

Stoneleigh station to be revamped.

10 March 2023



A new, covered footbridge will replace the existing structure at Stoneleigh station, providing full access via lifts or stairs to the central platform from both sides of the station. New lighting and security cameras will be installed on and around the lifts and bridge. The existing bridge structure will be removed, with the ticket office sited on the central island platform.

Network Rail and South Western Railway have been working together with Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to get this scheme off the ground. The council has provided a £500k funding contribution to the project from its Community Infrastructure fund.

A prior approval planning application was sent to and approved by the council in May 2022.

Network Rail estimate work will start on site – spring 2023 and enter into service Spring 2024.

Next up but one up the line Motspur Park will get a similar revamp and if cross-rail is ever built those trains will stop there.

Your Council Needs You - to bin your litter

10 March 2023



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has launched an anti-littering campaign, aimed at reducing litter throughout the borough. The campaign will focus on hotspots including Epsom train station, Epsom and Ewell town centres, and the borough's parks.

The Council's team of Environmental Enforcement Officers, who work in partnership with Surrey Police, will patrol the borough on foot or in a marked council vehicle and may warn people at risk of being fined or issue a Fixed Penalty Notice of £100.

The latest virtual recruit to the Council's Environmental Enforcement team is the famous image of Lord Kitchener, created by British graphic artist Alfred Leete. Posters will be displayed around the borough and used on social media, instructing potential litterlouts to bin their litter or take it home – or risk a penalty fine.

Littering is a criminal offence under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 sections 87/88.

A Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued to any person who is witnessed littering, including:

- Throwing away food wrappers or uneaten food
- Dropping chewing gum
- Discarding cigarette butts

Councillor John Beckett, Chair of the Environment and Safe Communities Committee, said: "Dropping litter is an issue for several reasons. It can take years to degrade, causing harm to wildlife and habitats. Food which is discarded by people attracts vermin such as rats and feral pigeons.

"Research has also shown that people can feel less safe in areas that are littered. Poor levels of cleanliness have been found to be associated with an increase in social disorder and crime.

"Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is committed to reducing incidents of littering within the borough, to ensure that Epsom & Ewell is a pleasant place to live and to visit, that feels safe."

Surrey MPs oppose each other on drills in the hills

10 March 2023



Jeremy Hunt MP has said it is "disappointing" that plans to drill for oil and gas in Dunsfold have not been "formally shelved" altogether. The Chancellor of the Exchequer issued the statement after the High Court ruled the government-approved exploratory drilling in his South West Surrey constituency would go to Judicial Review.

The High Court ordered the review on the grounds that there was “inconsistency in decision-making” by Secretary of State **Michael Gove**, and that Dunsfold bordered the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – where great weight should be placed on “conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty”.

Mr Hunt, who has campaigned against the planning application in Dunsfold before, said: “Despite the latest judicial review, it is again disappointing that plans for this potential gas exploration have not been formally shelved. The idea of drilling on this beautiful area continues to be inappropriate – what’s more UKOG’s data and mapping of the sub-surface is sparse, old and simply not detailed enough. I hope to meet with Protect Dunsfold again later this month to continue discussions.”

The Conservative MP has form in the matter. In June 2022 he wrote that DLUHC’s decision to overturn Surrey County Council’s initial refusal was “bitterly disappointing and wrong both economically and environmentally”.

He also wrote a letter to Housing Secretary **Michael Gove** that said the project had been strongly opposed by both county council and “the entire local community”, going as far as accusing DLUHC of “ignoring the strength of local opinion”.

After news of the judicial review broke, UK Oil & Gas (UKOG) issued a statement to the London Stock Exchange.

It said: “Mr **Justice Lane**, dismissed five of the opponent’s grounds seeking to reverse the Secretary of State’s grant of planning consent as being unarguable. Two remaining grounds were given leave to be argued at a further hearing at some time in the future, as yet unknown.”

It added that full planning and environmental consents remain in force.

Stephen Sanderson, UKOG’s chief executive, said: “The company’s legal team remains robustly confident that following the extensive Loxley public inquiry, the secretary of state’s decision to grant planning consent was thoroughly considered and entirely lawful. Consequently, we will continue to move our project ahead.”

Can you beat the ULEZ charge?

10 March 2023



Established in **Epsom** in 1904 **Wilsons** car dealership still keeps ahead with the times. LDRS reports on its efforts to stay ahead of ULEZ expansion to Epsom and Ewell’s London borders

A quick-thinking car dealership in Surrey is advertising ULEZ compliant cars to drivers looking to make the switch before the zone expands to the Surrey border later this year.

Wilsons Epsom car dealership, in Kiln Lane, has placed a huge advert emblazoned with “beat the ULEZ charge” and its marketing team said they have been thinking of going large as the expansion was “something that’s been in the news a lot lately”.

Last year, London mayor Sadiq Khan announced the expansion of the Ultra Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ) which would bring it right up to the county’s border with the capital in areas such as Epsom and Ewell, Elmbridge and Spelthorne from August 2023.

The scheme will slap motorists of most petrol cars registered with the DVLA before 2005 with a £12.50 daily charge to enter the ULEZ zone after August 29. Diesel cars must be much newer and will have had to have been registered after September 2015 to enter the zone free of charge.

Check your vehicle [HERE](#)

The car dealership told the LDRS : “It’s at the forefront of people’s minds and there is a lot of confusion still around with councils looking to challenge the expansion or to comply with the new zones.” they added: “The situation was still at an early stage given the zone is only scheduled to come into force in August. People who have got older vehicles are considering electric or hybrid. ULEZ directly impacts our business and we want to be helping all of our customers as much as possible. We have a large range of ULEZ complaint stock and we want to show that off to customers.”

According to the Mayor of London’s office, five million more Londoners will breathe cleaner air as a result of the zone expanding.

A scrappage scheme exists for Londoners, but those on the outside are currently unable to apply despite requests from Mr Khan to the Prime Minister to include Surrey residents.

Surrey County Council was one of five local authorities to announce a legal challenge to the scheme.

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[Council’s last minute opposition to ULEZ extension.](#)

Surrey’s get greener update

10 March 2023



Surrey County Council and the **Greener Futures Partnership** are on a mission to make Surrey carbon free and greener by 2050. Here are links to the latest updates from Surrey County Council:

Use the new Energy Advice Tool to help save money: *Find out more*

“I finally took the plunge and sold my car” Read Becky’s story and also find out how you could win an e-bike. ***Read more***

Seven tips to save £70. How being savvy with your food could save you money and play your part to reduce waste in Surrey. ***Read more***

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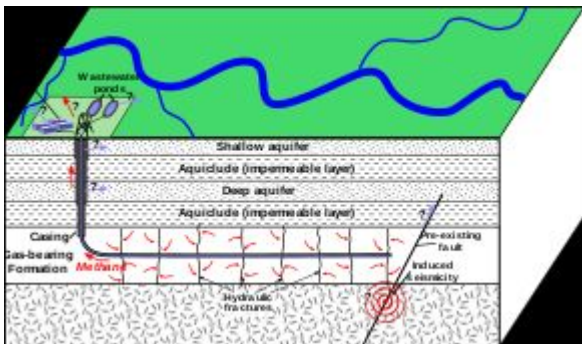
Growing verges wild for bees and flowers. Wondering why our grass is getting longer in some areas? ***Read more***

M25 junction 10/A3 Wisley improvement scheme. National Highways traffic improvements which will include improvements for local habitats and safer journeys. ***Read more***

Surrey County Council ask you to share this information with your friends and all are encouraged to **sign-up** to its bi-monthly newsletter.

Fractious Court case anticipated

10 March 2023



Anti-fracking campaigners are celebrating after the High Court granted a judicial review into the exploratory drilling of £123 million of oil near the **Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**.

The **UK Oil and Gas** (UKOG) was refused planning permission to search for fossil fuels at Loxley Well in Dunsfold in December 2020 by Surrey County Council’s planning committee.

But UKOG, which describes itself as an energy company focused on oil and gas exploration, appealed in June 2022 after a public inquiry. It was granted permission by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, led by Surrey Heath **MP Michael Gove**.

Almost immediately, **Waverley Borough Council** challenged the appeal decision in the High Court with £13,000 set aside for the legal challenge. Yesterday, the High Court ruled the matter would be examined again – by Judicial Review.

Responding to the court decision was **Frack Free Surrey**. They said: “We are delighted by the news. Allowing exploration for fossil gas during a climate emergency, and in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, was an appalling decision by the government. We need to rapidly wean ourselves off gas, not look for more of it. It will be good to hear the arguments tested in the High Court.”

The legal challenge has been supported by the **Goodwill Law Project**. The group’s director, **Jo Maughan**, said: “No Secretary of State who cared about the natural environment, or climate change, would have ignored the wishes of local people to grant planning permission for a huge new fracking project next to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We are pleased the High Court has given **Protect Dunsfold**, who we are supporting, permission to bring a judicial review challenge to a decision made under Michael Gove.”

According to lawyers, the Protect Dunsfold campaign succeeded for two reasons. The first was the “inconsistency in decision-making” by Secretary of State Michael Gove, who gave the Dunsfold drilling site the go-ahead on the same day he refused permission for a comparable site.

The second is that Dunsfold sits on the edge of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and there should be great weight to “conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty”.

Jeremy Hunt, now Chancellor and whose constituency covers Dunsfold, has previously campaigned against the drilling site going ahead. He was approached for comment.

UK Oil and Gas (UKOG) and DLUHC were approached for comment.

Paul Follows, leader of Waverley Borough Council has been approached for comment.

No date has been set for the review.

Will Me’lud halt ULEZ expansion to Epsom borders?

10 March 2023



A coalition of five councils has today (Thursday 16 February) launched a Judicial Review to challenge Transport for London (TfL) and the Mayor of London’s decision to expand the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) to outer London boroughs.

The London boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Harrow and Hillingdon and Surrey County Council have brought legal action following TfL’s announcement in November 2022 that it would push on with proposals to expand the scheme in August 2023 despite strong opposition from across outer London and beyond including concerns over how it is being delivered.

The coalition will challenge the expansion in the High Court on five grounds:

1. Failure to comply with relevant statutory requirements
2. Unlawful failure to consider expected compliance rates in outer London
3. The proposed scrappage scheme was not consulted upon
4. Failure to carry out any cost benefit analysis
5. Inadequate consultation and/or apparent predetermination arising from the conduct of the consultation

Cllr Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, said: “We are committed to delivering a greener future, but it must be done in a practical and sustainable way. We are dismayed at the lack of discussion or consideration given to these proposals by the Mayor of London. The impact on many Surrey residents and businesses will be significant and we will not stand by and watch that happen with no mitigations offered from the Mayor.

“To date, our requests for due consideration to be given to these mitigations have not been acknowledged, let alone acted upon. It’s disappointing that we, along with other local authorities, have to resort to legal proceedings to try and bring the Mayor of London to the table, but we have no choice but to do so.”

Cllr Ian Edwards, Leader of Hillingdon Council, said: “Our position has remained unchanged from when TfL’s plans were first mooted – ULEZ is the wrong solution in outer London as it will have negligible or nil impact on air quality but will cause significant social and economic harm to our residents. We shared this view in our response to the TfL consultation last summer and we’ve said it since when the plans were confirmed in November. Now, we’ll say it in the courts.

“We believe Sadiq Khan’s decision to impose this scheme on outer London boroughs is unlawful – his spending nearly £260 million of public money without any cost benefit analysis. Hillingdon, and the other coalition local authorities wouldn’t dream of making decisions in this fashion.

“The predominant effect of ULEZ expansion will be to financially cripple already struggling households, further isolate the elderly and harm our local economy with negligible or no improvement to air quality. Investment in improved transport links – on a par with those in areas within the existing ULEZ – is the better way to reduce car use in Hillingdon.”

Cllr Baroness O’Neill of Bexley OBE, Leader of the London Borough of Bexley, said: “We have been clear from the start that we believe air quality is important but that ULEZ is the wrong solution. By wanting to expand ULEZ to outer London boroughs it appears that the Mayor’s message is you can pollute as long as you can afford the £12.50.

“We believe he should give the monies that he has allocated to ULEZ to the boroughs who actually understand outer London and the transport connectivity problems our residents face to come up with innovative solutions that will deliver better, more practical results.

“We are also very concerned about the mental wellbeing of our residents who we know are already anxious about the installation of ULEZ and the very real prospect that they won’t be able to use their cars to get to work, visit relatives and friends, shop or attend health appointments.

“We are standing up for our residents who have given us a clear message of what they think of his plan.”

Cllr Colin Smith, Leader of Bromley Council, said: “We have been sounding the alarm about Mayor Khan’s attempted tax raid on the outer ‘London’ suburbs for many months now. The fundamental truth as to his true intention is now increasingly plain for all to see.

“In Bromley, this socially regressive tax directly threatens jobs, the viability and availability of small businesses, and causing significant damage to vital care networks, as well as creating a completely avoidable spike in the cost of living locally, at a time when some households are already struggling to make ends meet.

“To attempt to do all of this under cover of a false health scare over air quality, when the Mayor’s own research confirms that Bromley has the second cleanest air in London, also, that extending ULEZ to the boundaries of the M25 will make no discernible difference to air quality locally, is frankly unforgivable.

“The upset, pain and anxiety this has caused locally is immense, which is why, even at this late stage, I once again call on the Mayor to withdraw this spiteful proposal.”

The five grounds and a summary of each:

1.Failure to comply with relevant statutory requirements

Schedule 23 to the Greater London Authority Act 1999 governs the making of “charging schemes.” The Mayor decided to extend ULEZ by varying the existing scheme (which applies to inner London). Although Schedule 23 does permit a charging scheme to be varied, the proposed changes are so wide ranging that they amount to a whole new charging scheme which cannot be introduced by way of a variation. In addition, Schedule 23 contains procedural safeguards in the making of a charging scheme which have not been followed by the Mayor.

2. Unlawful failure to consider expected compliance rates in outer London

The Mayor’s failure to provide any meaningful information as to how he expects an instant 91 per cent compliance rate was unfair, and specifically, the Mayor did not respond to Hillingdon’s consultation response that the compliance assumptions “were not fit for purpose.” In addition, the consultation documents were unclear and confusing and prevented consultees from making proper responses.

3. The proposed scrappage scheme was not consulted upon

In making his decision to extend ULEZ the Mayor committed to a scrappage scheme costing £110 million. Details of the scrappage scheme only become available following his decision and were not subject to prior consultation. In particular, the Mayor’s decision to only offer the scrappage scheme to those residing in London was not consulted upon, although this was highlighted in the consultation response from Surrey County Council. Given the importance of the scrappage scheme to the Mayor’s decision, a consultation on the scrappage scheme should have taken place.

4. Failure to carry out any cost benefit analysis

Treasury Guidance recommends a cost benefit analysis where a policy decision requires the use of “significant new” public money. No such analysis was undertaken by the Mayor and no explanation given as to why one was inappropriate. Given that the implementation cost is estimated at £160 million and that the Mayor has introduced a separate £110 million scrappage scheme, and that the expansion is expected to generate a net operating surplus of £200 million in the first full year of operation, his decision clearly involves “significant new” public money.

5. Inadequate consultation and/or apparent predetermination arising from the conduct of the consultation

The consultation exercise contained 15 questions with drop-down answers, only one of which sought to address the question of whether the expansion should go ahead. In addition, following disclosure by the Greater London Authority (GLA) of background consultation information to the GLA Conservatives, it appears that a number of “organised responses” were excluded by TfL particularly those which opposed the expansion. This took place during the consultation and the way in which this happened suggests that the Mayor had predetermination.

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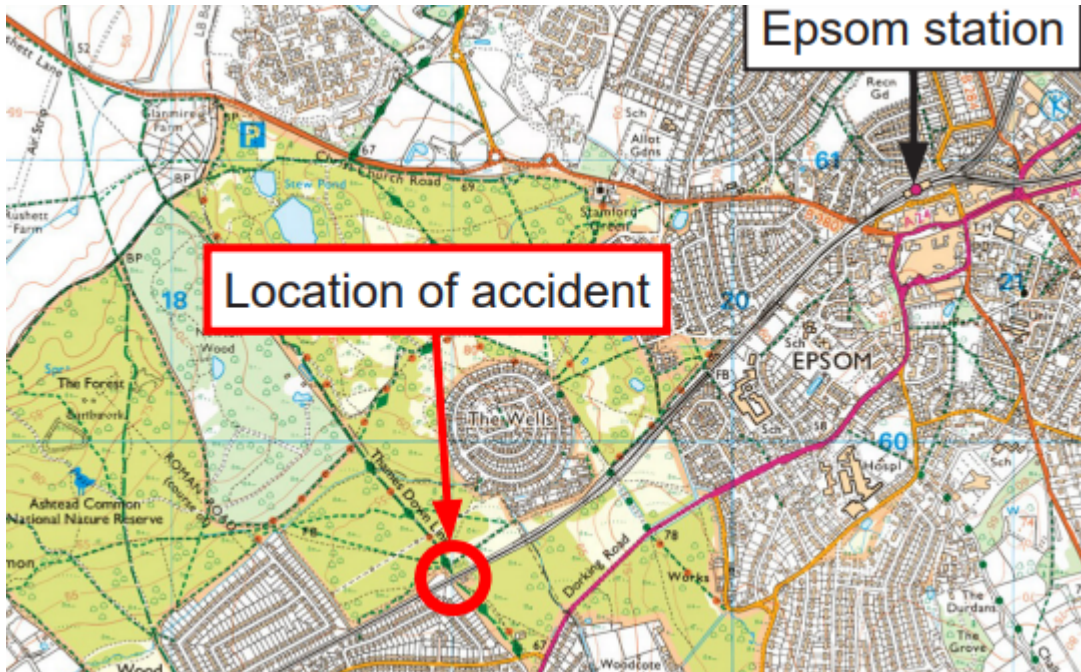
Council’s last minute opposition to ULEZ extension.

Epsom rail crossing fatal accident lessons

10 March 2023



In the afternoon of 21st April 2022, a pedestrian was struck and fatally injured by an out-of-service passenger train at Lady Howard footpath and bridleway crossing on Epsom Common. The pedestrian, who was walking on the crossing with a dog and pushing a wheeled trolley bag, started to cross the railway tracks shortly after a train had passed. She was struck by a second train, which was travelling in the opposite direction to the first. The driver of the train involved in the accident sounded the train's horn on seeing the pedestrian on the crossing. The pedestrian responded by hurrying forwards towards the exit of the crossing, but was unable to get clear of the path of the train in time to avoid being struck.



The **Rail Accident Investigation Board (RAIB)** carried out an investigation and has just issued its report and findings.

The investigation found that the pedestrian was apparently unaware that the second train was approaching when she made the decision to cross; there is no evidence that she was aware of it and/or had misjudged the time available to cross. This was because, although the pedestrian looked twice in the direction of the second train before starting to cross, the front of this second train was hidden behind the first train, which was moving away on the line nearest to her. RAIB also found it was possible that the pedestrian did not perceive the risk arising from the possibility that the first train was hiding another approaching train.

A probable underlying factor was that Network Rail had not provided any effective additional risk mitigation at the crossing, despite having previously deemed the risk to users to be unacceptable. Network Rail had planned to install miniature stop lights at the crossing, but complexities with the technology required at this location meant that this solution was not ready for implementation before the accident occurred. There is little evidence that Network Rail considered effective options to mitigate the risk on an interim basis while this solution was progressed, although they fitted additional warning signs for users and a camera to monitor crossing use.

Recommendations

As a result of this investigation, RAIB has made two recommendations, both to Network Rail. The first is intended to address the risk to pedestrians at crossings of this type arising from a second approaching train being hidden from view by another train. The second recommendation concerns the implementation of appropriate interim risk mitigations at level crossings that are awaiting long-term solutions.

Surrey County Council sets 23/24 budget

10 March 2023



A councillor who visited rural India paused his tour to take photos of the roads because they were “in better condition than Surrey’s”. The Labour group leader on Surrey County Council said he visited the state of Karnataka last month and on a visit to a village school, stopped to take a photo of the road.

Councillor **Robert Evans** (Labour, Stanwell and Stanwell Moor) told a meeting of the council on Tuesday (February 7) that his host had asked him what was wrong with the roads there. He told the meeting he had replied: “Nothing, to the contrary. I just wanted photographic evidence that the road surfaces here in rural India are better than in many parts of Surrey.”

Cllr Evans also said his Stanwell residents asked him why roads in what he called the “forgotten part of Surrey” were worse than in other parts of the county. He told the meeting: “I actually tell them they’re not, they are pretty bad everywhere.”

In the meeting, councillors voted through the authority’s budget for 2023/24, though without the support of the opposition. The county council’s share of council tax will increase by 2.99 per cent from April, which means an increase of 94p per week, or £48.69 per year on the average band D property.

This is less than the 4.99 per cent which the government says councils can increase council tax by without a referendum, though Slough, Thurrock and Croydon councils were this week given permission to raise council tax by 10 and 15 per cent to help pay off huge borrowing costs.

The district and borough councils in Surrey, as well as the Police and Crime Commissioner, will also add their shares to the bills that will be paid by residents. Surrey’s £1.1billion budget, which includes spending of more than £400m on adult social care and £249m on children, families and lifelong learning was described

as a “good and fair” budget by the council’s leader.

Cllr **Oliver** (Conservative, Weybridge) pointed to the council’s “ambitious” capital programme which included highways maintenance as well as low emission buses, flood alleviation measures, independent living facilities for the elderly and more accommodation in the county for looked after children.

A cabinet meeting last week heard that more government funding was needed in Surrey for repairs on the county’s 3,000 miles of roads. The Liberal Democrat group leader called on the council to spend money the council had in reserves rather than “cutting spending on roads and services for vulnerable people”. Cllr **Will Forster** (Woking South) said Surrey’s roads were “completely falling apart”. He pointed to a highways budget that he claimed would be less than £30m by 2024/25, compared to nearly £70m in the 2023/24 budget. He said: “That is not acceptable. Our residents would find that appalling.”

But another councillor said it would be “bonkers” to spend the council’s savings on road repairs or other projects.

Cllr **Edward Hawkins** (Conservative, Heatherside and Parkside) said he supported the budget and looking to the situation in the Ukraine, Turkey and Syria, that it was important not to spend money that had been put aside.

He told the meeting: “It’s bonkers to spend the money that you put aside for a rainy day, when we really don’t know what’s coming around the corner.”

The meeting opened with a minute’s silence for the dog walker who was killed in Caterham in January, the Epsom College head and her family who were found dead on Sunday (February 5) as well as those affected by earthquakes in Turkey and Syria.

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

10 March 2023



The state of Surrey’s roads is “no fault of the county council” its cabinet has heard, as councillors vowed to put more pressure on central government for highways funding. In what the council’s leader called “pothole season”, the problems facing the repair of the county’s roads were set out at a meeting of the authority’s cabinet on Tuesday (January 31).

Approving the budget for the next year, ahead of full council voting on it, cabinet agreed a 2.99 per cent increase to the authority’s council tax share, or 94p per week for residents. This will be alongside any increases to come from Surrey’s 11 districts and boroughs and a proposed £15 increase per year for the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Cabinet members agreed a final budget for the council in 2023/24 of £1.1billion, an increase of £61.4m from 2022/23. The council tax increase will be made up of a 0.99 per cent increase in the core council tax and a 2 per cent increase in portion that is spend on adult social care.

In terms of the budget for roads in Surrey in 2023/24, the meeting heard that the budget was being set in the context of “hyper-inflation”, seeing an increase in the cost of bitumen of nearly 30 per cent over the past year.

Councillor **John O’Reilly** (Conservative, Hersham), chairman of the communities, environment and highways select committee, pointed to three central government cabinet ministers being Conservative MPs, including the chancellor Jeremy Hunt, the MP for South West Surrey.

He said he hoped a central government review into highways funding was carried out earlier than next year, adding: “The state of our roads, through no fault of this council, do require not just pothole filling but resurfacing.” Cllr O’Reilly told the meeting: “I’m sure we’ll put as much of our influence as we possibly can on central government to address these issues of funding for highways, particularly potholes.”

Speaking before the meeting, Cllr **Tim Oliver** (Conservative, Weybridge), the council’s leader, said despite seeing more traffic than other areas, the county council got the same level of funding from central government. He said the potholes were a national problem, made worse at this time of year by the freezing weather in what he called “pothole season”. But he added that additional investment from the council had paid off and led to fewer potholes, with 32,000 being filled last year compared to 75,000 the year before.

He told the LDRS: “We need the government to give us some one-off money for potholes.”

Council will meet to approve the budget in full on Tuesday (February 7).

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