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From bikes to bytes: eeCAN puts climate action into practice

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An aubergine and tomatoes in Deirdre's Wisley allotment.

Epsom and Ewell's local climate action network is stepping up a mixture of practical recycling, sustainable transport, food, gardening and community projects as the latest national figures underline both the progress made in cutting Britain's carbon emissions and the distance still to travel.

The Epsom and Ewell Climate Action Network – eeCAN – says its trustees applied to the Charity Commission for charitable status on 10 September, a move which, if successful, could help the volunteer organisation develop and fund its growing portfolio of local projects.

Founded in 2024, eeCAN describes its purpose as delivering practical community-led projects addressing climate change, restoring nature and strengthening local resilience. Its activities now range from a Library of Things at Bourne Hall and home energy surveys to community growing, environmental exhibitions, repair projects and the reuse of bicycles and electronic equipment.

Bikes and unwanted technology get a second life

A centrepiece of eeCAN's October programme is a combined **Bike and Tech Amnesty at Epsom Methodist Church Scout Hall, Ashley Road, on Saturday 24 October from 9am to 5pm**.

Residents are being invited to bring unwanted bicycles, mobile phones, tablets, laptops and other suitable small electronic devices for reuse or recycling.

The scheme follows eeCAN's first Bike Amnesty in November 2025, when more than 65 bicycles were donated. The bikes were refurbished through Active Surrey and redistributed within the Surrey community. This year Active Surrey will again handle bikes, while Relove Technology is to deal with electronic devices, including secure removal of personal data before suitable equipment is refurbished and reused.

The emphasis on reuse rather than simply disposal comes against a stubborn national waste picture.

The latest Defra figures, published last month, show that England generated **21.9 million tonnes of household waste in 2024**, of which 9.6 million tonnes was recycled. England's household recycling rate stood at **43.8%**, compared with 44% the previous year. Across the UK the rate was 44.5%.

Electronic waste is separately regulated. Environment Agency statistics record electrical and electronic equipment placed on the market and waste electrical equipment collected, with the national dataset most recently updated in September with figures through the second quarter of 2026.

Schemes such as eeCAN's therefore sit at the smaller, local end of a much larger national attempt to keep usable products in circulation rather than turning them prematurely into waste.

Transport moves up the climate agenda

Transport is also the subject of eeCAN's next Climate Conversation, run in partnership with Epsom and Ewell U3A. A session on **"Transport and Integrated and Sustainable Travel"** is scheduled for Monday 12 October at Birchgrove Lower Mill Apartments.

The topic is particularly relevant because transport remains the largest single source of UK territorial greenhouse gas emissions.

Government provisional figures for 2025 put total UK net greenhouse gas emissions at **366.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent**, around 54% below their 1990 level. But domestic transport moved in the opposite direction during the year: its emissions rose by 2.3% to 112.9 million tonnes and represented approximately **31% of the UK total**.

Cars and vans also continue to dominate personal travel. The Department for Transport's newly published National Travel Survey for 2025 found that they accounted for **58% of all trips and 76% of the distance travelled** in England.

Walking accounted for 29% of journeys and cycling for 2%. Taken together with other active modes, active travel represented 31% of trips. The survey recorded an average 15 cycling trips and 57 cycling miles per person during the year.

The Department has cautioned against reading too much into some year-on-year changes, particularly walking figures,

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because the introduction of a digital travel diary appears to have affected the recording of shorter journeys.

A summer which broke the record

The unusually hot summer referred to by eeCAN's October newsletter was not simply a local impression.

The Met Office says **summer 2026 was provisionally the hottest UK summer since records began in 1884**, with a mean temperature of 16.5C. It estimated that human-induced climate change had made a summer mean temperature of that level around **130 times more likely**.

That gives a broader context to another strand of eeCAN's work.

Trustee and volunteer Deirdre has been taking part in allotment masterclasses at RHS Wisley, with lessons intended to contribute towards eeCAN's longer-term ambition for a community growing space in Epsom and Ewell.

The group's newsletter describes the practical effects of this summer's prolonged heat on the plots: seedlings wilting, greenhouse plants overheating and volunteers establishing watering rotas, while some heat-loving crops, including tomatoes and aubergines, flourished.

The project is as much about acquiring and sharing growing skills as producing food, with eeCAN hoping eventually to establish a community garden in the borough.

Food, students and the next generation

Food and its environmental impact were also prominent when eeCAN attended the Epsom Eco Fair at the Methodist Church on 26 September.

Chair Will and trustee Kristine gave talks on diets intended to be sustainable both for people and the planet. Among those attending the fair were Epsom and Ewell Mayor Cllr Lucie McIntyre and Epsom and Ewell MP Helen Maguire, according to eeCAN.

Earlier in September volunteers attended the University for the Creative Arts Freshers' Fair in Epsom, seeking student involvement, including contributions towards the group's planned **"Water is Life"** community art exhibition in 2027.

The exhibition will follow this year's "Living Rivers" project, which involved more than 500 exhibits from schools, colleges and community art groups.

Small projects against a very large target

Community projects cannot by themselves determine whether national carbon targets are achieved. The scale of the challenge is evident from the Government's figures: even after a 54% reduction since 1990, Britain emitted an estimated **367 million tonnes of greenhouse gases in 2025**.

But eeCAN's programme concentrates largely on areas where households can exercise some direct influence – how people travel, what they buy and discard, how much energy homes consume and whether rarely used goods can be borrowed, repaired or passed on rather than replaced.

Its Bourne Hall Library of Things, for example, allows residents to borrow equipment such as carpet cleaners, pressure washers, hedge trimmers, wallpaper strippers and gazebos without charge rather than each household buying its own. The organisation also supports home energy surveys; its partner scheme says more than 2,000 such surveys have so far been carried out across Surrey.

The network is now seeking volunteers for the Library of Things, its weekly repair service, Eco Schools liaison, nature and community gardening and the 2027 art exhibition.

For a group only established in 2024, the October newsletter suggests eeCAN is moving from climate campaigning in the abstract towards a collection of practical projects in which residents can participate directly.

Whether charitable status follows will be a matter for the Charity Commission. In the meantime, the success of initiatives such as the 24 October Bike and Tech Amnesty will provide a more immediate measure of how far Epsom and Ewell residents are prepared to turn environmental concern into discarded laptops, unwanted bicycles – and practical action.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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