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

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Epsom and Ewell Council answers parking complaint immediately

10 October 2024



Charles Moseley of Hurstpierpoint complained in a letter dated 8th October to the Epsom and Ewell Times about the running out of Epsom Playhouse beer and the Ashley Centre Car Park during his visit to the Counterfeit Stones performance. Just five hours later (by coincidence) Epsom and Ewell Borough Council wrote to us with a new plan to improve the parking experience. They could not be expected to fix an unexpected peak in the demand for beer at the Borough's showpiece theatre venue. Here are the communications in full.

8th October 2024 10:28 hrs

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to say how much we enjoyed a gig by The Counterfeit Stones, who were really good. However we arrived fairly early and decided to have a drink in the theatre bar and were served by a very nice bar lady who proceeded to pour two pints of London Pride. But she only managed one and a half before running out! She was very apologetic in saying that she had no more bitter of any description, only lager, cider and spirits. Apparently this was due to the audience of the previous night's show supping all the bitter. What are about 400 mainly middle or above aged Rolling Stones fans supposed to do with no beer? We had to plunge the depths of Epsom's society pubs and eventually found, at the third attempt, something resembling beer in Wetherspoons. As for the car park, well that was something else with two queues out and at least one in each line that had not paid or lost their little yellow disc! It was chaos! And £5.00 for the privilege! So it's full marks for the band and bar lady, as for Epsom Council? Give me strength!

Charles Moseley

Hurstpierpoint

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council are installing a new Auto Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) parking system at the Ashley Centre car park in Epsom town centre this month. Work will begin from 14 October and is expected to take three weeks to complete.

The ANPR system will mean that car users can drive up to the barrier and enter the car park with their registration being used for identification and payment upon exit.

The new system will remove the need for tokens and the associated charges that are incurred when they are lost. Cash and card payment options will be available on all floors, as well as the ability to pay remotely.

Councillor Liz Frost, Chair of the Environment Committee, said:

"The works taking place at the Ashley Centre car park are a welcome upgrade to a more modern and convenient system. We know the tokens have been a cause of frustration to many drivers as they are small, difficult to find and easily lost (leading to penalties being issued).

"We appreciate that the necessary work may cause some inconvenience for drivers during the installation of the new ANPR System, and we apologise for this. However, we feel the upgrades will be a great improvement and make it easier and quicker for people visiting Epsom Town Centre to park.

"With Christmas just around the corner, we believe the upgrades to the car park support the ongoing work we are undertaking to boost the local economy by making Epsom Town centre a more hassle-free and therefore more attractive place to visit."

Epsom and Ewell Brough Council 8th October 2024 16:00hrs

Paving the way to better regulation?

10 October 2024

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The Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has voted to dispense its current pavement licence policy, rather than it being updated to copy the .GOV guidance. This change comes as part of a broader review conducted during an Environment Committee Meeting held on July 16th. Instead, Officers of the council will continue to determine applications under delegated authority, with the Council's website linking to the .GOV guidance.

[This post corrects an earlier post that incorrectly inferred that applications would no longer be processed by EEBC.]

The original pavement licence policy, introduced under the Government's Business and Planning Act of 2020, was a temporary measure designed to assist the hospitality sector amid the economic turmoil caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. It allowed cafes and similar businesses to place removable tables and chairs on adjacent council-owned highways for a capped fee of £100, a significant reduction compared to the more cumbersome procedures under the 1980's Highways Act.

As part of the 2024 Levelling Up agenda, this temporary policy was transformed into a permanent measure. However, the cost cap was raised, allowing councils to charge up to £500 for new licences and £350 for renewals. This shift aimed to provide local authorities with greater financial flexibility.

The decision has sparked a range of reactions. Some view the licence fee as an additional financial burden on small, independent cafes striving to thrive in a challenging economic environment. However, proponents argue that the policy plays a crucial role in ensuring pedestrian safety and accessibility, preventing removable furniture from obstructing pathways and ensuring compliance with accessibility standards.

During the committee meeting, concerns over the cost of the licence fees were voiced. Councillor Robert Leach criticised the high fees, particularly the notion of paying £555 to process a form and issue a licence, suggesting it seemed "ridiculous" and speculating that the figure was derived using a "different unit of currency." However, it was clarified that the actual cost of processing a new application exceeded the fees charged, necessitating the higher rate to break even, though this remains capped by the government.

However, doubts were also raised regarding the renewal fee of £350, with some committee members questioning the justification for this amount, given that most of the necessary work is completed during the initial application process

Image: Cafe tables outside Zig Zag Epsom High Street – Google

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Poor road conditions a real test for learners

10 October 2024



A driving instructor said he's on a "one man crusade" to fix the roads around Redhill Aerodrome Driving Test Centre. Martin Pitchley, 57, said he was "shocked" at the road conditions in Redhill, Surrey.

Unreadable road markings, overgrown hedges blocking speed signs and poor road conditions were some of the issues raised by the driving instructor.

"It's not very fair for students taking their test with all these problems with the road which is caused by poor road management by the [county] council," Martin said.

Emailing Surrey County Council (SCC) on June 3, Martin said nothing has been done to fix the issue.

A SCC highways maintenance officer said the vegetation covering road signs will be removed as part of the rural cut back of Earlswood and Reigate South on July 19 . Fixing chevrons and replacing speed signs have also been requested on a list of works to be done.

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Students who are just about to take their driving test come out of the centre not knowing what the speed limit is on that road, according to Martin. He claims a speed sign had been knocked over and lying down in a hedge for over six months.

Outside the driving test centre is the 40mph Kings Mill Lane, but Martin says there is no signage until a good few hundred yards up the road.

He said: “It’s not fair to be giving students tuition and telling them there should be a speed limit here but there’s not one, or it’s knocked down.

“It’s an unsafe speed for that road” he added, “It’s got so many sharp bends, and big lorries yet students are expected to drive 40 mph up there.

“It’s like a one-man crusade really. It’s not really fair for the students going up to the test centre and taking their test with all these problems with the road.”

Not only worried for his driving students, Martin said he was concerned for the general public including pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.

“They are very severe and dangerous [roads] for any motorists, either for a learner or a full-time experienced driver,” he said. “They have to drive up these roads and find there’s a big steep dip in the roads or uneven roads that will make them steer awkwardly or crash their car.”

According to Crash Map data, seven ‘slight’ accidents and two ‘serious’ incidents with vehicles have occurred on Kings Mill Lane between 2018-2022.

Martin said the county council has had enough time to fix the issues with the road and wants to see change. He said: “I just want this issue to be resolved so students can go up to their driving test, get a fair test, and members of the public are not going to get hit by a speeding car.”

A SCC spokesperson said: “We appreciate the concerns raised and our Highways officers have been in communication with the individual to talk through the issues.

“The grass verges in question will be cut as part of our twice per annum rural cuts – information on where and when these take place are available on our website.

“Requests to replace speed signs in the area have been raised, however these need to be prioritised against other requests across the county and officers will review this as soon as they can.”

Image: Driving instructor Martin Pitchley, Credit: Road Rules Driving.

Tree falls on van in Ewell Village

10 October 2024



On Saturday a tree close to the bus stop, opposite the entrance to Bourne Hall in Ewell Village fell across the road onto a passing red Mercedes van shattering its windscreen.

Surrey Police were quickly in attendance and a female police officer used a broom to sweep debris from the road to make the road as safe as possible for passing traffic.

After approximately 30 minutes, contractors arrived on site to remove the fallen tree. No one is believed to have been injured by the tree falling across the pavement.

A few months ago, a similar incident occurred when a large tree inside the entrance gates to Bourne Hall fell causing major damage to walling which has had to undergo major restoration.

Whilst Saturday’s incident required Surrey Police’s involvement, it is not believed that any of the other emergency services were called upon. Two trees falling within only a few metres of each other within such a short space of time in a busy village suggests that people were lucky to escape serious injury. Does more need to be done in the Borough to ensure trees overhanging public spaces do not pose a danger to anyone?

Ivy can choke a tree if allowed to climb it and dead branches will then fall to the ground below. Ivy can, however be easily dealt with by removing a section of it from the base of a tree so that the ivy above dies and loosens its grip on the tree.

The tree that fell across the pavement and road onto the top of a red Mercedes van on Saturday was visibly covered in ivy.

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Epsom and Ewell braces for M25 closure traffic

10 October 2024



Greater chaos has been avoided by the **Epsom and Ewell Times** correcting the **Highway Authority**'s belief you could turn off the *northbound* A3 to go *south* at the Hook Junction. "Thank you for your email of 19 April 2024 in relation to the M25 junction 10/A3 Wisley interchange improvement project and specifically regarding the error in the M25 weekend closure diversion route published on our webpage. I'd like to apologise for this error and to also thank you for bringing it to our attention. This has now been corrected…." wrote Chris Davis, the Project Support Officer.

The Highways Authority has announced the closure of a section of the M25 motorway between junctions 9 (A243 Leatherhead) and 10 (A3 Wisley) from 9pm Friday, May 10, to 6am Monday, May 13, 2024. This closure is necessary for the installation of a new bridge.

Travellers are advised to avoid unnecessary journeys during this period, with the authority expressing gratitude to drivers who complied with similar closures in the past. A 19-mile diversion route has been planned, utilizing the A3 and the A240. Drivers are urged to follow this diversion and not rely on their SatNav systems.

For clockwise diversion, except for over-height vehicles, drivers are advised to leave the M25 at junction 8 onto the A217 (Reigate), then follow signs for London, Sutton, and Kingston on the A217 and A240. At the Esso roundabout, they should turn right onto the A24 (A240) towards Kingston, then left onto the A3 towards Portsmouth and Guildford. After 9½ miles, they can rejoin the M25 at junction 10.

Fortunately, the works at the Tolworth roundabout have all but completed for traffic. The northbound A240 has four lanes to filter at the junction approach.

For anticlockwise diversion, except for over-height vehicles, drivers should leave the M25 at junction 10 and join the A3 towards London. After 9½ miles, they should turn right onto the A240 towards Epsom and Reigate, then follow signs for Reigate and the M25 on the A240 and A217. After 3½ miles, they can rejoin the M25 at junction 8.

Drivers using the signed diversion route will not incur any Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) charges that may usually apply in London. However, over-height vehicles must follow a different diversion route to avoid a low bridge.

The Highways Authority also announced plans for three more weekend closures of the M25 this year, with no closures scheduled for June. The remaining closures will occur between July and the end of 2024, with dates to be announced following the May closure.

Plan your local Epsom and Ewell lunch dates with relatives accordingly…

Related reports:

M25 diversion cost me £12.50 ULEZ charge

Going South this weekend?

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