

Ewell East underpass transformed by new community mural

10 October 2025



A once grim and intimidating underpass in Ewell East has been given a striking new look thanks to a community mural designed to tackle anti-social behaviour and instil pride in the area.

The tunnel, connecting Nescot College with Ewell East railway station, has long been identified as a hotspot for crime and intimidation. Following reports from residents and students, the Epsom & Ewell Community Safety Partnership's Joint Action Group coordinated a project to reclaim the space.

Work began in September after Epsom & Ewell Borough Council successfully applied for funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Community Safety Fund. The mural was unveiled on 9 October by Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner, Lisa Townsend.

The artwork was created by the street art organisation Positive Arts in collaboration with Level 1 and 2 Art & Design students from Nescot. It draws inspiration from the college's 70-year history, incorporating elements from old prospectus covers, the Spirit of the Wind motif from a former college logo, a frieze from the original entrance, and images of local flora and fauna.

Lisa Townsend said: "It's really important to me that residents in Surrey are safe in their communities, and that they feel safe too. The footpath between Nescot and Ewell East Station was highlighted by residents as a location of concern, and I have discussed this issue with partners including Surrey Police, college leaders and the British Transport Police.

"The beautiful mural aims to reclaim this public space, which is used by both students and residents. Improvements to lighting, police patrols and additional private security will also bolster community safety and crime prevention in the area. There are seven murals within Epsom and Ewell, each of which helps to foster pride in our communities."

Councillor Shanice Goldman, Chair of the Crime and Disorder Committee, said: "This community mural is a fantastic example of how multiple partners can work together for the betterment of the community. It is also a valuable step forward in combating anti-social behaviour by rejuvenating an unloved, run down part of the borough and instilling a sense of pride and ownership of the area in the students."

Sarah Jane Morgan, Art & Design Lecturer at Nescot, said: "It's been an incredible learning opportunity for our talented students to work alongside renowned artists from Positive Arts to create and bring to life a professional street art mural. They have enjoyed painting a design that celebrates Nescot's history and curriculum areas, and we are grateful to the council for commissioning our students to work on this transformative project."

Positive Arts' director Julian Phethean added: "All of the students participated with passion and pride, eagerly embracing new spray painting techniques and applying them effectively while working collaboratively. They demonstrated a high level of creativity, motivation and focus throughout."

The Epsom & Ewell Community Safety Partnership includes representatives from Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, Surrey Police, Surrey County Council, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Nescot, National Rail and other community partners. The council's recent programme of murals across the borough has already shown success in reducing graffiti and improving the look and feel of public spaces.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Surrey Police And Crime Commissioner Reveal mural near Ewell East train station. (Credit: Emily Dalton/ LDRS)

Inquest into Banstead tree fall death of 12 year old

10 October 2025



A full inquest into the death of 12-year-old Brooke Wiggins, who was crushed to death by a falling tree branch on the Surrey and South London border last year, is set to take place next spring, as urgent questions remain over the tree's maintenance and safety.

The date was set following a pre-inquest review held on October 7 at South London Coroners Court, inside Croydon Council Chambers, and overseen by Coroner Ivor Collett. The inquest will determine whether Sutton Council, Surrey County Council, or both, bear any responsibility for the conditions that led to her death.

Brooke died on November 9 last year after a branch snapped from a tree she had been swinging on using a rope swing, while playing with friends at Grove Place, near the junction with Carshalton Road. The scene was described as deeply distressing, with her friends screaming for help as they waited for emergency services to arrive.

Emergency services spent over an hour trying to free her from the fallen branch, but despite efforts from residents and rescue teams, she was pronounced dead at the scene.

The inquest will hear evidence from the police, the Health and Safety Executive, and representatives of Surrey County Council. The council is responsible for managing the tree from which the rope swing was attached.

Arboriculture managers from Surrey will be called to give evidence on the inspection regime for the tree and whether it met required safety standards. The hearing will aim to establish if the branch failure was preventable and whether council maintenance processes were sufficient.

Coroner Collett noted the broader significance of the case, describing it as "an important issue for Surrey", given that it has the highest number of trees of any county in England, with a tree cover of 22.4%. He has also granted Surrey County Council permission to begin 'monolithing' - the removal of remaining branches on the tree involved in the incident.

The coroner is considering whether the London Borough of Sutton should be named as an "interested party" in the inquest. Interested parties are individuals, organisations or representatives with a legal interest in the death, giving them the right to be more actively involved in the inquest than other witnesses.

Although the tree was under Surrey's control, the branch extended over land owned by Sutton, and Brooke and her friends are believed to have accessed the area by crossing rights of way also owned by Sutton.

The inquest will examine the cause of Brooke's death and determine how and why the branch gave way.

Brooke's family attended the hearing and are expected to provide a pen portrait during the inquest to honour her memory. Coroner Collett confirmed that distressing body-worn footage from the day will not be used during the hearing, but that audio from the 999 calls will be played as part of the evidence.

Collett acknowledged that while the potential spring date for the three-day hearing was regrettable, it was a realistic outcome given the current backlog facing the court. Confirmation of the exact date is expected within the month.

Harrison Galliven - LDRS

Image: Brooke was killed after she was crushed by a branch in Banstead last year Credit: Google Maps

Three new schemes to help Surrey residents save energy and cut costs

10 October 2025



Surrey County Council is launching three new schemes to help residents make their homes warmer, greener, and more affordable to run.

With over 300,000 homes in Surrey energy rated D or worse, many properties are poorly insulated, expensive to heat, and at risk of damp and mould. Improving energy efficiency is a key step in supporting residents and progressing towards Surrey's ambition of becoming a net zero county by 2050.

Three ways Surrey residents can take action:

Home Energy Improvement One-Stop Shop

In partnership with energy specialists Furbnow, Surrey County Council is offering a comprehensive retrofit support service. Homeowners can access expert guidance through a three-stage journey: a home energy plan, design support, and project management. Recommended retrofit measures may include insulation, solar panels, draught-proofing, ventilation upgrades, and heat pumps. Eligible Surrey households may access up to 20% off a Home Energy Plan and 30% off design and project management services.

Registration is free and without obligation. Visit the **Furbnow website** to learn more.

Switch Together: Air Source Heat Pumps

Through the council's group-buying scheme, Switch Together, residents can upgrade to a highly efficient air source heat pump at a competitive rate. Each household receives a tailored quote and may be eligible for up to £7,500 in government funding via the Boiler Upgrade Scheme.

Residents can find out more and register on the **Switch Together Surrey website**. Registration is open until 31 October 2025.

Big Community Switch

This free group-buying scheme helps residents find competitive energy tariffs with trusted suppliers, including 100% renewable electricity as standard. Participants receive a personalised energy offer based on their usage and household needs, making it easier to compare and switch without the hassle.

To apply for this scheme, visit the **Big Community Switch webpage**. Registration is open until 31 October 2025.

Marisa Heath, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Environment, said: *"We know many households are interested in how to make their homes more comfortable, healthier, affordable-to-run and future-ready, and these tailored schemes are designed to make it easier to take action. Whether you're looking to improve insulation, switch to a heat pump, or find a better energy tariff, there's support available - and no pressure to commit. I'd really encourage residents to explore all three options and register their interest. It's a simple step that could make a big difference, and it helps us move closer to becoming a net zero council and county by 2050."*

For more information on all three schemes and other energy offerings visit our **home energy saving support for residents page**.

Surrey County Council



From field to fight: Bramley camp faces enforcement questions

10 October 2025



An unauthorised traveller camp has been built on land earmarked for inclusion in the Surrey Hills National Landscape - and now plans to make the site permanent have been submitted. Witnesses reported several caravans moving on to Unstead Lane in Bramley last week, sparking frustrations among residents over the lack of enforcement action. Since then a petition has been created calling on immediate action to be taken - with more than 600 people already signing.

It says: "Residents and taxpayers expect and deserve equal protection under planning law. The Surrey Hills National Landscape and Green Belt exist to safeguard our countryside for the benefit of all, not to be eroded by unlawful development. Allowing this encampment to remain would set a dangerous precedent that planning law can be ignored without consequence."

Guildford Borough Council has said it was aware of the work carried out and understood people's concerns. Officers visited the encampment and completed background work to gain a full understanding of the situation.

Councillor Jane Austin, leader of the Conservative opposition group in neighbouring Waverley Borough Council,

represents the Bramley and Wonersh ward near the site. She said: “People went to bed on Friday looking out to a field and now they have this. Saturday the road was blocked and they were clearly doing something without planning permission, but nobody could get hold of anyone. That field was due to be national landscape land, deemed to be of that high quality. The land is on floodplain and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, they won’t ever be legally built. People around here are reasonable and agree the GTL (Gypsy Traveller League) community need somewhere to live. Everybody should follow the law of the land without exception, planning is there to build sustainable communities and must be followed.”

Councils must provide adequate land for housing – whether fixed homes or traveller pitches. If they cannot demonstrate enough provision, sustainable planning applications are difficult to reject as they are often won on appeal – with the council liable for costs. In 2024 Guildford Borough Council was only able to identify 2.59 years supply for traveller pitches, below the minimum five years. Elsewhere in Surrey, Runnymede Borough Council’s decades-long failure to provide the legal minimum number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches has forced families to take matters into their own hands and build their own. Runnymede’s planning committee recently felt obligated to approve 12 new pitches in Hardwick Lane, Chertsey, despite concerns the site would be overcrowded and the roads unsafe.

Guildford Borough Council said it could not be expected to predict or prevent this type of incident occurring, but would react and manage it as quickly as possible. A spokesperson said: “If a breach of planning control is confirmed on any site in the borough, we have several enforcement options including negotiation and formal action. However, the enforcement powers available to local authorities do not achieve an instant solution.”

A planning application for the site was submitted on Saturday September 13. If it contains the correct paperwork, the council must validate it – with nearby residents contacted and given the opportunity to submit their views before any decision is made.

Surrey County Councillor Matt Furniss said he has been speaking with Guildford’s planning team and that Surrey Highways Enforcement has also visited the site to assess the new unauthorised access onto the highway for safety and to determine next steps. He added: “It is always disappointing when some individuals choose to work outside the planning process and I will be pressing both councils for a quick resolution.”

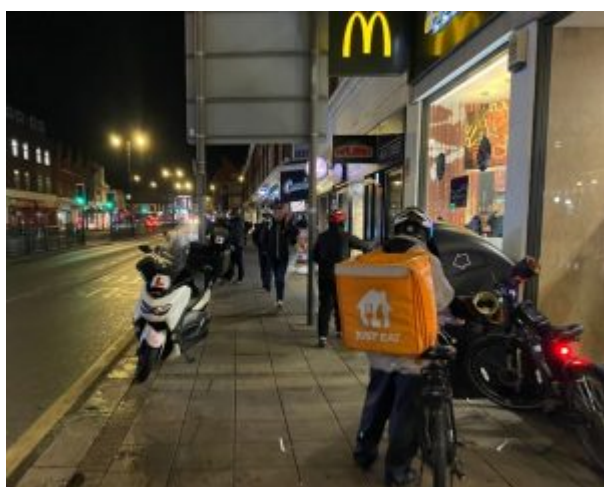
MP Jeremy Hunt said: “Residents all express the same sentiment – why is there so little action to address unauthorised encampments like this, which are appearing with increasing frequency. It is absolutely infuriating to see the law being ignored this way – and the people who do it getting away scot-free. This latest case is another rural field, recognised as being of such quality that it is earmarked for inclusion in the Surrey Hills National Landscape. Yet local people now face the prospect of potentially years of planning enforcement action – with no guarantee of success. The point is that such drawn-out processes risk consuming vast amounts of council time and money, while the local community continues to suffer the consequences. Early intervention and decisive action such as prompt issuance of a Stop Notice would help prevent situations like this from worsening.”

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Image of site in Unstead Lane, Bramley

Pavement Parking: Epsom & Ewell MP Speaks Out

10 October 2025



3rd September Helen Maguire, Liberal Democrat MP for Epsom & Ewell, spotlighted in a Parliament debate a pressing local frustration: pavement parking.

A Daily Struggle on Our Footpaths

Maguire painted a vivid picture of everyday life here in Epsom & Ewell—where pavements are meant to be safe, shared spaces, but too often become obstacles.

According to Guide Dogs UK, four out of five blind or partially sighted people report difficulty walking on pavements at least once a week, and 95% have been forced onto the road because vehicles encroach even slightly. For wheelchair and mobility scooter users, this alarming figure leaps to 99%. Even parents aren’t spared: 87% say they’ve had to step into the road, and 80% would walk their children to school more often if pavements weren’t blocked.

Maguire also revealed a telling local anecdote: on one evening alone, a constituent counted 23 mopeds and motorbikes cluttering a pavement, forcing people into traffic and weaving in and out unpredictably. It’s these small moments that

undermine our sense of safety—and, by extension, our freedom.

The Patchwork of Laws

Here's the head-scratcher: pavement parking is banned in London (for fifty years) and across Scotland unless your council specifically says otherwise. But elsewhere in England, the rule is reversed: it's allowed unless a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) is put in place—a long, expensive local process.

Driving onto pavements is already illegal under Section 72 of the Highways Act 1835—but, as Helen pointed out, few people even know the finer points of the law. One survey found just 5% of drivers understand all aspects.

A Consultation Left Hanging—and Growing Frustration

It's now nearly five years since the government ran a consultation titled *Pavement parking: options for change*, which closed in November 2020. It proposed everything from simplifying the TRO process to introducing a national default ban—but still, there's been no government response or action. Helen called on ministers to act before the consultation's fifth anniversary rolls around this autumn.

Lessons from Closer to Home—and Farther Afield

London and Scotland show what's possible: clearer rules, better enforcement, safer walking spaces. In Scotland, since the Transport Act 2019 came into force, councils have issued thousands of fines—raising almost £1 million in the process, with Edinburgh alone accounting for around £441,000, and showing that civil enforcement works.

Meanwhile, in England, research from Guide Dogs underscores the human cost—injuries, forced urban detours, isolation—and Living Streets found that 65% of drivers admitted to pavement parking, while 43% had done so in the past six months.

What It Means for Epsom & Ewell

For our residents—those with visual impairments, mobility challenges, parents with prams—the pavement should be a path to independence, not a blockade.

Maguire's plea is clear: she wants a national default ban on pavement parking—one that gives the police and councils clarity, hones enforcement, and safeguards community spaces.

What Could Come Next?

- A national ban as the starting point, with councils able to allow exceptions where needed.
- Proper powers for civil enforcement—think PCNs—not just confusing laws in dusty books.
- A public campaign: educating drivers, building understanding, reducing dangerous impromptu parking.
- Local upgrades to pavements: smoother, wider, safer—so more of us feel confident walking around Epsom & Ewell.

Related report:

[Epsom High St in need of more love?](#)

[Deliveroo drivers outside McDonalds Epsom](#)

Mole Valley spending plans

10 October 2025



How £11m for rail, transport, school, health and recreation upgrades will be spent in Mole Valley has been laid out. The district council has approved spending plans for community infrastructure money collected from developers since 2016 – with almost half expected to go on cycling and walking schemes. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is paid as part of the planning process to help offset the impact of the growing number of homes in the borough. Councillor Bradley Nelson, cabinet member for planning, said: “The local plan was adopted in 2024 so the time has come to focus on the £11m of strategic CIL which could rise to £34m given the local plan growth.” He said the projects should be ones “the council

thinks are necessary and achievable to help support development growth.”

“The programme commits investment for vital infrastructure such as health provision in Ashted, Bookham, and a health hub in Leatherhead. Early years provision in Ashted and Dorking would be targeted for funding as well as train station improvements in Dorking which we hope will lead to wider improvements and help the district as a whole, as well as investment in the district parks.” The council has been working with Surrey County Council over transport, education, early years provision and flood defence, Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Partnership, Great Western Railway, Network Rail, the Football Foundation, and its own parks and open spaces team to get an up-to-date picture of the suitable projects.

It has earmarked two transport projects to upgrade rail infrastructure on the North Downs Line at the stations in Dorking. These projects, the Tuesday July 22 cabinet papers read, will complement planned improvements on the line, such as battery-electric trains, and increase the number of people using this sustainable transport mode. Deepdene Station will be upgraded as a priority and a lift installed, acting as a major contribution towards “realising the potential of the district’s east-west travel connections, supporting growth and promoting sustainable development”. School capacity issues requiring funding in Hookwood could also be addressed, as well as the expansion of the SEND school on Woodland in Leatherhead.

Surrey County Council’s early years team has identified two potential projects, one in Ashted and one in Dorking, while football pitches at Ashcombe Secondary School in Dorking and the other at the Brockham Big Field could be upgraded to modern standards. There would also be financial support for the resurfacing of the sand-dressed pitch at Therfield Secondary School in Leatherhead to allow the installation of a new 3G football pitch “without losing a vital resource for hockey.”

Cllr Keira Vyvyan-Robinson (Liberal Democrats: Leatherhead North) said: “We all know just how much residents are concerned about the amount of development that comes and their biggest concern is where does the infrastructure come. It often seems that it’s a bit of a chicken and egg because the CIL comes from development, and without development you don’t get CIL - and therefore you don’t get infrastructure. For a long time we’ve been in the position where we’ve been telling residents we have to build these homes and we have to build these sites - and there hasn’t been anything to show - so it is really welcome to say ‘this is how we meet the infrastructure demands’. She added: “We can provide the funding, but we are dependent on the railway companies, the GP surgeries, the schools, to make those bids and to ask for the funding. But the development will pay for it and hopefully they will all come together at the same time.”

Estimated CIL Contributions by Infrastructure Category

- **Transport - Active Travel** - £11,555,000
- **Transport - Passenger Transport** - £3,450,000
- **Well Being - Health - Primary Care** - £2,350,000
- **Well Being - Open Space and Public Realm** - £3,859,000
- **Well Being - Sports Facilities** - £771,000
- **Education - SEND** - £870,000
- **Education - Early Years** - £300,000
- **Flood Defence - Nature Flood Management** - £95,000

Epsom Common 19th Green Flag Award

10 October 2025



Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve’s enduring excellence recognised with 19th consecutive Green Flag Award

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is celebrating receiving the prestigious Green Flag Award for Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve, the international quality mark for parks and green spaces, for a 19th consecutive year.

Councillor **Liz Frost**, (RA Woodcote and Langley Vale) Chair of the Environment Committee said: “We are incredibly proud that Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve has received its 19th consecutive Green Flag Award! This is an outstanding achievement and a true testament to the dedication and hard work of our Countryside team, volunteers, and partners as they create and maintain habitats that help biodiversity to flourish.

“Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and as such it is important that we continue

to protect and nurture its distinct habitats and wildlife for future generations to enjoy. A huge thanks to our Countryside team, volunteers and partners for helping us make a difference to our green spaces, including the Epsom Common Association, the Lower Mole Partnership and Natural England.”

Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve dates back to Saxon times and is a nationally and internationally important wildlife site. It is designated a ‘Site of Specific Scientific Interest’ due to its rare insects and its importance of breeding bird habitat. This local nature reserve contains oak woods, open pasture woodland and wetland habitats, including large ponds, and hosts species including cotton spotted orchids and purple emperor butterflies.

To find out more about the walks and tours taking place, managed by the Countryside team at the council, take a look here: [What’s on | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council](#).

Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve is one of 2,250 parks and green spaces in the UK to achieve the award.

Green Flag Award Scheme Manager, Paul Todd MBE, said: “Congratulations to everyone involved in Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve who have worked tirelessly to ensure that it achieves the high standards required for the Green Flag Award.

“Quality parks and green spaces like Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve make the country a healthier place to live and work in, and a stronger place in which to invest. Crucially, Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve is a vital green space for communities in the borough of Epsom and Ewell to enjoy nature, and during the ongoing cost of living crisis it is a free and safe space for families to socialise. It also provides important opportunities for local people and visitors to reap the physical and mental health benefits of green space.”

The Green Flag Award scheme, managed by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy under licence from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, recognises and rewards well-managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of green spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world.

More information about Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve - Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

The Green Flag Award Scheme (<http://greenflagaward.org/>) is run by the environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy, under licence from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, in partnership with Keep Scotland Beautiful, Keep Wales Tidy and Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful.

Any green space that is freely accessible to the public is eligible to enter for a Green Flag Award. Awards are given on an annual basis, and winners must apply each year to renew their Green Flag Award status. A Green Flag Community Award recognises quality sites managed by voluntary and community groups. Green Heritage Site Accreditation is judged on the treatment of the site’s historic features and the standard of conservation.

Hosepipe ban not reached Epsom and Ewell yet

10 October 2025



Frustration is growing towards Thames Water after it announced a hosepipe ban in parts of the South East just months after residents lived through a winter of “huge” leaks and sewage overflows. Thames Water has announced a hosepipe ban will kick in on Tuesday, July 22, covering all OX, GL, SN postcodes as well as RG4, RG8, and RG9, after the UK experienced one of its warmest and driest springs in over a century - followed by England’s warmest June on record. Currently the ban only impacts towns bordering Surrey, but Thames Water has said it may need to add postcodes “if anything changes”.

This year alone, residents in Surrey have endured water supply issues due to multiple pipe bursts, a report concluding water was “unfit for human consumption”, and people putting up barricades to stop raw sewage flooding homes. For some, a hosepipe ban would be the last straw. Sir Jeremy Hunt, MP for Godalming and Ash, said: “Godalming and Ash is not included in the hosepipe ban so far, but I completely understand residents’ frustration when they witness huge water leaks losing thousands of litres locally - Chilworth, Cranleigh, Ewhurst and Bramley in the last week alone - and yet Thames Water are asking us to use water sparingly brushing our teeth. I met with Thames Water CEO Chris Weston recently to press for investment locally because, although work is underway to improve water resilience, what is really needed is to connect our ‘water island’ area with the wider Thames water network - and to urgently replace those leaky pipes.”

Thames Water says its drought plan is designed to ensure the taps keep running for customers’ essential use while also protecting the environment. Water taken from the River Thames for the currently affected area is stored at Farmoor reservoir in Oxfordshire. If the warm, dry weather continues, the company anticipates reservoir levels will continue to drop. River levels are also below average, limiting how much can be drawn from the Thames while the hot weather also

causes more evaporation.

Esher and Walton MP Monica Harding said: “The threat of a hosepipe ban shows how important investment in the basics is. Thames Water’s current crumbling infrastructure can’t protect us now, let alone in the future from climate change and population growth. Thames Water has failed miserably in providing the investment needed up to this point and have lost the public’s confidence. The Government should grip the ongoing crisis at Thames Water, place it in special administration, make it a public benefit company, and replace Ofwat with a tough new regulator with teeth, to protect bill payers and give us the clean water we all need.”

Thames Water is also looking to secure future water supplies and said it was working on plans for a new reservoir in Oxfordshire, securing water supply for 15 million people across the South East, including Thames Water, Affinity Water and Southern Water customers. The company is also working on what it calls a vital drought resilience project in London which will be supported by water recycling.

A Thames Water spokesperson said: “Leakage is at its lowest ever level on our network, down 13.2% since 2020, but we know we have more work to do. The extended warm weather also brings increased risks of leaks and bursts due to pipe stress and shifting foundations in the ground. We’ve increased leakage teams in our region and we’re fixing 650 leaks a week with our engineers targeting leaks with the greatest impact to local water supplies. We’re also replacing 500km of water mains over the next five years to reduce leakage. We’re using innovative technology and data to find and fix leaks faster. So far, we have installed almost 40,000 acoustic loggers on our water network to help detect leaks and expect to have 100,000 in place by mid-2027. We’ve installed over 1 million smart meters, which are critical in helping us to locate leaks at our customers’ homes. We’ll continue to roll out smart water meters to households in our area, installing or upgrading a further c.1,200,000 smart meters to homes and businesses by 2030.”

A New Place for Reflection and Remembrance Opens in Epsom’s Long Grove Park

10 October 2025



A new natural sanctuary has been unveiled in Long Grove Park, offering a space for remembrance and quiet reflection. The ‘In Memory Woodland’, created by Age Concern Epsom & Ewell, was formally opened on Sunday 22nd June 2025 at a community event attended by local residents, families, and supporters.

Bathed in sunshine, the event marked the culmination of months of planning and planting, with contributions from the Epsom & Ewell Tree Advisory Board, who designed the woodland and oversaw the planting of elm and silver birch trees, alongside daffodils, bluebells, and other native flora. The tranquil glade is also home to a variety of wildlife, creating a peaceful retreat in the heart of the borough.

A ceremonial cherry tree planting and music from the Surrey Brass Quintet added to the occasion, while guests were offered complimentary tea and cake and invited to take part in remembrance activities. The speeches were led by Dorah May, Chief Officer of Age Concern Epsom & Ewell, and Howard Gregory from the Tree Advisory Board.

The woodland was made possible thanks to funding support from Surrey County Council’s *Your Fund Surrey*, with land provided by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. The site has been carefully developed to offer a permanent place for people to honour the memories of loved ones or to simply pause and enjoy the restorative qualities of nature.

Age Concern Epsom & Ewell, a long-standing local charity supporting older people, sees the ‘In Memory Woodland’ as a lasting and meaningful addition to the community. The charity hopes residents will return time and again to sit, reflect, and enjoy the peaceful setting.

For more information, visit: <https://ageconcernepsom.org.uk/in-memory-woodland>

New planning laws threaten Surrey countryside?

10 October 2025



Fears of “irreversible damage” to Surrey’s countryside have prompted calls to change a new planning bill currently going through parliament. Surrey County Council members have unanimously agreed to call for the central government to change a “deeply damaging” planning bill. Councillors voted in favour of an amended Green Party motion, highlighting serious concerns about the environmental implications of the potential legislation at a full council meeting on Tuesday (July 8).

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill currently going through Parliament aims to streamline the planning system to speed up the delivery of new homes and big infrastructure projects. But part of the bill includes the removal of some environmental red tape which the government argues is gridlocking the process. Councillor Jonathan Essex (Green Party/Redhill East) put forward the motion, stating: “If passed, this parliamentary bill will cause tragic, irretrievable and avoidable damage to Surrey’s countryside. We must not let this Bill dismantle decades of progress in nature protection, including removing key principles of environmental governance from the planning system.”

Surrey cabinet member for the Environment, Cllr Marisa Heath (Conservative/Englefield Green) supported the motion. She said the council is in favour of building new homes but “not to the detriment of the existing environment and residents”. Cllr Heath praised Surrey MPs who had already taken a stand and voted against the bill in parliament but hinted there was still more work to do.

Key concerns raised by councillors focused on part three of the bill which outlines a mechanism that would allow developers to bypass current environmental rules by putting money into a nature restoration fund. But the fund could be used at a later date to create environmental improvement elsewhere in Surrey or beyond, according to Cllr Heath. She stressed that once the fee is paid, concreting over green spaces can go ahead with the developer measuring the potential harm to the site during the planning process, how irreversible or long-lasting it may be.

Cllr Essex’s motion demanded the government “sufficiently amend” the relevant part of the bill. He said: “If Surrey’s beautiful countryside is to be protected Section 3 of this Bill must be scrapped.” The government has said the bill does not weaken environmental protections and will actually improve environmental outcomes and nature recovery.

Councillors from across the political divide came out against the possibility of developers side-stepping key ecological safeguards to drive through house building. They claimed it would neither bring in the finances needed nor deliver the environmental healing nature needed. Cllr Essex claimed the bill “waters down habitat protections” to sites of specific scientific interest (SSSIs) and other protected areas in Surrey like Colony Bog and Bagshot Heath, Brookwood Heath and Chobham Common. He added the new rules will chip away protection granted to individual species such as bats, newts, wild birds and water voles.

Rather than green interests slowing down growth, Cllr Essex argued planning delays are driven by under-resourced planning authorities, infrastructure bottlenecks, and industry-led viability constraints. He said: “I am not sure how Rachel Reeves was able to keep a straight face when blaming newts for the failure to build homes when a third of homes given planning permission in the last decade, that is 1.4 million, were not built.”

Surrey Wildlife Trust has slammed the bill in its current form as ‘a licence to kill nature’ as well as the Office for Environmental Protection claiming it waters down the existing laws designed to protect the environment. A statement from the government read: “Crucially, the Bill will also ensure that vital protections for the environment remain in place and through a more strategic approach we can deliver more for nature and not less. Current rules in the National Planning Policy Framework are clear that development resulting in the loss or deterioration or irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees, should be refused. This will not change through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.”

Surrey Hills National Landscape, Frensham Ponds (Image Natural England/ LYDIA2)

Fly-tipping in Epsom and Ewell part of national problem

10 October 2025



Organised criminal gangs are increasingly using fake waste removal companies to dump lorry-loads of rubbish across the UK — and Surrey is not immune.

According to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), over 47,000 large-scale fly-tipping incidents (involving tipper lorries or more than a van load of waste) were recorded by councils in England in 2022/23, costing local authorities more than £13 million to clear. Behind many of these cases are sophisticated criminal operations posing as legitimate businesses, advertising cheap waste clearance on platforms such as Facebook Marketplace and Gumtree.

“These aren’t just one-off chancers,” said John Roberts, Chief Security Officer at Kingdom Local Authority Support. “We’re talking about well-organised groups using the same tactics repeatedly — setting up fake firms, offering cheap deals online, and then vanishing before anyone can hold them accountable.”

How the Scams Work

According to Roberts, gangs offer low-cost rubbish removal services, load the waste into tipper trucks, and illegally dump it on green spaces, bridleways, industrial estates or roadside laybys — often under cover of darkness.

“They can disappear in a matter of hours. There’s virtually no trace, no formal business records, and no accountability,” he warned.

What many people don’t realise is that residents who unknowingly use these services can still be fined — up to £1,000 in fixed penalties, or face unlimited fines if prosecuted — if they fail to obtain a Waste Transfer Note, which proves the waste was handed to a licensed carrier.

Fly-Tipping in Epsom & Ewell: A Local Problem

While the national picture is alarming, Epsom & Ewell Borough has seen its own troubling rise in fly-tipping.

In February 2024, a man was prosecuted for multiple fly-tipping offences across the borough, including in the World’s End area. The Borough Council reported he was fined more than £2,300 after their investigations, using CCTV and physical evidence, successfully traced the waste back to him.

In 2023, the Council launched a targeted campaign to tackle what it described as “persistent” fly-tipping hotspots, including:

- Old London Road
- Hook Road
- Christ Church Road

Measures included surveillance cameras, warning signage, and public appeals.

A prior incident in 2021, covered by the Surrey Comet, showed men caught on camera dumping waste from a van near Horton Country Park — prompting public outrage and renewed calls for enforcement.

How to Avoid Illegal Waste Carriers

To avoid being scammed — and fined — residents are urged to take the following precautions:

- Check if the waste carrier is licensed with the Environment Agency: www.gov.uk/check-waste-carrier-registration
- Ask for a Waste Transfer Note. This document proves you handed over the waste legally.
- Avoid cash-in-hand deals and suspiciously low prices. Legitimate services charge based on volume and type of waste and hold valid permits.

How to Report Fly-Tipping in Epsom

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council encourages residents to report fly-tipping using the following methods:

Online: www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/fly-tipping

Phone: 01372 732000

Include details such as the time and date, exact location, vehicle registration (if known), and photos if safe to capture.

A Shared Responsibility

“People often don’t realise that even if they’ve paid someone to take the waste, they’re still legally responsible for what happens to it,” John Roberts said. “You’ve got to get that paperwork.”

The message is clear: fly-tipping isn’t just a public nuisance — it’s a criminal offence, and everyone has a role in tackling

it.

If you're clearing garden waste, disposing of old furniture, or hiring a skip, make sure you've checked who's collecting it.

Image from Pixabay licence free