



Surrey school children road safety faces funding challenges

Children at a special needs school could be left waiting years for a much needed crossing. Clifton Hill School, on Chaldon Road in Caterham, is a secondary school for 11-19 year olds with severe and complex learning difficulties and special needs.

Students at the school demanded action in May 2024 after telling councillors they felt scared going on the road outside their school because there is no safe crossing. Pupils are encouraged to use the cafe in the church opposite the school as part of their independent living skills, but they said people "driving like maniacs" or even honk at them if the students take too long crossing the road.

Surrey County Council said: "In the interim we are looking into rectifying shorter-term issues such as improving line painting and signage, and we will keep the school and parents updated on this as we progress. We'll continue to do all we can to keep our roads safe."

Short-term measures included lowering a school warning sign so drivers can see it at car-level, getting the greenery cut back so drivers can see the signs, and installing a dropped kerb for wheel-chair users.

"Another term is over and our children can't cross the road safely," said Rachael Forkan, mum and member of the Clifton Hill Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Ms Forkan said she and the head were "not thrilled" the signal crossing was part of a 'long-term plan' for improving the school's road safety. Ms Forkan said: "It isn't a bit helpful because that could be anything from two years to seven, and my son will leave there in five years' time."

Officers reported there were no dropped kerbs between the school and the church which made it "problematic to navigate" for wheelchair users trying to cross smoothly. Where the County Council would deliver road safety awareness training to students, for students with complex and multiple disabilities, like at Clifton Hill, officers said this type of training would "not be appropriate".

"It's definitely a priority for now," said Councillor Jeremy Webster for Caterham Hill. "But the [County Council] is telling me there isn't any money and that we have to wait a couple of years, but by then problems will be worse."

The local councillor described Chaldon Road as "problematic" with existing highways issues such as increasing pressure from developments and an unstable embankment. Cllr Webster told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) he would continue to urge the Surrey County and Caterham Parish council for their financial support.

Conservative MP for East Surrey, Claire Coutinho, who visited the school in summer 2024, said she recently met with Cllr Jeremy Webster at the school for an update on the crossing issue. Ms Coutinho said she asked him to maintain pressure on his colleagues at Surrey County Council to find a "funding solution" to get so a crossing installed as soon as possible.

A Surrey County Council spokesperson said: "At a site meeting completed in October 2024 we recommended a zebra or push button signalised crossing as the most appropriate road safety measure to be introduced. We appreciate that parents would like this to be implemented immediately, however this assessment forms part of a wider piece of work across the county which has seen us identify demands for road safety measures across another circa 50 sites, and we will have to prioritise which of these sites are then worked on with any available funding. At present, the council hasn't set its budget for this area of work and as such no funding has yet been allocated.

"Which sites take priority will depend upon a number of factors including the level of road safety risk based on site observations and collision history, the number of people that would benefit from improved facilities, cost and the level support from the local community for any proposals. Once funding has been identified it typically takes a year to design, complete the legal consultations and then implement a zebra or signalised pedestrian crossing."

MP spies pollution in Mole

Raw sewage has spewed out of a broken manhole cover and into the River Mole. Video taken by the Dorking and Horley MP, **Chris Coghlan**, shows the waste pumping out of the ground, just yards from the River Thames tributary in Brockham. He had been alerted by residents who said they were fed up after repeatedly trying to get Thames Water to fix the problem. The utility



firm has apologised to those affected and said they would also clean up the surrounding areas.

Posting a video to social media, Mr Coghlan said: "So it's happy new year, happy new sewage spill from Thames Water. I'm here outside a broken manhole cover here in Brockham and you can see it's literally busting sewage out of it, spraying it everywhere. And behind me you can see loo paper, what looks like condoms.

"I've been speaking to some of my constituents here, this has been going on for years. They have been reporting it to Thames Water and they've done nothing and if you look behind me down here, this is the River Mole. It's going straight into the River Mole. We're a little upstream from the stepping stones where many people would love to bring their kids to paddle but they just can't because this sewage is being dumped into the river and dumping E Coli everywhere.

"So I am very upset about this, I will be writing to Thames Water and the Environment Agency. It is a completely illegal sewage dump and I want it fixed."

Thames Water publishes an up-to-date map showing near real storm discharge activity, as indicated by its monitors. At the time of publication there were active discharges in Chertsey feeding into the River Bourne meaning "there could be sewage in that section of the watercourse," as well as at Leatherhead into the River Mole, at Holmwood into Holmwood Stream, at Cranleigh into Cranleigh Waters, and at Ockley Road feeding into Cobbler's Brook.

In London, Thames Water has issued an update after E. Coli was found in an area of South East London with people in Brockley advised to boil their water before using it. A Thames Water spokesperson said of the Brockham leak: "We responded to reports of external sewer flooding near Hillside Close in Brockham on Monday January 6. When our engineers attended the water had receded, however we will carry out further investigations to understand why the flooding occurred. During this time we will also clean up the surrounding areas and we are sorry to those who have been impacted."

Related reports:

Trust the public to check our rivers

River "Bogsmill" blights Borough

Image: Broken Manhole Chris Coghlan Dorking and Horley MP

Epsom and Ewell's solar powered spaceship

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has recently installed solar panels on the roof of Bourne Hall, and secured funding from the Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund to develop a heat decarbonisation plan for the Ewell Village community venue. These works are part of a planned programme of measures to decarbonise Bourne Hall.

This is part of the council's Climate Change Action Plan which has set an ambitious target for the council to be carbon neutral by 2035.

Bourne Hall uses the most energy out of all the council's buildings. The 52.2 kWp solar panel system will generate 45,000 kWh of electricity, covering 25% of Bourne Hall's electricity usage, and saving more than 9 tonnes of carbon each year. The panels will save Bourne Hall around £15,000 annually in costs which can then be invested back into services for the community.

The Low Carbon Skills Fund is run by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and is delivered by Salix.

Funding for the heat decarbonisation plan will enable the council to develop a detailed understanding of the different ways in which energy efficiency of this building can be improved, including decarbonising the heating system.

Windows are also scheduled to be replaced with double glazing next year, part funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Bourne Hall is a Grade II listed building, situated in the heart of the historic Ewell Village with Hogsmill River running nearby. Set in a picturesque setting, Bourne Hall has function rooms, facilities and services that the public and businesses can hire including an exhibition space. It also hosts Bourne Hall Museum, and Ewell Library which is run by Surrey County Council.

Councillor Liz Frost, Chair of the Environment Committee said: "We are passionate about our Climate Change Action Plan and take our responsibilities seriously. Changes and initiatives over the last four years has seen the council's operational carbon footprint reduce by 14% since the council first began to measure it in 2019.

"Bourne Hall is an important hub for our community, and the installation of solar panels and the development of a robust heat



decarbonisation plan is just part of a series of works that will make this picturesque and historical landmark more sustainable for future generations and help continue Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's drive to be carbon neutral by 2035."

Programme manager at Salix Christopher Masters said: "We are delighted to support Epsom & Ewell Borough Council in its net zero journey. Having a robust heat decarbonisation plan is a very important step in this process.

"We are looking forward to seeing what the plan will come up with and how the council will move forward as it continues to meet the ambitious net zero challenges."

More information about Climate Change Action Plan progress can be found here - Climate Change | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (epsom-ewell.gov.uk)

Surrey academic to lead plastic pollution fight

Tackling the plastic pollution crisis: Legislation must evolve to address challenges for our climate, ecosystems and human health

Urgent legislative action is needed to stop the imminent threats of environmental harms caused by plastics. To help find solutions, Dr Noreen O'Meara from the University of Surrey has been awarded a prestigious Mid-Career Fellowship by the British Academy to lead vital research that seeks to reshape how we govern the lifecycle of plastics through effective legislation and policy.

Dr O'Meara's project aims to support national, European, and global efforts to combat plastics pollution at a time when negotiations for a Global Plastics Treaty are intensifying. This treaty represents the first international legally binding framework aimed at addressing the plastics crisis, and Dr O'Meara's research will play a crucial role in informing its development and implementation.

Dr Noreen O'Meara, Associate Professor (Reader) in Human Rights, European and Environmental Law at the University of Surrey said:

"Plastics pollution is a toxic contributor to the triple planetary crisis of climate change, ecosystem degradation, and environmental pollution. Plastics production accounts for a rising proportion of the global carbon budget, which undermines states' net-zero goals and action under the Paris Agreement to achieve a safer climate. The plastics lifecycle creates serious risks to human rights and human health which must be mitigated in governance efforts to tackle plastics pollution.

"We must mitigate the serious risks to human rights and health that arise from the plastics lifecycle in our governance efforts. This fellowship gives us the opportunity to advocate for a rights-oriented model that not only addresses pollution but also respects human dignity."

With a strong background in EU and European Human Rights Law, Dr O'Meara's research delves into pressing challenges in climate law and environmental justice. She has been actively involved in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), which is working towards finalising the Global Plastics Treaty by mid-2025. As United Nations negotiations resume, her insights will be invaluable as states navigate the complexities of this treaty.

Image: Muntaka Chasant Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International licence.

Broad Gauges New Train Set to Serve Epsom

Residents of Epsom will soon benefit from South Western Railway's (SWR) latest investment in modern rail travel as the new Arterio trains, officially launched this week, are set to roll onto local lines in March 2025. The £1 billion fleet of state-of-the-art trains promises greater capacity, enhanced comfort, and cutting-edge features for commuters and leisure travellers alike.

The launch event at London Waterloo was marked by cricketer great Stuart Broad CBE naming one of the trains the **Nighthawk**, in a nod to his storied cricket career. Speaking at the ceremony, Broad reflected on the role trains play in bringing communities together:

"Trains are a lifeline for fans travelling to iconic venues. It's exciting to think of the Nighthawk connecting people across London and the South East, including my beloved Oval cricket ground."



The Arterio fleet is a major upgrade for SWR's suburban network. By June 2025, these sleek trains will serve routes to **Dorking, Epsom, Guildford, Hampton Court, and Reading**, with some of the first services to Epsom and Guildford scheduled for March.

What's New for Epsom Commuters?

Local residents can look forward to a host of improvements:

- **More Space:** Each 10-car Arterio train offers over 50% more capacity than the outgoing Class 455 models.
- **Modern Comforts:** Passengers will enjoy Wi-Fi, charging points at every seat, air conditioning, and accessible toilets.
- **Real-Time Information:** Advanced technology will provide live updates, helping commuters stay informed.

These upgrades are set to make travel smoother for Epsom residents, whether commuting to London or exploring nearby destinations like Guildford and Hampton Court.

A Train Network Honouring Sporting Heritage

SWR's nod to sporting excellence was evident at the event, where trains were also named the **Jockey, Red Rose, Ace, and Thames Racer**, celebrating key destinations such as Ascot, Twickenham, Wimbledon, and the Boat Race course. The Nighthawk is expected to carry cricket fans heading to the Oval via nearby stations, including Vauxhall.

Stuart Meek, Interim Managing Director of SWR, highlighted the significance of the new fleet:

"The Arterio trains are more than just a means of travel – they symbolise connection and community. Epsom passengers, among others, will soon benefit from the extra capacity, reliability, and comfort these trains bring."

A Boost for Epsom and the Local Area

The introduction of these trains is part of a broader commitment to enhancing rail services across Surrey. With more than 80 peak services planned each weekday, residents can expect reliable, comfortable journeys into London and beyond.

As Epsom prepares to welcome the Arterio trains, the town's position as a well-connected suburban hub is set to be further cemented, offering improved travel options for work, leisure, and everything in between.

For further updates on Arterio services to Epsom, keep an eye on the **Epsom and Ewell Times**.

Fly-tipping bags and BB gun shots close Bagshot recycle centre

Bagshot community recycling centre will close in an effort to protect staff from being threatened with violence, Surrey County Council has said.

The depot has been plagued with issues for years with people "dodging bb bullets", catapults fired, angle grinders used in break ins, and staff put in danger by those dumping hazardous waste, senior councillors said.

The closure would not save the authority money, they said, as alternate sites will have to their hours extended to deal with the knock on.

Waste contractors Suez has recorded 801 instances of fly tipping across all Surrey recycling sites between January 2019 and August 2024. Of these, 531 (66 per cent) were at Bagshot.

A nuisance report listed examples of flytipping at the site as well as details of break ins such as when an "angle grinder was taken to the office shutter" and "oil thrown around site".

Other times vandals broke in and left fluorescent tubes "smashed over the site".

Some of the break ins forced the recycling centre to close, while on June 17 "Someone fired a bb gun towards members of the public" which was later reported to the police.

Campaigners had argued that the centre was valued by the community and rather than give up on Bagshot, money should be



spent on modernising and making it safer.

They argued that closing the Bagshot centre would make it harder, longer, and more expensive for many people to recycle their waste.

Councillor Natalie Bramhall, cabinet member for property, waste and infrastructure, told the Tuesday, November 26. meeting at Surrey County Council: " Suez keeps the site safe, but it has inherent problems which are not present at other community recycling centres.

"For many many years the site has suffered from overnight vandalism and unlawful ingress.

"Containers, particularly those used for electricals, are regularly forced open and plundered and the site office has been vandalised.

"The perimeter fence has been driven into and fly tipping left outside the gates and tipped over the fences.

"Prevention measures, whatever we do, things get broken, they use catapults to knock out all the lights, they used angle grinders to get the fence and into the office and vandalise.

"Suez staff receive threats and have to deal with materials delivered to the site that are hazardous and not allowed on the site but they have to turn a blind eye to this because they are threatened with violence."

The report described the Swift Lane site as small, unmodernised and not fit for purpose.

It serves around 7,000 people in the Bagshot area who will be redirected to Camberley. Those who came from further afield, such as Windsor and Maidenhead, will be directed to the recycling centre in Lyne, Runnymede.

Subject to Surrey Heath Borough Council approval, it is anticipated that Bagshot tip will close immediately prior to the new tenant moving onto the site. This is likely to take place in December 2024.

Photo: Bagshot Recycling Centre (Image Surrey CC)

Another solar power story - Leatherhead

A four-year fight to install solar panels in a Leatherhead car park has left those behind the green project both "disappointed and very excited".

Mole Valley District Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and has been trying to decrease its carbon emissions ever since, with the goal of reaching net zero by 2030.

Now, a pilot scheme set to be approved could be a step in the right direction - but has left some wishing for a "far more expansive" roll out, after funding was approved to cover just 20 bays in Leatherhead with the new tech, the size of about two tennis courts.

Bays in the centre's car park will have new coverings with solar panelling installed on top. Electricity from the panels will be used to help power Leatherhead Leisure Centre although it will fall well short of delivering its full need.

It is anticipated that the electricity generated annually by the solar panels will be 37,498 kWh or about 2.7 per cent of what the centre uses - although it would still be enough to reduce the council's carbon footprint by about 9.7 tonnes a year.

Hope is not lost for those wishing to see greater role out of the panels as the council has said that, should key milestones and performance targets be hit, "the intention is that further role out of solar carports across other Mole Valley District Council carparks including Pippbrook Offices and Reigate Road will be implemented".

Cabinet Member Councillor Claire Malcomson said: "It's taken four years to get this far.

"I'm disappointed and very excited about this because at long last we're going to be doing it, I would love it to be far more expansive but it is only a pilot therefore hopefully it's going to open some really good doors for us."

The £175,000 project is expected to take about 16 years to cover its costs and the levels of energy produced too low to require battery storage units.

Regardless, the system will be plugged into the national grid with any spare capacity sold into the network - the most likely scenario here being on days the centre is closed.



She said: "It would take 16 years to pay itself back and I just hope we will consider it as its a very good step in the right direction because other councils are taking over but it was actually Mole Valley that initiated this in the first place."

A similar project is already in place in the Elmbridge Civic Centre car park in Esher.

Cllr Andy Smith (Independent; Ashted Lanes and Common) said: "This is a very good scheme indeed.

"I share the disappointment that its taken so long to get off the ground but I'm very keen that we seize the opportunities for this type of solar project rather than using up productive agricultural land with solar arrays."

Final sign off on the plans are dependent on cabinet approval.

Leatherhead Leisure Centre (Image Google)

Surrey University Launches UN-Affiliated Centre to Tackle Climate Change

Drastically improving the UK's ability to address climate change is the grand challenge that the new United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)-affiliated CIFAL centre at the University of Surrey will tackle.

CIFAL Surrey will be officially launched on Monday, 25 November, with a ceremonial UN flag raising, a Signing Ceremony and a panel event. In attendance will be a senior delegation from UNITAR, including Alexander Mejia, Head of the CIFAL Global Network and Director of the Division for People and Social Inclusion at UNITAR, other UNITAR delegates, Zöe Franklin, M.P. for Guildford, alongside a range of the university's collaborative partners in business and government.

Drawing on the University's strong research heritage and active engagement in sustainability, the new CIFAL Centre (Centre International de Formation des Autorités et Leaders), known as 'CIFAL Surrey', will work with UNITAR (the UN's training branch) and the CIFAL Global Network among other stakeholders to lead both training and capacity-building initiatives in sustainability. In doing so, CIFAL Surrey will make a unique and much-needed contribution to empowering climate leadership through enhanced climate literacy within and beyond Surrey.

As part of its activities, CIFAL Surrey will work in partnership with national and local government, industry, civil society, and beyond, developing sustainable economic practices, and helping to advance action towards the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Situated within the University's Institute for Sustainability, CIFAL Surrey will draw strongly on multi-disciplinary expertise in delivering both training and capacity building on a wide range of sustainability challenges, to help facilitate knowledge exchange among leaders in government, the private sector, and civil society - locally, nationally and internationally, as well as UK-based international organisations.

Professor Amelia Hadfield, the University of Surrey's Associate Vice President for External Engagement, and the new Director of CIFAL Surrey, said:

"Sustainability is far more than just a philosophy limited to net zero here at the University of Surrey. For us, and our community, sustainability reflects our deep, shared commitment to rebuilding a thriving planet for future generations. From the fundamentals of climate change to advanced policy implementation, CIFAL Surrey will provide hands-on training and resources to national and local government, businesses, and community groups, helping them deliver on the demands for a more sustainable future.

"Focused on knowledge sharing, skills building and decision-making, CIFAL Surrey will connect local expertise with global insight, fostering collaboration across government, the private sector, civil society, and the United Nations system to drive sustainable progress. As CIFAL Surrey Director, I'm delighted to be working with our own Institute for Sustainability, other CIFAL centres around the world, and UNITAR itself to deliver these critical goals."

CIFAL Surrey is the second UN-affiliated centre on campus, following the 2023 launch of the Centre of Excellence for Ageing, which appointed its first cohort of Fellows in June 2024.

Nathalie Hinds, co-founder of the Institute for Sustainability at the University of Surrey, said:

"If the UK is to be a leader on sustainability, leaders need more than just an awareness of net zero - they need the skills to create real change. CIFAL Surrey's training gives leaders hands-on experience with sustainable practices and governance, focusing on



systems thinking and breaking down silos across sectors. Alumni of CIFAL Surrey will leave not only with world-renowned accreditation but they will also be part of a global network of alumni, gaining access to our Sustainability Innovation Hub for insights, research partnerships, and ongoing support."

Mr Alex Mejia, Division Director at United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), said:

"We are honoured to inaugurate CIFAL Surrey, hosted by the University of Surrey, a renowned global institution at the forefront of innovation and learning. This new centre will mark an important step in our mission to advance sustainable development and capacity-building worldwide. It will serve as a vital hub for fostering collaboration, innovation, and knowledge exchange across the United Kingdom and beyond."

Deputy Leader and Lead Councillor for Regeneration at Guildford Borough Council, Cllr Tom Hunt, said:

"We are proud to support the launch of CIFAL Surrey and be a key partner in the project. This initiative will play a big role in driving sustainable development. It will give us the chance to work together to share knowledge, improve skills and deliver practical solutions for our communities. One of our key priorities as a council is to create a more sustainable borough. Our partnership with CIFAL gives us a unique opportunity to work alongside local, national and international experts to ensure a bright, sustainable future for Guildford."

Councillor Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth at Surrey County Council, said:

"It's a pleasure to be able to welcome the team from the United Nations to launch this new international centre in the heart of Surrey. The CIFAL centre will play a key role in promoting sustainable development at home and abroad while also opening up opportunities for our communities. It also reinforces the region's global reputation for innovation, research and knowledge exchange."

Party divide on Surrey solar farm?

Plans for a Surrey solar farm have been questioned as an MP has called for the government to look again at the "nationally significant" decision. Jeremy Hunt, MP for Godalming and Ash, has supported the request of Compton Parish Council to call in the application.

The University of Surrey was granted permission to build solar panels on a 43-hectare site west of Blackwell Farm, Hog's Back near Guildford on November 6. In partnership with SEE Energy, the solar farm is said to provide 34% of the University's current electricity needs. On its own, the facility will increase total renewable energy generation in Surrey by 13%.

Mr Hunt, whose constituency covers the southern and western part of the site, has written to the Minister of Housing, Communities and Local Government Angela Rayner to express his concern on the facility's impact on the countryside. The southern parts of the site are assessed as meeting National Landscape criteria and recommended for inclusion within the revised part of the Surrey Hills boundary.

In his letter to Mrs Rayner, who is also the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Hunt said he was worried the development "may set a precedent for emerging policy relating to National Landscape land". He wrote: "Rather than selecting brownfield, this site selected is high value farmland in a geographically significant and nationally important landscape."

He added: "Given the national importance of this decision, I support the view of Compton Parish Council and CPRE that the application should be called in and determined by a Planning Inspector."

The secretary of state decides whether to review a planning decision based on government policies after a request to call in has been made. If approved, the Planning Inspectorate will hold a public inquiry into the proposal and produce a recommendation.

Surrey Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) charity also wrote to the deputy PM in November, arguing the decision for the solar farm on green belt land be overturned. John Goodridge, Surrey CPRE chair, raised concerns on the impact of "agricultural land, encroachment on the green belt, harm to ancient woodland, the land's legal status as candidate for inclusion in the Surrey Hills National Landscape".

However, Guildford's MP Zöe Franklin has defended the solar farm plans and she support's the university's aims through the investment.

The new Liberal Democrat MP said she "recognise[s] that solar farms can be contentious "important part of providing renewable energy for a sustainable, low-carbon future". Mrs Franklin said: "This solar farm proposal is a move towards clean, affordable,



local energy production and supports our local grid capacity in Guildford and our villages.”

She expressed her confidence in Guildford Borough Council’s planning committee having made the decision in line with planning regulations. But, the Guildford MP added she would also like to see the university include solar installations of their existing buildings and car parks.

A spokesperson for the University of Surrey said: “We are proud to play our part in reducing emissions – not just through this facility, but also through adding solar to the large roof on the Surrey Sports Park, progressing feasibility studies to maximise other on-campus generation – for example on our car parks – and a comprehensive energy efficiency programme.

“We hope others will follow our lead, as there is no time to waste in increasing renewable generation to reduce emissions and increase Surrey and UK energy security. This project is firmly in line with local and national planning policy priorities, and we look forward to bringing it on stream in the near future.”

Related report:

Surrey University to get a third of its power from the Sun

£12 million bus boost for Surrey

Surrey County Council has been allocated £12,074,800 from the Department for Transport, to further improve and protect local buses.

The council will work with bus operators to allocate the funding, which is likely to generate more frequent buses on popular routes, protect services in rural areas and improve punctuality.

The investment will also be used to help Surrey bus services grow their passenger numbers and to support people who rely on them to make essential journeys.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Growth at Surrey County Council said, “I’m delighted that Surrey will benefit from this essential funding which will help us to build upon our own significant investment and encourage more people to take the bus.

We’ve recently added 54 new zero emission buses to our fleet, invested £6.3m in more ultra-low and zero emission community transport minibuses, £9m in bus priority measures to ensure Surrey buses turn up on time, and £1.4m in improving information for passengers at bus stops.

Our Surrey LINK card gives young people half-price bus travel and we’ve expanded our on-demand Surrey Connect bus services to cover areas where there are limited fixed bus routes, giving more options to travel by bus for all residents right across Surrey, particularly supporting our rural areas.”

26 million journeys were made by bus in Surrey during 2023.