

Epsom PC is tough on crime and the causes of crime

9 February 2024



Police Constable **Bethan Evans-Jones** has been working to reduce shoplifting in **Epsom & Ewell** including working with one prolific individual who has recently been convicted of 24 counts of theft. Thanks to her interventions, he is also being supported to break out of the cycle of crime.

Bethan joined Surrey Police in 2022 via Police Now's National Graduate Leadership Programme, which recruits, trains and develops talented graduates to excel as neighbourhood officers across England and Wales. Previously training to be a solicitor and working in her local MP's office before deciding to become a police officer, Bethan speaks to us about her role on the frontline and her passion for supporting vulnerable people in the community.

Last summer, Bethan investigated a series of repeated thefts that targeted a petrol station in the borough of Epsom & Ewell.

Bethan began to visit the petrol station as part of her regular patrol route, and developed strong relationships with the staff, to ensure she would be directly alerted to any incidents while in the area.

She was subsequently able to intercept and arrest the offender as he attempted to shoplift alcohol. Thanks to the evidence she gathered during her investigation, he was convicted of 24 counts of theft at a local magistrates' court. He was given a Community Protection Warning prohibiting him from entering any local businesses without the means to pay. He is also required to undertake drug rehabilitation and to pay compensation for his offences.

Police Constable Bethan Evans-Jones said: "I'm pleased to have been able to support staff at the local petrol station, who have the right to feel safe in their place of work.

"It is also important to me that the offender is supported to break out of the cycle of crime he had fallen into and receive the help he needs. He is well known within the community and, despite the crimes he committed, the shop staff spoke kindly of him – so it was important to all of us that he receive help.

"I referred him to local partner agencies, and he was able to get help from a charity that supports those with drug addictions and was also assigned a social support worker. He recognised that these were the first steps to 'getting better' and we believe that this will be an important step to prevent him from re-offending.

"Drugs and drug misuse has become a particular area of interest for me, because of the often-vulnerable nature of the offender themselves, as well as the need for victim support. This is the kind of thing that neighbourhood police officers can really support with, through strong partnership working with local charities and organisations, as well as compassion and a real understanding of what the vulnerable members of society experience. Getting to know people in the neighbourhood and being on patrol is what ultimately enabled me to apprehend this individual.

"That's one of the reasons I decided to join the force via Police Now's neighbourhood programme, where I knew I could embed myself in the local community and build relationships to make a difference. The programme also offers other development opportunities and I have successfully secured a four-week secondment with the Home Office to work on county lines policy. This will be a great opportunity to develop my skills further and bring key knowledge back to my neighbourhood, to better support residents across Epsom and Ewell."

West Surrey Intelligence Manager, **Inspector Alan Knight**, said: "Bethan is a very competent and capable police officer. She has the principles of community policing at the heart of all the work she undertakes, and this is reflected in what she has achieved.

"By tackling the core issue of the matter and diverting offenders from the vicious circle of reoffending to fund an addiction, Bethan has not only supported her community by preventing future criminality but is inspiring neighbourhoods that feel safe. I hope that the results in this case will provide reassurance to victims of crime that we are focused on pursuing those responsible.

"Bethan's work has shown that working with communities and victims of crime promotes the partnership sharing of intelligence and information which is so vital when combating all levels of criminality."

Epsom MP cuts ribbon of new nursery

9 February 2024



Children at a new nursery welcomed MP **Chris Grayling** who cut the ribbon to officially open the new provision at an Epsom school.

The **Vale Primary School** now offers a curriculum for two to 11-year-olds and its nursery already has 23 children on the roll with more joining in the spring.

Mr Grayling, MP for Epsom and Ewell, joined **Julian Drinkall**, CEO at GLF Schools, in cutting the ribbon to officially open the nursery on Wednesday 7 February.

"I was delighted to be invited to attend the official opening," said Mr Grayling. "The additional nursery places will support the government's expansion of childcare support to working parents and offer the local community free, funded 15 and 30 hour early years places for two, three and four-year olds. It is clearly going to be a really happy nursery," he added.

The school is a member of the GLF Schools Multi-Academy Trust which has a strategy to promote school readiness by ensuring as many as possible of its primary schools can cater for children aged from two to 11 with a school-run nursery on site.

Sarah Leyland and **Cathy Browne**, co-heads at The Vale, said they were both very proud of the hard work and community collaboration which has seen the creation of 'such a positive environment for our young children.'

To add to the celebration aspect of the event, a specially made cake depicting the school logo and an array of cupcakes were made by a former parent of the school.

"I am delighted for our community and the parents and carers with us today that GLF can offer this new nursery provision. GLF's nursery strategy emphasises the importance of ensuring our youngest children have access to high quality early education and being ready to start school," said Mr Drinkall.

“It was clear today that our new nursery at The Vale Primary School is quickly becoming an integral part of the local community and provides local families with the opportunity to access a new and exciting two-11 curriculum.”

The nursery will be holding an open morning on Wednesday, March 6 and Friday, March 8 and visits can be booked at the school on 01372 273639 or via info@thevaleprimary.org

The Vale Primary School website also has details on how nursery funding is changing and how parents can apply for funded places for 15 hours childcare for two-year-olds. More details on www.thevaleprimary.org

Primark to open in Epsom

9 February 2024



Primark will occupy 44,000 sq ft in the former House of Fraser space in the Ashley Centre, Epsom, utilising two floors and sitting adjacent to the scheme’s central square near retailers such as JD. Forming the destination’s anchor tenant, the new store will feature Primark’s full offer, incorporating menswear, womenswear and childrenswear, as well as accessories, beauty, home, and lifestyle. The store is expected to create around 100 jobs for the local community and is set to open in early 2025.

Louisa Butters, Head of Retail Asset Management UK at CBRE IM, commented: “Primark’s signing is a milestone moment for the Ashley Centre. The opening will mark the final stage of our two-year repositioning project that underpins our long-term strategy for the revitalisation of the Ashley Centre, ensuring that it continues to serve the needs of the community in every way possible. We are looking forward to welcoming Primark early next year, and delivering an optimised and enhanced experience and environment for our visitors.”

Philippa Nibbs, Director of Sales UK, London and the South East at Primark, also said: “As we continue to invest in the UK high street, we are delighted to announce our new store in Epsom that will open next year. We look forward to becoming a part of this community and playing a central role in the refurbished Ashley Centre.”

Primark in Epsom will join Newbury, Berkshire, as the next locations confirmed for Primark in 2025. This follows the recent news that Primark will be investing more than £100m in its UK stores this year, as it celebrates 50 years of Primark on the Great British High Street. Local shoppers in Epsom and the surrounding areas looking to get their Primark fix in the meantime will be able to visit the nearby Sutton, Kingston or Woking stores.

In 2023, the Ashley Centre welcomed a raft of new openings such as JD, Deichmann, and GAIL’s Bakery, forming a key part of the centre’s leasing strategy to evolve its retail and F&B offer. The centre’s £7 million refurbishment will also work in tandem, seeing the reconstruction of the East entrance and enhancements to the interior, creating a refreshed and modern look.

Related Reports:

5 Shops that could replace House of Fraser in the Ashley Centre

Ada of Surrey inspires big AI project

9 February 2024



Drawing inspiration from **Ada Lovelace**, who resided in Surrey, a computing pioneer and translator who overcame societal barriers in the 19th century, the “ADA network” based at **Surrey University** aims to usher in a transformative era of AI research focused on digital inclusion.

Augusta Ada King, Countess of Lovelace (*née Byron*; 10 December 1815 – 27 November 1852) was an English mathematician and writer, chiefly known for her work on Charles Babbage’s proposed mechanical general-purpose computer, the Analytical Engine. She was the first to recognise that the machine had applications beyond pure calculation. In 1835, she married the first Earl of Lovelace, becoming Lady King. They had a home in Ockham Park, Surrey.

The **University of Surrey** has been granted a multi-million-pound award from the **Leverhulme Trust** to spearhead a groundbreaking initiative aimed at ensuring equitable access to artificial intelligence (AI)-powered digital media. This ambitious project, named the Leverhulme Doctoral Scholarships Network for AI-Enabled Digital Accessibility (**ADA**), will receive a grant of £2.15 million over eight years.

Professor **Sabine Braun**, ADA Director at the University of Surrey, emphasized the importance of digital media accessibility, stating that it is pivotal for engaging with various aspects of life, from public information to entertainment. The ADA project aims to leverage AI technology to make digital content accessible to individuals of all ages, languages, cognitive and sensory abilities, and physical mobility.

In today’s digital landscape, interacting with digital content involves complex sensory inputs. However, accessibility issues arise when individuals cannot access content in their preferred language or format. While traditional methods like text subtitles or simplified versions have been used to address these challenges, the sheer volume of digital content necessitates AI-driven solutions.

The ADA project seeks to advance AI-driven accessibility solutions by integrating insights from the humanities and social sciences to better understand user needs.

The Surrey Institute for People-Centred AI (PAI) will host the ADA project, aligning with its mission to advance AI from a human-centric perspective. The project will draw expertise from three renowned research centers at the University of Surrey: the Centre for Translation Studies (CTS), the Centre for Vision, Speech and Signal Processing (CVSSP), and the Nature Inspired Computer and Engineering Research Group (NICE).

CTS will contribute expertise in language and translation technology to improve media accessibility, while CVSSP will leverage its world-leading AI and computer vision capabilities. NICE will provide specific expertise in knowledge-driven AI and machine translation for under-resourced languages.

Professor **Adrian Hilton**, Director of PAI and CVSSP, highlighted ADA's vision to establish a hub for high-quality research training in AI-enabled digital accessibility. By collaborating with Surrey's Digital World Research Centre (DWRC), Digital Societies, and Brain and Behaviour research groups, the ADA project aims to drive meaningful advancements in AI accessibility, ensuring that media services are accessible and inclusive for all individuals and society.

Image: Daguerreotype by Antoine Claudet and Surrey University's newest lab that has 200 machines which are each equipped with a Nvidia Quadro P4000 Graphics Card: useful for intensive jobs that require multiple cores in areas such as data science, AI and deep learning.

Surrey's Tory MPs exiting the County

9 February 2024



Kwasi Kwarteng the Conservative MP for Spelthorne has just joined four other of his Party's Surrey colleagues in announcing he will not stand at the upcoming General Election. Surrey has 11 constituencies and all are held by Conservatives.

With Paul Beresford MP for Mole Valley, Dominic Raab MP for Esher and Walton, Crispin Blunt MP for Reigate and Banstead and our own **Chris Grayling** MP for **Epsom and Ewell**, all having confirmed they are not going to run, this leaves 6 Surrey Conservative MPs still standing.

One can expect Michael Gove MP for Surrey Heath and Jeremy Hunt MP for South-West Surrey, who serve in the Cabinet, to seek re-election. Leaving Jonathan Lord MP for Woking, Ben Spencer MP for Runnymede and Weybridge, Angela Richardson MP for Guildford and Claire Coutinho MP for East Surrey assumed to be still up for the fight.

Epsom and Ewell Conservatives have already put in place their new prospective Parliamentary Candidate, **Mhairi Fraser**, an anti-corruption lawyer.

She will be challenged by **Helen Maguire** of the Liberal Democrats, **Gina Miller** of the True and Fair Party and **Steve Mckenna** of the Green Party. Labour has yet to select its Prospective Parliamentary Candidate.

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Robot puts study at home pupil in the classroom

9 February 2024



One pupil at a Surrey primary school has been utilising virtual technology to help her keep-up with learning by sending a robot into class.

The robot is controlled by the pupil, and gives her the opportunity to be with her friends and classmates even though she cannot be in school physically.

Cuddington Croft Primary enlisted some cutting-edge technology when a Year 5 pupil was forced to take several months off school due to serious illness.

To enable Alexia to continue her studies remotely, the school arranged for an AV1 robot to attend lessons in her place, allowing the youngster to join her classmates virtually.

"The robot was on a table at school, and when Alexia was on, it would 'come to life', and its head could rotate to see the classroom," said **Mike Skelton**, Head Teacher at Cuddington Croft, part of the GLF Schools Multi Academies Trust.

"The aim of the AV1 was to help the pupil to attend lessons while they were unable to be there in person," explained Alexia's teacher, April Riley. "It's been brilliant at making that connection between the pupil and the class. It's mainly for them to join in, listen to the lessons, and still feel part of the class.

"The first few times the pupil came online it was very exciting, and the other children were interested to see how it moved and when the eyes changed et cetera. However, it didn't take much time before it started to feel normal."

"What's great is that they can log on and show off their learning and their work," she continued. "That made them feel like they had done their part, and I think that sense of achievement was really important.

"We had a great example of this in our last English unit where everyone had to read a speech. The pupil came online and read their speech through the AV1, and everyone cheered afterwards."

The portable robot was provided with the help of the **Surrey County Council** Access to Education Team.

"I really love my robot, as I can join in with the lessons in class with my friends and my teacher, and interact with them," said Alexia, who is currently making a phased return to school. "It also makes me feel like I am in the classroom with everyone and lets me see everyone without being seen, as sometimes I don't feel well.

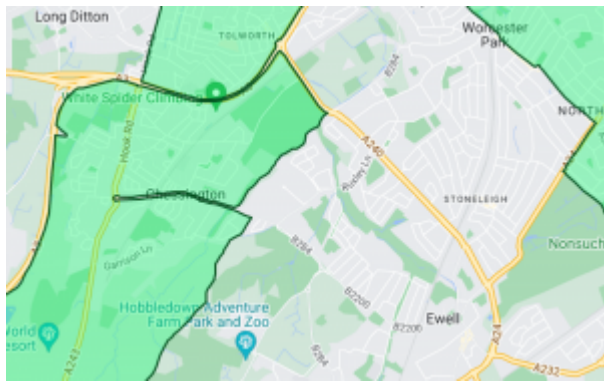
"It allows me to answer questions and to change the colour if I don't feel well but still want to listen into the lesson. Then my teacher knows I am there but might not 'put up my hand' to answer questions.

"I prefer to be in class, but sometimes that's not possible because I am not well, but it still helps me to feel included in the class."

"This technology allowed a child to feel included within her class during the toughest period of her and her family's lives," added Mr Skelton. "It added a sense of normality and togetherness that could not have been achieved through sending work home."

M25 diversion cost me £12.50 ULEZ charge

9 February 2024



Driven to despair and a £12.50 charge, Dorset pensioner complains to Transport for London for inadequate signs before the ULEZ charging A243 at the Hook Junction with the A3. She thanks Epsom and Ewell Times for a better explanation of the zone than provided by TfL.

In fact the TfL explanation has some clarity:

“Rushett Lane is outside the ULEZ. At the junction with the A243, the A243 going north is inside the zone, while going south it is outside the zone. Fair Oak Lane is outside the zone.”

Moreover, Surrey County Council, as an Highway Authority, has indicated an unwillingness to cooperate with the warning signage.

Here is her story of woe:

Dear Editor,

I found clearer information from your on-line newspaper than I could from the TfL website.

It’s probably a waste of breath on my part but if there is a local battle in the Epsom area to have this phallic extension of the Ulez zone sticking out into Surrey, then count me in. I presume it’s to clobber all the tourists going to Chessington Zoo!

On Saturday February 3rd I paid the Ulez congestion charge because I believe my husband and I accidentally drove into the Ulez zone at Hook Junction on the A3 in Surrey without realising it. We had driven up from Dorset on Friday to East Molesey which is outside the Ulez Zone. Then on Saturday morning I took the train from Hampton Court to Vauxhall to pick up my younger son’s dog. However there was chaos on the railway in that area due to trespassers on the line and after several hours of delays I finally got a train back to Esher (instead of Hampton Court) where my husband picked me up. We don’t normally travel into East Molesey via Esher but was assured by my son that it was outside the Ulez Zone. At the Scilly Isles Roundabout we became confused by signs telling us to follow M25 diversion and joined the Kingston By Pass for a short distance which swept us into the Hook Junction interchange. We did not see any Ulez signs en route so just followed the M25 diversion signs which led us down the A243 past Chessington Zoo and eventually to the M25. We later discovered this was to help motorists avoid extreme traffic congestion at Junction 10 on the M25/A3.

When we got home I checked the Ulez map on my computer because we had heard about an extension of the Ulez zone into Surrey from the Surbiton area and while the online maps lack detail it seemed to me that a short length of the A243 Hook Road running south i.e. away from London has been placed inside the Ulez zone, and by following the diversion signs we had accidentally entered the zone for a mile or so.

I have had no choice but to pay the congestion charge or risk being fined, but I do think it is unfair to place M25 diversion signs on major roundabouts without warning that the diversion can take you through a section of the Ulez zone that isn’t even in Greater London.

Out of London visiting pensioners like ourselves, still driving government recommended diesel cars, rely on clear road signs, not trying to read an almost illegible Ulez on-line map on an iPhone.

Yours.

Mrs Geraldine Osment

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ULEZ court challenge begins

Thames Water’s reputation going down the drain

9 February 2024



Thames Water’s spending on infrastructure is “woefully inadequate”, its behaviour a “disgrace”, and direct lines of communications to MPs “unhelpful” – a meeting into the “largest ever” water outages in “recent history” heard.

Last November tens of thousands of homes in and around Guildford and Godalming were left without water when the utility company failed to deal with the impact of Storm Ciarán. Some 20,346 homes were cut off for more than three hours, and 14,520 for 12 hours or more hours – including hospitals and schools.

So far Thames Water has paid out £1.7million pounds in compensation to those impacted.

The outage led to chaotic scenes as people became increasingly angry with the privately owned water company, with reports of staff and volunteers being verbally abused and spat at.

Addressing the Tuesday, January 31, meeting of Guildford Borough Council’s overview and scrutiny committee was Thames Water’s Paul Wetton. He said it was “By far the largest ever we’ve had to manage in recent history”.

The utility company, which reported an 11 per cent increase in its underlying revenue in its interim 2023/24 accounts to £1.2 billion, needed up to 16 tankers to

prop up the network in order to feed water directly to cut off hospitals during the outage. It also delivered 750,000 litres of bottled water to customers described as “priority”.

Thames Water’s Tess Fayers acknowledged the huge disruption and apologised for all the impacted homes, businesses and other critical operators such as hospitals and schools that were cut off. She said: “I’m also aware that there is also a sense of heightened unease about the water supply with a number of issues being raised to us recently which can’t be very helpful to the community. We are here because we are committed to putting things right. We want to make sure we do the right thing by the community and provide you with a constant supply of water.”

Guildford is prone to water problems. All the water available to residents is on a closed network. So if there are problems, extra resources cannot be brought in. Most of the water that goes into the network comes from the ground with the remaining 40 per cent drawn from rivers before being treated for human use. Daily demand sits at around 50 megalitres, the equivalent of 50 million bottles of water. The system essentially runs at maximum capacity with new water being drawn in to replace what is going out. When the power at the processing plants went down during Storm Ciarán, that process stopped and the water ran dry.

People on the tops of hills were impacted first and the last to be restored. Capacity in Guildford is so tightly packed that it’s difficult to find the capacity to enable the investment, the meeting heard.

Tess Fayers said: “Communications were bland, lacked technical information that we should be more bold putting forward.” She added: “Not telling our customers does not help and leaves more people in the dark. Another thing we learned, in all honesty, it’s sometimes unhelpful to have a line of communications running between ourselves and potentially a member of parliament – which doesn’t always allow us to manage the message in the best possible way.”

To improve matters, the meeting heard, an “enhanced” leadership team has been put in place and investment is being made, although capacity issues complicates the matter.

Councillor Danielle Newson (LD, Tillingbourne) said: “ “Your infrastructure spending is woeful completely inadequate. Telling us you can’t actually tell us what you know is just disgraceful when we are paying your bills and your bonuses.”

Deputy leader of the council, Cllr Tom Hunt, said: “I just wonder how many residents in Guildford or Waverley would choose Thames Water today.”

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NESCOT Saturday academies for the young

9 February 2024



Got a young person passionate about animals, cookery, e-sports, film making or another hands-on potential career? Our next Saturday Academy starts 24 Feb 2024 - book now!

The next set of Saturday academies for young people starts soon and places are filling fast. The academies are a popular set of 4-week Saturday courses which offer: Practical, enjoyable, hands-on learning. A taste of a subject for possible a career or further study. A chance to develop a leisure interest. Places in all subjects cost £95 for four three-hour sessions **Click here to book**

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Academy Format and Pricing

We hold Saturday Academies for young people at Nescot in Ewell, near Epsom. The Academies are fun and instructive Saturday courses that last four weeks. They start at 10am and finish at 1pm on consecutive Saturdays. The Academies will all start on Saturday 24th Feb 2024. **The total cost for all four Saturdays in any Academy is £95. Click on the link below for full details.**

[CLICK HERE FOR FULL DETAILS AND BOOKING](#)

NESCOT, Reigate Road, Ewell, Epsom, KT17 3DS
www.nescot.ac.uk

Chalking up a victory for the Hogsmill

9 February 2024



The **South East Rivers Trust** (SERT) has completed the construction of a 2,000m² pollution filter which will bring major benefits to Epsom and Ewell's **Hogsmill** chalk stream.

When planting takes place in the spring, the newly constructed Chamber Mead wetland will protect and improve 5km of river downstream, filtering pollutants and becoming a haven for wildlife.

The project has been carried out in partnership with **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council**, which owns and manages the **Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve**, a popular greenspace which will now benefit from this new community asset.

The wetland is a crucial project for the Hogsmill, which suffers adversely from pollution such as urban road runoff, raw sewage discharges and misconnected plumbing that sends drain water directly into the river. Water from the Green Lanes Stream has been diverted through a sediment trap and two wetlands, with filtered, cleaner water reconnected to the Hogsmill downstream of the famous Stepping Stones.

News about the wetland's completion comes in the week of **World Wetlands Day**, on Friday 2nd February. Dr **Bella Davies**, Co-CEO of SERT, said: "We are delighted that the construction phase of this important wetlands project has now been completed. It is destined to become a jewel in the crown of the Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve. The public has shown great enthusiasm for this project, and we will soon be calling on volunteers and community groups to add the plants that will really make the wetlands flourish as a magnet for wildlife. The water quality improvements that will result from the wetlands are designed to help the river become a healthier place for all, especially wildlife that thrive in a chalk stream, such as brown trout."

Councillor **John Beckett**, (RA Auriol) Chair of the Environment Committee at Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, said: "The council is committed to protecting and enhancing biodiversity in our borough, as per our Biodiversity Action Plan 2020-30. This partnership project with the South East Rivers Trust will help to ensure that the Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve is a place where nature can thrive; from woodpeckers, hedgehogs and bats – to species whose numbers have dwindled such as water voles, fish and eels. We know our residents cherish this Local Nature Reserve and I hope that many can join the community planting days, which are a unique opportunity to be part of this fantastic project."

SERT is now preparing a series of community planting days, to take place in the Spring. These will give residents the chance to plant the vegetation to help the wetlands counter pollutants.

Schools, community groups and residents will be given opportunities to install plants that have been specifically selected to filter pollution, trap sediments and attract a variety of wildlife. Plants selected include yellow flag iris, ragged robin, purple loosestrife and brooklime.

In time, SERT will also offer guided walks and outdoor education sessions for school children. A nature trail is planned for families to interact with the wetlands as they develop, alongside information boards which will detail the reasons why the wetlands were needed and the types of wildlife that should be attracted.

Supported by the Hogsmill Catchment Partnership, the project has received funding from The Coca-Cola Foundation, Natural England (through the Species Recovery Programme), the Environment Agency, Surrey County Council, the Rivers Trust, the Zoological Society of London, Garfield Weston Foundation and Thames Water, with in-kind support from the landowner Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. The new wetlands are part of the wider Replenish programme in partnership with the Coca-Cola Foundation and the Rivers Trust. The aim of Replenish is to restore millions of litres of water in this and other local catchments, in turn improving biodiversity.

The construction of the wetland is expected to cost £1 million. We are proud to have a good mix of funding for this project, including private funding from Coca Cola, Thames Water and charitable grants, as well as public funding from the Environment Agency, Natural England and Surrey County Council.

It is estimated there are 200 chalk streams across the world, with about 160 of them in England, mostly in the south.

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["Garden of Eden" coming to West Ewell as Wetlands Plan is approved. Will this stop pollution?](#)