EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

26th November 2026

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Epsom and Ewell to be served by publicly owned trains

4 December 2024



The government has announced that South Western Railway (SWR), which serves commuters from Epsom, Ewell West, Stoneleigh and Worcester Park to London Waterloo, will be the first train operator to transition back into public ownership. The move comes following the passage of the Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Act 2024, signalling a historic shift for Britain's railways.

Starting next year, SWR services, including the Epsom to London routes, will come under the direct management of DfT Operator Limited, a publicly owned body. This change aims to address long-standing issues of delays, cancellations, and high costs that have plagued privatized rail services for decades.

What This Means for Epsom Commuters

Epsom's SWR services connect thousands of local residents daily to key destinations such as London Waterloo, Wimbledon, and Clapham Junction and south to Dorking and Guildford. These routes are lifelines for commuters and leisure travellers alike, and reliability issues have often sparked frustration among passengers. Under public ownership, improvements in punctuality, affordability, and customer satisfaction are hoped for.

Local resident and commuter Sarah James commented: *"I've been using the Epsom to Waterloo service for over ten years, and while it's convenient, the delays and rising ticket prices have been hard to justify. If public ownership can bring real improvements, it'll be a welcome change."*

Government's Vision for the Railways

Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander said: *"We're putting passengers back at the heart of our railways. For too long, privatization has failed to deliver for the British public. South Western Railway is the first step in our plan to rebuild a rail system that works for everyone."*

The move forms part of a broader government commitment to overhaul the rail network, with c2c and Greater Anglia services also set to follow suit by 2025. The goal is to save up to £150 million annually by eliminating franchise fees, redirecting those funds into service improvements instead of shareholder profits.

How Will the Transition Work?

The Department for Transport (DfT) is prioritizing a seamless handover, ensuring minimal disruption for passengers. Ticketing systems and staffing will remain unchanged during the transition period, with SWR's current workforce continuing to support commuters.

Publicly managed services will eventually integrate into Great British Railways (GBR), the government's new overseeing body for track and train operations. GBR promises a more unified and efficient approach to rail management, focusing on reliability, accessibility, and value for money.

Local Impacts Beyond the Commute

Epsom is known for its vibrant community and attractions like Epsom Downs Racecourse and Epsom shopping centre, which rely on reliable rail links to draw visitors. Public ownership of SWR could boost local tourism by ensuring smoother travel to and from Epsom.

Additionally, the promise of greater transparency and accountability could restore faith in public transport, encouraging more residents to opt for trains over cars, which aligns with Surrey County Council's environmental goals.

What's Next?

The first publicly run trains will start operating in 2025, and residents can expect regular updates on planned improvements, including timetable adjustments and station enhancements. The Epsom and Ewell Times will continue to monitor the situation closely, bringing you the latest developments as they happen.

For now, commuters and local businesses will be watching closely to see if public ownership delivers the transformative results promised by the government.

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Planning buses not missing them says Epsom’s MP

4 December 2024

Dear Editor,

Thank you to Stuart Gosling for his contribution and for highlighting the important issue of transport links in relation to the new hospital development.

Has Epsom’s new MP missed the bus to a new hospital?

I completely agree that good transport connectivity is essential for the success of this project, and I want to reassure residents that we have already considered this as part of the planning process.

New transport links will be introduced once the hospital is built, and discussions around the best way to serve the site with appropriate public transport will take place as we progress along the development timeline. It’s important to note that transport infrastructure often needs to be developed alongside the new services and demands that arise from it.

I’ll be at the forefront of ensuring that the new hospital is well-served by transport, and I’m committed to ensuring that Epsom and Ewell’s needs are fully met. The process may take time, but I’m confident the results will be worth the wait.

Yours faithfully,

Helen Maguire MP

Surrey showing true grit for winter roads

4 December 2024



Surrey’s team of gritter drivers are now available 24/7 to help keep residents moving during the colder months.

Our 39 state-of-the art gritting vehicles are ready to grit the county’s busiest routes before and during severe weather, using the 10,000 tonnes of salt stored at our four Surrey depots.

Winter arrangements typically begin in October and run until the end of March although this period can be extended depending on weather conditions.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth said, *“We’re committed to keeping drivers safe here in Surrey and investing in our roads.*

“When temperatures plummet, our highways teams across the county will be ready to work around the clock to keep traffic moving on our primary routes using our new, efficient gritters.

“Keeping our roads safe this winter is part of a series of highways improvements we’ll be making across our busy network.”

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Has Epsom’s new MP missed the bus to a new hospital?

4 December 2024

Dear Editor,

Our new MP Helen Maguire has supported the construction of a new hospital, complete with an accident and emergency (A&E) department, near the Royal Marsden Hospital in the southern area of Sutton. [See Epsom and Ewell Times 12th October 2024 “Public meeting about Epsom Hospital future“].

While well-intentioned, her recommendation seems to miss a significant concern shared by residents in Epsom, Ewell, and much of Sutton: accessibility.

The current sites—Epsom Hospital and St Helier Hospital—are better served by public transport than the proposed location near the Royal Marsden, which lacks convenient train and bus links. Moving our local A&E services to this “public transport desert” would place a greater burden on people relying on public transport, particularly those without access to a car.

Epsom Hospital, for example, is within walking distance of Epsom Station (though it’s still a 20-minute walk). It is served by several bus routes, including:

- **E5** (Langley Vale – Epsom – Watersedge): every 30 minutes from Epsom Clock Tower, though it only passes the hospital every two hours.
- **166** (Epsom Hospital – Epsom – Banstead – West Croydon): an hourly service from Monday to Saturday, no service on Sunday.
- **293** (Epsom Hospital – Epsom – North Cheam – Morden): every 20 minutes during peak times.
- **408** (Epsom – Ashtead – Leatherhead – Cobham): runs approximately every hour on weekdays.
- **479** (Epsom – Ashtead – Leatherhead – Guildford): every 30 minutes at peak times.

St Helier Hospital, also in Sutton, has additional connections:

- **151** (Wallington – Sutton – Worcester Park): every 10 minutes peak.
- **157** (Morden – Croydon – Crystal Palace): every 12 minutes peak.
- **S1** (Mitcham – Sutton – Banstead via Wrythe Lane): every 20 minutes peak.
- **S4** (Roundshaw – Wallington – Sutton – St Helier): every 30 minutes peak.
- Other services such as the **154**, **164**, and **280** serve nearby areas, with buses stopping outside or near the hospital.

In contrast, public transportation from Epsom Clock Tower to the Royal Marsden site involves multiple transfers. A trip requires at least two or three buses, such as the S2, S4, 293, SL7, and S4, taking anywhere from 45 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes depending on timings. For many, this could be inconvenient, time-consuming, and impractical—especially in emergencies.

For residents reliant on public transportation, moving A&E services to a poorly connected area would be disruptive. We should seek solutions that keep healthcare accessible and ensure that those who need urgent care can get there quickly. I urge our MP and local authorities to consider this reality as they deliberate on the future of our local healthcare services.

Yours faithfully,

Stuart Gosling

Epsom Resident

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Surrey school kids' country walk saving money

4 December 2024



Children have been told they can walk 4.9km through fields and over an unguarded railway line by Surrey County Council bureaucrats who cancelled their free bus passes.

The decision has left their family feeling "let down" and "frustrated" after the vital service relied upon for years was cut because a 10 kilometre hike was found by county hall officials.

Joe Massey was sent the letter informing him of the council's decision after a "review" found the route was considered a safe walking route for children travelling from South Nutfield to Carrington School in Redhill.

The free bus service historically served the area but the so-called discovery of the new route means notice has been served on those who depended on the county council's travel assistance.

Normally, free bus access is only provided to those who live more than three miles from their chosen school.

South Nutfield is within that distance but the narrow lanes linking the village to the school are unsafe for young people to walk along.

Now the council has written to parents telling them that a new 4.95 kilometre route – across muddy fields and unprotected railway lines is a suitable alternative – but as a precaution children should wear suitable footwear as the farmer's field is prone to flooding.

The instructions, seen by the LDRS, on how the children should get to school read: "Follow the public right of way until you reach Mid Street.

"In places it is narrow, and it can be muddy with surface water, occasionally liable to flooding so appropriate footwear would be advisable after inclement weather.

"There are two stiles to climb over; these are easily scaled.

"The train track is an open crossing with no gates, barriers, attendant or traffic lights. The sightlines in both directions are long, straight and clear. It is a rural line, Redhill to Tonbridge, on average there are two trains per hour and occasionally a freight train making it safe to cross."

Adding: "The public right of way continues across a farmer's field which it can be muddy with surface water, occasionally liable to flooding."

The decision was taken by the Surrey Travel & Assessment team alongside the Safer Travel team who had reviewed a number of routes across the county previously been deemed unsafe.

They team wrote: "We understand that this may be disappointing news, however we have undertaken a thorough investigation into your child's current eligibility, applying the travel assistance policy robustly, and this is the resulting outcome. "

Joe Massey, said they have two boys who will be impacted, one in year 10 the other in year 7.

He said: "We qualify for the council's assisted travel scheme because the nearest school to us is over three miles away but we've received a letter f saying that as of September next year they're going to be cancelling both passes – because they've found an alternative route that's less than three miles.

"A big chunk of it is cross country through cow fields and rail roads with no bridge. It's just open tracks.

"It's a public right of way. We did the walk, there's a cow field, you're wading through mud.

"The council says it's fine because its only 2.96 miles but the app says 3.06."

"Some of the roads are really uncomfortable to walk along and to expect anyone to do it, especially in winter, is just unsuitable.

"And the fields are not lit at all; it's just plain dangerous."

Mr Massey said: "I'm extremely frustrated by the situation. Obviously the money is a big thing but it's the principle.

"It took us an hour to do it, there's no way in hell you'd send your child on that route.

"To then expect your child to walk for an hour ,they're going to be exhausted.

"My wellies were caked in mud – they said in the letter to wear suitable footwear.

"It's traumatic enough at secondary school but to have to carry muddy wellies around all day.…

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“We just feel let down and the option they’ve given us is just unbelievable.

“If any normal human being would have looked at that route, I can’t believe they would have sent the letter.”

Clare Curran, SCC cabinet member for children, families and lifelong learning said: “This route has been established between South Nutfield and Carrington School following individual Safe Walking Route assessments that were carried out by the council.

“Safety of route assessments are carried out in line with Road Safety GB Guidelines. It is important to note that this is an assessment of the road safety of a walked route by an accompanied child – national guidance advises that the child should be “accompanied as necessary”. It is the expectation that the child, and the accompanying adult, will wear appropriate clothing and footwear for the conditions underfoot.

“The current travel assistance provided by the council is an annual bus pass on a public bus service. This costs the Council £881 per year for each pupil. In line with statutory guidance, these pupils are no longer eligible to receive a free bus pass through the council. Amidst a set of challenging financial circumstances, the council is not in the position to continue to pay for transport for families where they are no longer eligible for assistance, due to a safe route being established.

“The council is not prescribing that children should walk to school via the safe route that has been established; the option is still available to use the bus service. Families will be able to purchase a bus pass directly from the operator to continue to use the bus. Families can appeal against the decision to withdraw travel assistance via the stage one safety of route appeal form, and a link to this was included in the initial correspondence with the family.”

Image Joe Massey – on the new school walk

Epsom High St in need of more love?

4 December 2024



Driving safely, parking appropriately. Romy Sustar reports:

This is the second article in my series following on from “Epsom town as a safe place to Live”. It seemed to me that for the second article it was worth looking at a specific business issue around anti-social behaviour in Epsom High St, that is currently being discussed widely. And one that currently projects an image of decline and lawlessness in our High St.

My all-time favourite McDonald’s meal has always been—and still is—the Filet-O-Fish Combo. I’m “lovin’ it” and really want to hold onto this positive feeling. However, like so many others, McDonald’s seems to have forgotten its leadership role.

Last Friday night, on my way to the cinema, I walked by McDonald’s and counted 23 drivers parked on the pavement, completely blocking the pavement between Creams and McDonald’s, extending along the High Street towards the crossing. Pedestrians had no choice but to either walk on the busy street or navigate through the maze of motorcycles. It made me feel very unsafe and angry, but I don’t blame the drivers.

Drivers for UberEats, Just Eat, and Deliveroo frequently express their frustrations on platforms like Glassdoor and Indeed, highlighting their shared challenges with residents impacted by these services. While UberEats drivers appreciate the quick onboarding process, this excitement soon fades as many struggle to earn even £10 during entire shifts, facing inadequate customer support that leaves them feeling isolated and undervalued. Deliveroo riders share similar grievances, describing their experiences as akin to “slave labour,” contending with low pay and fierce competition for orders. Issues with app reliability and poor management responsiveness only deepen their dissatisfaction. Just Eat feedback on Glassdoor clearly states that management doesn’t really understand the performance of the business. I wonder how many of the drivers are aware that the minimum hourly rate for 2024/25 in the UK is £11.44 for age group 21 and over.

Let’s consider McDonald’s in Epsom High St, it’s been a pillar of the community for more than two decades, in that time most of us have come to understand the fantastic benefits brought by Ronald McDonald House allowing parents to stay with their sick children. We have seen the support for thousands of UK and Irish farmers in very difficult times, and for the organic farmers as their industry developed. We have noticed the healthy options appearing in the menu, the sugar content reducing, and have been reassured as recycled cardboard content has increased. All of this happening, whilst most of us simply continued to enjoy the product as one of the love brands in our local economy.

Are they truly so insensitive that they fail to recognise the damage they’re inflicting? Or is it that they simply don’t care about the residents and migrants at all, revealing their brand identity to be a facade? When I mention “residents,” I mean

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everyone—from young children and mothers with baby pushers to the elderly and those with disabilities, the blind and those in wheelchairs.

We reached out to McDonald's and a spokesperson: "At McDonald's we strive to be a good neighbour in the communities we serve, and the management team at our Epsom restaurant are continuously working with local stakeholders to help find a solution to the on-going parking issues which are affecting a number of businesses in the town. The safety and wellbeing of our people, customers and local residents remains our top priority and as such we have asked our delivery partners to ensure that all couriers continue to drive safely and park appropriately."

When the views of the local manager were sought McDonald's asked for nothing to be added to its spokespeson's response.

The phrase "Continue to drive safely and park appropriately" seems more like a message to maintain a facade than a reflection of daily reality in Epsom. This raises my curiosity about which local stakeholders McDonald's claims to be "continuously working with." It suggests a disconnect between their messaging and the actual experiences of the community.

So I contacted Russell Bailey from Swail House, a local Blind charity severely affected by the issues: "I am in touch with the Surrey Council parking enforcement team and councillors and our MP Helen Maguire regularly about the issue, but there does not seem to be any progress. It seems to be that it will take an accident before any real action is going to be taken".

Then I contacted the Ebbisham Centre owners of the land just behind McDonalds who said: "We are as frustrated as residents and customers of Epsom Square about the prevalence of mopeds parked on our premises and at the entrance to our squares, on council pavements. The mopeds themselves are unsightly and a hazard. The congregation of moped drivers, usually with full face helmets still worn, creates an intimidating and threatening atmosphere in the town and at the entrance to our squares. This is not good for the economy or for the wellbeing of residents, and seems to serve only the benefit of one or two national-multiple fast food outlets on the High Street".

The Council are now vocal on the issue and are reacting to pressure from the community. **Steve McCormick** (an RA Surrey County and Borough Councillor) passed a unanimous motion at the County to deal with the problem. So who is McDonald's actually talking to and how could it possibly be, that McDonalds, our love brand, is still entirely oblivious to the oncoming storm if it is "continuously working with local stakeholders to help find a solution"?

Town Ward RA Councillor **Neil Dallen** is aware of the problem but a Council led solution is proving elusive.

Epsom and Ewell Times sent a simple survey to all Epsom and Ewell Councillors. These are the few responses received to the questions how many times in the last year have you used these services and what is your solution?

Date	**Name**	**Party and Ward**	**Orders last year**	**Do you have a solution to the problem of many delivery riders on two-wheels obstructing roads and pathways in Epsom? If so, please describe the solution briefly**
12/10	Steve Bridger	RA Stamford (Mayor)	0	Dedicated area for them to park – NOT obstructing the pavement at one of the busiest areas with a bus stop! Also to check the insurance, licences and validity of the electric scooters of the drivers
12/10	Julie Morris	LibDem College	12	Create dedicated parking areas for delivery bikes. For example, Epsom Square, taxi bay in Upper High St, convert small sections of pavement where it's wide enough and use that for delivery.bike parking, etc. eventually deliveries will come via drones and it won't be so bad. After segregated parking has been put in place, enforce illegal parking from delivery bikes
12/10	James Lawrence	LibDem College	1	There need to be dedicated parking bays for them, similar to the bays outside Dreams (near the Odeon). Enforcement then needs to be used to ensure these bays are used. This will allow them to continue their very useful activities of providing delivery services to businesses and residents, without blocking the pavement or being an obstruction for pedestrians.
12/10	Robert Geleit	Labour Court	15	Find them a place to go. Make sure that they don't have to work 12 hours a day 7 days a week.
13/10	Phil Neale	RA Cuddington	0	Have a system where the riders can be reported to the company that employs them then operate a three strikes and out policy.
16/10	Alison Kelly	LibDem Stamford	0	There needs to be a designated parking zone for the delivery drivers. It is clear that many people want home delivery. The solution is not asking the police to continually move them on.
18/10	Chris Ames	Labour Court	12	Police enforcement, including stopping riders with illegally powered bikes

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And finally we contacted the closest local residential management company whose residents are most affected by the issues on a daily basis.

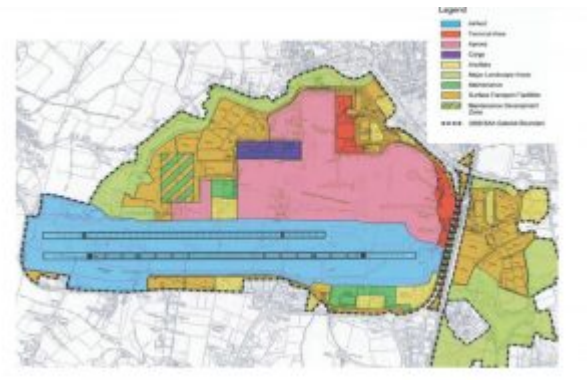
“Nobody from McDonald’s has ever contacted us. Our residents are almost 100% in favour of a thriving High St. We live in Town ward because we like the hustle and bustle, the bars, the businesses, and yes even a cheeky Mac and chips, along with the immediate access to all the wonderful things on offer in Epsom.

It should however never be forgotten that this is our manor, it does not belong to corporations and they do not have any right to ruin our environment, subject our families to unacceptable risk or to impede our disabled, simply because it is convenient and profitable to do so. McDonald’s should be reminded that you can only kick a dog so many times and that once kicked the dog is unlikely to care, if someone else is kicking it as well.”

In conclusion, my investigation indicates that McDonald’s has not engaged with the local stakeholders most affected by its new business model. Merely claiming that other businesses are doing the same raises ethical concerns, and the message that “all couriers continue to drive safely and park appropriately” seems both absurd and disingenuous. This suggests that McDonald’s has indeed lost touch with its core values. As a result, local stakeholders may soon be expressing their discontent by singing, “Ba Da Ba Ba Bah, Not Lovin’ It.”

Gatwick expansion update

4 December 2024



Local authorities have said they will not support Gatwick Airport’s plans to expand unless its growth is dependent on meeting environmental and noise targets.

According to legal documents, the impacted councils are concerned that there is currently a “lack of sanction” against Gatwick if the growth of the airport exceeds expected environmental guidelines without clear accountability.

Airport chiefs at Gatwick, the country’s second busiest airport, want to modify its northern runway so that it can increase passenger numbers to about 75 million a year on 386,000 flights. It says this will help minimise delays, bring in about £1 billion into the region’s economy every year, and create 14,000 jobs – all while staying within agreed noise levels. It also has a carbon action plan for how the airport will be net zero for its own emissions by 2030, with aviation emissions excluded.

Gatwick Airport has applied for a Development Consent Order (DCO), a legal document that allows the construction of major infrastructure projects. Part of the process requires the applicant to show the planning inspector how it will mitigate the impact of the development.

The airport’s current position is that the impact from the growth of the runways will be controlled by an air noise envelope (a way to limit sound) an annual cap of 386,000 commercial air transport movements, surface access commitments/SACs (55 per cent people accessing the airport by public transport by 2040) and a carbon action plan (to reduce carbon footprint).

Councils such as Crawley Borough, West Sussex County, Surrey County, Reigate and Banstead Borough, Mole Valley District and Tandridge (together the JLA) have been consulted on the proposals and have written to both Gatwick Airport and the planning inspector with recommendations.

The JLA say they are “concerned” that the current project “will impose unjustified adverse impacts on local communities, local businesses, and the receiving environment”. The group disagree with the Planning Inspectorate’s recommendations for the major development and believes it does not go far enough to address their concerns.

Instead, the JLA has put forward an approach where any increase in passenger numbers would be dependent on Gatwick Airport’s achievement of specific targets which would avoid, limit and reduce impacts of the project. The group said that if all their recommended measures were adopted, including the Environmentally Managed Growth framework (EMG), they would “not object”.

Under the JLAs’ proposed approach, Gatwick Airport would be required to continually monitor and regularly report on the extent of the environmental effects associated with the airport in the four areas: noise, air quality, greenhouse gases and surface access. In each of the cases, the JLAs say they want to ensure Gatwick meet their specific targets and are held accountable, to prevent the airport expanding at any cost.

The group has proposed a tier system in which to monitor potential breaches in environmental commitments. For instance, if air quality or green gas emissions go above a certain point (level 1), Gatwick will review the current measures and work on mitigation. Then, if air quality gets increasingly poorer (level 2), Gatwick will review its pollutant

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contributions and introduce mitigation measures, perhaps preventing further capacity. If the limit for air pollution is breached, further mitigation would be required to solve the problem and no more aeroplane flight slots will be allocated.

The JLAs also want further clarity on the impacted areas exposed to higher levels of aircraft noise, especially areas where noise could wake people up. Measures should also be applied to give Gatwick Airport an incentive to transition to quieter aircraft and noise insulation as soon as possible, according to the JLA's statement. The JLAs also want to secure night time controls for flying.

The examination of the proposed DCO closed on August 27. The Planning Inspectorate will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport, who will then make a final decision on or before February 27.

A London Gatwick spokesperson said: "We are fully committed to making sure the airport's growth is sustainable. London Gatwick has thoroughly assessed the environmental impacts of its growth plans, which include environmental mitigations related to noise, carbon emissions and surface access improvements.

"As part of our sustainability policy we are committed to reaching net zero for our own scope one and two admissions by 2030, as well as continuing to reduce overall energy use, invest in on-site renewable energy, and continuing to source 100% renewable electricity.

"London Gatwick is delighted with the strong support shown by many local people and businesses during the recent hearings, who all voiced their desire to see the airport grow for the economic benefit of the area. We thank them for their ongoing support."

Related reports:

Gatwick Airport Expansion

Gatwick 2nd runway sneaking in?

Gatwick expansion plans revealed

Gatwick to get 2nd runway?

Gatwick Plans (Image PINS / Gatwick)

Will Surrey reporting tool fill the pot-holes?

4 December 2024



Surrey County Council's new 'FixMyStreet' online reporting tool will now make it easier for residents to report potholes, faulty traffic signals and other street defects, following its launch today (Tuesday 17 September).

FixMyStreet allows people to quickly and simply report issues in their area which need fixing, cleaning or clearing. Accessed via **Surrey County Council's website**, residents are also able to see issues which have already been reported, to sign up for local updates and to track the progress of repairs using their mobile phone or other device.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth said, "*We're very aware that well-maintained roads are highly important to our residents. This is why here in Surrey, we're investing nearly £300m in repairing and improving Surrey's roads and pavements by 2028.*

"Introducing the 'FixMyStreet' platform is another example of our continued investment in our vital highways service. This new reporting platform will make it easier for people to report potholes and other defects, and to check the progress of all repairs in their local area.

"Keeping Surrey's busy road network moving and investing in improving our roads continue to be top priorities for Surrey County Council."

To report an issue and see existing reports in your area, visit **https://tellus.surreycc.gov.uk/**

Related reports:

Don't blame us for potholes say Surrey's highway authority.

90% of Surrey road hole damage claims go to pot

Prevention costs less than cures…..

Image: Pothole in Woodcote Road Epsom. Copyright Epsom and Ewell Times

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Surrey roads get better marks

4 December 2024



Nearly £2m will be spent this year on improving road markings across the county, with over 48 miles of line painting already completed.

Surrey County Council has substantially increased its funding for this and coming years to make the county's roads safer and improve their visual appearance. This is in addition to the largest ever surface dressing programme which will see over 100 roads improved across Surrey to help prevent potholes.

The programme of works will see white and yellow road markings refreshed on roads across the county, with busy roads and those most in need of refreshing prioritised. This will also include major motorway junctions including the M25 J6 (Godstone), J8 (Reigate), J9 (Leatherhead) and M3 J1 (Sunbury Cross).

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said: "*We're very aware that well-maintained and presentable roads are highly important to our residents. This is why here in Surrey, we're investing nearly £300m in repairing and improving Surrey's roads and pavements by 2028.*

"*Our increased investment in line painting will improve the safety and appearance of many roads across our highway network, along with our surface dressing programme which will significantly strengthen 85 miles of the county's busiest roads, preventing deterioration in years to come.*

"*Our highways teams are also continuing to trial new products which can complete these works in half the time, whilst also using more sustainable equipment.*"

Residents can keep up to date with works in their local area by signing up to our weekly highways newsletter here: **Your Highways Update landing page (surreycc.info)**.

Mixed responses in Surrey to 20mph zones

4 December 2024



Plans for new speed limits in Surrey could go ahead despite lack of confidence it would improve road safety.

Locals said they considered road conditions and potholes to have a greater impact on safe driving and cycling.

Reviewing speed limits is part of Surrey County Council's (SCC) road safety strategy called 'Vision Zero' in partnership with Surrey Police (including the Police and Crime Commissioner), Surrey Fire and Rescue and National Highway colleagues. It aims to halve the number of collisions where someone is killed or seriously injured on the roads by 2035, with the ambition to get to 'zero' by 2050.

In the early 2000s Surrey had 60-70 deaths on the road every year and in the last few years it has reduced 30 or under, a Surrey County Council committee heard July 18. Cllr Matt Furniss (Conservative Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure) said the number of collisions has "plateaued" around the 30 mark.

Highlights of the strategy include: introducing more 20mph limits around schools, town centres and residential areas, investing in sophisticated speed cameras to tackle the worst speeding and casualty routes; review 60 mph rural speed limits and replace them with lower limits.

Over 3,600 people responded to the consultation between January and March this year, both Surrey drivers and local residents.

Concerns were raised that 70 per cent of respondents were not confident or neutral that the strategy would improve road safety in Surrey, causing councillors to question whether it should rethink the proposal.

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Respondents said they felt road maintenance had a greater impact on road safety and therefore the money would be better spent on fixing potholes and improving roads. “I would much prefer to see the roads we already have maintained better rather than new interventions,” one respondent said.

Officers admitted road maintenance is “crucial”, but said it was not the purpose of the multi-partner strategy. They added that “significant work” was already taking place to address the road defects.

Despite not having data to hand to show if improved road maintenance would lead to less road collisions, officers said police reports would let SCC know if this was the case.

The committee heard that potholes and road defects were occasionally mentioned in police reports but the speed limits and road maintenance “goes hand in hand” and “needs to work together” to improve safety.

Half of the responses (1,832) disagreed with the proposal for new 20mph speed limits, with 10 per cent (around 366) feeling neutral. The report stated the public had a “mixed view” on the subject.

Sceptical of this, Cllr Mark Sugden (Conservative) said: “Is the issue a lack of understanding and communication, or is there a fundamental disagreement to the proposed strategy?”

Officers claimed not everyone understood the policy. They highlighted 135 (4 per cent) of the respondents who had disagreed with implementing 20mph speed limits, had in fact aligned with the proposals. These included comments that did not support a blanket approach but only supported 20 mph limits in town centres, residential areas or near schools but not on main roads.

Negative comments by the public said 20mph limits do not improve safety (170 responses) and increase congestion and air pollution (132 responses). Officers accepted some people may be against the proposals but argued their reasoning went against national research shown in their report.

Officers repeatedly stressed that enforcing 20mph speed limits would not be a “blanket approach” and would, if approved by the cabinet, be subject to local consultation. They added the council needed to communicate its road safety message more effectively with residents.

With only 46 per cent of respondents being happy or very happy with the approach, officers said they had “hoped for more support” for the proposals. A further 20 per cent were neutral to the safe roads approach.

The committee resolved that SCC needed to address the public’s perception that fixing potholes would improve road safety and the concern whether the strategy will succeed.

Image: Neighbouring London Borough of Kingston’s Bridge Road approach to Epsom and Ewell 20 mph zone.

90% of Surrey road hole damage claims go to pot

4 December 2024



Pothole damage has given rise to 5,619 claims for compensation from Surrey residents to the county council since May 2021.

Since the last local election three years ago, only 581 claims were successful (just over 10 per cent) resulting in £190,000 spent on repayment.

in 2024 so far, up to May, only 12 out of 1,204 claims have been repaid by Surrey County Council (SCC), with £4,435.15 being paid.

As the local highways authority, SCC is only liable to pay for damage to vehicles if it can be proved it has been negligent in the inspection and maintenance of its roads.

“Rather than 90 per cent of the claims being fraudulent, it is more likely that only 10 per cent of people are determined enough to see through a difficult process to the end,” said Cllr George Potter (Lib Dem/Guildford East) at a county council AGM meeting on May 21.

Cllr Potter said the process is “very difficult and time consuming and bureaucratic” which will “discourage many people from going all the way through with their claims.”

Residents can apply for compensation if they suffer personal injury or property damage due to council-owned roads.

For their claim to be successful, they must provide a long list of information such as the details of damage plus two independent estimates for repair, exact location, proof of ownership and current MOT and insurance, travel direction as well as time, date and weather conditions.

Rebutting the accusation, cabinet member for finance and resources, Cllr David Lewis (Conservative/Cobham) said he did not believe the claims were “fraudulent” in any way but that the criteria was not met.

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"We have a duty to protect our finances and money raised from residents," Cllr Lewis said. "[SCC] simply can't have a process where every claim put in is paid out. The system we currently have is fair." He added there are no plans to review the criteria or the process of compensating pothole claims.

Fixing approximately 50,000 potholes a year on average, Surrey County Council has budgeted to spend £5m of its annual budget on repairing potholes and other road safety defects.

SCC inspects its major roads (A roads), roads connecting traffic between A roads and smaller roads (B roads) and some smaller roads (often linking a housing estate or a village to the rest of the network) once a month. Rural roads connecting to smaller communities are inspected once every three months, according to guidance on SCC's website.

As a general rule, the county says, the diameter of the pothole at the surface level should be less than 150mm on carriageways for cars to require it to be repaired within five working days. If it is not possible to permanently correct or repair the defect within the time period, a permanent repair should be carried out within 20 working days.

Related reports:

Pothole payouts and repairs penalise Councillor projects?

On the Hunt for pothole repairs

Don't blame us for potholes say Surrey's highway authority.

Going potty about pot-holes?

Mutual easing of access benefits Epsom development

4 December 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has agreed to enter into a mutual deed of **easement** with the developer of the SGN Gas Works site in Hook Road, Epsom. This site is situated next to the council-owned Hook Road car park, and the deed of easement grants reciprocal access rights over each site's roads.

This agreement is an important step in the council's long-standing ambition to promote the redevelopment of this combined site, in order to provide an improved, attractive, better connected and rejuvenated area that would attract new residents and businesses to Epsom Town Centre.

The combined site has previously been included in the November 2023 consultation of the Epsom Town Centre Masterplan, and the Reg 18 March 2023 consultation of the Draft Local Plan.

The deed of easement will enable the Gas Works site developer to design a scheme that could use the council's Rainbow Leisure Centre access road as the main entrance off East Street. In return, the council would have access across the Gas Work developer's estate road infrastructure from the current Hook Road car park entrance. By removing the need for separate, duplicated road infrastructure, the Gas Works site can be designed to maximise open space and connectivity across the wider combined site.

The deed of easement is conditional, which means it will not be completed or take effect until such time that the developer of the Gas Works Site is granted planning permission for development. This will ensure the council can maintain its two separate, independent capacities as landowner and as Local Planning Authority.

Cllr **Hannah Dalton**, (RA Stoneleigh) Vice Chair of the Strategy & Resources Committee, said: "Members unanimously voted for the mutual deed of easement at a special Strategy and Resources Committee held on Wednesday 19 June. This is an excellent example of the council working in partnership with other landowners and we hope that, as a result of this decision, we can deliver wider benefits for the community through appropriate high-quality redevelopment and regeneration of the SGN Gas Works site."

Image aerial view East Street Epsom – Google.

Local roadworks taken to task

4 December 2024

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Surrey County Council has established a critical new **task force** to reduce the impact of utility roadworks and drive better coordination and communication of works across Surrey's road network.

Utility companies' demands in Surrey are amongst the top five highest in the UK with 88 works starting every day in the last twelve months. In total, over 32,000 utility works have been undertaken across the county during this period, at a cost impact to Surrey residents of £35,424,225.

Made up of representatives from water, energy and telecoms companies, the task force held their inaugural meeting last week and agreed five key areas of focus:

- Better coordination of roadworks across Surrey
- Working collaboratively to minimise disruption for residents
- Improved public communication by utility companies and improved on-site signage prior to works commencing and throughout
- Improved methods of sharing information, including online mapping of planned utility works
- Clearly defined escalation routes so that SCC can quickly hold utility companies to account.

Jonathan Hulley, Deputy Cabinet Member, Strategic Highways at Surrey County Council, said, "*Whilst we recognise that works on the highway carried out by utility companies are necessary, these works are all too often impacting negatively on Surrey road users.*

"*This is a huge source of frustration for our residents, and we need to ensure that utility works are completed quicker, with better traffic management, better coordination, and better resident communication, which is why we have formed this vital task force.*

"*Surrey County Council is working hard to improve over 100 roads as part of our £8.5m highways maintenance programme this Summer to help prevent potholes – the biggest ever surface dressing programme undertaken in the county.*

"*I thank all partners who attended the first meeting of the task force and I look forward to working together to drive real improvements and do all we can to reduce utility congestion on our busy road network*."

The task force will meet monthly to take this work forward.

More information on Surrey County Council's responsibilities and utility companies roadworks is available on the **Surrey County Council website**.

Image: Credit Geof Sheppard Licence

Cyclist death prompts A217 review

4 December 2024



The death of a "fit and active" cyclist has prompted a coroner to raise concerns over paths near a main road in Tadworth.

A man named John Bass died after falling from his bike following an incident involving a van on the A217 at Tadworth in December 2022.

Encroaching mud, twigs and grass more than halved the width of the popular cycle path which poses a risk of further fatalaties, a coroner said at Mr Bass's inquest.

The 80-year-old was considered a "fit and active cyclist". While the footpath from which Mr Bass fell was 1.4 metres wide, due to encroaching mud, grass, twigs and acorns on the pavement space, the space where he was able to cycle was

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reduced to only 0.6 metres wide.

Weeks before his death, a highways inspector visited the path and did not consider the narrowing of pathway as a safety concern.

Assistant Coroner Krestina Hayes found in a Prevention of Future Death Report: “There is a risk to future pavement users if clear guidance is not provided to inspectors to identify safety concerns regarding vegetation growth on footpaths.”

The report, published May 14, 2024, also expressed concerns that the frequency of the yearly road inspections should be reviewed.

Speaking at the inquest, Mr Bass’ family advised the footpath by the Tadworth Road is used regularly by cyclists to avoid the vehicles on the busy road, where the speed limit is up to 40mph.

As the highway authority, Surrey County Council (SCC) is responsible for maintaining public highways. Although there is reference to trees and vegetation in SCC, there is no clear guidance on encroachment on pavements.

Inspected yearly, the stretch of highway was examined by car on November 14, and on foot on 22 November. No safety defects were found to meet intervention level by SCC. The family said the pavement was cleared shortly after the accident.

A spokesperson for SCC said: “Our deepest sympathies remain with John’s family and friends, and we will respond to the Coroner’s report following careful consideration of the concerns raised.”

SCC has been given until 3 July to respond to the report.

Image: A217 Road, Near Tadworth, Banstead. (Photo Google)

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