

Case for dog-walker regulation after death-mauling

4 November 2024



A coroner has raised concerns about the “lack of regulation”, both locally and nationally, after a professional dog walker was mauled to death in a Surrey park. Natasha Johnston, 28, had been walking eight dogs in Gravelly, Caterham, when she was fatally attacked on January 12, 2023.

Senior Surrey coroner Richard Travers found that Ms Johnston died of shock and haemorrhage to her neck from a “vicious dog attack”. She also had multiple penetrating dog bites to the neck, arms and torso which would have also resulted in her death, the coroner said.

Mr Travers said the “lack of regulation” on controlled dog walking was a “matter of concern” on a national level and there is a risk of other deaths in the future. He addressed his Prevention of Future Deaths report to the Home Secretary, as well as the CEO of Surrey County Council.

Ms Johnston had walked a large number of dogs before, and had walked some of the same dogs previously without difficulty, the inquest heard. In his conclusion of the inquest, on October 21, Mr Travers said Ms Johnston “appeared to have some control” over the eight dogs she was walking.

But, he added, “it was readily apparent that as time went by that any such control was lost, eventually with a tragic result.” Taking account of the number and size of the dogs, the coroner said Ms Johnston’s “inability to control and to hold [the dogs] was not surprising.”

Evidence was presented at the inquest that there is some guidance available as to the maximum number of dogs a person should walk on their own in a public place. However, Mr Travers expressed concern there is “no actual restriction” on the number or size of dogs that a person can walk on their own in a public place, either locally or nationally.

Mr Johnston passed numerous dog walkers, pedestrians and a couple of horse riders on her walk. At first in control, the coroner described how the dogs became “increasingly excited” and disorderly.

Two of the dogs reportedly ran towards two horses, frightening them, and causing one to bolt, with the rider thrown to the ground. After this, one of the larger dogs began scaring a smaller dog that was being walked by its owner. On picking up her dog, the owner was then bitten in her left buttock by the larger dog, “causing severe pain and injury”, the inquest heard.

By the time of the last two incidents, the dogs were no longer in Ms Johnston’s control. She was discovered by a walker, lying at the bottom of a steep slope “covered in blood and with a large number of puncture wounds”, according to the report.

Some Surrey councils have adopted new dog walking rules in 2024. Reigate and Banstead council is the latest local authority to have mandated a new four dog limit for dog walkers or face a fine. Surrey County Council has also introduced a new code of conduct for walkers which asks walkers to only take six pets at a time.

Image: Surrey Coroner’s Court, Woking. Taken by LDR

Attic find fills gap in Epsom local asylum history

4 November 2024



Last Friday saw the return of a singular missing hospital record book. The book contains the medical case book of women admitted to The Manor Hospital between 19 May 1900 and 11 July 1901. This was one of five psychiatric hospitals established by the London County Council at Horton near Epsom at the start of the twentieth century. A treasure trove for family and social historians, the volume records the names, family details and medical notes of 250 London women living

with a range of mental illness, with their photographic portraits fixed to its fragile pages. These poignant records allow a precious glimpse of the lives and experiences of women admitted to these vast Victorian pauper asylums. Julian Pooley of the Surrey History Centre rescued many of The Manor's records after its closure in 1995, case book number 4 was not among them. It's discovery in an attic in the London Borough of Kingston gives hope that other missing records from Surrey's former mental and learning disability hospitals may yet come to light.

The couple who found the book in their attic realised its significance when watching Gemma Collins discover her family's mental health history in a recent episode of 'Who Do You Think You Are'. Having read the case histories and been fascinated by the patient photographs, they got in touch with **Epsom** based charity The Friends of Horton Cemetery.

Lead researcher for the charity, **Kevin McDonnell** said: ""This discovery of *Manor Asylum - Case Book No. 4* is of immense historical value, especially for our project. I'm grateful to you for preserving it. It will now find a home at the Surrey History Centre in Woking, where it will be accessible to our team of volunteer genealogical researchers. This document is critical to our mission to protect **Horton Cemetery in Epsom**, where nearly 9,000 unclaimed mental health patients were laid to rest between 1899 and 1955. These graves, left unmarked and forgotten, tell stories that we're working to bring back to life. The cemetery, sadly, has been neglected and mistreated since it was sold to a property speculator in 1983. It's a disgraceful situation for such a sacred resting place, now overgrown and scattered with rubble, and this important find helps highlight the significance of the lives laid to rest there."

Surrey History Centre was delighted to find that it filled such an important gap in the surviving records. Now preserved in the History Centre's strong rooms, it can be made publicly available for research and a range of community engagement projects.

Epsom & Ewell consults on anti-social behaviour

4 November 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is calling on the public to take part in their consultation about a proposed Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) from 4 November. The consultation will run for 8 weeks and ends on 5 January.

PSPOs deal with a particular nuisance or problem in a specific area that is detrimental to the local community's quality of life, by putting restrictions on how people can use public spaces in that area. They are intended to help ensure that the everyone can use and enjoy public spaces, safe from anti-social behaviour.

The consultation will help shape the future of our alcohol-related PSPO, with the public having a say on whether to renew the existing PSPO and extend its reach through the proposed changes.

Proposed changes include expanding the geographical area the PSPO covers to include the entire borough and, in partnership with Surrey Police, to provide additional community support to help counteract antisocial behaviour in public spaces.

The proposed new prohibitions in the PSPO include:

- Harassing or intimidating residents, businesses or members of the public.
- Threatening any person with violence and/or being verbally abusive towards any person.
- Urinating in an open public place.
- Littering or spitting with the intent to cause harassment, alarm or distress to any person.
- Wearing a piece of clothing with the intent to obscure or hide their identity for the purposes of committing crime and/or anti-social behaviour.
- Acting, or inciting others to act, in an anti-social manner, which is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to any person.
- Joining or remaining in a group of two or more people, which is acting in a manner that is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to any person.
- Consumption of alcohol following a verbal warning by an authorised person to stop. An authorised person includes a Police Constable, Police Community Support Officer, a Council Officer, or any other person authorised by the Council.

Councillor Shanice Goldman, Chair of Crime and Disorder Committee said:

“Our council is deeply committed to ensuring that public spaces across the borough are safe and welcoming for everyone. Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) allow police and council staff to address antisocial behaviour effectively, without immediately resorting to arrests.

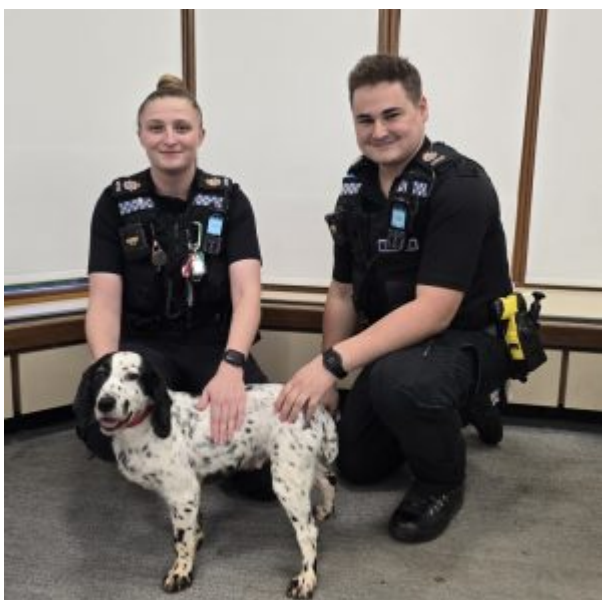
“We’re seeking feedback from all residents, workers, and visitors to get a clear understanding of whether the proposed changes will better support the police and council in managing antisocial behaviour.

“I really do encourage your participation as your views will help shape our approach to creating safer, more enjoyable spaces for all.”

The consultation survey is available here – Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) Public Consultation.

Stolen dog recovered by Surrey Police after 8 years

4 November 2024



After eight long years, a gorgeous Cocker Spaniel called Daisy, who was stolen from her home in Mole Valley back in 2016, has now been reunited with her owners.

Daisy, who was one at the time, was stolen along with three other dogs in November 2016, after thieves took the working gun dogs from the garden kennels they were housed in.

Tragically one of the dogs was killed after being hit by a car as it tried to escape and the other two stolen dogs have never been located, despite best efforts from officers.

In a surreal turn of events, and nearly eight years to the day since Daisy was taken, officers were alerted on Tuesday 29 October, that someone had tried to update her microchip details. Our rural crime officer PC Laura Rowley immediately contacted the microchip company to obtain the details of the new owners.

Just two days later officers from the Mole Valley Safer Neighbourhood team completed a three hour round trip to bring Daisy back to Surrey and her owners. They said, “Daisy had been rehomed in good faith by the new owners and they were unaware of the theft of Daisy.

“We brought Daisy, who is now slightly deaf, back to the Mole Valley Safer Neighbourhood Team Office and there was not a dry eye in the house when she was reunited with her owners. She recognised them immediately and stuck to them like glue!”

Sadly, the other dogs, Tilly a black working Cocker Spaniel, and Storm a patchy white Patterdale Terrier, remain missing and are believed to be elderly or have possibly passed away due to their age at the time of the theft. However, if you have any information that may be relevant, please contact us quoting PR/45160097926.

Pictured with Daisy are PC Ewan Keen and PC Ellen Francis.

Epsom school fined for finger loss

4 November 2024



A school trust in Surrey has been fined after part of a pupil's finger was amputated.

The five-year-old boy, a Year 1 pupil at Danetree Primary School in Epsom, had been leaving the toilet on 15 June 2022 when his right hand slipped and went into the hinge side of a door.

There was no door guard installed and he trapped his right hand in the door.

This led to the tip of his middle finger becoming detached as his right hand was stuck in the door.

A teacher found the tip of his middle finger, and the boy underwent surgery to re-attach his finger at St Georges Hospital in Tooting, London.

Although younger pupils in Key Stage 1 were taught in a newer building where hinge guards had been fitted on the doors, the incident occurred in a separate building where the older children in Key Stage 2 were taught.

The Key Stage 1 pupils would use the Key Stage 2 building at least once a week to use its library and learn about music and science. While in this building, the Key Stage 1 pupils were allowed to use the toilets unsupervised.

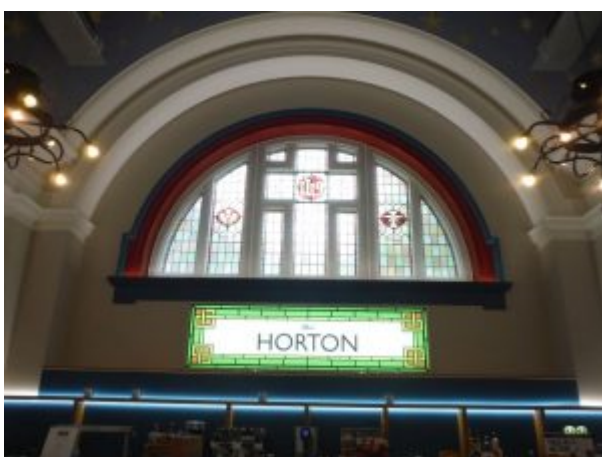
A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation into the incident found GLF Schools, the trust that runs Danetree Primary School, had failed to identify the risk to its Key Stage 1 pupils while using the toilets. This meant hinge guards were not installed on the toilet doors of the building where Key Stage 2 pupils were taught.

GLF Schools, of Picquets Way, Banstead, Surrey, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The trust was fined £6,000 and ordered to pay £6,875.70 in costs at Staines Magistrates' Court on 30 October 2024.

HSE principal inspector Emma Stiles said: "This little boy and his family could have been spared a lot of pain and upset if the trust had installed widely available, effective and inexpensive hinge guards on the doors the young children had access to. I would ask all schools to review their estates to make sure they have hinge guards where needed so no other children are hurt in this way when at school."

The Horton Hid Hiring From Regulator

4 November 2024



Controversy surrounded the appointment of the salaried Centre Manager of Epsom and Ewell's new arts and exhibition venue, The Horton Arts Centre.

Documents obtained by the Epsom and Ewell Times under Freedom of Information Act requests reveal that the Charity Commission found that the trustees of the Horton Chapel Arts and Heritage Society did not seek its prior permission to employ the wife of a trustee.

A recently retired trustee, a trustee or a person connected to a trustee through marriage may not be given paid employment by their charity without prior Charity Commission approval.

The Commission found that Maria Reeves, the wife of founding chairman of the Charity, Ian Reeves, who was herself previously a trustee, was appointed to the manager role without its permission.

In these circumstances the Commission would normally order the trustees to pay the Charity the salary of the employee in question. However, in this case the Commission determined that the appointment had been hidden from the Commission for so long that such an order would be "disproportionate".

The Commission also determined that the eventual appointment was "made in good faith", but refused to answer how that

finding was compatible with the failure to seek its permission. It has also refused to disclose the justification submitted to it by the trustees for the retrospective Commission approval.

Other documents obtained by the Epsom and Ewell Times show that an earlier recruitment exercise, described by an expert as “exemplary”, was reversed on the intervention of trustees, including the then Chair Ian Reeves and his next door neighbour and trustee, Rupert Salmon.

That process had not short-listed the Chair’s wife Maria Reeves.

One former short-listed candidate who asked not to be named said: “I was of course disappointed that the recruitment process for The Horton Centre Director role was aborted as I had been shortlisted to the second round and was expecting to attend a second interview.

With regards to the Charity Commission’s role – it is disappointing that the Charity Commission’s own guidelines were difficult to enforce in this instance.”

None of the short-listed candidates from the aborted recruitment process were invited to re-apply and it appears that the recruitment process that led to the appointment of Maria Reeves was from a candidate list of one.

Ian Reeves and Rupert Salmon have been requested on a number of occasions to provide their response. Our press regulator confirmed that they had been provided with a reasonable opportunity to do so.

One former trustee stated: “Mr and Mrs Reeves deserved a reward for all the unpaid effort they had put into converting this disused chapel into a beautiful arts centre”.

Lionel Blackman, a former trustee and chair of the initial 6 strong recruitment committee, that consisted of three independent trustees and three independent external experts, said “I only wish to make a general observation that trustees of charities should comply with the rules. That expectation is somewhat heightened when a charity has been given £3 million of public money.”

Caring Mentors in Epsom and Ewell sought for young

4 November 2024



MCR Pathways, (Mentoring, Charity, Relationships) an award-winning charity dedicated to transforming the lives of young people through mentorship, is looking for volunteer mentors to support a young person throughout their education.

The charity addresses the widening gap in educational and employment outcomes between care-experienced young people and their peers. Research shows that those who do not receive MCR Pathways mentorship are 23% less likely to progress to college, university, or employment compared to their mentored peers. By connecting young people with caring mentors, MCR Pathways helps bridge the gap between aspiration and achievement.

Mentors meet with their mentees for just one hour each week in school. This consistent interaction provides a valuable opportunity for young people to focus on their future, discuss any concerns, and share their thoughts and experiences in a safe and supportive environment. Research shows that even one hour a week with a caring adult can significantly boost a young person’s confidence, improve academic performance, and open doors to a brighter future.

Since its founding in 2007, MCR Pathways has made a significant impact, launching its programme in Surrey in 2021 and establishing partnerships with seven schools across the county. With the growing demand for mentors, MCR Pathways is actively seeking new volunteers in **Epsom and Ewell**. If you’re ready to make a meaningful impact in your community, find a school near you by visiting mcrpathways.org/school-locator.

To find out more about the programme and to register, head to mcrpathways.org/whats-stopping-you or for any enquiries about becoming a mentor, please reach out to Liz Grace, MCR Pathways’ Surrey Volunteer Recruitment Manager, at liz.grace@mcrpathways.org or call 07483 390702. Together, we can help create a future where every young person has the opportunity to thrive. Join MCR Pathways today and be the change in a young person’s life!

Frozen Shoulder Link to Menopause

4 November 2024



Frozen shoulder, also known as adhesive capsulitis, is a painful condition that restricts movement in the shoulder joint due to adhesion and inflammation in the joint capsule. While this condition can affect anyone, it is particularly common in women aged 40 to 60, with many cases coinciding with menopause.

What Is Frozen Shoulder?

Frozen shoulder is characterised by pain and stiffness in the shoulder joint. It progresses through two main stages: the **painful stage**, where movement becomes uncomfortable and often disrupts sleep, and the **stiffness stage**, where shoulder mobility is severely restricted. The exact cause isn't always clear, but there are certain risk factors.

The Menopause Connection

Frozen shoulder tends to occur more frequently in women, especially during menopause. Hormonal changes, particularly declining oestrogen levels, can impact connective tissues, making them more prone to inflammation and stiffness. This hormonal shift may partly explain why women in midlife are at higher risk of developing the condition.

Signs and Symptoms

Key symptoms of frozen shoulder include:

- **Pain:** A deep, aching pain that worsens with movement. Night pain is common.
- **Stiffness:** As the condition progresses, shoulder movements become more restricted, making daily activities like dressing or reaching overhead challenging.
- **Limited Range of Motion:** Both active and passive movements are affected.

Risk Factors for Frozen Shoulder

- **Age and Gender:** Women between 40 and 60, especially those going through menopause, are at higher risk.
- **Diabetes:** Those with diabetes are more susceptible and often experience a more prolonged course of frozen shoulder.
- **Thyroid Disorders:** Hypothyroidism and other thyroid issues are linked to a higher likelihood of developing frozen shoulder.
- **Immobilisation:** Lack of movement after an injury or surgery can trigger the condition.

Treatment and Management Options

Physiotherapy: The Gold Standard

Physiotherapy is the cornerstone and is supported by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). It includes a combination of manual therapy, exercise, and education to relieve symptoms and improve shoulder function.

- **Manual Therapy:** Techniques like joint mobilisation and stretching are used to reduce stiffness and increase mobility.
- **Exercise Therapy:** A personalised exercise plan can help restore shoulder movement and build strength. Early in the painful stage, exercises are gentle, with intensity increasing as the shoulder improves.
- **Patient Education:** Understanding frozen shoulder, its natural progression, and expected recovery time is vital. Many patients worry about the severity of their pain, especially during menopause, but education can reassure them that frozen shoulder is manageable and temporary.

Injection Therapy: Corticosteroids and Hydrodilatation

For those whose pain severely limits rehabilitation, injection therapy can be an effective complement to physiotherapy.

- **Corticosteroid Injections:** These are most useful in the early painful stage, providing significant pain relief and reducing inflammation. This helps patients participate more actively in physiotherapy.
- **Hydrodilatation:** This procedure involves injecting a saline solution, often combined with a corticosteroid, into

the joint capsule to stretch it and improve mobility. It's typically used during the stiffness phase.

Can Frozen Shoulder Be Prevented?

While not always preventable, staying active and maintaining shoulder mobility can reduce the risk of developing frozen shoulder, particularly during menopause when hormonal changes increase vulnerability. If you experience early signs of stiffness or discomfort, seeking physiotherapy promptly can prevent the condition from worsening.

Role of Menopause in Frozen Shoulder Recovery

Due to hormonal changes, women going through menopause may experience a longer recovery time. However, with early intervention, including physiotherapy and, if necessary, injection therapy, most women see significant improvements within one to three years. Managing underlying conditions like diabetes or thyroid issues can also speed up recovery.

Conclusion

Frozen shoulder is a painful and limiting condition, but with the right treatment, particularly physiotherapy, most people can regain their shoulder mobility over time. For women experiencing menopause, the added risk makes it important to be proactive in addressing early symptoms. Whether through manual therapy, tailored exercises, or injection therapy, effective treatment can help you regain shoulder function and return to your regular activities.

Fresh New Look for Ernest Jones Epsom

4 November 2024



Sponsored article:

A refreshed Ernest Jones store, designed for Epsom's shoppers, has opened its doors in the Ashley Centre.

Customers are welcomed into a bright interior, with a host of new features to improve and enhance their shopping experience.

Every aspect of the refurbishment has been thoughtfully designed with local shoppers in mind.

"We wanted our Epsom customers to feel right at home from the moment they enter our store," said store manager, Denise Ducasse.

"As a trusted jeweller with a reputation for quality, craftsmanship and expertise, we're here to help our customers celebrate milestone moments and so we really wanted to heighten that sense of occasion in our store," she said.

"We're really excited and hope our customers, will love our makeover," she added.



To celebrate the opening of the new-look store, this weekend from October 25th-27th, Ernest Jones is inviting shoppers to join them for a glass of bubbly with an opportunity to view the latest collections, learn more about the range of jewellery and watch services available as well as an enjoying an extra 10% off the final weekend of sale.

Ernest Jones Epsom is part of a multimillion-pound store investment programme by parent company Signet Jewelers UK and Ireland. A total of 14 Ernest Jones stores and 41 H Samuel stores across the UK are being refurbished.

“This significant investment underscores our dedication to local high streets and shopping centres across the country. We believe that a vibrant retail sector is a vital part of a thriving community and we hope our refurbished stores will be warmly welcomed by local shoppers,” said Neil Old, Managing Director Signet Jewelers UK and Ireland.

Ernest Jones Ashley Centre, 10 Central Square, Epsom KT18 5DA

Epsom and St Helier Hospitals in Desperate Need of Repairs

4 November 2024



Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals are in need of urgent repairs, with more than £150 million required to address crumbling infrastructure, according to the latest NHS data. Epsom and Ewell MP **Helen Maguire** has urged the Government to prioritise investment in the upcoming Budget to tackle these issues.

The data highlights that nearly £70 million of the required repairs are classified as ‘high risk,’ meaning a failure to address them promptly could lead to serious injury and significant disruption to healthcare services. Both hospitals have been struggling with deteriorating facilities for years, with St Helier Hospital facing particularly severe challenges, such as falling ceilings and condemned buildings.

One major issue is the division of emergency care teams across both sites, a problem that the proposed specialist emergency care hospital in Sutton is intended to resolve. However, delays in funding mean that these plans have not yet come to fruition, leaving local residents reliant on facilities that are increasingly unable to meet modern healthcare needs.

Ahead of the Autumn Budget, Liberal Democrat MP Helen Maguire has renewed her call for urgent financial support to clear the backlog of repairs and ensure that the hospitals can provide safe and effective care for local communities.

“It is scandalous that people in Epsom, Ewell, Ashted, and Leatherhead are being treated in hospitals that need millions of pounds in repairs,” said Maguire. “When someone goes to the hospital, they should expect to be treated in a building that is safe. This is the bare minimum. We need to do far better. It is now down to this Government to rescue our NHS, which is why, at the Budget, the Chancellor must urgently use any changes to the borrowing rules to invest in hospitals

here in Epsom and Ewell.”

NHS Response

A spokesperson for the **Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust** acknowledged the extent of the challenges, stating: “We’ve spent £60 million in the past five years improving the facilities in our ageing hospitals, which are deteriorating faster than we can fix them. Local people deserve better, and we’re ready to build a new state-of-the-art hospital and upgrade our existing sites, but urgently need investment to make this a reality.”

The spokesperson also highlighted the outdated nature of parts of the hospital infrastructure, some of which predate the founding of the NHS. “The age of our buildings means they flood regularly, and when our lifts break down, we can’t fix them because they don’t make the parts anymore.”

Plans for the new specialist emergency care hospital in Sutton aim to address these issues by consolidating highly skilled medical teams, providing round-the-clock care. This would alleviate the strain on the existing Epsom and St Helier hospitals, which will continue to provide 85% of local services, including outpatient appointments and scans.

The Way Forward

The pressing need for investment in the local NHS infrastructure is clear, with both the MP and the hospital trust calling for urgent action. As the Budget approaches, the focus will be on whether the Government will step up and provide the necessary funds to ensure that residents of Epsom and surrounding areas receive the healthcare services they deserve in safe and modern facilities.

Local residents will be closely watching developments in the Budget announcement, hoping that long-awaited improvements to the area’s hospitals will finally become a reality.

Surrey Tories bouncing back already?

4 November 2024



The Conservative election turnaround in Surrey shows no sign of slowing after the party beat the Liberal Democrats, Labour and independents to take two more seats at the October 2024 by-elections.

Voters in Elmbridge backed the Tories in both seats contested on Thursday, October 10 – holding on to Weybridge and winning Hersham Village.

The polls were called following the death of former Conservative councillor and “community champion” Charu Sood, who died after a cancer battle in August, and the resignation of Chester Chandler.

The two victories build on other Tory wins in Surrey with the party winning in Waverley Borough Council following a huge 19 per cent swing and victory in Runnymede where they doubled Labour’s vote share.

The wins have left the Conservative group leader on Elmbridge Borough Council in buoyant mood and talking up the possibility of going into coalition with the residents groups to offer “a better approach”.

Councillor John Cop said: “We’re back, after a couple of difficult years it’s amazing to see the council group grow again.

“I think it was a combination of two factors.

“Firstly there was a very clear rejection on the door of what the Liberal Democrat council has done.

“The Hersham community has been treated really poorly.

“There’s been the closure of the community centres, still not fully reopen and there was a lot of concern around high rise buildings going up on the town centre – and the council not getting a local plan in place leaving us open to development.

“Secondly. there was a real anger at the new Labour government, winter fuel coming in, and talking down the economy, I think that was why we saw such a dramatic turnaround.”

Elections in Elmbridge take place every year, with the fourth year left free for the county council ballot.

The Conservatives had not won in Hersham since 2021. Cllr Cope put the reversal in fortune down to the popularity of their candidate whom he dubbed “Mr Hersham” ‘

In Weybridge, the party held on to narrowly hold the seat, in what was their first victory there since 2022.

The new council now comprises 21 Liberal Democrats, easily the largest party, 13 Residents Associations Group members, 11 Conservatives, two Hinchley Wood RAG and one independent.

It leaves the door open for a change of control at the top should the residents associations go into coalition with the Conservatives, something Cllr Cope said he would look to do.

Cllr Cope said: “We would welcome going into coalition with the residents associations and change the council for the better.

“I would be more than happy to talk to the residents’ associations to see if they would prefer a different approach.”

Weybridge St Georges Hill results in full

- Colin McFarlane: Conservative Party 608 votes, 46.0 per cent (Elected)
- Andrew Kelly: Weybridge and St George’s Independents 598 votes, 45.2 per cent
- Brittany Johansson, Green Party, 116 votes 8.8 per cent

Turnout 19.7 per cent

Hersham Village

- John O’Reilly. Conservative Party 1029 votes 55.4 per cent (Elected)
- Vasha Khodiyar, Liberal Democrats 736 votes 39.6 per cent
- Francis Eldergill. Labour Party 94 votes 5.1 per cent

Turnout 27.1 per cent

Newly elected Elmbridge Borough Councillor Colin McFarlane and John O’Reilly (image John Cope)

Ancaster acquires the Epsom keys to Allams

4 November 2024



Sponsored article: Ancaster Group has announced the acquisition of Allams of Epsom, a prominent Skoda dealership that has been a cornerstone of the local automotive industry for over 70 years. This move comes as Ancaster celebrates its 75th anniversary, marking a strategic expansion for the group across South West London and Surrey.

Allams of Epsom, located on Longmead Business Park, has been serving customers in the region since its establishment in 1952. The dealership is well-known for offering the full range of Skoda vehicles and operates as an authorised service and MOT centre. For decades, it has built a loyal customer base, providing reliable service and quality vehicles to generations of local residents.

With this acquisition, Ancaster Group continues to solidify its presence in the South East, adding to its existing network of 13 dealerships representing brands such as Nissan, Hyundai, MG, Renault, and Dacia. This addition will allow the group to further enhance its customer offerings, particularly in the fast-growing Skoda brand. Ancaster’s Managing Director, Stephen Wood, expressed enthusiasm for the future, stating, “This acquisition is a strategic milestone for us, as it accelerates our growth and broadens the brands we offer in South London and Surrey. Allams and Ancaster share the same important core values of customer service provided by a motivated and committed team.”

Allams will continue to operate under its current name, with customers benefiting from the enhanced support and synergies provided by Ancaster’s wider network. The acquisition positions Ancaster to serve the Surrey and South West London markets even more effectively, with a strong focus on customer satisfaction, as both companies are known for their dedicated service teams.

The Allams dealership has long been a fixture in Epsom, having earned a reputation for trust and quality in automotive sales and servicing. For local residents, this acquisition signals the continuation of a trusted service, now backed by the broader expertise and resources of a larger dealership group. Ancaster’s purchase ensures that Allams will remain an integral part of the community, while also benefiting from new growth opportunities within a larger organisation.

Ancaster Group, which was founded in 1949, has built its reputation over the decades through customer service, trust, and value. With this latest acquisition, the group looks set to strengthen its ties to the local community, continuing to offer a comprehensive range of new and pre-owned vehicles across multiple brands.

For Epsom motorists, this new chapter in the history of Allams promises continuity in quality service, combined with the

benefits of a broader dealership network under the Ancaster umbrella.

Fly-tippers force closure of Surrey recycling centre

4 November 2024



A Surrey recycling site will permanently close due to persistent fly-tipping at the site.

The Mound car park in Tattenham Corner has been repeatedly hit by high levels of dumped rubbish, despite CCTV cameras being installed at the site Reigate and Banstead Borough Council has said.

The centre's final day will be October 17.

Councillor Hannah Avery, executive member for neighbourhood services said: "When fly-tipping at one of our recycling sites blights the local area and prevents us from recycling all the waste that we can, it is doing more harm than good.

"It reduces the environmental benefits, increases the financial costs of waste disposal and takes our Cleansing team away from other work to keep the borough clean.

"I want to thank the majority of residents who are recycling their waste responsibly and especially those that are going the extra mile to arrange local clean ups.

"I want it to be easy for Reigate and Banstead residents to recycle as much of their household waste as possible, but I also want them to be confident that their recycling gets recycled properly and has a positive environmental impact."

All collection bins with the exception of the clothes banks will be removed with the vacant space turned over for car parking.

According to the council, its recycling sites can be magnets for large amounts of non-recyclable fly-tipped rubbish - a quarter of all reported tips last year were at the Tattenham Corner site.

Overall the council says it clears 300 van-loads of dumped waste from The Mound each year.

A spokesperson for the council said that in an effort to stem the flow they used mobile CCTV and issued 16 fixed penalties for fly-tipping and a further 12 for littering at the site so far this year since, while in March new signs informed visitors that ongoing misuse could lead to the facility being closed without further notice.

It did not reduce the number of fly-tips - including from both commercial and trade waste.

The spokesperson added: "The council estimates around 70 per cent of the dumped waste is made up of items that cannot be recycled, which contaminates the recyclable waste that people are disposing of responsibly.

"As a result, the Tattenham Corner recycling site, which is on Royal Drive, will close permanently on Thursday. October 17.

"The Mound car park will close for one day on October 21 to allow for the creation of additional car parking spaces."

Image: Royal Drive Tattenham Corner Fly-tipping (RBBC)

Surrey student satellite stars

4 November 2024



Meet DARWIN - the award-winning, small satellite that could detect and track wildfires, built by students from the

University of Surrey.

Surrey's Peryton Space team has won the prestigious UK Students for the Exploration and Development of Space (UKSEDS) satellite design competition, beating teams from around the country for the second year in a row.

DARWIN - also known as Detection, Analysis and Research for Wildfire Investigation Network - is just 10cm x 10cm x 30cm.

Team leader Mya White, who recently finished the second year of her BEng degree in Aerospace Engineering and who has started a year-long industry placement, said:

"We used a thermal camera to detect heat spots and an optical camera to determine distance so that we could calibrate the temperature readings. We also wrote software to split the area we monitored into a grid so we could pinpoint exactly where the simulated fires were."

Peryton Space also enjoyed success at other UKSEDS competitions.

They won the In-Orbit Servicing and Manufacturing competition, which gives students experience in mission design, engineering, business development, and other industry-relevant skills.

Peryton students came second at the competitive Mach-24 rocketry competition, where their high-powered rocket reached an altitude of 2.5km, Peryton's highest rocket launch to date. It successfully launched and deployed the CanSat built by the team.

Away from UKSEDS, Peryton Space also won an award for the best presentation at the Race2Space National Propulsion competition, which challenges students to design, manufacture and test rocket engines.

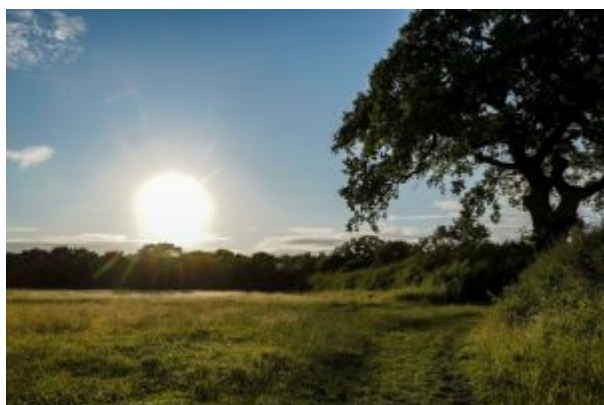
Harvey Nixon, who leads the research and development branch of Peryton Space and who is studying for an MSc in Space Engineering at Surrey, said:

"We are delighted with our 2024 results and really proud of the team at the University of Surrey's Peryton Space. On our team, there are students of all backgrounds and disciplines, which ensures we have a range of expertise, and our members get invaluable experience ready for careers in the space sector.

"Some members of Peryton Space are working on the Jovian-1 satellite project here at the University of Surrey. This involves collaborating with industry professionals and students from partnering universities and applying the skills learnt from Peryton Space to working on a space-bound project."

Secret 100 acres just north of Epsom and Ewell

4 November 2024



Despite being home to ancient hedgerows, a locally significant population of brown hairstreak butterflies, and a small fragment of wetland, the series of seven meadows spanning 42 hectares (about 100 acres) at Tolworth Court Farm is far from reaching its ecological potential.

Citizen Zoo is working with Kingston Council and The Community Brain to change that! Our shared vision is to establish a dynamic, mixed-mosaic nature reserve that nurtures a more diverse and abundant wildlife population. We will restore and enhance the site's ecological balance while honouring its rich farming heritage through innovative rewilding measures inspired by rural projects such as mixed grazing regimes.

Mixed-Grazing Scheme

Despite its size and location along the green corridor of the Hogsmill, the site is underperforming in terms of the wildlife it supports. After 20 years of annual hay cuts that should increase botanical diversity, the site's plant communities have degraded since the last surveys were conducted in 2003. Additionally, while the 1000+ insects and 40+ bird species recorded sounds an impressive number, this is far below what a site of this should support. Indeed, a few decades back the site was home to nationally rare ground-nesting birds such as skylarks and lapwing, plus increasingly scarce bullfinches.

Adopting the mixed grazing methods of successful rewilding projects in rural areas, such as Knepp and Wild Ken Hill, we are currently preparing the site for the re-introduction of livestock!

We will be introducing a small number of cattle and pigs, which through their varied grazing

behaviours, will improve plant diversity, aerate the soil, and create a diversity of habitats. This will create a dynamic ecosystem within Kingston's largest nature reserve helping to restore ecological balance and create a healthier ecosystem for local species and people. With the invaluable support of our dedicated volunteers and local students, we are clearing vegetation around the perimeter of the site, and preparing to install a secure livestock fence. Once in place, the cattle will be free to roam within the designated area. Each individual will be fitted with a GPS tag, allowing us to monitor their movements and make adjustments if needed, ensuring their welfare and the protection of the environment.

We are aware of the vital importance of the site in terms of local people's access to green space as well as its popularity among dog walkers. However, with the presence of cattle, it will be increasingly important to keep dogs on leads. We will be using Sussex cattle, which will have received training around the presence of humans and dogs, and also be individually selected for their docile traits. This is a common breed for grazing in urban areas and means we can be confident of no issues arising, however, as with other projects, we will ask dog walkers to keep their dogs on leads within the enclosure as an extra precaution.

We are recruiting a dedicated team of 'Wild Guardians' to conduct checks on the livestock and their welfare every day. If there are any issues flagged with the individuals or regarding their safety on site we will respond immediately. Do get in touch if you would like to be a part of this group. It will be a wonderful opportunity to get hands-on experience with a traditional breed, and we would love to have you on board!

Wetland Restoration Project

Another key feature of the Wild Tolworth project is the restoration of a large wetland area in the Great Meadow. Historically, the Hogsmill River flowed through the western corner of Tolworth Court Farm Fields, which acted as a floodplain for the site stream. The river was straightened around the 1950s to reduce flooding in the area. This was a commonly used method of flood reduction that counterintuitively passed the risk of flooding on further downstream, as the water flows quicker from A to B. While we would like to have re-diverted the river back through the site, due to electrical, sewage, and gas utilities on site, this was not possible. Instead, we will mimic the flow of the river with an enhanced closed-system wetland. By restoring this important feature, we will rejuvenate the ecological balance of the area, providing vital new habitats for local wildlife while also reconnecting the site with its historical roots. This will increase the presence of many bird species and amphibians on site. Additionally, by storing surface runoff and slowing water entering the river, the wetland will help to prevent flooding downstream. We will increase the accessibility of the site with a wheelchair-friendly boardwalk over the wetland, offering everyone the opportunity to enjoy the natural beauty of Tolworth Court Farm and experience this unique habitat up close.

This restoration project required us to gain planning permission from the council (as shown by the green planning notice signs at the entrances to the site). There will be no buildings constructed on site.

Work to Date

This project has been a long time in the making. Citizen Zoo, alongside Kingston Council and the Community Brain, has coordinated comprehensive ecological surveying including engaging with nationally recognised invertebrate experts and botanists. Further to this work, in conjunction with the Field Studies Council and Biological Recording Company, we have run over 10 Community Field Recorders Days, where volunteers can learn from species experts to help survey the site and learn more about the incredible species that can be found within the reserve. This has provided insight into the biodiversity of Tolworth Court Farm and informed the changes that can be made to improve the health of the ecosystem and bring benefits to wildlife and people.

We intend to begin work on our livestock fences and wetland restoration project in late 2024 to early 2025.

Nature-Friendly Dog Walks

Tolworth Court Farm is a cherished local space, and we want everyone to feel informed and involved. If you have any questions regarding the logistics of these changes please come along to one of our Nature-Friendly Dog Walks on site. This provides a great opportunity to ask any questions you have while we show you the vision for the site. You can find more information on these on our website (citizenzoo.org) or our Eventbrite page!

Further Questions

If you are unable to make it to a dog walk but you have any questions regarding the logistics of these changes please see our website by googling 'Citizen Zoo Wild Tolworth' for some FAQs or email hello@citizenzoo.org.

Pia Trevelyan-Ashby

Surrey Cop demoted for racist texts

4 November 2024



A Surrey Police sergeant who shared racist texts and a video of a man attempting to take his own life has been stripped of his rank – but will continue on active front line duties.

Daniel Hebborn admitted to sending a series of Whatsapp messages to friends in 2019 and 2020 which included a video which showed a man attempting to take his own life by jumping from a high rise building. The video showed the male with “devastating injuries” on the floor, a police misconduct panel heard.

During the two-day police misconduct hearing this September, the former sergeant accepted the messages were inappropriate, breached of the standards of authority, respect and courtesy. The panel said his behaviour had the “obvious potential to cause serious harm to the reputational standing of the Surrey Police and national policing in general and undermine public confidence”.

The messages also included an image deemed an “inappropriate racist joke” showing a photo of an elderly black man with his arm around the shoulders of an elderly white man with the accompanying title ‘is this a mugging?’. In a separate message, the officer was asked whether he “beat a guy like you did when you arrested him for littering” to which the officer responded “he was white”.

He also shared an image of an empty articulated lorry trailer with the heading “Trailer for sale, serious offers only, sleeps 39 people”, followed by “Guess my favourite restaurant will be short staffed again too”.

Hebborn continued to serve as a sergeant with Surrey Police in the years between sending the racist messages and the conduct hearing.

The report read: “There was some concern that the ‘banter’ contained in the WhatsApp messages may have extended beyond the private group and into his position as a sergeant and role model to those in his team or station. based on comments made in his own submitted character references including; “Dan’s sense of humour is best described as pushing boundaries that are deliberately controversial but always intended as a joke”.

The panel determined that the multiple breaches of the Standards as admitted, amounted to gross misconduct and were arguably so serious as to justify dismissal. However Hebborn avoided being sacked and was instead given a final warning and reduced to the rank of constable.

The report reads: “A clear message had to be given that where an officer behaved in a way demonstrated by the conduct in this case, such conduct was not tolerated within the police service. There was a strong need to build and maintain public trust in the police.”

The report added that action had to be taken in order to maintain public confidence and respect especially when it came to the police “tackling issues of racism within their forces.”

Head of professional standards, Chief Superintendent Andy Rundle, said; “Surrey Police expects a high level of professionalism from our officers and staff and we will take action when these standards are not met.

“The hearing heard that former PS Dan Hebborn had admitted to the offensive and inappropriate messages and shown significant remorse for his actions. Due to their historic, non-work-related nature, as well as his previous record of service, on this occasion the panel has determined that reducing his rank to PC is an appropriate course of action.

“This decision carries a financial impact as well as potentially impacting any transfer request and future career development. Surrey Police is committed to being an anti-racist organisation, where all forms of discrimination are entirely unacceptable. We place immense value on serving and protecting all our communities with fairness and respect as well as ensuring those who work within our Force enjoy a sense of belonging and respect from their colleagues.

“Earlier this year, we shared our anti-racism statement across the organisation. Our expectation is that all officers, staff, and volunteers uphold the commitments outlined in this statement to challenge injustice and uphold anti-racist principles. We are developing training to deliver to officers and staff that will support the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to ensure respect for all in the service we deliver. In September, we began a series of training sessions that all leaders are required to attend which include a focus on race equality and guidance on how to ensure an inclusive team environment.”

Surrey Police ethics print on wall at Mount Browne HQ. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)