Banned fan cheers on Epsom and Ewell FC from tree

A lifelong supporter of Epsom & Ewell Football Club has taken to watching matches from a nearby tree after receiving what he describes as an "unwarranted" lifetime ban from the club's ground.

Richard Lambert, 58, has followed the ninth-tier side for nearly 44 years. The ban was imposed in January following a long-running series of disputes with the club's committee.

Mr Lambert told the BBC he believes the suspension was triggered after he altered the name of his personal X (formerly Twitter) account to appear as if it were the club's official account. He has been a frequent critic of the club's management on social media and on his personal website, with some posts directed at individual committee members.

Since April, the BBC says it has approached Epsom & Ewell three times for details about the ban. The club has declined to discuss the matter beyond stating: "We have had a number of issues with this supporter over the years. We do not want to discuss this any further. The matter has been dealt with."

A letter from the club to Mr Lambert, seen by the BBC, cites only a breach of a previous agreement over use of social media. It referred to an "indefinite" ban, but the club has since told the BBC it is now for life. Mr Lambert says he has not been officially informed of this change.

Mr Lambert, who first attended a match as a 15-year-old in 1981, has served as the club's historian for two decades, producing statistical archives and match reports. "All I want to do is see my team play," he said, "but I also want to see the culture at our club change towards valuing its supporters."

Lifetime bans from football stadiums are rare and generally imposed only for serious offences or criminal acts, which is not alleged in this case. Clubs, however, are entitled to refuse entry to anyone without giving a reason.

The Football Supporters' Association told the BBC it had attempted to mediate between Mr Lambert and the club but received no response from the club's committee. "At non-league level, fans are the lifeblood of the game," said the FSA's Garreth Cummins. "In a situation like this, we don't see that either side is winning."

Mr Lambert initially watched games from outside the perimeter fence but says that after the club stationed security to move him on, he began climbing a tree for a better view. He ended last season 30ft up overlooking King George's Field in Surbiton. This season, the Salts have returned to Leg O'Mutton Field in Cobham, sharing with Cobham FC, and Mr Lambert has found a lower tree with a full view of the pitch.

Founded in 1918 as Epsom Juniors, Epsom & Ewell's greatest moment came in 1975 when they reached the inaugural FA Vase final at Wembley, losing 2-1 to Hoddesdon Town. Last season they lifted the Southern Combination Challenge Cup, defeating Abbey Rangers 1-0 in the final. The Salts averaged around 90 spectators at home league matches in 2024-25.

"If the ban stays in place for life," Mr Lambert told the BBC, "then I'll be climbing this tree for the rest of my life – or at least for as long as I'm physically able to."

Richard Lambert sitting in a tree looking on to the pitch where Epsom & Ewell play, with his back to the camera and the pitch in the background

Epsom Mother and Daughter join British Army together

A mother and daughter from Epsom have completed Army entry training within weeks of each other, marking the start of their respective military careers.

Sherene De Stadler, 40, will join the Army Reserve with the Grenadier Guards, while her daughter Chloe, 17, has graduated from the Army Foundation College in Harrogate.

Chloe was among 750 Junior Soldiers taking part in a parade at Harrogate to mark the end of months of basic training. The programme included military skills, fitness, education and a two-week battle camp and tactical exercise to prepare recruits for Army life.

Having completed phase one training, Chloe will now move on to trade training in her chosen specialism. She hopes to join the Army Air Corps as ground crew, aiming to work with Apache helicopters as part of the rear crew team.

She enlisted shortly after sitting her GCSEs at Epsom High School. "Joining the Army always interested me because of all it has to offer," Chloe said. "I am grateful for the opportunities it will give my future career and the challenges I will need to overcome to get there."

Over 5,000 family members attended the parade, including Sherene. "It felt amazing knowing my mum was in the audience, knowing what I've gone through to be on that parade square," Chloe said. "It's so nice to be able to talk to her about Army life because she understands and can relate to it. I hope my mum is as proud of me as I am of her."

Sherene, who completed her own basic training weeks earlier, said: "There's definitely been loads of tears from myself and her father today. Chloe has quit projects before when they've been hard, so I'm very proud of her for going through the challenges of Army training and enjoying it."

Chloe fought to get time off to attend Sherene's passing out parade earlier this year. "It's very different from watching your daughter graduate from university," Sherene said. "We've completed training so close together that we both have a unique mother-daughter bond that not many people get to have."

Chloe's advice to any young person considering the Army is: "Try your hardest and do not let other people get into your head."

The Senior Inspecting Officer at the Harrogate parade was Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Roly Walker, with former England football manager Sir Gareth Southgate as guest of honour.

The Army Foundation College takes two cohorts of Junior Soldiers each year, offering either a 49-week course or a shorter 23-week course.

For more information, resources and how to join junior training at AFC Harrogate click here.

Epsom & Ewell Community Fund Seeks New Chair

The *Epsom & Ewell Community Fund* is a philanthropic fund that provides financial support to local charities and projects across the borough.

As Chair, your role is to lead a Fund Panel made up of individuals with experience in serving the local community. The Fund is an 'area fund' under the umbrella of the Community Foundation for Surrey.

The Epsom & Ewell Community Fund maintains and builds assets in two parts:

- 1. **Grants Fund** for immediate grant giving.
- 2. Endowment Fund an investment fund for future generations, with the investment income used for making grants.

Responsibilities of the Fund Panel:

- Raising philanthropic donations from local high-net-worth individuals, businesses, and other sources.
- Deciding which local charitable organisations or projects should receive grants.
- Managing the strategic development and growth of the Fund.

Ideal candidates will bring:

- Experience of leading a team of volunteers.
- A passion to improve the lives of local people, especially those experiencing disadvantage.
- An understanding and/or experience of the voluntary sector.
- Experience in fundraising, philanthropic giving, or event organisation.

- A strategic vision.
- Strong networking skills across the local community.
- Professional experience in areas such as marketing, communications, fundraising, events, or business networking.

There are currently eight members of the Fund Panel. Meetings are held approximately four times a year, either in person or online. A representative from the Community Foundation usually attends to provide advice and support.

While this is an unpaid, voluntary position, the opportunity to help improve the lives of individuals and communities across the borough is deeply rewarding.

You can find out more about the Epsom & Ewell Community Fund at:

Epsom and Ewell Community Fund — Community Foundation for Surrey

For more information, contact Chris Frost at chrisfrost810@btinternet.com or 07516 024999

The deadline for applications is 5pm, Friday 19th September 2025.

Surrey town going to the dogs with 24/7 gambling casino?

A budding Surrey casino has applied for a 24/7 gambling licence despite local opposition. Golden Slots (Southern) Limited has asked for a 24/7 gambling licence for an adult gaming centre in the former Barclays bank building on Church Street, Ashford.

Spelthorne Borough Council has refused planning permission three times for the gaming centre- but was eventually overruled at appeal in April 2025.

The government planning inspector green lit the scheme but the approval came with conditions: the 24-hour opening hours originally proposed were reduced to 9am-11pm and requirements were placed on sound insulation and managing potential late night disturbances.

The applicant's agent said: "Irrespective of whether a premises licence is granted to operate 24/7 my client does not intend to breach any planning condition on opening hours."

The licencing application states "the premises will be open 24/7" and states there is no restriction on opening times for adult gaming centres. According to the council, the adult gaming centre would still have to comply with planning conditions even if a 24-hour licence was granted. The discrepancy regarding opening hours can be dealt with at the sub-committee hearing.

Spelthorne councillors voted to support a national campaign urging the Government to modernise gambling laws at a full council meeting on July 17.

The motion proposed by Cllr Harry Boparai and seconded by Cllr Katherine Rutherford calls for councils to be granted powers to implement stronger safeguards to better protect communities from gambling-related harm and to work with local health and voluntary sector partners to signpost residents to gambling addiction support and education initiatives.

The gambling licence application details an electronic lock will be used between 10pm-8am with the door locked during these hours and opened by a staff member when a customer wants to enter the casino.

The maglock will also be used when the machines are being emptied and refloated when the premises will be closed, the application said.

The application reads: "At least two members of staff working on site at any given time on the basis of a maximum of eight customers, if the numbers increase then an additional member of staff will be used for busier periods."

Proposed design layouts of the casino show 42 seats around the edge of the premises, including a kiosk/ customer service desk with 20 seats. The number and type of adult gaming machines have not been included in the licence application.

The application also includes a local gambling risk assessment outlining how the operator plans to minimise harm to children, vulnerable people and the wider community.

Mitigation measures include 24-hour CCTV, staff training, a 'Think 25' age verification policy and access to self-exclusion tools for customers.

The risk assessment acknowledges the site's proximity to schools, care homes, ATMs and existing gambling premises but insists there is a low risk of harm because of the proposed safeguards.

The application read: "Golden Slots is an established operator that has held an Operating Licence since January 2016 without any enforcement action taken against it. It operates other sites in Milton Keynes, Haringey, Cricklewood and Northampton."

Residents can comment on the application on the council's website until August 27. Police and public health officials can also submit comments.

Plans submitted to turn the vacant bank into an 24/7 adult gaming centre (image Google)

Asylum hotel tension mounts in Surrey

The leader of Spelthorne Borough Council has again written to the Home Office, demanding the government to abandon controversial plans to use Stanwell Hotel exclusively for single male asylum seekers.

The Home Office announced on August 1 it was temporarily pausing the scheme. But it has not been abandoned.

In her second letter on the matter, this time addressed to the Minister of State for Border Security and Asylum, Cllr Joanne Sexton warned the Home Office there could be "further escalation within the community" if this "urgent and significant" issue is not seen to.

She wrote: "I am writing to you to register heightened community concern over the potential consequences of the proposed changes and the impact they will have on Stanwell Village."

The renewed letter comes just days after hundreds of people protested outside the hotel near Heathrow Airport. Dozens of signs were held stating 'Just say no' and people were chanting outside the hotel.

So far two people have been arrested during the protests, one on suspicion of attempted arson and another on suspicion of "conspiracy to commit violent disorder and aggravated trespass".

Councillors and Spelthorne MP Lincoln Jopp have also expressed disappointment at the situation, urging the Home Office to listen to the community.

The Home Office have since paused the plans but Cllr Sexton has urged for a meeting to be arranged with herself and the Labour Group Leader, Cllr Jon Button, in whose ward the hotel is located.

In her first letter on July 25, Cllr Sexton had warned the Home Office has caused "alarm" in the community and is completely inappropriate for the area.

She said the decision would undo months of successful integration and was made without any proper consultation with the council or residents.

A Home Office spokesperson said: "The government is reducing expensive hotel use as part of a complete overhaul of the asylum system.

"From over 400 asylum hotels open in summer 2023, costing almost £9m a day, there are now less than 210, and we want them all closed by the end of this Parliament.

"We will continue to work closely with community partners across the country, and discuss any concerns they have, as we look to fix this broken system together. The security of the local communities within which hotels are located will always be our paramount concern."

Image: Stanwell Hotel protest on July 31. (Credit: Sam Jennings/ Facebook) Permission for use.

Almost any listening environment on Earth coming to Surrey

A new national audio hub featuring world-first acoustic facilities is being built at the University of Surrey, thanks to £2.2 million in funding from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). The facilities will allow researchers to simulate almost any listening environment on Earth, from a quiet living room or modern office to a vast concert hall, cathedral or bustling city street.

At the heart of AURORA³ (Anechoic and Universal Research Observation Rooms for Audio, Acoustics & AI) will be two world-class audio environments: a state-of-the-art anechoic chamber with a spherical loudspeaker array and a first-of-its-kind variable acoustics room capable of adjusting both reverberation time and physical volume at the push of a button. AURORA³ will be open to researchers from both academia and industry across the UK and globally, as well as to Surrey staff and students.

Professor Enzo De Sena, Director of the Institute of Sound Recording at the University of Surrey, and Fellow of the Surrey Institute for People-Centred AI, said:

"AURORA³ will create a national hub for excellence in sound and AI, allowing researchers to generate reproducible data, test innovations in controlled and lifelike environments, and shape technologies that benefit society."

The initiative aims to unite the Audio, Acoustics and AI (A³) research community and fuel breakthroughs in sound technology by enabling more accurate modelling of the physical and perceptual phenomena involved in real-world hearing. AURORA³ will pave the way for voice assistants and remote communications that are more robust to noise and reverberation, more immersive Virtual and Augmented Reality experiences for entertainment and virtual prototyping, and smarter hearing aid devices that better understand and adapt to the acoustic scene.

AURORA³ will be hosted at Surrey's Institute of Sound Recording – part of the School of Arts, Humanities and Creative Industries – and co-led with the University's Centre for Vision, Speech and Signal Processing (CVSSP). The facilities will also work in collaboration with the Surrey Institute for People-Centred AI, the CoSTAR National Lab, and is backed by a consortium of 18 partners and 12 key users, including the BBC, Meta, KEF, Imperial College London, the University of Cambridge, and non-profits such as the Royal National Institute for Deaf People and the Institute of Acoustics.

Professor Enzo De Sena continued:

"Combined with the UK's deep AI talent pool and rapidly expanding computing capacity, AURORA³ provides the missing facility for audio data capture, placing the UK at the centre of global audio and acoustics research."

Image: Professor Enzo and the AURORA logo: credit Surrey University

Box Hill teacher with naked boy interest struck off

A teacher has been struck off and banned from the profession after being found with hundreds of indecent images of children and a search history looking for naked young boys. Nicholas Heuvel worked at Box Hill School Trust in Mickleham, Dorking from September 1997 before resigning in 2017.

The school was a private boarding and day school until it merged with Reigate Grammar School and became RGS Surrey Hills in 2025.

Between January 2016 and January 2018, Mr Heuvel had up to 224 indecent images of children on his phone, including at least one of the most extreme kind. He also admitted to searching for terms including 'little boy nudists' and 'young boy speedos', between 22 October 2017 and 23 October 2017, and was given a police caution in 2021.

The Teacher Regulation Agency rejected Mr Heuvel's claim that he wasn't sexually motivated, finding no plausible innocent explanation and, on the balance of probabilities, that he was seeking gratification.

The panel, which concluded its findings on July 15 this year, said Mr Heuvel's viewing and searching for significant numbers of indecent images of children over a lengthy period of time were relevant to his position as a teacher. They said it amounted to serious misconduct and fell significantly short of the standards expected of the profession.

There was also a lack of any evidence that Mr Heuvel made any effort to report the images – which he would have known he needed to do by virtue of his role as a teacher and the safeguarding training he would have received.

David Oatley, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education, said that the period of time with which Mr Heuvel used specific search terms to access indecent images of children was a significant factor and that the risk of repetition was high due to Mr Heuvel's lack of insight and or remorse into his actions and the impact that his actions had on children.

Mr Oatley said: "Mr Nicholas James Heuvel is prohibited from teaching indefinitely and cannot teach in any school, sixth form college, relevant youth accommodation or children's home in England. "Furthermore, in view of the seriousness of the allegations found proved against him, I have decided that Mr Heuvel shall not be entitled to apply for restoration of his eligibility to teach.

Hayley Robinson, headteacher of RGS Surrey Hills, formerly Box Hill School, said: 'We very much support the decision of the Teaching Regulation Agency to regard the safety of children as the highest priority in our profession. "We note that Nicholas Heuvel was struck off for matters unconnected with allegations about his behaviour at Box Hill School and relate to the years 2017-18, nearly a decade ago. RGS Surrey Hills is now a member of the prestigious Reigate Grammar School group of schools, where safeguarding and pupil safety and wellbeing is at the centre of everything we do."

Box Hill School before it merged to become RGS Surrey Hills (image Google)

Water voles return to Ewell

Once extinct in the county, the much-loved water vole has today (30th July) made an historic return to the Upper Hogsmill in Epsom & Ewell. This milestone is the result of a pioneering wetland restoration project led by the South East Rivers Trust (SERT) and reintroduction project by rewilding organisation Citizen Zoo, with support from Wildwood Trust, Natural England Species Recovery Programme, Thames Water and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council.

Around 50 water voles were released onto the Hogsmill river and Chamber Meads wetland this morning at a celebratory event. This was the culmination of many years of work by the South East Rivers Trust, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, Citizen Zoo, and partners to restore the river and create the new wetland habitat. The return of this endangered species marks a major milestone for Surrey's biodiversity and one of the most exciting rewilding projects in the region.

"Water voles were once a familiar sight on the Hogsmill, but due to habitat loss and invasive predators, they died out. Now, after years of dedicated river restoration work, and the creation of the flagship wetland at Chamber Mead, as well as extensive monitoring by a band of dedicated local volunteers-, we're thrilled to have brought them back to the upper Hogsmill in Surrey," said **Dr Bella Davies**, CEO of the South East Rivers Trust.

The **Wildwood Trust**, based in Kent and Devon, is one of the UK's leading centres for conservation breeding, and bred 50 water voles through its expert captive breeding programme for release on the upper Hogsmill river. Wildwood has played a key role in restoring water vole populations across the UK.

"The UK's biodiversity is facing a critical decline – putting our ecosystems, food security, and climate resilience at risk," said **Tyrone Capel**, Conservation Officer at Wildwood Trust. "Ambitious rewilding projects like this are central to our mission: returning nature to the places it once thrived. We're proud to support this initiative by breeding water voles for release along the Hogsmill and ultimately reversing the near 20 year extinction of Water voles in Surrey."

The creation of the **Chamber Mead wetlands** and river restoration work undertaken by SERT has improved conditions on the Hogsmill and transformed the area into an ideal habitat for water voles. This work forms part of SERT's broader vision to revive this rare urban chalk stream and inspire nature recovery in towns and cities.

Citizen Zoo, a rewilding organisation that has delivered a previous successful water vole release along the Hogsmill further downstream in Kingston, led on the reintroduction. The team is now calling for local volunteers to support ongoing monitoring of the population.

"This is not just a win for water voles—it's a flagship moment for urban river restoration across the UK," said **Elliot Newton**, -Director of Rewilding at Citizen Zoo. "With the help of local people, we're giving this species a real chance to thrive again."

"We are deeply committed to protecting and nurturing habitats that help biodiversity flourish, and we are honoured that the Upper Hogsmill River in our borough has been chosen as the second release site for the reintroduction of water voles." said **Councillor Liz Frost**, Chair of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Environment Committee. "They will be the first water voles living in the wild in Surrey for over 20 years. This milestone reflects the strength of our partnerships to create the right

conditions for these once-extinct animals to thrive and reflects our borough's dedication to managing biodiversity and creating resilient ecosystems that play a role in tackling climate change."

Water voles—made famous as Ratty in *The Wind in the Willows*—are one of the UK's fastest-declining mammals, having disappeared from 94% of their former range. Their return to Surrey is both a symbolic and ecological milestone.

Wild Wood Trust

Leatherhead railway station gets access upgrade

A major upgrade to Leatherhead railway station has officially opened, marking what local MP Helen Maguire has called a "crucial step" in the campaign to make rail travel more accessible across Surrey.

The improvements, delivered through the Department for Transport's Access for All programme, include the installation of two 16-person lifts and a new footbridge linking both platforms. The £6.2 million project also included platform widening, upgraded lighting and CCTV, and enhanced ramp access. The enhancements are designed to make life easier for elderly and disabled passengers, as well as those travelling with pushchairs, bikes or heavy luggage.

The scheme was developed and delivered by Network Rail in partnership with Southern, with much of the work taking place over the past year. Prior to the upgrade, Leatherhead was nominally step-free, but passengers needing to avoid stairs had to take a lengthy, steep detour under a railway bridge outside the station to move between platforms. The new bridge and lifts provide a direct and safe route for all users, replacing what many had described as an awkward and at times treacherous alternative.

Opening the new facilities, Helen Maguire MP praised the scheme as a long-overdue improvement for passengers in the area. "I'm delighted that Leatherhead has become the latest station in my constituency with step-free access," she said. "These improvements are absolutely vital for our town, and a crucial step in making rail travel more accessible to my constituents regardless of their need."

However, the Liberal Democrat MP for Epsom and Ewell also used the occasion to highlight wider concerns about the state of the rail network in her constituency. In particular, she pointed to the reduction in the number of South Western Railway (SWR) services running to and from Waterloo since the Covid pandemic. "South Western Railways should also increase the frequency of the Waterloo service back to pre-Covid levels to ensure that passengers are not overcrowded," she said, noting that passenger numbers have increased while service levels have not kept pace.

Maguire also raised the ongoing lack of sufficient blue badge parking spaces at local stations, and the need for ticketing systems that are more accessible for people with visual impairments. With SWR now operating under national ownership, she said, passengers would be expecting higher standards of service. "Delays to the Arterio train rollout and extortionate ticket price rises are a worrying start," she added. "I will keep campaigning to ensure that rail passengers in Epsom, Ewell, Ashtead and Leatherhead get a fair deal."

Southern, which manages Leatherhead station, has also introduced cycling improvements alongside the accessibility works. A secure cycle hub with 26 spaces and a maintenance area has been installed on Platform 1, while Platform 2 now features a double-deck cycle rack with space for 32 bikes, as well as new motorbike parking. Lighting and CCTV coverage in these areas has also been upgraded.

Jenny Saunders, Customer Services Director at Southern's parent company Govia Thameslink Railway, welcomed the improvements, saying: "Lifts benefit everyone who finds stairs a barrier, and for some disabled passengers this project has the potential to be life-changing."

Leatherhead joins a growing list of stations to receive Access for All funding, with similar projects completed in recent months at Barnes, Herne Bay and Motspur Park. The scheme forms part of a wider national programme to modernise railway infrastructure and open up travel to all users, regardless of mobility needs.

Network Rail's Sussex Route Director Lucy McAuliffe said: "These upgrades have removed a significant barrier to travel at Leatherhead. We're proud to be making a difference for passengers who, for too long, have had to navigate difficult routes to use our railway."

While the transformation at Leatherhead station represents a clear step forward, campaigners and passengers alike will be watching closely to see whether service levels and surrounding facilities are brought up to the same standard.

Image: MP Helen Maguire opens Leatherhead upgraded railway station

Male only asylum Surrey hotel "shock"

A Surrey council leader has said she was "shocked" to learn of Home Office proposals to house exclusively male asylum seekers in a hotel in a village.

In a strongly worded letter to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Spelthorne Borough Council (SBC) leader Joanne Sexton expressed "serious concerns" regarding changes to plans for The Stanwell Hotel on the villages Town Lane.

SBC said it had previously approved for families and single women to be accommodated at the venue but the new plans would mean relocating the current families and women and replacing them with men.

The Home Office said it wants to close all hotels by the end of Parliament and will "continue to work closely with community partners".

Cllr Sexton said the existing group of families at the hotel were "integrating well and building community ties. This abrupt change risks undermining all of that".

In her letter to the Home Office, the leader said the council is "determined to avoid circumstances that could lead to civil unrest". Describing the potential upheaval as an "adult male intensification", Cllr Sexton added she is "alarmed about the potential consequences of the proposed changes and the impact they will have".

A council spokesperson added that, while Spelthorne had a history of supporting asylum seekers including both Afghan and Ukrainian refugees, it still expects to be properly consulted and involved in decisions that significantly impact the local area.

SBC is urging the government to listen to the concerns of the local authority and the community, and is calling on the Home Office to immediately reconsider and consult on the way forward.

A Home Office spokesperson said: "The government is reducing expensive hotel use as part of a complete overhaul of the asylum system.

"From over 400 asylum hotels open in summer 2023, costing almost £9m a day, there are now less than 210.

"We will continue to work closely with community partners across the country, and discuss any concerns they have, as we look to fix this broken system together. The security of the local communities within which hotels are located will always be our paramount concern."

The Home Office has a legal obligation to support asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute by providing appropriate support, which usually includes accommodation.

Outside of The Stanwell Hotel, Stanwell, Staines. (Credit: Google Street View)