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Darts mathematics lesson for Epsom college students

6 March 2025



Nescot (North East Surrey College of Technology) College in Epsom, Surrey welcomed a trio of darts legends and MC, Paul Starr to the college Wednesday to inspire students and encourage them to develop their mental maths skills. Paul 'The Asset' Nicholson, Devon 'The African Warrior' Petersen and three-time darts World Champion Mighty Michael Van Gerwen visited the college for the 'Nescot Loves Darts & Maths' event promoting arithmetic and numeracy, launching a college darts league and sharing their stories of determination and success.

Nescot hosted a full day of darts events, aimed at students re-taking their maths GCSEs. Nicholson and Petersen played a 5-leg match, then the players and Paul Starr held a Q&A and participated in a darts related maths quiz with students. Smaller groups of students later met the players in workshops on self-belief and inclusion.

The players also formally opened the newly branded Nescot Department of Maths. Each classroom now has a darts board and is named after a darts legend. In addition, Nescot launched a darts club and league, the first college in the country to do so. The inaugural Kapsalis Cup was contested between Nescot and East Sussex College Group, with plans to roll out a wider college league. During the sessions, all three players plus the MC were awarded a Nescot Honorary Fellowship and the day concluded with a 'meet and greet' for students.

The event was masterminded by Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO at Nescot, and also a massive darts fan. Julie makes an annual pilgrimage to the Lakeside World Championships and loves watching the sport, live and on TV. Having previously worked in sports PR, she also has contacts in the world of darts and reached out to them with the seed of an idea.

Julie said "Exciting and engaging students retaking their maths GCSEs was the challenge that made this day take shape. We regularly invite leaders from business, sport and the community to share their stories and when looking for a maths enthusiast, my mind turned to my own sporting passion – darts.

"The response from the darts community was incredible, after one phone call we were gifted boards, surrounds and darts, then the representatives of top players suggested an entire day of events at the college. We created a mini arena, and it was so exciting to see darts legends step up to the oche at Nescot. We're so grateful to the players, their management and everyone involved for taking the time to promote maths and inspire our students. Highlighting role models from all kinds of backgrounds and making learning fun are key at Nescot. I can't wait to see our students' playing darts in the classrooms. Game on!"

Michael van Gerwen said "It's great to see first-hand how Nescot are using darts to inspire their students. It's a brilliant way to improve mental maths, as the two go hand in hand. I love the fact the college is going to have a dartboard in every maths class too. It will be a fantastic addition, and I'm sure the students will love it."

Devon Petersen said"It was a pleasure to visit Nescot College, and it's so good to see them following core values and using darts to enhance their arithmetic. I have seen darts and maths work together in the work that I do for Bullseye Maths with young children, and Nescot will definitely see the benefits of using darts to enhance their education."

Paul Nicholson said "Seeing young people like the ones at Nescot College enjoying the sport of darts today is so good to see, and I have no doubt that including darts as part of the student's maths learning journey will only be a good thing. Darts is a sport for all, and it can be educational as well as fun, as proved with what Nescot are doing. Schools and colleges can only benefit from adding darts to their learning program."

Darts is a sociable, inclusive sport, which almost anyone can access. It can improve mental health by enhancing cognitive function, reducing stress and boosting confidence. It also improves motor skills, hand-eye coordination and problem solving. Importantly for the maths department, the mental maths involved in darts can improve maths skills generally, especially around multiplication and subtraction.

Maths skills and mental maths are important for many employers. Nescot welcomes students who would like to retake their maths GCSEs and improve their employment prospects before they step into the world of work.

As well as functional skills courses in maths and English, Nescot offers a wide range of college courses for school leavers and adults, including Animal Care, Business, Computing and IT, Construction, Performing Arts, Childcare, Health & Social Care and Beauty Therapy. The college has an open event on May 15th, from 4.30 – 7.30pm, where prospective students can learn more about the courses, campus and facilities. To find out more about studying at Nescot call 020 8394 3038, visit www.nescot.ac.uk or email adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk

Image: Julie Kapsalis and Andy Cowan from Nescot alongside Devon Petersen, Michael Van Gerwen and Paul Nicholson

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Concerns over secretive policing include Surrey

6 March 2025

Surrey Police has been affected by a nationwide push by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) to influence responses to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, raising concerns about transparency in local policing.

Newly obtained data from the BBC reveals that Surrey Police referred a total of 39 FOI and Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) requests to the NPCC's Central Referral Unit (CRU) between January and March 2024. This accounts for around 9.6% of all FOI and EIR requests received by the force in January, 8% in February, and 3.5% in March.

Of the 39 requests referred, six were classified as "mandatory referrals," a controversial category requiring police forces to consult with the CRU before disclosing certain types of information. Topics covered under these mandatory referrals include covert policing operations, counter-terrorism, and the use of controversial surveillance technology. Critics argue this process enables the NPCC to centralise control over information disclosure, effectively limiting the public's right to know.

Nationally, the CRU advised local police forces on 1,706 FOI requests in the first three months of 2024, a practice campaigners have labelled as "authoritarian censorship." In some cases, police forces that had initially disclosed information were later advised to retract their responses, with the CRU citing concerns about national security and reputational risks.

Surrey Police received 523 FOI and EIR requests over the three-month period, meaning one in 13 requests was referred for CRU advice. Transparency advocates argue that these figures highlight an increasing trend of policing secrecy, particularly in sensitive areas such as police surveillance, drug-related crime, and misconduct investigations.

Jake Hurfurt, head of research at Big Brother Watch, condemned the NPCC's role, stating: "Pressuring police forces to retract data disclosed in response to journalists' Freedom of Information requests, and instead trying to refuse to confirm or deny they hold the data, is the practice of an authoritarian censor, not an accountable public body."

While the NPCC insists it only provides guidance and does not dictate disclosure decisions, critics believe the process lacks accountability. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has previously taken action against multiple police forces for poor FOI performance, though Surrey Police has not been subject to specific regulatory action.

This revelation raises questions about whether Surrey residents are receiving the full picture when requesting information from their local police force. As scrutiny intensifies over the role of the NPCC in transparency matters, campaigners are calling for greater oversight to ensure that FOI laws serve the public interest rather than institutional secrecy.

Jekyll's Ashtead garden plan can no longer hide

6 March 2025



Recently unearthed plans of an **Ashtead** garden, designed by the renowned Gertrude Jekyll, have been donated to the Surrey History Centre.

Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) of Munstead Wood, Godalming, is celebrated as one of the greatest English garden designers. Though she described herself as an 'artist-gardener,' Jekyll was also a painter, embroiderer, interior designer, author, and photographer. As an early exponent of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Surrey, her legacy includes significant garden plans, watercolours, photographs, and publications, all held at the Surrey History Centre.

The newly unearthed plans, detailing the garden at Warren Hurst in Ashtead, were thought to be lost but were discovered inside a copy of Richard Bisgrove's book, *The Gardens of Gertrude Jekyll* (1992). They were returned to a former property owner, who brought them to the attention of the Surrey Gardens Trust. The plans have been donated to the Surrey History Centre to enhance its extensive Jekyll collections.

The discovery of these two plans is important. While other plans of Warren Hurst exist in the Gertrude Jekyll Collection at the University of California, Berkeley, and can be accessed through the Surrey Gardens Trust website, these newly found plans offer more detailed evidence of Jekyll's work.

One plan is a tracing made by the house architect, Percy Leeds, to communicate with Jekyll. He wrote notes on it, asking her questions about planting and plant sourcing, and she responded with her own instructions. The other plan is a rough pencil copy of one of Jekyll's detailed herbaceous border designs, given to the architect for reference.

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Together, these plans show that the garden project was active in July 1914, just before the First World War began. They capture the creative exchange between Jekyll and the architect as they brought her designs to life. These documents offer a fascinating insight into Jekyll's methods and types of plants and shrubs, confirming that the garden was fully planted.

The Surrey History Centre's Conservator, with funding from the Surrey Gardens Trust, has meticulously conserved the garden plans. The conservation process included surface cleaning, light humidification and flattening to remove creases, and repairing torn or fragile areas using wheat starch paste and Japanese paper. Once conserved, the plans will be mounted on sturdy boards and protected in archival polyester sleeves. The plans will be featured in an exhibition of archive treasures at the Surrey History Centre's Open Day on **Saturday 8th March**.

Councillor Denise Turner Stewart, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities, said:

"The donation of these plans is a remarkable addition to our collection. Gertrude Jekyll's work continues to inspire and educate, and we are thrilled to preserve and share these historical documents with the public.

The upcoming Open Day on 8th March is a fantastic opportunity for residents and visitors to explore these plans and other fascinating collections. With our friendly and helpful staff, we would like to see as many residents as possible using the Surrey History Centre for research and discovering the fascinating history of the county of Surrey.

Whether you're a history buff or simply curious about our work, the day will offer something for everyone, so do come along and explore our diverse collections."

Sarah Dickinson, Chair of Surrey Gardens Trust, added:

"It is a rare moment when lost Gertrude Jekyll plans come to light. These are working drawings, the tools of her trade. They enhance our understanding of Jekyll's garden design practice. They narrate a moment in history, the Summer of 1914, when a Jekyll design and its planting is being implemented.

We are transported to Jekyll's desk and witness her tenacity as she responds to questions from the architect who is overseeing the planting of this garden. Surrey Gardens Trust is equally thrilled to be part of this revelation and to support the preservation and presentation of these unique documents."

For more information on the **Open Day** and to book a place on a behind-the-scenes tour, please visit the **Surrey History Centre website**.

Discover more about **Gertrude Jekyll sources** at the Surrey History Centre.

Explore **Gertrude Jekyll's Surrey Archive** on the **Surrey Gardens Trust's website** for additional insights.

Epsom Schools Lead the Way in Pioneering Mobile Phone Pilot

6 March 2025



Glyn School and **Rosebery School** in Epsom are at the forefront of a groundbreaking initiative aimed at tackling smartphone distractions in the classroom. The schools, both part of the GLF multi-academy trust, are participating in a pilot scheme that restricts social media and messaging apps during school hours.

The initiative, which also includes Meridian High School in Croydon and Merstham Park School in Surrey, will see all students in Years 7-9—around 2,300 pupils—install an app called Blackout. This app blocks access to non-essential apps such as social media, games, cameras, and web browsers while still allowing calls, SMS, maps, and calendars. The restriction will only apply during school hours and term time.

Glyn and Rosebery schools, both well-respected within the Epsom community, have been chosen to help test whether this technology can improve student wellbeing and classroom focus. The rise in smartphone usage has been linked to increased anxiety and reduced concentration, and educators are keen to explore solutions that promote healthier digital habits.

A parent at Rosebery School voiced strong support for the initiative, saying: *"Well done to Rosebery and GLF Schools for trialling the Blackout technology. Teachers are on the front line every day, dealing with the disruption caused by smartphones. If this helps students focus and reduces distractions, I'm all for it."*

The pilot will continue after the February half-term, with students required to install the app if they bring a phone to school. Glyn and Rosebery's existing phone policies will remain in place, with additional checks to ensure compliance.

Julian Drinkall, CEO of GLF Schools, emphasised the trust's commitment to exploring new approaches to mobile phone

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use in education: *"We understand why some schools have introduced outright mobile phone bans, but we believe technology can be part of the solution rather than just a problem. Blackout offers a way to encourage positive digital habits while still allowing essential communication between students and parents."*

Amy Anderson, Headteacher at Meridian High School, echoed this view: *"This pilot allows us to take a more refined approach to phone management. Instead of just confiscating devices, we can use technology to help students engage more fully in their learning environment."*

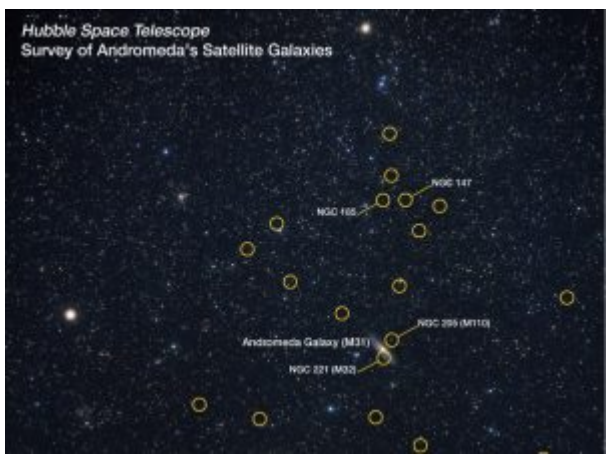
The effectiveness of the trial will be assessed through student, parent, and staff feedback, with key metrics including improved concentration, reduced classroom disruptions, and enhanced student wellbeing. If successful, the initiative could be expanded to more schools in the GLF network and beyond.

Privacy concerns have been addressed, with Blackout confirming that the app does not access personal data such as messages, browser history, or location tracking. It simply blocks non-essential apps during school hours.

Glyn and Rosebery's participation in this pilot reinforces their reputation as forward-thinking schools, willing to embrace innovative solutions to enhance student learning and wellbeing. As local pupils and parents adjust to the new system, the Epsom community will be watching closely to see if this pioneering approach proves to be the key to a more focused and productive school day.

Surrey University boldy go to the next galaxy

6 March 2025



A collaboration of more than 30 international institutions, including the University of Surrey, has observed vast differences in the dynamic ecosystem of smaller satellite galaxies orbiting our neighbour galaxy, Andromeda. Surveyed using images from over 1,000 Hubble Space Telescope orbits, the findings have given scientists new insights into the evolution of galactic systems.

The study, published in The Astrophysical Journal, found that Andromeda's satellite system is notably different from our own Milky Way, 2.5 million lightyears apart. While both galaxies are surrounded by a flotilla of smaller dwarf galaxies, Andromeda likely hosts three times as many – offering a rare glimpse into their unique history and formation.

Dr Michelle Collins, Associate Professor at the University of Surrey's School of Mathematics and Physics and co-author of the study, said:

"What we've discovered is that these tiny systems have evolved quite differently from those around the Milky Way. Whether this divergence stems from a massive merger – a slow, gradual collision in Andromeda a few billion years ago – or whether it reflects the natural diversity of the smallest galaxies remains a mystery we're working to unravel."

One of the study's key themes is how Andromeda's dwarf galaxies have formed and sustained stars in unexpected ways compared to those around the Milky Way. Researchers had long assumed low-mass galaxies would follow similar patterns, but the Andromeda system tells a different story. These satellite galaxies appear to have experienced a more complex evolutionary history, with some continuing to form stars far longer than anticipated.

Lead author of the study, Dr Alessandro Savino, from the University of California, Berkeley, said:

"Star formation really continued to much later times, which is not at all what you would expect for these dwarf galaxies. This doesn't appear in computer simulations. No one knows what to make of that so far."

To explore these differences more closely, researchers at the University of Surrey are working to understand the forces driving these unexpected evolutionary patterns. A follow-up study will investigate the mass profiles and dark matter distribution of Andromeda's satellite galaxies, integrating data from this paper with new observational measurements.

Dr Collins, who will lead the research, said:

"We've established that there are clear differences, but what I'm really interested in now is why these differences exist. What factors have shaped Andromeda's satellites in ways we don't see in the Milky Way?"

Combining the latest Hubble data with ongoing studies at Surrey, the team plans to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms shaping galaxies across the universe. Additionally, Hubble is providing the first set of imaging that allows astronomers to measure the motions of Andromeda's dwarf galaxies – offering a rare opportunity to track their movements and reconstruct their past interactions.

To find out more, visit the Space Telescope Science Institute's news page.

Image credit: NASA, ESA, Alessandro Savino (UC Berkeley), Joseph DePasquale (STScI), Akira Fujii DSS2

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THE STATION, IN STONELEIGH, REOPENS FOLLOWING MAJOR SIX-FIGURE INVESTMENT

6 March 2025



SPONSORED ARTICLE:

Popular Stoneleigh pub, The Station, on The Broadway, has reopened to the public following an exciting six-figure renovation designed to revitalise the existing site and give it a brand-new look and feel.

The Station closed its doors in January and is now reopening following completion of major works both inside and out, reaffirming the popular pub as a central community space.



The inside of the pub has received a complete makeover to create a modern, welcoming atmosphere with new refreshed décor and an open plan layout divided into zones for various occasions, including a cocktail area, a TV-free restaurant/dining area, and a sports bar, with plentiful TVs including ones situated in the new outdoor pergola.

Customers will find comfort and convenience at the pub with the new layout, including bookable booths and a champagne table, providing a cosy and private space to enjoy time with friends and family. The pub can cater to gatherings of varying sizes in its revamped function room and the refurbished toilets offer improved facilities for all.

Anna Carrier, General Manager of The Station said: “Our brilliant team at The Station, are excited to showcase our new and improved pub to the local community. We’re looking forward to welcoming both new and old customers!

“The renovation has given the pub a new lease of life, and we’re confident that customers will love our improved facilities, whether they’re looking for a drink with friends, a meal with the family, are booking a party, or enjoying a sporting event, there really is something for everyone!”

The stunning gardens have undergone a huge transformation too and now offer a variety of comfortable seating from booths, high seats to normal tables, along with mood lighting and heating. The outdoor areas now offer even more space for relaxation or to dine and drink with friends whilst watching the sport on new outdoor TVs.

The pub offers Sky and TNT Sports, showing all major matches throughout the year, so sports fans need never miss a second of the action. The venue is also registered on the Greene King Sport App for countless deals.

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Alongside seasonal events, The Station will host a regular programme of activities, including bingo every Tuesday, Thursday quiz nights, and live entertainment every Friday.

The Station reopens with a delicious menu, with many deals including irresistible small plates, perfect for sharing, priced at three for £15, or five for £22.50. Plus, there is a dedicated kids' menu, a Lunch Club menu, and a fabulous weekly Steak Thursday ensuring there's plenty of variety for everyone to enjoy. A Sunday menu is also available serving traditional roasts for all the family.

The investment has provided multiple job opportunities to the local community and the pub team has grown, offering around 10 new jobs for locals.

The Station reopened on the 21 February and is located on The Broadway, Stoneleigh, Epsom, KT17 2JA. For more information visit: https://www.greeneking.co.uk/pubs/surrey/station

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Epsom and Ewell Leads South East in Small Business Growth

6 March 2025

Region	% Growth in Small Businesses (2023 to 2024) in the Region	Top Authority	Small business number 2023	Small business number 2024	% Growth in Small Businesses (2023 to 2024)
East Midlands	-1	Oadby and Wigston	2060	2155	4.61
East of England	0.4	Harlow	3215	3360	4.51
West Midlands	-1.35	Solihull	7815	8145	4.22
London	0.55	Camden	33930	35290	4.01
South East	**-0.09**	**Epsom and Ewell**	**3470**	**3570**	**2.88**
North West	-0.53	Fylde	3250	3330	2.46
South West	-0.24	Tewkesbury	4180	4280	2.39
Scotland	0.39	Na h-Eileanan Siar	1170	1195	2.14
Northern Ireland	0.85	Mid and East Antrim	4990	5085	1.9
Wales	-1.72	Isle of Anglesey	2610	2650	1.53
North East	-0.77	Stockton-on-Tees	5285	5350	1.23
Yorkshire and the Humber	-1.51	Kirklees	15070	15070	0

Epsom and Ewell has emerged as the fastest-growing local authority in the South East of England for small businesses, according to new data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) analysed by BusinessFinancing.co.uk. The borough gained 100 new small businesses in 2024, representing a 2.88% increase—the highest growth rate in the region.

This growth is particularly significant given that the South East as a whole experienced a slight decline in the number of small businesses, with a recorded drop of -0.09%. Epsom and Ewell's performance stands in contrast to this regional trend, highlighting the borough's resilience and business-friendly environment.

The latest analysis was conducted by BusinessFinancing.co.uk, which examined data from the ONS to determine small business growth rates across local authorities in the UK. Their study identifies the areas where entrepreneurial activity is thriving, despite the economic challenges of recent years, including Brexit-related trading difficulties and the lingering impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The strong performance of Epsom and Ewell may be attributed to its strategic location, well-connected transport links, and the continued support for local enterprise initiatives. Business owners in the borough have also benefited from improved access to credit, as financial institutions report an increase in successful loan applications for small firms.

Local business leaders have welcomed the findings, seeing them as an encouraging sign that Epsom and Ewell remains an attractive destination for entrepreneurs. "It's fantastic to see our borough leading the South East in small business growth," said **Richard Excell** of Epsom based **Excell Design & Marketing** and the **Epsom Business Club**, "This reflects the hard work and resilience of our local entrepreneurs who continue to drive innovation and employment in our community."

BusinessFinancing.co.uk has also created a nationwide map showcasing their findings across the UK, which illustrates the varying rates of small business growth. Their analysis highlights Aberdeen as the UK's leading city for small business expansion, with a 1.95% increase.

With Epsom and Ewell bucking the regional trend and proving to be a hub for entrepreneurial activity, the future looks promising for small businesses in the borough. Continued investment in local infrastructure and support networks will be key to sustaining this momentum and ensuring long-term prosperity for the area's business community.

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

6 March 2025

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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.

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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)

Related reports:

Sir Ed supporting Epsom based Ukraine charities

Fire Assembly for Ukraine

2 years on Epsom to gather in solidarity with Ukraine

Surrey Uni Zebrafish Study Links Blood Pressure Drug to Potential ADHD Treatment

6 March 2025



A commonly prescribed blood pressure medication could offer a safer alternative for treating ADHD symptoms, according to a new study involving the University of Surrey. The findings suggest that amlodipine, a well-established drug for managing hypertension, may help reduce hyperactivity and impulsivity, key characteristics of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

From Fish to Humans: Genetic Links in ADHD Research

The study, published in *Neuropsychopharmacology*, tested five potential drugs in rats genetically bred to exhibit ADHD-like symptoms. Of these, only amlodipine significantly reduced hyperactivity. To validate the findings, researchers turned to zebrafish (*Danio rerio*), an important model organism in neurological studies, which shares approximately **70% of its genes** with humans. The zebrafish trials confirmed that amlodipine reduces hyperactivity and impulsivity, and for the first time, researchers confirmed that the drug crosses the blood-brain barrier, directly influencing brain function.

Further analysis of human genetic data reinforced the findings, showing that ADHD is linked to calcium channels in the brain—the same targets of amlodipine. A review of UK-wide patient records further strengthened the case, revealing that individuals taking amlodipine reported fewer mood swings and a lower tendency for risk-taking behaviour.

Dr Matthew Parker, co-author of the study from the University of Surrey, noted:
"Repurposing amlodipine, a well-established blood pressure medication, offers a promising and swift pathway to address ADHD symptoms. Our research indicates that, due to its existing approval and safety profile, amlodipine could be rapidly redeployed as a treatment option for ADHD, potentially providing relief to patients sooner than developing new medications."

Why Zebrafish? The Genetic Overlap with Humans

Zebrafish have become an invaluable model in medical research due to their high genetic similarity with humans. In fact, they share a greater proportion of their genes with humans than many might expect. Some examples include:

- **Chimpanzees** (~98-99%) – our closest genetic relatives.
- **Mice** (~85%) – widely used in biomedical research.
- **Dogs** (~84%) – studied for genetic diseases and neurological conditions.
- **Zebrafish** (~70%) – a crucial model for studying brain function and drug effects.
- **Fruit flies** (~60%) – key for understanding genetics and neurobiology.

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Because of this genetic overlap, zebrafish are often used in drug discovery, particularly for neurological disorders. Their transparent embryos and rapid development allow scientists to study the effects of medications in real-time.

A Safer Alternative to Existing ADHD Medications?

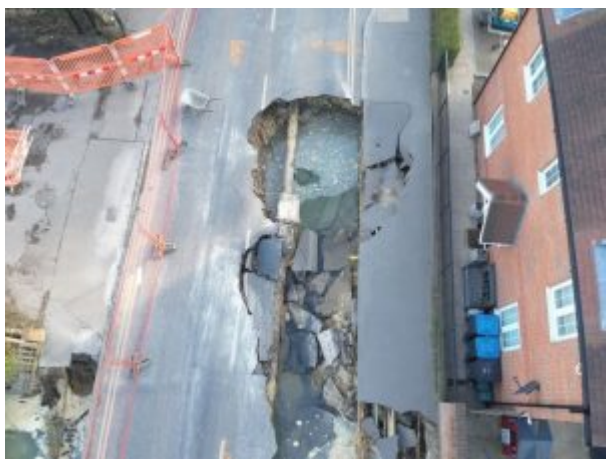
Current ADHD treatments, such as stimulant medications, are effective but often come with significant side effects, including appetite loss, high blood pressure, headaches, and sleep disturbances. Additionally, stimulant medications carry a risk of misuse. Amlodipine, already widely prescribed and well-tolerated, could offer a new alternative with a safer profile.

With approximately **25% of ADHD patients not responding well to existing treatments**, the need for new options is urgent. If further clinical trials confirm these findings, amlodipine could be repurposed as an ADHD treatment much faster than developing a brand-new drug, providing relief for patients sooner.

The study highlights the importance of genetic research in understanding brain disorders and demonstrates how unlikely connections—such as a heart medication treating a neurodevelopmental condition—can lead to breakthroughs in medical science.

Surrey sink-hole major incident

6 March 2025



A significant sinkhole has emerged on Godstone High Street in Surrey, leading to evacuations and widespread disruptions. The incident began on Monday night when a section of the road collapsed, revealing a hole filled with water. By Tuesday morning, the sinkhole had expanded to approximately 20 metres in length and 6 metres in width.

Surrey County Council has declared the situation a major incident, with the Surrey Local Resilience Forum overseeing the response. Assistant Director for Safer Communities, Carl Bussey, stated that efforts are underway in collaboration with emergency services, utility companies, and Tandridge District Council to ensure public safety and restore essential services.

The sinkhole’s rapid expansion has led to the evacuation of around 30 properties within a 100-metre cordon. Residents have been advised to avoid the area while investigations and repairs are conducted. The incident has also resulted in the closure of Godstone High Street between Oxted Road and Bletchingley Road, with diversions in place for the foreseeable future.

The cause of the sinkhole is believed to be a burst water main. SES Water has confirmed that engineers are on-site working to repair the damaged pipe and restore water supplies to affected homes. In the interim, bottled water is being distributed to residents.

Local residents have expressed concerns over the incident. Some evacuees have reported hearing cracking sounds and witnessing the sinkhole’s growth overnight. One resident described the scene as resembling the aftermath of an earthquake, with buckled roads and pavements.

Authorities are urging the public to follow updates from Surrey County Council, Surrey Highways, and Tandridge District Council on social media for the latest information regarding the situation.

Prominent Residents Association Councillor leaves the fold

6 March 2025

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Councillor **Alex Coley**, who has represented Ruxley Ward in Ewell for seven years, has announced his resignation from the ruling Residents' Association (RA) group, opting to serve as an Independent councillor. In his resignation letter addressed to RA Group Chair **Hannah Dalton** (RA Stoneleigh) on 11 February 2025, Cllr Coley expressed deep concerns about the council's financial trajectory and his inability to support the proposed 2025/26 budget.

Throughout his tenure, Cllr Coley has been instrumental in advancing several key initiatives, including the Climate Change Action Plan, the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy, and the Community Safety Strategy. He also played a pivotal role in enhancing governance and transparency as Vice Chair of Audit & Scrutiny and of Standards & Constitution.

He also stood as an independent candidate in the last election for Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner receiving a highly creditable 16% (42,062) of the vote being just a little less than half the votes cast for the Conservative Party incumbent Lisa Townsend.

He was an independent minded Councillor on 22nd March 2023 when he walked out of a Full Council meeting protesting the ruling group's pause progressing the Local Plan.

His recent efforts to promote Epsom & Ewell as a cultural and creative destination led him to uncover unsettling truths about the council's finances and property management. "In my pursuit of this goal, I have uncovered many unhappy truths about our finances and the properties we own and operate for the benefit of our residents," he stated in his letter.

Cllr Coley voiced apprehension about the council's financial sustainability, indicating that he believes the council may face insolvency by 2026. "I have thought for some time that 2026 is the year this Council runs out of money," he remarked, highlighting a lack of clarity and planning for this potential outcome.

The RA group has maintained majority control of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council since its formation in 1937. In the 2023 local elections, the RA secured 26 out of 35 seats, reaffirming its dominant position. Despite this longstanding control, the council has faced financial challenges. In February 2021, RA leader Eber Kington acknowledged a £5.8 million deficit, underscoring the fiscal difficulties confronting the council.

Cllr Coley's departure from the RA group underscores the ongoing concerns about the council's financial health and the need for transparent and effective fiscal management. As he transitions to an Independent role, he remains committed to collaborating with residents' groups to serve the best interests of the community.

The council approved the 2025/26 budget. The budget includes a 2.98% increase in the borough council portion of council tax, equating to an additional £6.75 per year for the average Band D property. Despite this increase, Epsom & Ewell's council tax remains below the average for Surrey.

Related reports:

Epsom & Ewell Full Council Meeting: Budget Approved Amid Debate

Planning or pantomime? Councillors press pause on Plan.

Epsom complainant changes Surrey police procedure

6 March 2025



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Surrey Police Accepts Recommendation to Improve Retention of Body-Worn Video Evidence in Complaints

Surrey Police has agreed to implement a key recommendation from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) following a complaint by an Epsom resident regarding the retention of body-worn video (BWV) footage in police complaints.

The issue arose from an incident on 12 April 2023, when the complainant was filmed by a police officer, PC Scruby, during a meeting at his mother's address. The complainant alleged that he was not informed he was being recorded until ten minutes into their interaction. He later raised concerns that the footage, which he believed could substantiate his account, had been deleted under Surrey Police's 28-day evidence retention policy before it could be considered in his complaint.

After being dissatisfied with the response from Surrey Police's Professional Standards Department (PSD) in October 2024, the complainant appealed to the OPCC. The OPCC conducted a review and found that Surrey Police's service was acceptable in 18 out of 19 points raised in the complaint. However, it upheld one element of the complaint, determining that the complaint handler had failed to properly investigate the complainant's concerns regarding what the officer had said during the meeting.

The review confirmed that the interaction had been recorded on BWV, but the footage was not secured by Surrey Police despite the complaint being made the following day on 13 April 2023. As a result, in line with the force's BWV policy, the footage was automatically deleted from the system without being saved, rendering it unavailable as evidence in the complaint process.

In response to the case, the OPCC issued a recommendation that complaint handlers should secure any BWV footage providing evidence in a complaint against police at the earliest opportunity and, in any case, within 28 days of the alleged incident. This measure is aimed at closing a procedural gap that may hinder transparency and accountability in police investigations.

The complainant expressed frustration over the deletion of potentially valuable evidence, stating: "It is concerning that evidence which could clarify what happened during my interaction with the officer was destroyed. I welcome the OPCC's recognition that procedural changes are needed."

The OPCC's report also addressed broader concerns raised in the complaint, including allegations of inadequate communication and procedural mishandling by PSD. While it found that Surrey Police's actions were generally in line with existing procedures, the recommendation for improved evidence retention was seen as a necessary step to enhance the fairness and thoroughness of future complaint investigations.

Surrey Police confirmed that it accepted the recommendation in full on 20 January 2025, with the PSD now in the process of implementing the change.

This development highlights ongoing efforts to ensure greater accountability and efficiency in police complaint handling, reinforcing public trust in the system.

Image: West Midlands Police – CC BY-SA 2.0

Surrey leading the shout: "Keep the noise down will you!"

6 March 2025



An interdisciplinary network of engineers, policymakers, industry stakeholders and social scientists, led by the University of Surrey, will take on one of the UK's most overlooked environmental challenges: noise pollution.

From the constant hum of road traffic to the thousands of flights in and out of UK airports, noise awareness in our modern world often fades into the background – but it carries significant consequences for both human health and wildlife. Noise Network Plus will focus on promoting conscious design processes to create quieter products, buildings and transportation systems – with the aim of reducing noise pollution and building a healthier environment over the next 10-15 years.

Professor Mark Plumbley, project lead and Professor of Signal Processing at the University of Surrey's Centre for Vision, Speech and Signal Processing (CVSSP), said:

"Noise is a frequently neglected pollutant, but it has a big impact on health, society and the environment. For example, road noise can lead to sleep disturbance and heart disease, costing £7-10 billion each year in England alone. Once noise is out there, it is really hard to remove. We need to re-think how we design noise from the start."

Awarded more than £1.8 million in funding, Noise Network Plus is one of six research projects to receive a share of £10 million from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). Together they form part of its wider

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community engagement initiative to address ‘Tomorrow’s Engineering Research Challenges’ (TERC), launched today (11th February), which focuses on tackling the most pressing issues facing the engineering sector.

Professor Abigail Bristow from the University of Surrey, said:

“We’re at a pivotal moment in time where our environment is under threat, but we have the technology and expertise to make meaningful changes. Our mission-oriented research and innovation network will look to adopt a systems-thinking approach, addressing the root causes of noise and understanding its far-reaching impacts.”

A collaboration between the University of Surrey, City St George’s University of London, the University of Bath, and the University of Salford, Noise Network Plus aims to build unprecedented research capabilities to tackle the complex challenge of reducing noise and its impacts on people, the environment and the economy. Bringing together diverse teams and stakeholders, the initiative will promote inclusive dialogue and co-design innovative solutions.

Alan Hunter, Professor in Autonomous Systems based in the University of Bath’s Department of Mechanical Engineering, will lead the network’s efforts on underwater noise and artificial intelligence. This will include research into the effects of noise created by human activities at sea and improving the resilience of uncrewed underwater vehicles to noise. Professor Hunter said:

“The ocean is a noisy place, and a lot of the tools and technologies we rely on to deliver services either increase noise levels or are affected by noise. Taking oceanographic measurements, measuring marine wildlife populations, or inspecting underwater infrastructure, are all examples of activities affected by noise and of which we need to build a better understanding.”

Professor Antonio Torija Martinez and Dr Simone Graetzer are co-leads on the project at the University of Salford’s Acoustic Research Centre. Professor Martinez said:

“As the UK moves toward Net Zero, the adoption of sustainable energy and emerging technologies – such as wind turbines and drones – will introduce new sources of noise, fundamentally reshaping our soundscapes. This offers us a unique opportunity for a fresh start and through our initiative, we aim to transform the way noise is managed, embedding innovative solutions into engineering design and policy.”

Professor Charlotte Clark, Professor of Environmental Epidemiology in the Population Health Research Institute at City St George’s, University of London, said:

“This is a rare and timely opportunity to form multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary teams to develop engineering solutions addressing the problem of noise effects on health. We know that noise affects health, but we know little about how to mitigate the problem. The missions developed in the Noise Network Plus have the potential to step up mitigation efforts that will translate into major, long-term public health gains.”

The launch of Noise Network Plus will take place on 18th March at Prince Philip House, the home of the Royal Academy of Engineering, in London. The event will bring together a cross-section of people from engineering and other disciplines including researchers, industry, professional institutions, policymakers, charities, and other stakeholders, to identify the challenges that need to be addressed, and plan how the Network can work to address these challenges.

Professor Adrian Hilton, Director of the Surrey Insititute for People-Centred AI and CVSSP, added:

“Noise Network Plus represents a significant step towards addressing an often-overlooked pollutant and its detrimental impact on people. This interdisciplinary people-centred approach aims to tackle the complex challenges of noise in our modern world and develop innovative solutions for quieter and healthier communities.”

Surrey’s new rail link to Heathrow?

6 March 2025



Plans for a new railway connecting Surrey to Heathrow and beyond have resurfaced as the track’s backers welcomed government support for a third runway at the airport. The line, called the Heathrow Southern Railway (HSR), is a privately financed proposal to link towns in Surrey to one of the world’s busiest airports.

If built, it would operate between Heathrow and London Waterloo via Staines. There would also be direct trains from the airport to Woking and Guildford, before carrying on to the south coast. Heathrow Southern Railway said it also would provide for an extension of the Elizabeth Line to Staines.

Baroness Jo Valentine, the group’s chairperson, said: “The UK Government has set a bold agenda for growth with its support for a third runway at Heathrow Airport. Our railway enhances that growth by increasing connectivity and reducing surface emissions. These benefits accrue with a two runway airport but will be enhanced with an additional runway. We look forward to working with all partners to make this a reality.”

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Mark Livock, chief executive, added: “The new Government has expressed interest in finding ways to harness private sector finance in making the delivery of major infrastructure schemes more affordable. Heathrow Southern Railway has a depth of experience in creating opportunities for private investment that could deliver tangible benefits to the UK, and southern rail access to Heathrow would positively transform public transport connectivity to Europe’s busiest airport.”

The group estimates that the new route would cut about millions of road journeys – with many of those from the M25. They added: “Our construction plans minimise the impact on neighbouring communities by providing a route mainly in tunnel and using only electric trains. Unlike the previous “Airtrack” proposals, HSR avoids level crossings in the Egham area.”

An HSR spokesperson said: “Our proposed route starts at Heathrow’s Terminal 5 station and is intended to run mainly in tunnel and be electrified to minimise environmental impact. It rises to the surface to connect to the existing railway near Staines and Virginia Water.”

Related reports:

Heathrow expansion reaction

“Blocks away” from airport expansions

Hsr Proposed Route (Image Heathrow Southern Rail)

Elections Delayed as Surrey Faces Uncertain Future of Local Government Shake-Up

6 March 2025



Surrey residents will have to wait an extra year to vote in the county elections following the government’s decision to postpone the polls from May 2025 to May 2026. The delay comes as part of a sweeping local government reorganisation that will see the biggest structural shake-up in fifty years. However, concerns are mounting over the rushed timetable, the fate of council debts, and the financial burden that could fall on responsible local authorities.

Reorganisation at Speed

The government’s drive for local government reform is progressing at an accelerated pace, with councils required to submit interim proposals by 21 March 2025 and finalised plans by 9 May 2025. The reform aims to replace Surrey’s current two-tier system – where Surrey County Council oversees borough and district councils – with unitary authorities that will consolidate power at a higher level.

Under plans being considered, a directly elected mayor could manage strategic services such as policing, fire and rescue, health, and education. However, uncertainty remains over whether the new unitary system will feature a single authority covering all of Surrey’s 1.2 million residents or two to three smaller councils.

Who Pays the Price?

A key source of controversy is the issue of existing council debts, particularly in boroughs such as Woking, Spelthorne, and Runnymede, which have amassed a combined debt exceeding £3 billion. Woking has already declared effective bankruptcy, with Spelthorne and Runnymede under government scrutiny.

Local leaders across Surrey are voicing their objections to any attempt to spread the financial burden of these debts across councils that have maintained responsible fiscal management.

Councillor Richard Biggs, leader of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, said: “Our view remains that plans should not support any restructuring of local government boundaries based on ‘redistributing’ the debt of other authorities.” His council, along with others, has worked to maintain financial stability while continuing to provide additional services beyond statutory requirements.

The Residents’ Association and Independents Group at Surrey County Council has strongly criticised the government’s approach, arguing that it is forcing through change with “zero funding” while suggesting that costs could be covered by selling off council-owned assets. Group leader Councillor Catherine Powell raised concerns that the government expects local authorities to fund reorganisation through “capital receipts,” which could mean selling buildings currently used to deliver essential services.

Opposition to Election Postponement

The Surrey Leaders Group, a forum representing the county’s borough and district councils, has already voiced opposition to the decision to delay elections. Chair of the group, Councillor **Hannah Dalton**, (RA Epsom and Ewell for Stoneleigh

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ward), warned that the proposed reorganisation could remove decision-making from local communities and lacks clarity on how existing debts will be handled.

“There is a real risk that new authorities will be set up to fail,” said Cllr Dalton, highlighting the potential for new unitary councils to inherit substantial financial liabilities without sufficient funding or support from the government.

A Distracted Local Government

Critics argue that the rapid timeline for reorganisation is an unwelcome distraction at a time when councils are struggling with increased demand for statutory services, including social care and housing. Concerns have also been raised about the practicalities of implementing a new financial IT system for the newly formed authorities, given that Surrey County Council’s recent system overhaul has been plagued with problems.

With just weeks to prepare draft proposals and a final deadline in early May, councils across Surrey are left scrambling to determine the best way forward. The government’s insistence on a rapid restructuring without clear funding commitments has left many questioning whether the changes will deliver better services—or simply create further financial and administrative chaos.

For now, Surrey residents must wait for further clarity on how their local government will be reshaped, and more crucially, who will bear the cost of these sweeping changes.

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