On 14th June, the group will tackle 11 peaks, 30km and 1,700m of ascent in one day, all in aid of two amazing charities.

Established in 2016, the Trailblazers' charity hikes have raised over £55,000 in recent years, and this year's target is a massive £10,000 for their chosen charities - one local (Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled People) and one national (The Brain Tumour Charity).

The bi-annual walking challenges plus many months of training routines have helped the Trailblazers become great friends as well as shaking off some excess kilos in the process.

According to four-times Trailblazer John Croome: "The Trailblazers have all been training really hard this year, hiking endless repeats of the Box Hill ascent every weekend in preparation for the Carneddau challenge and getting in shape any way we can.

"We think we are ready, and are really looking forward to the hike to raise much-needed funds for these great charities."

The Brain Tumour Charity is the largest dedicated funder of research into brain tumours globally, and has a special connection to the group, with a best friend of a Trailblazer currently undergoing treatment for a brain tumour. Supporting their work will help to save and improve the lives of everyone affected by a brain tumour.

The Trailblazers have also chosen to support the Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled People as their local charity this year - the Surrey-based charity supports disabled people of all ages to maximise their independence and achieve their potential. Again, the group has a personal link with the charity with one of the Trailblazers working hard at the charity every day.

Firzana Khan, Community Fundraiser for The Brain Tumour Charity, said: "We're incredibly grateful to the Epsom Trailblazers for choosing to support The Brain Tumour Charity on their epic Carneddau to Coast challenge.

“Their determination, camaraderie and generosity are truly inspiring, especially as they walk in support of a close friend affected by a brain tumour. Every step they take helps us move closer to our goal of doubling survival and halving the harm that brain tumours cause. We’re cheering them on every inch of the way!”

The Trailblazers 2025 challenge: <https://www.givewheel.com/fundraising/8095/trailblazers-2025-carneddau-to-coast/>

Epsom Charity Celebrates Project Milestone with a BBC Radio Takeover

7 July 2025



The Sunnybank Trust is celebrating a major milestone – five years of **Sunny Sessions**, its inclusive radio show dedicated to amplifying the voices of the learning disability community.

Founded during the lockdown by CEO **Dorothy Watson** and Futures Manager **Claire Dawson**, the show began with the goal of keeping the community connected during a difficult and isolating time. *Sunny Sessions* aimed to provide comfort, connection, and positivity through buzzing music, exercise segments, and relevant news updates.

Dorothy Watson, CEO of The Sunnybank Trust, said:

“We are proud to be celebrating five years of Sunny Sessions. What started as a way to connect people has become a vibrant platform run by and for the learning disability community. Congratulations to Jon Andrews, our dedicated producer, and many thanks to Surrey Hills Community Radio for hosting our show.”

To mark this milestone, The Sunnybank Trust is pleased to announce that the **BBC Breakfast Show** will host the anniversary celebration on **28 March 2025**, between **7 – 9 am** on **BBC Radio Surrey & Sussex**.

As part of the celebration, the show will feature an interview between **Emma Blackmore**, a Sunnybank reporter based in Bristol, and the consultants from **Understand Us**, a consultancy founded by The Sunnybank Trust in 2019.

Understand Us is a learning disability-led consultancy based in Epsom, offering services such as training, workshops, and audits to help businesses become more accessible to people with learning disabilities. For more information, visit understandus.co.uk.

During the interview, the consultants will share insights into their roles, discuss how businesses can benefit from Understand Us, and reflect on their favourite projects.

James Cannon, BBC Producer, said:

“We are incredibly proud of the journey Sunny Sessions has taken over the past five years. This anniversary and the feature on BBC Breakfast provide an opportunity to share the voices and stories of the individuals who have been part of the show’s success. Our mission has always been to amplify these voices and promote inclusion, and we are excited to take this next step in reaching an even wider audience.”

Today, *Sunny Sessions* is presented by **Jon Andrews**, who brings his passion and energy to the show as it continues to grow. The programme has expanded to cover a wide variety of topics, providing a platform for people to share their stories, engage in meaningful discussions, and raise awareness about issues that matter to them.

Jon Andrews said:

“I’m incredibly proud of what we have achieved with the radio show and excited to see where the next five years will take us.”

The Sunnybank Trust

Photo: **Jon Andrews from The Sunnybank Trust**, and **James Fieldus, a Sunnybank Reporter**. Photo by The Sunnybank Trust.

Epsom and Ewell’s Record-Breaking Poppy Appeal

7 July 2025



The **Royal British Legion**’s Epsom and Ewell branch has once again demonstrated the remarkable generosity of the local community, raising a record-breaking total of **£79,366.99** during the 2024 Poppy Appeal. This astounding figure, collected throughout the borough in November, marks an increase of **£16,000** from the previous year—an incredible achievement as collectors and supporters returned in full force after the pandemic.

Poppy Appeal Organiser **Amy Johnson**, alongside her dedicated deputies, coordinated an army of volunteers, young and old, who braved the autumn chill to collect donations across the **Ashley Centre, Sainsbury’s Kiln Lane, local schools, shops, businesses, and various poppy stands** throughout Epsom and Ewell. The generosity of local residents ensured that the borough, known for its strong community spirit, once again surpassed expectations.

A special note of thanks goes to the **Ashley Centre and Sainsbury’s Kiln Lane management teams**, whose continued support provided vital collection points for this year’s appeal.

Reflecting on the significance of the funds raised, **Barb Warwick, Chair of RBL Epsom and Ewell**, stated:

“As we sadly say farewell to the last of our WWII service men and women, our mission now is to ensure that the new generation of Armed Forces personnel and their families receive the support they need, no matter where or when they serve. We are secure in the knowledge that Epsom and Ewell, the smallest borough with the biggest heart, will rise to this challenge.”

The Royal British Legion continues its vital work providing welfare and support to serving and former members of the Armed Forces and their families. Anyone in need of assistance, whether they have served in the past or are currently in the Armed Forces, is encouraged to reach out to **barb.warwick@virginmedia.com** for confidential support and guidance.

With the borough's unwavering dedication, Epsom and Ewell have once again shown their commitment to remembering and supporting those who have served. **Lest we forget.**

Epsom Runner's Tribute to Sister Raises Over £22,000 for Epilepsy Charity

7 July 2025



An Epsom man has completed an extraordinary fundraising challenge in memory of his sister, raising more than £22,000 for national charity Epilepsy Action.

Barry Ahearn, from Epsom, ran **27 half-marathons** over the past year to honour his sister, Abbie, who tragically passed away in September 2023 following a severe epileptic seizure. Barry's challenge was deeply symbolic—each half-marathon representing **one minute of the 27 minutes** his sister's brain was without oxygen while paramedics fought to save her life.

His final run took place on **Saturday, 8th March, in Battersea Park**, where he was joined by **40 fellow runners** and **150 supporters**, including family, friends, and representatives from Epilepsy Action.

A Challenge Driven by Love and Loss

Reflecting on the challenge, Barry said:

"Losing Abbie has been the hardest thing I've ever experienced. She was kind, compassionate, and full of life. Every day since she passed, I've felt emotional pain—so I decided to match it with physical pain and push myself to do something in her memory."

Abbie was just **three months away from her 30th birthday** when she suffered a fatal seizure. Having been diagnosed with epilepsy only six weeks earlier, her death came as a devastating shock to her loved ones.

Barry's journey has taken him across the UK, completing half-marathons in **London, Carsington Water, and even at his local park**, where he ran up and down a single path **55 times** to complete the 21km distance. Some runs were part of organised events, while others were solo challenges that tested his mental and physical endurance.

Community Spirit and Support

Throughout his challenge, Barry was supported by his **wife Naomi**, who not only cheered him on at every race but also ran parts of the final half-marathon with him.

"Seeing my best friends, family, and their children cheering me on has been so special. The solo runs were tough emotionally, but I knew I had people behind me every step of the way."

His efforts have not only raised funds but also **heightened awareness of epilepsy**, a condition that affects **over 600,000 people in the UK**, with **three people dying from epilepsy-related causes every day**.

An Impact Beyond Fundraising

Barry's campaign has been hailed as a remarkable achievement by **Epilepsy Action's Director of Fundraising, Philippa Cartwright**, who praised his determination and resilience:

"Barry's efforts are truly inspiring. The funds he and his team have raised will help support vital services, from Talk & Support groups to our helpline, ensuring people with epilepsy get the help they need."

Barry hopes that his sister's story will encourage more people to learn about the risks associated with epilepsy and push for better awareness and research.

"When I started this challenge, I wanted to raise awareness and funds. I can't measure the full impact it's had, but if this helps save even one life, it will have been worth it."

How to Support the Cause

Barry's fundraising page remains open for donations to **Epilepsy Action**, which continues to campaign for better services and support for those affected by epilepsy.

To contribute to Barry's campaign, visit: **JustGiving - Barry Ahearn's Fundraiser**

For more information on epilepsy and support services, visit **www.epilepsy.org.uk** or call the **Epilepsy Action helpline on 0808 800 5050**.

Epsom Stands in Solidarity with Ukraine on War's Third Anniversary

7 July 2025



Epsom's Market Place was a scene of unity and reflection today as residents, dignitaries, and members of the Ukrainian community gathered to mark the third anniversary (24th February) of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Organised by the Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network (EERN) and Epsom based Surrey Stands With Ukraine (SSWU), the event served as a powerful demonstration of the town's enduring support for those affected by the war.

The Worshipful The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, Councillor **Steve Bridger**, (RA Stamford) and the Mayoress, Carol Bridger, attended the commemoration, reaffirming the borough's commitment to standing in solidarity with Ukraine.

“Kindness Will Prevail”

The event opened with a speech from **Jo Sherring**, co-founder of EERN, who highlighted the strong bonds forged between the local and Ukrainian communities. “We are privileged to have met and worked with such wonderful people, and we will continue to support them as long as they need our help,” she said. EERN supports as many as 80 or more families from Ukraine. Mainly women and children.

Roy Deadman, Chair of SSWU, praised the tireless efforts of volunteers who have dedicated time and resources to aid Ukraine. “The support for Ukraine we have seen today from this wonderful community still shows us that kindness will prevail in a world that feels very dark right now,” he said. SSWU has sent a van of civilian aid nearly every week since the war began and thousands of pounds of aid for humanitarian projects in Ukraine.

The two charities work together in offices generously provided by the Ashley Centre and for which the Council has waived all business rates.

MP's Message of Support

Epsom & Ewell's MP, **Helen Maguire**, who was unable to attend in person, sent a statement which was read aloud to the assembled crowd. She paid tribute to Ukraine's resilience and urged continued support for its fight against Russian aggression.

“Three years ago, the world watched in horror as Putin launched his brutal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. I am proud that Epsom's community has gathered here today to say what we have said from the very beginning: We stand with Ukraine. We stand with its people. And we will not waver,” she said.

Ms Maguire described Ukraine's battle as one for “democracy, sovereignty, and the right of nations to choose their own future.” She praised the courage of the Ukrainian people, whether on the battlefield or in communities enduring relentless attacks, displacement, and loss.

“To our Ukrainian friends here today: you are not alone. We have not forgotten you, and we will continue to support you, in both word and action, for as long as it takes,” she added.

The MP also called for the UK to take a leadership role in supporting Ukraine's victory, advocating for military assistance and the seizure of Russian assets to aid in reconstruction. “The future of Ukraine must be decided by Ukrainians,” she said.

Emotional Tributes

The gathering featured a powerful performance by **Helin Konyar**, a third-year student at Laine Theatre Arts and a Ukrainian national, who sang Ukraine's spiritual anthem *God Save Ukraine*. Her performance deeply moved those in attendance.

A particularly poignant moment came from **Constantin Ryzhikov**, a blind Ukrainian refugee, who shared his heartfelt gratitude for Britain's support. He spoke about the difficulties faced by Ukrainians both in their homeland and those who have sought refuge abroad, moving many in the audience to tears.

The event also included a prayer led by Deacon **Gary Carter** of St Joseph's Church in Epsom, calling for peace and strength for those suffering in Ukraine.

A Show of Unity

The commemoration ended with the Ukrainian national anthem, once again performed by Helin Konyar. The assembled crowd joined in a moment of solemn reflection, standing in solidarity with Ukraine.

As the war enters its fourth year, the event served as a poignant reminder of Epsom's unwavering support for Ukraine and the power of community in times of crisis.

Ukrainian Culture

Since the war talented Ukrainian musicians and a local Ukraine Choir come together for the 11th Ukraine Music Evening since the war began. Held at 6pm on Saturday 22nd March in the Worship Area of the Epsom Methodist Church in Ashley Road. Entry is free and a leaving collection is dedicated to support the musicians whose livelihoods have been cut in their homeland.

For more information on how to support Ukraine locally, visit:

- **Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network:** www.epsomrefugeenetwork.org
- **Surrey Stands With Ukraine:** www.surreystandswithukraine.org

Image: Roy Deadman of SSWU addresses the crowd alongside Jo Sherring of EERN and Deacon Gary Carter (Credit Nina Kaye)

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