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

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Epsom Station joins app helping visually impaired bus users

8 November 2025



Epsom Station has become one of eight new locations added to a Surrey County Council (SCC) scheme that uses an innovative app to help blind and partially sighted people travel more independently by bus and rail.

Seeing the way through technology

The **Aira Explorer** app connects users by video call to a trained visual interpreter who, using the smartphone's camera, can describe surroundings, read timetables, or guide the traveller safely between a bus stop and nearby rail station. The service is free to use at designated Surrey locations thanks to SCC's allocation from the Government's Bus Service Improvement Fund.

Initially launched in June 2025 at Guildford, Redhill, Staines and Woking bus stations, the trial has now expanded to cover bus stops and interchanges serving Caterham, Dorking, Oxted, Leatherhead, Reigate, Horley, and **Epsom Station and Clocktower.**

Support for independent travel

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth at Surrey County Council, said: "We're keen to make bus travel accessible for everyone and hope this expansion will support people to travel confidently and independently. We've expanded this trial to cover more bus stops and rail interchanges to create better and joined-up journeys for people who are visually impaired."

He added that the initiative forms part of a wider programme of investment in the county's bus services, including £6.3 million for ultra-low and zero-emission community transport minibuses, £9 million in bus priority measures to keep services punctual, and £1.4 million to improve passenger information at bus stops.

Backing from rail and disability organisations

Carl Martin, Accessibility Lead at Govia Thameslink Railway, welcomed the expansion:
"We're really pleased to see the expansion of Aira to further bus stops, as it's a vital step in making multimodal journeys more seamless for blind and visually impaired customers."

Clare Burgess, Chief Executive of Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey, called the scheme "great news" for people living with sight or combined sight and hearing loss:
"Travelling alone when you have a sensory impairment can be a daunting prospect, but having the Aira Explorer App at your fingertips makes independent travel so much easier and less stressful."

Nikki Roberts, Chief Executive of the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People, said:
"It's fantastic news that the Aira app coverage has now been extended to twelve locations in Surrey. The app will provide our visually impaired members the support they need to feel much more confident when travelling independently."

A national first for Surrey

When the project began in summer 2025, Surrey County Council became the first local authority in the UK to introduce the app for bus users. It followed the success of a similar partnership between Aira.io and Govia Thameslink Railway to help visually impaired rail passengers navigate station environments.

The trial was originally launched to coincide with Better Transport Week, celebrating initiatives that help connect communities and improve access to public transport.

Ben Curtis from Campaign for Better Transport said at the time:
"Good public transport networks help connect us to the people we love, the things we need and the places that matter. The new Aira app will help ensure that everyone can access and use the county's buses, building a fairer future for everyone."

Making travel more inclusive

The Aira Explorer scheme represents one part of Surrey County Council's wider drive to make sustainable travel options more inclusive and reliable. For residents in Epsom and across the county, it means greater independence, safer journeys, and a more connected community.

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More information about the service is available on Surrey County Council's website.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

Bus station app for visually impaired first in Surrey

Heathrow expansion – what it may mean for Epsom

8 November 2025



The Government has launched a review of the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS), which sets out the policy framework for major airport expansion. The key points:

- Aiming for faster progress than the previous ANPS, the Government intends a draft for consultation by summer 2026 and to reach a final planning decision on a third runway within the current Parliament.
- Expansion of Heathrow is being promoted as a boost to UK economic growth, international connectivity and competitiveness — specifically positioning Heathrow as Britain's only global hub airport.
- The review will test any proposed scheme against four criteria: climate change, noise, air quality and contribution to economic growth.
- The Government says it will ask for formal advice from the Climate Change Committee (CCC) to ensure alignment with the UK's net-zero commitments.
- Financing must be purely private, with no taxpayer cost, and transport access improvements must be covered by the promoters.
- Two promoters remain under consideration: Heathrow Airport Limited and the Arora Group; one will be selected by end November to proceed.
- The Government also flagged wider infrastructure and planning reforms (via the upcoming Planning & Infrastructure Bill) and the establishment of a new UK Airspace Design Service to modernise airspace in the London region.

Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander said the Government is "backing the builders, not blockers", and Chancellor Rachel Reeves added that after decades of false starts, "we are backing the builders to get Heathrow's third runway built, creating thousands of jobs, boosting growth …"

Why this matters for Epsom & Ewell
Our borough is already directly affected by aircraft using the London hub airports, and the proposed expansion of Heathrow would likely increase the scale and intensity of that impact.

Flight paths and heights: The borough is within one of the "design envelopes" identified by Heathrow Airport Limited in its previous airspace consultation, meaning more frequent overflights at lower altitudes. Currently some aircraft arrive or depart over the borough at heights of 7,000 to 22,000 ft, averaging around 12,000 ft. Under the proposed expansion there could be flights as low as 3,000 ft and up to 47 arrivals per hour over the area.

Noise and air-quality concerns: The borough's geography — dense housing, many schools, and a declared Air Quality Management Area — means that increased aircraft at lower altitudes could raise noise, traffic and pollution burdens. The council previously warned of a possible four- to five-fold increase in noise levels in some scenarios.

Community and amenity risk: Residential areas, schools such as North East Surrey College of Technology, and leisure or nature sites like Epsom Common and Horton Country Park could experience greater disturbance.

Airspace redesign: The Government's plan to modernise UK airspace may change how routes are drawn. This could either

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reduce or shift impacts on particular communities, but consultation with affected areas such as Epsom & Ewell will be essential.

The opposing case
Environmental and local campaigners have long voiced opposition to expansion.

Climate and emissions: Groups such as Friends of the Earth argue that expanding a major hub airport is incompatible with the UK's net-zero goals, warning it would lock-in high carbon infrastructure and increase air and noise pollution.

Noise and community disruption: CPRE Surrey has said that the borough could experience up to 47 additional flights per hour at just 3,000 ft, and that such a change would be "unacceptable".

Consultation concerns: Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has criticised the information provided by Heathrow Airport Limited for lacking clarity around flight numbers, heights, and environmental impacts.

Financial and strategic risks: Critics also question whether the economic case for expansion remains strong in a changed post-pandemic aviation environment, and whether cost burdens such as community compensation and infrastructure upgrades have been fully addressed.

Current status
The Government review of the ANPS is underway, with a public consultation on the draft expected in summer 2026. One of the two promoter schemes will be selected by end November.
For Epsom & Ewell, the exact flight-paths and altitude projections are not yet finalised, and detailed new routes are unlikely to be confirmed until around 2027. Airspace modernisation may alter or mitigate local impacts.

What to watch
Residents and councillors should track:
– Future flight path proposals and altitude models over the borough.
– Noise, air-quality and health impact data once new routes are known.
– Community consultation opportunities.
– Any noise-respite or mitigation measures offered.
– The outcome of financial and planning reviews.

In conclusion
The DfT's announcement marks a major step toward the possibility of a third runway at Heathrow. For Epsom & Ewell it raises serious local questions — more frequent aircraft, lower flights, and possible increases in noise and pollution balanced against potential economic benefits.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

Heathrow expansion reaction

Surrey village to suffer a lot more Heathrow flights

Chance for Epsom and Ewell's say on Heathrow flights

Heathrow shown with a third runway over the M25 (image Heathrow)

Pavement Parking: Epsom & Ewell MP Speaks Out

8 November 2025



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

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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

8 November 2025

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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 Ashtead, Bookham, and a health hub in Leatherhead. Early years provision in Ashtead 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 Ashtead 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

Smarter tickets would boost bus travel

8 November 2025

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Public transport in Southern England is struggling, not just because of cost or convenience, but because it has failed to keep up with the digital age, according to a new study from the University of Surrey.

In a study published in Public Transport, researchers simulated improvements in areas like payment convenience and real-time service updates. The study found that these tech-driven changes could boost bus ridership by over 30%.

Researchers have found that simple innovations, such as easy payment systems, e-ticketing, and mobile applications, can transform public transport, boost ridership, and improve passenger satisfaction.

The study employed a novel analytical approach, Machine Learning Influence Flow Analysis (MIFA), to understand the attitudes and behaviours of bus passengers in Southern England. The team also analysed detailed survey data, which helped them identify the key factors that influence whether people choose the bus over their private cars. These factors where: addressing issues around payment convenience and real-time information can make buses far more appealing.

Dr Wolfgang Garn, one of the authors of the study and Associate Professor in Analytics at the University of Surrey, said:

“We discovered that passengers want a seamless, hassle-free experience. If paying for a bus journey feels complicated or outdated, people are more likely to opt for driving instead. By introducing smart ticketing and contactless payments, alongside mobile apps that provide real-time updates, we can not only make bus travel easier but also more attractive. This isn’t just about technology, it’s about fundamentally changing how people view public transport.”

The study used advanced machine learning methods, including neural networks and random forests, to create predictive models from survey responses. These models enabled the researchers to identify the factors that most strongly influence bus usage decisions. By simulating improvements in passenger sentiment, such as increased satisfaction with payment methods, the MIFA framework can predict how these changes may alter people’s willingness to use buses. The results suggest that these technological enhancements could increase bus ridership by over 30%.

The findings also highlight several critical issues that undermine bus usage, including inconvenient payment processes, a lack of clear information about bus routes and fares, and concerns about reliability and security. The research recommends practical solutions such as integrated smartcard payment systems, real-time travel apps, and expanded bus lanes to reduce journey times. Together, these measures can create a public transport system that competes with the convenience of private cars.

Dr Garn continued:

“Integrated ticketing is an option that needs to be further explored. It allows passengers to travel across different public transport modes using a single ticket or system, typically a smart card, for their entire journey. This means a traveller can switch between buses, trains, trams, and other modes of transport without needing to purchase multiple tickets or navigate different payment systems – an issue that arises when governmental policies do not sufficiently guide multiple private bus transport companies. A related study I worked on demonstrated that increased frequency, low fares, and an improved bus network significantly boost bus ridership.

The future of bus travel in Southern England depends on embracing digital convenience and improving the passenger experience. With smart payments and better information at the heart of this transformation, buses can become the preferred mode of travel for many, not the last resort.”

Image credit: Geoff Charles, National Library of Wales. Public domain

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On the Buses – Surrey going Green

8 November 2025



Following a successful bid for funding to the Department for Transport, Surrey County Council has been awarded an

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additional £1.7m for 12 new zero emission buses. This follows a previous allocation in 2024, taking Surrey's total provision to over £5 million and 31 new buses in total.

Along with the 34 hydrogen buses already operating across the county, and a further 23 coming into service this Summer, this will see 88 zero emission buses operating on Surrey's roads.

The new fully accessible vehicles use green hydrogen and have a range of up to 600 miles. They offer a smooth, quiet ride with free Wi-Fi, charging points and social seating on board.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Growth at Surrey County Council said, *"I'm delighted that Surrey will benefit from this extra funding which will help us to build upon our own significant investment in providing cleaner buses.*

"Introducing these buses to our fleet is expected to deliver an estimated carbon saving of c112,000 tonnes over the life of the buses, which is great news for Surrey residents and for everyone else travelling in and out of our county.

"We've also 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 in our rural areas."

Richard Telling, Managing Director of Falcon Buses said, *"Through the partnership working with Surrey County Council (SCC), who have been awarded Department for Transport (DfT) ZEBRA 2 funding, we are now enhancing our roll out of zero Emission buses, introducing 21 electric buses into our fleet.*

"Financial investment from Falcon Buses, together with SCC and DfT has enabled us to place orders with Alexander Dennis for the supply of their brand new Enviro 200 EV next generation bus and we will see electric buses operating on a number of our services from Spring 2026. Exciting times are ahead for Falcon operating new technology with electric buses, and we look forward to our customers coming on the journey with us."

Simon Rowland, CEO of White Bus said, *"We are incredibly excited about our new electric vehicle fleet coming later this year. Not only is White Bus providing greener, cleaner vehicles, but also giving our passengers the additional comfort of quieter vehicles. Our 446 and 555 will be the first routes to use the new Yutong E10s, and they will be branded in the green Flightline livery as part of other service improvements in partnership with Surrey County Council and Heathrow. Our thanks to DfT and Surrey County Council for their support in helping White Bus make the transition to a greener future."*

Related report:

£12 million bus boost for Surrey

Image: 465 Enviro Bus in Dorking High St: Arriva436 Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license

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Guidance to consumers impacted by Heathrow Airport incident

8 November 2025



Selina Chadha, Group Director for Consumers at the UK Civil Aviation Authority, said: "Passengers are advised not to travel to Heathrow at this time and should contact their airlines for the latest flight updates. We appreciate the difficulties that travel disruption causes, and we expect airlines to take all necessary steps to support and assist their passengers during this period of disruption. The Civil Aviation Authority remains in close contact with Heathrow Airport, airlines, and the Government during this time."

Heathrow Airport is closed today due to a fire at a nearby electrical substation, affecting the supply of power to its terminals. Unfortunately, this means that today's flights to and from the airport have been cancelled. The knock-on effect may also lead to delays and further cancellations over the weekend.

Flights that had already departed that were due to land at the airport had to be diverted to other airports.

Air passenger rights

When flights are delayed and cancelled, we expect airlines to minimise the overall impact on you by keeping you informed

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and looking after you.

In many cases you will be protected by rights which are set out in UK legislation. The table below provides guidance on whether your flight is covered by UK legislation:

Flight Itinerary	UK or EU Air Carrier	Non-UK / Non-EU Air Carrier
Departing from Heathrow	✅ Covered	✅ Covered
Arriving to Heathrow	✅ Covered	❌ Not Covered

Whether these rights apply or not, we encourage airlines to do all they can to minimise the overall impact to their passengers.

Flight Cancellations

If your flight from Heathrow Airport has been cancelled

Please do not go to the airport and contact your airline for further advice.

Your airline is required to offer you the choice of a refund or find you an alternative flight (referred to as “re-routing”). Re-routing should be at the earliest opportunity or at a later date at your convenience, subject to availability.

Unfortunately, it may be challenging for airlines to offer re-routing during periods of major disruption, especially when an airport is closed at short notice. This may mean that your airline may not be able to get you to your destination as quickly as any of us would like. Nevertheless, if you still wish to get to your destination, we expect your airline to do all it can to offer you an alternative flight and keep you updated.

If your airline is unable to proactively offer you care, or offer suitable replacement flights, we expect it to promptly reimburse you for the costs you incur making your own arrangements. Make sure you keep receipts and avoid incurring excessive costs.

If your flight to Heathrow has been cancelled

We realise that being unable to travel home as planned will be concerning for you. We expect your airline to update you and advise you of your rights.

If your flight is covered by UK passenger rights legislation, your airline will be required by law to get you home and look after you while you wait by providing meals, refreshments and hotel accommodation proportionate to the length of time you are delayed.

To get you home, your airline is required to find you an alternative flight (referred to as “re-routing”). Re-routing should be at the earliest opportunity or at a later date at your convenience, subject to availability.

Unfortunately, it may be challenging for airlines to offer re-routing during periods of major disruption, especially when an airport is closed at short notice. This may mean that your airline may not be able to get you home as quickly as any of us would like. Nevertheless, we expect your airline to do all it can to offer you an alternative flight and keep you updated.

If your airline is unable to proactively offer you care, or offer suitable replacement flights, we expect it to promptly reimburse you for the costs you incur making your own arrangements. Make sure you keep receipts and avoid incurring excessive costs.

Different rights apply if your airline is not a UK or EU carrier. Please speak to your airline or check its website for more information about your rights.

Diverted flights

If your flight was diverted because it could not land at Heathrow and your flight is covered by UK passenger rights legislation, your airline should provide onward transportation (this may be by other means) to get you to Heathrow. It should also look after you and provide you with meals, refreshments and hotel accommodation while you wait, proportionate to the length of your delay.

If your airline is unable to proactively offer you care, or offer onward transportation, we expect it to promptly reimburse you for the costs you incur making your own arrangements. Make sure you keep receipts and avoid incurring excessive costs.

Different rights apply if your airline is not a UK or EU carrier. Please speak to your airline or check its website for more information about your rights.

If you are travelling on a package holiday

If you booked a package holiday, you may also benefit from additional rights, particularly if this means that your original package cannot be provided.

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If flight delays or cancellations lead to your holiday being cancelled, or new arrangements are made that result in a significant change to your holiday, then your travel company must offer an alternative holiday if they can, or a refund for the full price of your package holiday.

Flight Delays

If your flight from Heathrow Airport is delayed

Your airline should look after you and provide you with meals, refreshments and hotel accommodation proportionate to the length of your delay.

If your flight to Heathrow Airport is delayed

If your flight is covered by UK passenger rights legislation, your airline should look after you and provide you with meals, refreshments and hotel accommodation proportionate to the length of your delay.

Different rights apply if your airline is not a UK or EU carrier. Please speak to your airline or check its website for more information about your rights.

Fixed sum compensation

In addition to their obligations to look after passengers, as set out above, airlines are sometimes required to provide fixed sum compensation to passengers in certain circumstances.

Although we recognise the adverse impacts these delays and cancellations will have on passengers, the disruptions directly caused by the closure of Heathrow Airport are likely to be viewed as “extraordinary circumstances”. As a result, you are unlikely to be entitled to fixed sum compensation.

Extraordinary circumstances do not affect your other entitlements to replacement flights and care set out above — these are due regardless of the cause of your delay or cancellation.

Notes

The Civil Aviation Authority’s interpretation of extraordinary circumstances is illustrative and for guidance only, rather than determinative of our view in any specific case that may arise. Each case will be context and fact specific. This does not mean that a passenger or group of passengers cannot try and claim compensation, including through the courts, if they disagree with our interpretation.

The protections set out above are based on Assimilated Regulation 261/2004 which collectively apply to all flights departing from the UK, and flights arriving into the UK on UK and EU carriers. Different rights may apply to passengers arriving on flights to the UK operated by non-EU carriers such as flights from the USA on US carriers.

Civil Aviation Authority News

Heathrow Airport. Mike McBey **CC BY 2.0**

Expanding London airports “not an environmental trade off” – Minister claims

8 November 2025



Expanding Heathrow and Gatwick is “crucial” for this government after years of people sticking “their heads in the sand” over plans for new runways at south east airports, the Secretary of State for Transport said.

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Heidi Alexander made the remarks as she outlined its vision to “modernise” the aviation sector at the annual AirportsUK dinner at a time when passenger levels at the country’s airports had grown by 7 per cent – and signs indicating 2025 would be a record breaking year.

She said: “It’s clear this is a trend, not an unusual year. In fact, everything points to a record-breaking 2025 – and it’s easy to see why.

“The world has never been more interconnected. The desire for travel never stronger. Global forecasts show a near doubling of passengers and cargo in the next 20 years. So the demand is there. It’s growing. And if we don’t seize it, we not only risk being outpaced by European competitors, but we will be on the wrong side of public aspirations.”

The Government has already announced its support for a third runway at Heathrow Airport – which has put in £2.3billion to overhaul its infrastructure – and more recently said it was ‘minded to approve” a second at Gatwick.

She added: “We see airports as a crucial pillar of our plan for change. And it’s why we’ve acted, and acted quickly, across three areas – starting with expansion. It’s no secret that long ignored capacity issues in the south-east, has meant some of our major airports are now bursting at the seams.

“And yet – when it came to expansion – too many people stuck their heads in the sand. It left the industry in a perpetual holding pattern, with decisions circling around Whitehall for years, waiting for a clear signal.”

Expansion at Heathrow would be the first new full-length runway in the country for quarter of a century with the transport secretary saying her job was now to balance “economic benefits of expansion with social and environmental commitments.”

She said this was reflected in her caveated support for Gatwick – with a “clear path for expansion” set out if certain conditions are met.

A final decision on whether to approve Gatwick’s expansion is expected to be made on October 27.

The transport secretary finished: “I will never accept the false trade off that pits growing aviation against protecting our environment. I honestly believe we can, and must, do both. And how we do that is already being answered…

“Firstly, we cannot hope for quieter, cleaner and greener flights if our most critical piece of infrastructure is stuck in the past. We must ramp up work on reducing emissions. Green flight isn’t only essential for the industry, it’s existential.”

Related reports:

“Blocks away” from airport expansions

Gatwick Airport Expansion

Report against airport expansion

Heathrow expansion reaction

Heathrow Airport. Credit Heathrow Airports Limited.

Epsom Ranks Among Surrey’s Best for Train Punctuality

8 November 2025



Epsom railway station has emerged as one of Surrey’s most reliable stations for punctuality and service, faring significantly better than many other locations across the county. Despite serving three major London terminals—Victoria, Waterloo, and London Bridge—Epsom’s train services remain relatively efficient, avoiding the severe delays and cancellations plaguing other areas.

Government Push for Greater Transparency

The government has announced plans to improve transparency in railway punctuality by introducing live data screens at major stations across the country, including in Surrey. These digital screens will display real-time statistics on train cancellations and punctuality, offering commuters a clearer picture of service reliability. Data will also be made available online.

The latest figures highlight significant differences in performance across Surrey’s rail network. While some stations suffer from frequent delays and cancellations, Epsom continues to provide a more dependable service for its passengers.

Surrey’s Worst-Offending Stations for Delays and Cancellations

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Several stations in Surrey have been identified as the worst performers for punctuality and cancellations, frustrating thousands of daily commuters. At the bottom of the list is Woking, where only 72.2% of non-cancelled trains arrive 'on time'—defined as arriving within three minutes of schedule. Just above it, Guildford fares only slightly better at 74.2%.

Other stations in the lowest 10 for punctuality include:

- **Guildford** – 74.2%
- **Horley** – 74.8%
- **Gomshall** – 74.8%
- **Haslemere** – 75.2%
- **Reigate** – 75.6%
- **Dorking (Deepdene)** – 76.4%
- **Byfleet and New Haw** – 76.6%
- **Earlswood** – 76.7%
- **Redhill** – 77%

Some of these stations also struggle with cancellations, with Earlswood topping the list, where 11.7% of all scheduled trains simply do not arrive. This is followed by Salfords (11.7%) and Horley (8.4%). The full list of worst stations for cancellations is as follows:

- **Earlswood** – 11.7%
- **Salfords** – 11.7%
- **Horley** – 8.4%
- **Kempton Park Racecourse** – 7.4%
- **Sunbury** – 7.3%
- **Upper Halliford** – 7.3%
- **Chilworth** – 6.8%
- **Redhill** – 6.6%
- **Shepperton** – 6.6%
- **Gomshall** – 6.5%

Epsom's Strong Performance

If Epsom were included in these rankings, it would rank significantly higher in reliability. The latest figures show that **87.7%** of its non-cancelled trains arrive on time or within three minutes, a notably strong performance compared to its Surrey counterparts. Additionally, the station has a low cancellation rate of just **1.6%**, offering passengers greater confidence in their daily commutes.

Natasha Grice, Director at Transport Focus, welcomed the initiative to improve the transparency of service reliability, stating: "Passengers tell us they want a reliable, on-time train service and will welcome improvements to information about the punctuality of their service and cancellations being shared more transparently. It's important that the industry uses this information to drive up performance."

Meanwhile, Woking MP Will Forster has launched a new cross-party group aimed at holding South Western Railway accountable for poor performance. "I'm disappointed but sadly not surprised Woking suffers from more delays than any other station in Surrey," he said. "My constituents in Woking, and passengers right across the South Western Railway network, deserve a fair deal as they travel by train. We should expect cheaper and more reliable services."

A Positive Outlook for Epsom Commuters

While many Surrey stations struggle with delays and cancellations, Epsom's strong performance provides a welcome relief for local commuters. The government's move to display live data at stations will allow passengers to make more informed travel choices and hold operators accountable. As the debate around rail service reliability continues, Epsom's efficiency stands out as a positive example in an otherwise challenging landscape for rail users across Surrey.

Surrey leading the shout: "Keep the noise down will you!"

8 November 2025

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An interdisciplinary network of engineers, policymakers, industry stakeholders and social scientists, led by the University of Surrey, will take on one of the UK's most overlooked environmental challenges: noise pollution.

From the constant hum of road traffic to the thousands of flights in and out of UK airports, noise awareness in our modern world often fades into the background – but it carries significant consequences for both human health and wildlife. Noise Network Plus will focus on promoting conscious design processes to create quieter products, buildings and transportation systems – with the aim of reducing noise pollution and building a healthier environment over the next 10-15 years.

Professor Mark Plumbley, project lead and Professor of Signal Processing at the University of Surrey's Centre for Vision, Speech and Signal Processing (CVSSP), said:

"Noise is a frequently neglected pollutant, but it has a big impact on health, society and the environment. For example, road noise can lead to sleep disturbance and heart disease, costing £7-10 billion each year in England alone. Once noise is out there, it is really hard to remove. We need to re-think how we design noise from the start."

Awarded more than £1.8 million in funding, Noise Network Plus is one of six research projects to receive a share of £10 million from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). Together they form part of its wider community engagement initiative to address 'Tomorrow's Engineering Research Challenges' (TERC), launched today (11th February), which focuses on tackling the most pressing issues facing the engineering sector.

Professor Abigail Bristow from the University of Surrey, said:

"We're at a pivotal moment in time where our environment is under threat, but we have the technology and expertise to make meaningful changes. Our mission-oriented research and innovation network will look to adopt a systems-thinking approach, addressing the root causes of noise and understanding its far-reaching impacts."

A collaboration between the University of Surrey, City St George's University of London, the University of Bath, and the University of Salford, Noise Network Plus aims to build unprecedented research capabilities to tackle the complex challenge of reducing noise and its impacts on people, the environment and the economy. Bringing together diverse teams and stakeholders, the initiative will promote inclusive dialogue and co-design innovative solutions.

Alan Hunter, Professor in Autonomous Systems based in the University of Bath's Department of Mechanical Engineering, will lead the network's efforts on underwater noise and artificial intelligence. This will include research into the effects of noise created by human activities at sea and improving the resilience of uncrewed underwater vehicles to noise. Professor Hunter said:

"The ocean is a noisy place, and a lot of the tools and technologies we rely on to deliver services either increase noise levels or are affected by noise. Taking oceanographic measurements, measuring marine wildlife populations, or inspecting underwater infrastructure, are all examples of activities affected by noise and of which we need to build a better understanding."

Professor Antonio Torija Martinez and Dr Simone Graetzer are co-leads on the project at the University of Salford's Acoustic Research Centre. Professor Martinez said:

"As the UK moves toward Net Zero, the adoption of sustainable energy and emerging technologies – such as wind turbines and drones – will introduce new sources of noise, fundamentally reshaping our soundscapes. This offers us a unique opportunity for a fresh start and through our initiative, we aim to transform the way noise is managed, embedding innovative solutions into engineering design and policy."

Professor Charlotte Clark, Professor of Environmental Epidemiology in the Population Health Research Institute at City St George's, University of London, said:

"This is a rare and timely opportunity to form multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary teams to develop engineering solutions addressing the problem of noise effects on health. We know that noise affects health, but we know little about how to mitigate the problem. The missions developed in the Noise Network Plus have the potential to step up mitigation efforts that will translate into major, long-term public health gains."

The launch of Noise Network Plus will take place on 18th March at Prince Philip House, the home of the Royal Academy of Engineering, in London. The event will bring together a cross-section of people from engineering and other disciplines including researchers, industry, professional institutions, policymakers, charities, and other stakeholders, to identify the challenges that need to be addressed, and plan how the Network can work to address these challenges.

Professor Adrian Hilton, Director of the Surrey Insititute for People-Centred AI and CVSSP, added:

"Noise Network Plus represents a significant step towards addressing an often-overlooked pollutant and its detrimental impact on people. This interdisciplinary people-centred approach aims to tackle the complex challenges of noise in our modern world and develop innovative solutions for quieter and healthier communities."

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Young Artists Brighten Up Tattenham Corner Station

8 November 2025



Passengers at Tattenham Corner station will soon be welcomed by a brand-new display of artwork, thanks to a creative collaboration between local students and The Arts Society Epsom.

Led by Carol Skelton, Arts Coordinator, Year 6 students from Epsom Downs Community School have explored block printing and etching on polystyrene sheets to create Greek vase designs inspired by renowned printmaker Patrick Caulfield's *Pottery 1969*.

The project has been supported by The Arts Society Epsom, with Angie Child, Head of Young Arts Volunteering, overseeing the initiative. It follows the launch of a permanent art display at Epsom Station in October 2024, created by students from Nescot College of Technology.

Part of the national **Art@TheStation** initiative, the project is backed by The Arts Society's head office in London and funded by Southern Railway. The goal is to showcase local primary school artwork, bringing creativity into public spaces and enriching the experience of travelers passing through the station.

Next time you're at Tattenham Corner station, take a moment to admire the talent and creativity of these young artists!

"Blocks away" from airport expansions

8 November 2025



So called "blockers" to major transport projects will be cleared in a move that looks set to curb challenges to Heathrow and Gatwick Airport expansions, the Government has announced.

The Prime Minister wants to curtail legal challenges to major decisions in what the Government describes as "unarguable cases" they say can cause "years of delay and hundreds of millions of cost to projects that have been approved by democratically elected ministers."

Instead, the legal system will be overhauled with campaigners given just one attempt at a legal challenge for "cynical cases lodged purely to cause delay rather than three". It comes after reports the chancellor Rachel Reeves said she was prepared to face down critics of plans to expand Heathrow Airport and Gatwick – arguing economic growth outweighed other concerns.

The Government has said this would balance the need for ongoing access to justice against what it describes as a "challenge culture" where small pressure groups obstruct decisions taken in the national interest. Prime Minister Keir Starmer said: "For too long, blockers have had the upper hand in legal challenges – using our court processes to frustrate growth. We're putting an end to this challenge culture by taking on the NIMBYs and a broken system that has slowed down our progress as a nation. This is the government's Plan for Change in action – taking the brakes off Britain by reforming the planning system so it is pro-growth and pro-infrastructure. The current first attempt, known as the paper permission stage, will be scrapped.

"Primary legislation will be changed so that where a judge in an oral hearing at the High Court deems the case Totally Without Merit, it will not be possible to ask the Court of Appeal to reconsider. To ensure ongoing access to justice, a

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request to appeal second attempt will be allowed for other cases."

What the airports say

Heathrow has said it would wait until formal plans before commenting but that it strongly believed in its "vital role for the UK economy" and its long-held belief that expanding capacity at the UK's hub airport was critical for economic growth.

A Heathrow spokesperson said: "Heathrow is the best-connected airport in the world. That competitive advantage for UK plc already enables over £200bn of British trade annually. But growing the economy means adding capacity at the UK's hub airport which is full. That's why we're planning to unlock capacity by improving and upgrading our existing infrastructure, while also looking at potential options to deliver a third runway at Heathrow in line with strict tests on carbon, noise and air quality."

Stewart Wingate, CEO of London Gatwick said: "We can be a major part of the Government's drive for growth. We are already contributing over £5.5billion to the UK economy and supporting over 76,000 jobs, but unless we can access greater airport capacity the UK will miss out on opportunities to enhance global connectivity and unlock further opportunities for trade, tourism and job creation. Bringing our Northern Runway into routine use, through a £2.2 billion privately financed, shovel-ready investment will create 14,000 jobs and generate £1 billion a year in economic benefits.

"The project, which is due for government approval early next year, could be operational by the end of the decade. We have put forward a strong and compelling case focused around making best use of our existing infrastructure, minimising noise and environmental impacts and meeting the four 'tests' for airport expansion set by Labour."

The average legal challenge takes about 18 months to resolve and more than half of of all major infrastructure decisions were taken to court.

Campainers will not rest

Paul Beckford, the chairperson of the HACAN clearskies campaign group challenges the notion that expanding the airport would bring the craved-for growth.

He says that at best it could bring in £3.3bn over 60 years and that 75 per cent of passengers using a third runway would likely be transfer passengers "who contribute nothing to the economy". He also said that Heathrow expansion would not be in a vacuum and instead "suck growth" from the regions.

Government's own figures show that a third runway at Heathrow would suck growth from the regions, citing Department for Transport Aviation Forecasts that suggested "expansion at Heathrow would see 170,000 fewer flights per year from regional airports than if expansion does not take place".

Mr Beckford said: "Local communities around Heathrow represent nearly a third of all people across Europe exposed to levels of aircraft noise that harms their health. If Heathrow were to expand the Government would expose over two million people to increases in noise pollution in spite of a deepening evidence base of the negative health impacts, particularly at night. Such expansion would increase the emissions of the country's single largest source of carbon by around 9million tonnes per annum, which is incompatible with the UK's climate targets.

"It would be a failure of duty for any Government to put the health of their citizens at risk in the forlorn hope of generating growth when we know that the business case is marginal at best and 75 per cent of passengers using any third runway would contribute nothing to the UK economy."

Sally Pavey, who chair the CAGNE group that opposes expansion of Gatwick airport call the government's decision a disgrace that ignored public opinion in order to build a new runway by stealth. She said: "If this story is true it opens the door to us communities concerned about the decline in our wellbeing to benefit the shareholders of Gatwick Airport. Any airport expansion shows a lack of understanding and priority placed by this government towards global warming and yet we see the signs constantly on the news of flooding, fires and rising temperatures.

"Aviation is one of the biggest polluters this planet suffers and yet a new runway would add extra carbon a year plus greenhouse gases, and there are no true decarbonising factors that will reduce this as with more planes comes more CO2 and noise. CAGNE has been at the forefront of opposing this new runway due to the lack of infrastructure, lack of workers, decline in air quality and unbelievable increase in noise as Gatwick would be as big as Heathrow today.

"Gatwick already has serious issues with noise and yet we were not allowed to include the modernisation of airspace that Gatwick is reliant upon to reach its economic growth goals with two runway operation. This is just one of the reasons we will be legally challenging a decision to allow a new runway at Gatwick. We have already started to fundraise to legally challenge a decision to allow two runway operations as there were so many flaws in the evidence provided by Gatwick at the DCO hearings, this news story, if factual, is just another reason to challenge a new runway decision."

Surrey village to suffer a lot more Heathrow flights

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Residents could suffer “an unacceptable amount of noise” from an airport as flight directions change, meaning the number of landing planes could increase from 36 to over 300 a day in a Surrey village.

Heathrow Airport is proposing to change its flight patterns to share noise more equally to communities around the site. This involves alternating between the southern and northern runways when the airport operates flights eastwards.

Most of the time (70 per cent) the airport runs on westerly operation, meaning planes take off and land towards the west as the wind favours the west direction at Heathrow. From 7am-3pm, planes land on the northern runway and depart on the southern runway. Halfway through the airport’s day, at 3pm, Heathrow switches runways to give neighbouring residents a break.

This is because of the Cranford Agreement in 1952 which restricted departures over Cranford. But the government ripped up the Cranford agreement in 2009 to bring more equal noise distribution in the residential areas around Heathrow.

As planes are now allowed to take off over Cranford (to the north-east of the airport) Heathrow is proposing to make changes to the airfield to allow for easterly operations of planes taking off and landing from the east. These include: building a noise barrier, up to seven foot high, near Longford, as well as changing the taxiways where planes turn on the runway to reduce ground noise.

The applicant states the redistribution of noise around Heathrow Airport will result in lower noise effects in some locations and higher noise effects in others, but it will enable noise from aircraft operations to be more fairly distributed around the airport than it is currently.

Despite the overall aim meant to have a more even spread of noise, Spelthorne council’s noise officer has objected to the changes as it will adversely impact Spelthorne and especially Stanwell Moor.

Currently only 36 planes arrive over Stanwell Moor on an easterly operation but if plans go ahead it could skyrocket to 328 landing a day, according to council documents. Councillor Joanne Sexton (Independent Spelthorne Group/ Ashford East), leader of Spelthorne council, said it was “quite a shock” to see the dramatic increase.

Heathrow submitted a planning proposal to Hillingdon Borough in October 2024, which is now in the consultation stage. Councillors wholeheartedly voted to object to the scheme, citing unacceptable noise impacts on the borough, at an environment and sustainability council meeting on January 14. These comments will be passed on to Spelthorne’s planning committee.

Only Cllr Paul Woodward (Conservative/ Ashford Town) approved Heathrow’s proposal, arguing: “Landing is the quietest part of the operation until you put the airbrakes halfway down the runway.”

Stanwell Moor runs directly parallel to Heathrow’s southern runway which leaves residents with a “constant stream of aircraft noise” for half the day, according to council documents. But if the airport uses full easterly alternation, the noise officer said this would “significantly increase the noise and frequency of overflights and significantly affect [Stanwell Moor] residents”.

Although Cllr Sexton raised concerns of Ashford becoming increasingly louder with plane noises, the noise officer said the changes would not harmfully impact Ashford or Sunbury.

Applauding the council for objecting to the project, Cllr Sue Doran (Labour/ Stanwell North) said: “It doesn’t matter which way [the planes] fly, the noise is terrible all the time.” Cllr Doran said she had lived in Stanwell for 15 years and said there is noise “virtually 24 hours a day”.

Heathrow Airport is aiming to introduce easterly runway alternation by 2028. Currently there is no proposed increase in the number of flights taking off or landing from the airport, just changes in the direction.

A Heathrow spokesperson said: “We know that noise is an important issue for local communities which is why we have published clear reduction targets in our Noise Action Plan. Our noise footprint has reduced by 41 per cent since 2006 and we expect to see further reductions. Easterly alternation is aimed at delivering predictable noise respite to more communities and is coupled with our ongoing work to install noise insulation for our nearest neighbours.”

Heathrow Airport. Credit Heathrow Airports Limited.

Will Surrey potholes outwit AI?

8 November 2025

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Surrey County Council will now use AI to detect potholes to help speed up road repairs across the county.

Computer vision cameras fitted to dashboards inside highways vehicles will spot and photograph potholes which will then be automatically recorded for repair. Future enhancements will see other defects such as missing signs and foliage overgrowth also programmed for repair.

Highways Inspectors will no longer need to step onto the road to manually carry out inspections which will make the process safer and more efficient. Potholes that don't need immediate attention will also be regularly tracked to ensure they are dealt with when needed.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said, "*We have some of the country's busiest roads and we're working incredibly hard to improve them, with nearly £300m allocated to repairing and improving Surrey's roads and pavements over the next five years (2023 – 2028).*

"*Adopting this technology will mean we can proactively log and fix potholes, helping to ensure we have well-maintained roads across the county for our residents.*

"*We're also resurfacing more roads and pavements than ever with 100 miles of roads and 30 miles of pavements resurfaced by our highways teams from April – December 2024 alone. This will make our highway network more resilient which will reduce the number of potholes that develop on our roads in the first place.*

"*I'm also pleased that we are pioneering AI technology to detect potholes as championed by the government just this week.*"

Connell McLaughlin, CEO of Route Reports said, "*We're thrilled to formalise this long-term partnership with Surrey County Council, who were among our earliest supporters and collaborators in developing Route Reports' AI road maintenance platform.*

"*Their feedback and hands-on involvement played a key role in refining our defect detection technology to ensure it meets the real-world needs of the community. This partnership exemplifies how innovative solutions and local expertise can come together to make roads safer, more efficient, and more sustainable.*"

Surrey County Council is the first local authority in the UK to move away from manual inspections and solely use video and AI technology to log and programme pothole repairs. The council has worked with provider, Route Reports, to trial and develop the software.

Residents can also report and track road and pavement issues on **Surrey County Council's website**.

Image: Pothole in Woodcote Road Epsom

Surrey school children road safety faces funding challenges

8 November 2025



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.

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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.”

Broad Gauges New Train Set to Serve Epsom

8 November 2025



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 cricketing 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.

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- **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**.

£12 million bus boost for Surrey

8 November 2025



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.

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