

# Epsom and Ewell Parliament candidates interviewed

25 June 2024



On Monday 17th June **James Hains** of the Epsom and Ewell Times conducted interviews with Gina Miller (True and Fair Party), Mhairi Fraser (Conservative), Helen Maguire (Liberal Democrat), Stephen McKenna (Green Party) and Mark Todd (Labour). The interviews were filmed by the Creative and Media Team at **NESCOT** in Ewell. Epsom and Ewell Times extends our immense gratitude to NESCOT for their professionalism and service especially **Charlie McCarthy**.

Mayuran Senthilnathan of the Reform Party was called away at short notice and could not make the schedule.

Here are the interviews:

Epsom and Ewell Times thanks all the candidates who took part.

They are all a credit to our democracy whether you agree with them or not.

Make sure you vote on 4th July and don't forget your photo ID.

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## More opinions of opinion polls

25 June 2024



In the run-up to the 2024 general election, polling data for party support in **Epsom and Ewell** shows a fluctuating political landscape. Epsom and Ewell has returned a Conservative Party since the constituency was first created.

However, recent polling data indicates a potential upheaval.

In the 2019 general election, the Conservatives maintained a significant lead with 53% of the vote. The Liberal Democrats followed with 23%, while the Labour Party took a 17% share. However, recent polls now place the Liberal Democrats at the forefront as potential victors in the upcoming election 4th July.

This data comes emerges from the model of Electoral Calculus, which predicts that the Liberal Democrats have a 72% chance of winning the elections this term, with the Conservatives at 20%. The model suggests a dramatic turnaround favouring the Liberal Democrats, with a swing of 26.09% of support from the Conservatives. In addition, the Electoral Calculus predicts that the Labour party will have a 5% chance of winning.

Even so, alternative polling sources, such as the UK Polling Report, suggest a more closely contesting race. The current support levels are predicted to be 29.76% for the Conservatives, 24.21% for the Liberal Democrats, and 24.03% for Labour. It indicates that there is a significant residual support for the Conservative Party, which challenges the prediction of a Liberal Democrat win, making the race far from a foregone conclusion.

YouGov polls illustrate a more volatile landscape in comparison, with the winners emerging differently on a weekly basis, underscoring the volatility in voters' intentions. According to the latest YouGov prediction, the support in Epsom and Ewell is 35.1% for the Conservatives, 25.9% for the Liberal Democrats, and 19.7% for Labour.

This general election highlights Epsom and Ewell as a key constituency, reflecting upon broader electoral trends across

the United Kingdom.

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# Conservative who promises to serve “with integrity”

25 June 2024



Epsom and Ewell Times is publishing the appeals of the Parliamentary Candidates standing in the General Election for the constituency of Epsom and Ewell. This is the appeal of **Mhairi Fraser** the **Conservative Party** candidate.

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Epsom has been my family home for almost 20 years. All three of my younger siblings went to school here, at Glyn and Epsom College; my mum worked at Leatherhead Food Research; in university holidays I could be found working behind the bar at the Marquis of Granby, or volunteering at Epsom Hospital Radio; and as a young graduate, I commuted from Epsom into the City. I have a genuine drive to protect everything that makes Epsom, Ewell, Ashted and Leatherhead special, and I also know where they need investment and attention.

I love this country and everything it stands for, and I believe traditional Conservative values - strong education, low taxes for workers and businesses, efficient use of public money, respect for law and order, and the personal freedom to allow you to aspire to great things - is the best way to build a Britain where that is possible for everyone.

I am running to be your MP because I believe it is time to bring integrity back to our politics. Having built a career as an anti-corruption lawyer at one of the top law firms in the world - whether advising the world's most influential companies and governments on how to fight money laundering, or defending Nobel Peace Prize winners against persecution by foreign governments - integrity is, quite literally, my speciality.

That is why you will have seen me challenge other parties' policies, which I believe would restrain the potential of us all, and of this country. But you have never heard me on the doorstep, or online, or in a leaflet, attack any of my opponents as individuals. Everyone is fed up with the division that is rife in our politics at the moment; it's time that the British public was put before self-interest.

Having been lucky enough to call it my home, I know that's how we do things in Epsom, Ewell, Ashted and Leatherhead too. This is a really special place, with a rare community feel for somewhere so close to London. We put politics aside and work together - whether as neighbours or colleagues, in community groups or for charities - to make things better. I promise to do the same for you, here and in Westminster, starting with my key local priorities.

## **Protecting the Green Belt:**

We are at a critical point, with only a few months left to have the Draft Local Plan amended to remove Green Belt sites. I have been visible at both of this year's Green Belt protests, but I have also been quietly working behind the scenes, using my legal expertise to assist the Keep Epsom & Ewell Green Belt Group with legal strategy. I am in excellent company with my Conservative councillors Kieran Persand and Bernie Muir, who have consistently fought to remove the Green Belt from the Draft Local Plan.

Home ownership is one of the great aspirations of the younger generations in Surrey, and we all know that there is a need for new homes to be built for those who are currently finding it impossible to get on the housing ladder. But our housing needs can be met by building on brownfield sites, which have previously been developed, rather than forever destroying the Green Belt. If elected, I will continue to fight for a “brownfield first” strategy - including pushing the Council to consider the alternative plan for development at Kiln Lane and Longmead - which will be able to meet our actual housing needs as a borough.

The Green Belt is an essential home to hundreds of native species of flora and fauna. The minute the concrete is poured, the land is forever lost to nature. But there are also human consequences to building hundreds of new homes on inappropriate sites that do not have the infrastructure to support them. Schools and GP services running out of places. Traffic jams polluting our air. An increased risk of homes being flooded.

I am adamant: I will not let Epsom, Ewell, Ashted and Leatherhead turn into carbon copies of Croydon and Woking. Our Green Belt and green spaces must be protected.

## **Tackling crime with a more visible police presence:**

We deserve to feel safe at home, and when we head out. Under the Conservatives there are more police in Surrey than ever before, but I know that levels of vehicle theft, burglary, violent crime, drug dealing and shoplifting remain too high.

I have been relaying residents' and business owners' concerns straight to the top, to the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner – and I will be a consistent voice for a more visible police presence on the streets of Epsom, Ewell, Ashted and Leatherhead, because I firmly believe that more bobbies on the beat is the best deterrent to crime.

**Improving commuter services:**

Local residents using Ewell West, Stoneleigh and Worcester Park stations have been suffering unacceptable levels of overcrowding, delays and cancellations on South Western Railway trains at peak hours.

The supposed ease of the commute to and from London is one of the major reasons people have chosen to live in this area, and these issues are causing serious levels of disruption and stress. I know what it's like – I've commuted to and from London on the same line on and off over a period of almost twenty years.

I have already spoken with representatives of South Western Railway to discuss train services in the constituency, and am pushing them to provide two extra trains during the morning peak and, in the interim, to reorganise their existing fleet to introduce additional ten-coach services for morning commuters.

**Regenerating our high streets:**

The high streets of Epsom and Leatherhead have long been in need of regeneration, and the best way to achieve that is to allow local businesses to thrive – by reducing taxes and abolishing unnecessary red tape.

I have kept my promise to you to run a clean campaign; it is the first of many promises to you that I will keep, continuing with my pledges above.

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The other candidates:

Mark my words for Labour candidate

Lib Dems' Helen Maguire – "Getting Things Done"

The Green promises

Reform candidate for Epsom and Ewell

A True and Fair view of the world

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## Surrey to have a new political colour 4th July?

25 June 2024



Jeremy Hunt "faces a tight race" to be re-elected according to new polls that show Surrey could have as many as 12 new MPs after the July 4 general election.

Only East Surrey's Conservative MP and Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Claire Coutinho, are predicted to be safe.

Data published by Ipsos suggests the combination of big beast Conservative resignations and huge swings in voting intentions could drastically alter the political map.

The projections are based on Ipsos' first MRP poll that uses a large-scale online survey of nearly 20,000 participants together with population data at a constituency level, to project which party will win individual seats at the upcoming General Election.

Currently every single seat in the county is held by a Conservative but Ipsos polling has the Liberal Democrats poised to win in Esher and Walton, Dorking and Horley, Guildford, and Epsom and Ewell leaning that way too.

The scale of the swings needed are huge with the Conservatives holding majorities as high as 29 per cent in constituencies predicted to go to the Lib Dems.

Three seats, with what would normally be considered safe Tory strongholds with majorities greater than 30 per cent, are also said to be in play.

Runnymede and Weybridge, Woking, Spelthorne, Windsor, and Godalming and Ash are all toss ups, according to Ipsos.

Even among the seats Ipsos has staying blue, Ipsos says that Surrey Heath, Farnham and Bordon, and Reigate are only "leaning" Conservative with just East Surrey – which was last won by Claire Coutinho in 2019 with a 40 per cent majority

“likely” to stay Tory.

Nationally the polls show:

Labour winning 453 - with ‘certainty’ range of 439 to 462 seats

Conservatives 115 - with a range of 99 to 123 seats

Liberal Democrats 38 - with a range of 35 to 48 seats

SNP 15 - with a range of 13 to 23 seats

Plaid Cymru four - with a range of two to five seats

Reform UK three - with range of three to 10 seats

Green Party three with a range of zero to four seats

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According to Ipsos data the voting intentions in Surrey are:

**Liberal Democrat gains**

**Esher and Walton** (Strong Liberal Democrat) overturning conservative majority of 5 per cent

Con 28%, Lib Dem 50%, Lab 11%, Ref 8%, Green 3%

**Dorking** (Likely Liberal Democrat) overturning Conservative majority of 19 per cent

Con 30%, Lab 17%, Lib Dem 41%, Ref 8%, Green 4%

**Guildford** (Likely Liberal Democrat - overturning Conservative majority of 6 per cent

Con 25%, Lab 16%, Lib Dem 39%, Ref 15%, Green 4%

**Epsom and Ewell** (Lean Liberal Democrat - overturning Conservative majority of 29 per cent

Con 30%, Lab 23%, Lib Dem 35%, Ref 7%, Green 4%

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**Conservative holds:**

**Surrey Heath** (Lean Conservative) majority 30 per cent

Con 36%, Lab 18%, Lib Dem 30%, Ref 12%, Green 4%

**Farnham and Bordon** (Lean Conservative) majority 27%

Con 37%, Lab 17%, Lib Dem 31%, Ref 11%, Green 4%

**Reigate** (Lean Conservative) majority 36%

Con 34%, Lab 29%, Lib Dem 18%, Ref 9%, Green 10%

**East Surrey** (Likely Conservative) majority 40%

Con 38%, Lab 26%, Lib Dem 16%, Ref 15%, Green 5%

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**Toss ups**

**Runnymede and Weybridge** (Toss up) Conservative majority 31 per cent

Con 35%, Lab 31%, Lib Dem 18%, Ref 10%, Green 5%

**Woking** (Toss up) Conservative majority 17 per cent

Con 35%, Lab 30%, Lib Dem 25%, Ref 9%, Green 5%

**Godalming and Ash** (Toss up) Conservative majority 19 per cent

Con 34%, Lab 17%, Lib Dem 33%, Ref 11%, Green 5%

**Spelthorne** (Toss up) Conservative majority 37 per cent

Con 31%, Lab 31%, Lib Dem 17%, Ref 16%, Green 5%

Jeremy Hunt and Paul Follows were contacted for this story.

Related reports:

6 out of 11 Conservative MPs leaving Surrey

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# Taxing question for Surrey's private schools

25 June 2024



Labour's proposal to add VAT to private school fees has ignited a fierce debate in Surrey, home to numerous prestigious independent schools. The policy, aimed at generating £1.5 billion to improve state education, has drawn both sharp criticism and staunch support from local residents, educators, and politicians

One Surrey grandmother explained that her grandchildren go to private school and says she thought it is a "ridiculous" policy on "hard-working people".

Labour has said that if it wins the general election it plans to remove tax exemptions that private schools enjoy, generating around £1.5 billion. The most significant of these is scrapping VAT exemptions on private school fees.

Critics say taxing private schools does not hit the super rich but hurts middle-income parents. Cllr Kate Fairhurst (Conservative/ Reigate) said: "I am very concerned that Labour's plans will punish families striving and investing for a better future for their children."

Private schools could make cuts to absorb the added VAT cost, Labour Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves has said, so it is not passed on to parents.

Profoundly objecting, Roger Jones, a previous Conservative candidate for Dorking, said: "Private schools would have to axe a third of its [departments]", causing the most affluent of pupils to move to other fee paying schools" or in the public sector. He added the suggestion of cuts as an option is rooted in the Labour's envy of the privately educated.

With the money raised, Labour said it will improve standards in state schools by employing 6,500 teachers, improving schools and careers advice, as well as helping pay for mental health support staff in every secondary school.

Surrey has around 140 private schools: including primary, secondary and special schools. Fees vary between schools, but the cost of independent education in Surrey is above the national average.

They range from £18,975-£38,367 per year for day pupils and from £25,290-£47,535 per year for boarding. With an addition of 20% tax, this would hike the figures to £22,770- £46,040 annually for day pupils and £30,348- £57,042 for students at boarding schools. To those who can just about squeeze £18k for a year of schooling, the added VAT may make the private sector unaffordable.

"It would be a huge backward step for the county," added Roger Jones He said: "Should Labour find themselves in government, then this policy will disadvantage every single child of school age and those yet to come." He argued that taxing private schools would cost the state more than it is projected to generate as more children would move to the public school system.

One woman, who wished to remain anonymous, expressed concerns that the influx of previously private schooled children in the state sector could put strain on already struggling public schools. "Walloping private schools isn't going to make the state schools better and the money raised will be a drop in the ocean compared to the financial needs of the sector," she added.

Concerns were raised about the tax not affecting prestigious schools, like Eton, where the woman claimed the pupils are from very wealthy families. She said: "The imposition of 20% VAT won't even begin to affect the attitude of [those] who are brought up by such schools to believe that they are superior to everyone else."

Twenty-three-year-old Grace, who went to a comprehensive school in leafy Esher, said raising fees could increase elitism in private schools, making bullying and student dynamics worse. She said: "It's no secret that private schools have a self-proclaimed elitist culture, and increasing VAT will mean the super rich will be more prolific in these schools."

The vast majority of independent schools are classed as charities or non-profit making trusts. For-profit schools are not allowed in the UK so funds go towards running and improving schools.

Speaking to people on the doorstep, Guildford 's Lib Dem candidate Zoe Franklin told the LDRS how a woman in Stoughton made "very careful and conscious spending decisions" to pay for a private school. She said the woman did not have foreign holidays and lived in a modest house to afford private schooling as they were unable to get into the local school of their choice that they felt would best support their child with special needs.

Labour's policy would exempt private SEND schools Ms Franklin said: "It's especially hard to hear people who say they feel they have to pay for private education for a child with SEND, because the right support just isn't there in the state sector."

Labour first announced this policy in its 2019 manifesto, under Jeremy Corbyn, but was brought back into the news limelight in 2023 by Keir Starmer. Worried parents started a Change.org petition against plans, attracting 145,446 signatures at the time of writing.

Starting in Berkshire, the petition argues parents who currently pay school fees on top of taxes used for school funding will be “adding to the state’s burden rather than opting to relieve it” by choosing an independent school. Critics have argued it is “reasonable” for a service provided by a business, like private schools, to be taxed in the same way as other goods and services. One person commented: “Both are voluntary choices when the state provides a free alternative.”

IPSOS polling, published November 2023, showed the majority of the public (57 per cent) support the Labour party’s proposal., with just under one in five (18 per cent) opposing the policy. Research found that even among 2019 Conservative voters, nearly half (47 per cent) support it, compared to a third (32 per cent) who oppose it.

Speaking on behalf of the party, Labour candidate for Reigate Stuart Brady said: “Introducing VAT on school fees is a tough choice being made against the backdrop of a very difficult economic and fiscal position Labour would inherit from the Tories. Labour wants to drive high and rising standards in all our schools, so that we can break down barriers to opportunity across our country.

“I’ve listened to stories from Reigate Constituents and am aware of the variety of economic and educational positions of those paying privately for education, including parents of children with additional needs. I know that most are not the super-rich. [But] Labour in government will spread opportunity to all parts of the country at every age and every stage.”

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## Mark my words for Labour candidate

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**Mark Todd** has lived with his family in Epsom for the last fifteen years. He runs and cycles locally, so he knows how bad the roads are, you’ll often see him at Nonsuch parkrun on a Saturday running or volunteering, or at the Wells Centre helping out.

He has committed to not take a second job if he is elected as MP; instead concentrating all his time on the people, businesses and charities of Epsom, Ewell, Ashted and Leatherhead. So, you’ll get a full time MP with Mark not a part time one as previously.

Mark’s very active locally and as your MP he will fight to:

**FIX OUR BROKEN ROADS:**

The Lib Dem Tory coalition slashed Surrey’s road budgets to unsustainable levels. Our roads are broken and dangerous. Mark has successfully fought to get some of the worst repaired. He will call for extra funds for the constituency and demand Surrey County Council up their game.

**REDUCE SEWAGE IN LOCAL RIVERS:**

Mark led a cross-party group demanding Thames Water stop dumping sewage into the Hogsmill, our local stream. Having gained support from Feargal Sharkey, Thames Water met with Mark and have promised to reduce sewage overflows into the Hogsmill by 80% by 2030. Mark will continue the fight in Parliament.

**MORE NOT LESS COMMUNITY FACILITIES:**

Community centres and youth centres are being cut across the country. Mark is a trustee of The Epsom Wells Community Centre which Epsom & Ewell council shut and wanted to demolish. As Treasurer, he wrote the business plan with other trustees that convinced the Council to give the centre, now re-opened, back to the community.

**MORE HOMES WHILE DEFENDING THE GREEN BELT:**

We need more homes, but most people want to keep our green belt. Mark is a strong supporter of preserving our green spaces and green belt. Labour plan to build more homes, particularly smaller affordable units, on brownfield sites and in New Towns to provide homes while saving the green belt.

**BETTER SCHOOLS & HOSPITALS:**

The NHS is on its knees and waits are enormous. Labour has committed to rebuilding our local hospitals at St. Helier and Epsom, if elected. Labour also have a fully costed plan to improve the NHS and state schools by providing 17,500 more doctors and nurses, more weekend clinics, 6,500 more teachers and free breakfast clubs for primary school children so parents can get to work.

**RE-TAKE OUR STREETS:**

Crime is almost decriminalised under the Conservatives with the Police and Court systems so inefficient. Anti-social

behaviour and shoplifting is rife, and many women don't feel safe to walk the streets. Labour will provide 13,000 more police officers and reform the criminal justice system so that more crimes are solved, and criminals punished.

**REALLY TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE:**

Labour will take the climate crisis seriously. Labour will work with the private sector to double onshore wind, triple solar power, and quadruple offshore wind by 2030. We will invest in carbon capture and storage, hydrogen and marine energy, and ensure we have the long-term energy storage our country needs. These measures will reduce carbon but also reduce bills.

**ABOUT MARK:**

□ Graduated in Politics and Economics at Oxford University and also has a Master's degree from Birmingham University  
□ co-founded one of the UK's largest energy price comparison companies at 28 years old that, recommended by Martin Lewis, and powering comparethemarket's energy service, it organised 10 million energy switches and employed 350 people.

□ a leading voice in energy, he campaigned tirelessly to ban rip off energy tariffs and was successful convincing Amber Rudd and her civil servants to bring in the energy price cap in 2018.

□ after the election, win or lose, Mark will be part of the All-Party Group on Energy Costs at Parliament as one of the UK's leading experts in energy.

□ given Mark's very strong academic and business background, and his strong work ethic, he is perfectly placed to make a big impact in Parliament for our local area and for the whole of the UK.

□ A Labour MP would be a great fit for the area as we really need our public services to improve in Epsom and Ewell.

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The other candidates:

Conservative who promises to serve "with integrity"

Lib Dems' Helen Maguire - "Getting Things Done"

The Green promises

Reform candidate for Epsom and Ewell

A True and Fair view of the world

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## Lib Dems' Helen Maguire - "Getting Things Done"

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My Army training gave me focus, my police work gave me a determination to maintain good order, while being a working mum of three in Claygate taught me a great deal about my local community.

It's these and other aspects of my career that led me to become a Liberal Democrat and to stand for Parliament to serve my local community - and to get things done to make the constituency of Epsom & Ewell a better place.

While there are many issues the Liberal Democrats want to tackle in the next Parliament, there are three big issues in Epsom & Ewell close to my heart. I want to see them fixed. I have been campaigning on these for the last 18 months and I want to take them to Parliament as your local representative and get them resolved.

My first concern is health and social care. Previous Conservative governments have run the NHS into the ground, and as far as Epsom & Ewell is concerned, have consistently failed to resolve one of our biggest issues, which is the overcrowding at Epsom and St Helier hospitals.

Our health care professionals across Surrey came up with an exciting and practical plan to build a third hospital which would be designed to treat the most difficult emergency cases, so that local people could get world class care in an emergency. The building of this new critical care hospital at Sutton would then free up Epsom and St Helier to be upgraded to significantly better district hospitals, caring for all other aspects of medical care.

The Conservatives have consistently promised to build the critical care hospital, but nothing has happened. As a result,

our pressurised NHS workers are having to deal with overcrowding and poor facilities - even getting into Epsom to park can be an issue!

At the most basic level successive Conservative governments have failed on health and social care. So many people can't get to see their GP when they need to. The Lib Dems want to give everyone the right to see a GP within seven days, or within 24 hours if they urgently need to - and we'll train another 8,000 more GPs to deliver this.

Finding NHS dental care can be as difficult as finding hen's teeth. The running down of NHS dentistry is causing great concern and so the Lib Dems will guarantee access to a NHS dentist for urgent and emergency care, putting an end to the dental deserts we see emerging across the country.

Mental health services need shaking up so we will push for mental health hubs for young people. We also must produce better results in terms of cancer survival rates and want to introduce a guarantee that all patients will start treatment for cancer within 62 days for urgent referral.

Successive Conservative governments have promised to do more to resolve the social care crisis, but nothing of any substance has happened. We have come up with a raft of fully costed measures aimed at making people's lives much easier than they are now. We want to introduce free personal care based on the model we introduced in Scotland in 2002, so that provision is based on need, not ability to pay.

We also want to establish a Royal College of Care Workers to improve recognition and career progression and introduce a higher Carer's Minimum Wage. We want to establish a cross-party commission to forge a long-term agreement on sustainable funding for social care. A subject very close to our leader Ed Davey's heart is to give unpaid carers a fair deal so they get the support they so desperately need, including paid carer's leave and a statutory guarantee of regular respite breaks.

Everyone in Epsom and Ewell will benefit from better healthcare provision, but perhaps even more fundamentally is the need to build a stronger economy enabling us to shake off the cost-of-living crisis. One of the greatest opportunities is in the booming 'green economy' where the Liberal Democrats want to invest in renewable power and home insulation to drive a strong economic recovery, bring down energy bills, and create clean, secure, well-paid new jobs.

This means we need to develop an industrial strategy that will give businesses certainty and incentivise them to invest in new technologies to grow the economy, create good jobs, and tackle the climate crisis. In Epsom & Ewell we need to boost small businesses and empower them to create new local jobs, including abolishing business rates and replacing them with a Commercial Landowner Levy to help stimulate our high streets.

The mismanagement of our economy and public services by the Tories extends to the inability of government to sort out the water companies who have been for too long polluting our rivers and waterways with raw sewage. Instead, they have pandered to the water companies in whose interests are best served by doing nothing other than the bare minimum about pollution.

I, and my fellow Liberal democrats, will hold the water companies to account by giving them a duty to protect the environment, including banning water companies from dumping raw sewage into rivers, lakes and coastal areas. Trashing our environment is totally unacceptable.

We want to make homes warmer and cheaper to heat. We will introduce a ten-year emergency upgrade programme, starting with free insulation and providing low-cost heating - heat pumps for those on low incomes.

We want to extend this to solar generation by expanding incentives for households to install solar panels. We will invest in renewable power so that 90% of the UK's electricity is generated from renewables by 2030.

All these issues can be resolved providing we plan well for the future and elect politicians whose life experiences are about taking on problems and solving them, this is what I have been trained to do, and I wish to do so to the benefit of everyone who lives in Epsom, Ewell, Ashted & Leatherhead.

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The other candidates:

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## The Green promises

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Britain is a wealthy country. Yet underinvestment the last 14 years has adversely affected the country. We have a series of ongoing crises notably in the health care system and in terms of cost of living impacting millions of people. In housing, transport and our energy and water bills, costs are rising to levels that are unaffordable for many. All of this set against a backdrop of growing climate crisis and it's impacts on, drought, flooding, rising food prices, declining biodiversity and so on.

The Green Party manifesto proposes that to "fix Britain" we need to invest significantly more than might otherwise have been the case if proper investment had been undertaken. We do not apologise for being honest about the problems we face and the fact that our plans involve raising taxes.

However it is clear that a lot of investment now will bring solid benefits for the whole of society and avoid further worsening of the situation. We want to progress towards a fairer, greener society.

The main parties are in denial about the scale of these challenges. There is a "conspiracy of silence" about funding what has to be done which amounts to a policy of "no change" for the next five years. This would be disastrous. Independent reports say the NHS will decline further under Labour's plans.

Labour say they will involve the private sector at a time when we spend a lot less per head on health services than other European countries. This is a further step towards privatisation which the Green Party rejects. We need a proper Investment Plan for the whole NHS. Our tax and spend plan is about investing long term in people and capital assets. So for instance recruiting more home grown talent to fill vacancies will be vital. "Earn while you learn" apprenticeships will incentivise our young people to study whilst full time students should benefit from maintenance grants. The end of tuition fees will help but universities will need to be properly funded as well.

Having said all of this, the state has broad shoulders to carry this weight - after all over £400 billion was raised during the pandemic without the sky falling in and the Institute of Fiscal Studies has made supportive qualified comments about our tax and spend plans. More importantly IFS has not suggested there are any risks to the economy as a result of our proposals. Don't forget, much of what we propose is about spending now to save later.

No party should enter Government without a commitment to ending the housing emergency. Our programme will generate greater tax receipts and will save on things like subsidies to landlords and developers. We want to create 150,000 council homes a year nationally across the country including conversions, refurbishments, buying empty or houses in disrepair as well as new build. All Councils should produce a five year plan to provide Council or social housing in their areas which should also reduce their current extortionate emergency and accommodation spending.

One of the biggest threats facing this area is the weakening of the planning system proposed by the main parties. Rather than address the core issues of our broken housing market they engage in a numbers game about who can build more unaffordable homes! "Unblocking" the planning system would enable further destruction of our supposedly sacrosanct Green Belts, without reference to any constraint. Nationally building 300,000 homes per annum would amount to two cities the size of Birmingham over a five year period!

This is not sustainable and is unnecessary. Imagine all the consequences that flow from this - new roads and a loss of tranquility is the least of it - traffic congestion, air pollution, noise, water and sewerage discharges into streams and rivers and impacting on biodiversity, a lack of GPs, hospitals, dentists, school places. This at a time when our Government is supposedly signed up to delivering protection of nature on 30% of our land by 2030. At present only 3% of our land is protected.

So if elected, what would my main priorities be as your MP?

- Protect and expand Green Belts and integrate these with nature recovery and community health based strategies, banning any development in such locations
- I will prioritise NHS and social care funding including an upgrade of Epsom Hospital and community based healthcare
- In education I would advocate for more places for special needs (SEND) children in Surrey and encourage funding for "earn while you learn" apprenticeships
- Support public ownership of water and energy companies
- Secure better integrated public transport with enhanced service delivery, lower fares and a scrappage scheme in Surrey to support transitioning to ULEZ compliant vehicles

- Support the national programme of retro fitting homes to deliver energy efficient homes and lower energy bills
- Epsom and Ewell has no Council housing and I would require all Councils to produce an annual target for provision of Council/social housing -
- Support our High Streets - such as grants to increase live-work places on upper floors above shops, enhanced broadband in centres to support small businesses find space, providing help to park with charging points for electric vehicles, environmental and other improvements - of course business rates should also be scaled back to help compete with online offers.
- Help our farmers to grow quality food for the home market with a large expansion of the horticulture sector and nature friendly farming,
- Create green manufacturing jobs in renewables, green technologies and related sectors.

Finally I urge you to ignore the opinion polls. In this election, more than any other in my lifetime, there is no scope for tactical voting. In Epsom and Ewell, for so long a safe Tory seat, a surprise result is definitely on the cards and cannot be predicted. The Green Party is the only party offering a decent and deliverable vision for the future backed up by realistic spending plans.

Therefore I ask you to vote with your heart and your head for a better fairer country, vote Green on 4th July!

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The other candidates:

Conservative who promises to serve “with integrity”

Lib Dems’ Helen Maguire - “Getting Things Done”

A True and Fair view of the world

Reform candidate for Epsom and Ewell

Mark my words for Labour candidate

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## A True and Fair view of the world

25 June 2024



Epsom and Ewell Times is publishing the appeals of the Parliamentary Candidates standing in the General Election for the constituency of Epsom and Ewell. This is the appeal from **The True and Fair Party** candidate **Gina Miller**.

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My name is Gina Miller and as an activist for fairness and justice for 34 years, a successful businesswoman over 28 years, mother fighting for my now adult disabled daughter, and a survivor of domestic violence I feel compelled to step into the political arena.

Many think of me as being “that bloody difficult woman” who took two Conservative Prime Ministers to the Supreme Court and won - securing historic constitutional victories and stopping these PMs from putting themselves above the law. But my motivation has always been the same - to speak out when things are blatantly wrong, dishonest, and hurting people.

My years of campaigning has led to successful changes in the areas of special education provision, modern-day slavery legislation, campaign for laws to tackle online abuse, and bringing about changes to stop rip-offs in financial services. My work in the charity sector over the years has also helped improve governance, sustainability, and safeguarding.

The FT called me a wrecking ball - but unfairness, our broken institutions and systems need to be called out. Without integrity, morality, and common decency from leaders we all suffer.

My vision is for a thriving, healthy, happy community. So how do I plan to achieve that?

Health and Wellbeing:

Faced with debilitating pressures on our health and social care services, bringing early intervention, alternative therapies and services, medical MOTs, and mobile services onto our high streets is key. Services to tackle the growing demands on our mental health services, elderly in the community, long term sick, special needs and respite services, people unable to feed or house themselves. Collective community actions that translate into kinder communities.

Enhancing the Local Economy:

As a successful businesswoman, I'm passionate about supporting small businesses, entrepreneurs, and responsible businesses. Creating a vibrant, partnership-led local economy that attracts investment, creates jobs and local supply chains and boost prosperity and community cohesion. For example, encourage our Local Authority Pension Fund to invest into local businesses, infrastructure, and projects. Petitioning the next government for a Local Business Development Fund which would offer grants and low-interest loans. Replacing business rates with a fairer transaction tax for online and bricks and mortar businesses.

#### Environmental Protection:

Urgent action is needed to protect our environment which is why I am calling for ecocide to be put law, making it a criminal offence for organisations not to take steps to mitigate their environmental damage. Robust challenges to building on greenbelt, protecting our waterways and biodiversity. The Hogsmill River is a place of local pride, however, it has been subject to repeated sewer spills by Thames Water, who continue to make inflated profits whilst local people bear the brunt of these actions.

Under my proposed ecocide law, polluters would be held legally responsible and face fines or prison.

I would also legally challenge the planned development on the Green Belt via a 'People vs. Planner & Property Developers' action. The Green Belt is essential in protecting against urban sprawl out of London, air quality and the wellbeing of local people.

#### Tackling the Housing and Homelessness Crisis:

Contrary to conventional wisdom, increasing housing supply alone won't solve the housing crisis. I am committed to addressing the housing and homelessness crisis with a human rights-based approach. In my local manifesto I set out a coordinated set of policies to tackle our housing and homelessness crisis. Making homeownership a reality instead of just an aspiration via mortgage reforms, stamp duty and building on brownfield sites.

Our proposed 'Housing First' model would give unhoused people the security of a home, providing them with the support necessary to reintegrate back into society, work, and accommodation.

#### Education:

I am a fervent believer in the power of education as the key to success, compassion, and aspiration. To unlocking social mobility and innovation. But our education system is also broken and is unfit to meet the demands of our rapidly changing world.

We are committed to inspiring students, supporting teachers, and creating a fairer, more effective education system by developing a more flexible curriculum which emphasises confidence, critical thinking, and creativity.

I understand the range of challenges facing children and parents and propose standardising the length of terms, and creating a short summer term that focuses on the arts, sports, wellbeing and building resilience. This would also alleviate costly childcare over the summer, minimise negative influences over children and ensure they are 'school ready' when they enter the September term. Creating new T-levels from 13 years old, and a Loan Write-Off Scheme for graduates working in crucial public services such as the NHS, education, civil service, and police.

#### Crime:

Seek to reestablish a local police station and have more community police out in the community. Introduce more street lighting so women and girls feel safer. Tackle the plague of young people on motorbikes at night, and the growing drugs and alcohol problem - provide places, activities, and clubs for young people to go.

#### Safer Roads and Pavements:

The state of local road and pavements is abominable, with the UK having the worst road quality in the world - indeed we experience this every day. I want to work with the councils to ensure higher standards or repair and inspections, and on closing legal loopholes that allow them to get away with the shoddy standards that exist.

A vote for me, is a vote for an independently minded, woman of action as your MP - not afraid to fight for you. To be represented by a determined, principled, experienced person with the national profile and experience to heighten awareness and support of this wonderful constituency of Epsom, Ewell, Ashted, and Leatherhead.

I have never been known to stay silent in the face of wrongdoing, injustice, and unfairness. I won't stay silent when things need to be done to protect you, your family and community. I would work to champion this constituency and make it a place you are proud to call home.

To be YOUR strong voice in Parliament - nationally and locally, would be my honour and privilege.

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#### The other candidates:

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Lib Dems' Helen Maguire - "Getting Things Done"

The Green promises

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Mark my words for Labour candidate

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# Epsom and Ewell General Election Public Hustings

25 June 2024



**Epsom and Ewell Times**, in collaboration with NESCOL, will host a public hustings for local voters. Your opportunity to question Parliamentary Candidates on Wednesday 26th June at 7pm. The hustings will be held in the Adrian Mann Theatre, NESCOL, Reigate Road, Ewell, Epsom.