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NESCOT marks 70 years with a tree

22 March 2024



Nescot (North East Surrey College of Technology) in Ewell marked seven decades since its official opening with a commemorative tree planting in the college grounds today (22.03.24). The Mayor Epsom & Ewell, Councillor **Rob Geleit** (Labour Court Ward) planted a silver birch along with **Julie Kapsalis**, Principal and CEO of Nescot and **Chris Muller**, Chair of Nescot Corporation. They were joined by three students, Donna from our Supported Internship programme; Kirsty from Access to Nursing and Anna from Catering who have all had a successful term and made an impression.

Speaking at the tree planting, Julie Kapsalis, said: “It is wonderful to have students take part in this historic moment as without them and the many thousands who walked through these gates before them, we would not be here.

“As we reflect on 70 years of Nescot today, by planting this beautiful silver birch tree we are also looking to the future of education here, which we hope will be sustainable, ever-growing and long-lived. Maybe in 70 years’ time – 2094 – people here will be looking back on photos from today, admiring this tree in its full maturity, and be reflecting on education and what Nescot means to them.”

Marking the commemorative event with the tree planting, the Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, Cllr Rob Geleit, said: “It is an honour to be here today to plant this commemorative tree to mark Nescot’s 70th anniversary. I hope in 70 years’ time someone similar will be doing the same thing.”

Julie added, “When this site was formally opened on 22 March 1954, the world was very different and courses such as Home Economics, Flower Arrangement, Guest House Management and Typing were on the curriculum, along with a number of more scientific and technical subjects. Today, our curriculum includes learning opportunities in electric vehicles, artificial intelligence, robotics, gaming, sectors which could barely have been imagined in 1954.

“We can be proud of the role that Nescot plays, offering increased opportunities for people from all walks of life to gain the skills and qualifications they need for a successful career and continuing to provide learning for the local community in Epsom & Ewell and our surrounding region.”

Students and staff took part in a variety of events throughout the day and during the week organised by various curriculum areas that included activities, displays and even a 1950s lesson for some of our plumbing apprentices to mark Nescot’s 70 years.

Nescot began life as Ewell County Technical College, with the first students beginning courses in September 1953 and the establishment being formally opened the following March. Explore the college’s rich history, evolution of education and community engagement on our website here.

Related reports:

The fellowship of NESCOT

NESCOT Saturday academies for the young

Coursera & NESCOT to enhance further education

Epsom and Ewell’s Technology College 70 years young

Photo: (Centre) The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, Councillor Rob Geleit at the commemorative tree planting of a silver birch to mark Nescot’s 70th anniversary along with (left to right), Catering student Anna, Principal and CEO of Nescot, Julie Kapsalis, Access to Nursing student, Kirsty and Chair of Nescot Corporation, Chris Muller. Credit: Nescot

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More than a Hollywood Moment for Surrey

22 March 2024



Amazon MGM Studios and Netflix have taken up residence in the completed expansion of Shepperton Studios. The

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development makes Shepperton Studios the second biggest film studio in the world with a total of 31 purpose-built sound stages alongside ancillary production accommodation, the whole site covers 1.5 million sq ft.

Chris Bird, Managing Director, Prime Video UK said, “It feels fitting that, ten years from the launch of Prime Video, we’re beginning our tenure in brand new facilities at Shepperton Studios. It’s so exciting that some of our most loved series and movies around the world will be made right here in the UK, including season three of our fantastic UK Original The Devil’s Hour. Shepperton Studios have long been synonymous with world class filmmaking, and we’re delighted to continue supporting and investing in the UK creative industries.”

Anna Mallett, Vice President Production EMEA/UK Netflix said, “The UK is our most important production hub outside North America. Today’s announcement reinforces our long-term commitment to Britain’s creative sector. Since 2020, we have invested over $6 billion in the UK creating shows like Sex Education, The Crown and Bridgerton here. The completion of Shepperton will allow us to expand our footprint even further, creating incredible new shows, jobs and a boost for the economy.”

Paul Golding CBE, Chairman, Pinewood Group said, “We’re incredibly pleased to have opened our new state-of-the-art facilities at Shepperton Studios and to see Netflix and Amazon MGM Studios making this long-term commitment to the studios and to the UK.”

Commenting on the announcement, **Tim Oliver**, Leader of Surrey County Council, said: “This is fantastic news for Shepperton and for Surrey as a whole, cementing our reputation as a region for innovation, creativity and top class talent.

“The fact that two of the largest content producers in the world have chosen Shepperton and Surrey for a global base speaks volumes for the amazing offer the county provides to businesses, large and small.

“We look forward to deepening our relationships with Shepperton, Amazon and Netflix in the months and years to come, so we can ensure our residents and businesses benefit from the investment, jobs and opportunities this brings.”

Prime Minister **Rishi Sunak** said, “The decision by the two largest content producers in the world to choose their long-term home in the UK and base their global productions at Shepperton Studios backed by private sector investment is testament to the support the Government has given to the UK’s screen sector.

“I am thrilled that Amazon MGM Studios and Netflix have taken possession of 17 new state of the art sound stages at Shepperton Studios making Pinewood Group, the biggest studio complex in Europe.

“This support was further demonstrated by the recent £1billion package of measures for the creative industries announced in the recent Budget. The UK is now the second largest production hub, second only to Hollywood, in the world.”

Crime rising on Surrey farms

22 March 2024



Surrey farmers have called for police to take rural crime ‘seriously’ as it pledges to crackdown on rising incidents. The National Farmers’ Union (NFU) have welcomed **Surrey Police**’s commitment to tackle rural crime, but said the farming communities need to see results.

Harriet Henrick, NFU County Adviser for Surrey, said farmers need “better protection” from police. She said: “Our members need reassurance that when crimes are reported they will be taken seriously and investigated.”

Attacks on sheep, thefts, suspected arson on barns and fly-tipping are some of the many serious incidents Surrey farmers have been victim to in recent months.

Farmers say rural crimes are taking an expensive toll, costing individual businesses thousands of pounds, causing severe animal suffering, and impacting on their ability to feed the nation.

The cost of rural crime in the South East was estimated at £9.3m in 2022, an increase by nearly a quarter from 2021, the NFU said. The South East made up around 18.7 per cent of the total cost of rural crime in the UK in 2022, at £49.5m.

Members of the union want to see clear targets, priorities and objectives in preventing rural crime- with both long-term and short-term solutions.

Superintendent **Michael Hodder** of Surrey Police admitted rural crime is an area where “even more work can be done” to support farming communities. Key initiatives for cracking down on rural crime focus on collaborating and engaging with farmers and landowners to understand the challenges they are facing and how the force can support them in policing.

Meetings between the NFU and Surrey Police have taken place with the aim of giving farmers greater protection; Surrey Police have also promised to visit every NFU member in the county as part of its efforts to tackle rural crime.

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Superintendent Hodder added: “We will investigate every report of rural crime, and will work closely with victims so they know what they can expect from us, what we need from them, and how we can work together to reduce rural crime across the county.

“We want everyone to feel safe in Surrey, and so my main ask would be that anyone who is the victim of rural crime reports it to us, so that we can continue to build an accurate picture of this crime across the county.”

Photo: Credit: National Farmers’ Union

A concert of English music in Epsom

22 March 2024



Peter Lutton reviews a concert given by Epsom Choral Society of English music conducted by their Musical Director, Julian Collings. The concert took place Saturday 9th March at St Martin’s Church, Epsom.

The concert opened with Elgar’s The Spirit of the Lord, the atmospheric opening to his oratorio The Apostles, contains several themes heard throughout the work. There are one or two tricky moments but it is very direct in its unison passages and with its majestically long melodic line. The choir ensemble throughout was good and the climax was very effective, Elgar’s word setting allowing real clarity of text. Just occasionally I felt that a little more support in the choir’s breathing would have lifted the line, but this was a strong start.

John Ireland’s Greater Love Hath No Man again has a strong melodic line and clear presentation of the text. The opening tenor line was well projected with a good vocal blend and it was encouraging to see a choral society with a healthy number of men, some younger – one or two of the latter watching the conductor assiduously. Only once was the ensemble not quite together but the early climax was powerful and was particularly dramatic as it subsided. The Soprano solo was excellently projected and well balanced by the Baritone. The change of tempo was smooth and the build up to the choral climax suitably staged. The arrival at the final climax was very effective, followed by a well-supported soft closing section, though I would have liked to hear more bass in the final bars. The emotional circumstances of this work’s early performances (during and after WW 1) resonate today as much as ever and this presentation was in the best English tradition.

Herbert Howells’ Like as the Hart is one of four small-scale anthems written in war time when he directed the reduced forces of the chapel music at St John’s College, Cambridge. The tenors and basses produced a warm sound at the start and the first tutti was suitably intense. A few more consonants from the sopranos would help in the acoustics of St Martin’s but the Piu Animato went well as did the climax on ‘Where is now thy God?’ The Tenor and Bass were better supported than the Sopranos but the latter handled very well the demanding descant which accompanies the return of the opening material. Bliss indeed was the final tutti with its ecstatic solo Soprano, followed by the atmospheric ending. A memorable performance of a great piece, an all-time favourite of your scribe.

Gerald Finzi’s Lo the Full and Final Sacrifice is a work on a much greater scale. After the organ introduction (full marks to the organist, Peter Jaekel, as this is a demanding piece on any instrument) the first choral entry was excellent despite a hint of flatness at the end of the section. Again, we have a piece where the words can be heard and understood – we heard them clearly. Though the next entries were exposed, they were confident and accurate, not least the altos with the low start. While the G flat section wobbled slightly, the Soprano entry with (another) big tune was very clear and confident as indeed were the following entries, though the unison on ‘Help, Lord’ was less united. But these are small points; the performance conveyed the rhapsodic nature of a musical style very suited to the metaphysical poets, not least in the climax on ‘Lo the Bread of Life’.

The final work, Stainer’s ‘The Crucifixion’ of 1887 has, as the programme helpfully noted, had its ups and downs. Stainer had rebuilt the reputation of St Paul’s Cathedral Choir; in ’The Crucifixion’ he encouraged the grass roots of Anglican music.

This performance did full justice to this piece. The soloists gave us the lines with simple directness, as did the choir in its first entries outlining the drama of the scene in the Garden. John Findon sensitively sang the tender solo that provided relief before the final tutti section. The recitative which covered the crucifixion itself was clearly given – the soloists were consistently top-class and the solos which followed kept up the intensity, especially in ‘King ever Glorious’. John Findon was very impressive at every level – I have not heard it sung better.

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In the final chorus the pent-up tensions of the drama found release, in the brisk tempo and strong dynamic contrasts. There was some lack of clarity in the short ‘Crucify!’ shouts but we got the point. The final pages were well shaped, as well as being tender and dramatic in equal measure and having an effective ending, even though it was pianissimo.

Though we all know the end of the story, it still has the power to move, as this performance of the final recitative and semi-chorus proved. The well-known final hymn leaves us with the hope for the future even though Easter is not mentioned. It was clear that the choir had really enjoyed the whole dramatic progression; the audience certainly did.

Peter Lutton

‘Crisis point’ in local government funding

22 March 2024



Parties from across the spectrum called on the next government to change its funding model for local councils, claiming it is “not fit for purpose”.

Councillor **Robert Evans** (Labour, Spelthorne) told Surrey County Council (SCC) it should call on the next government to bring in a “fairer and robust system to replace council tax”. He put forward the motion at Surrey’s full council meeting on Tuesday, March 19.

Introduced in 1993, council tax is based on 30-year-old property valuations (from 1991). This is not affected by changes in house prices or how much the property is worth today.

Average house prices in Surrey have risen over 400 per cent, from £103,569 in January 1995 to £525,897 in December 2023.

Leader of the County Council **Tim Oliver** (Conservative, Weybridge) said the issues are not party-political, but “local government vs central government”. He added: “Everything should be put on the table. We are now at a crisis point within the local government and we need to do something different.”

Wage inflation, general inflation and soaring demands in adult social care and child services have squeezed council budgets, exceeding the income received from central government. The Local Government Association (LGA) found councils have suffered a 27 per cent real-terms cut in core spending power since 2010.

Council tax for Surrey residents will increase a further 4.99 per cent from April, as the county leader claims £1.2bn net is needed for the council. Around 70 per cent of SCC’s budget is spent on social care. With Surrey’s older demographic and ageing population, the demands on care are likely to increase.

Deputy leader for bankrupt Woking Borough Council, Cllr **Will Forster** (Liberal Democrats) said: “When there is so much cross-party consensus, in and out of the political spectrum, I think something is up.”

Cllr Forster said as a “ridiculous comparison” , Buckingham Palace, valued at £1bn, sits in Band H and pays just over £1,800 council tax, which is equivalent to a Band B property in Surrey.

In the short-term, Cllr Evans suggested the government could introduce new council tax bands “so the wealthy in larger homes could contribute a fairer percentage of their income to Surrey”.

He also suggested as a long-term proposal, to replace council tax, stamp duty and the bedroom tax with a “proportional property tax based on property values updated annually”. Another “more radical” option would be a land tax as land or a site itself- not the buildings or anything on it would be valued.

Discussions on local government funding were extended to include reforming business rates and highways funding. Speculative options also mentioned a local levy on fuel duty and petrol stations, airport tax, tourists charges, increased fines in breaches of highway rules.

The motion was resolved that SCC would lobby the next government, following the General Election, to overhaul local council funding.

Related reports:

Local Government monopoly board at play?

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Tory leader pleads with Tory Government

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Worcester Park school celebrates

22 March 2024



Worcester Park's **Linden Bridge School** caters for 144 students with autism and complex social and communication needs from four to 19-years-old, including 20 in the sixth form and a residential facility which can accommodate 32 places, with pupils typically staying for two nights a week.

The school's pupils are exceptionally well-prepared for future life, and they feel valued and secure as a result of strong relationships with staff, says a recent Ofsted report, which judges pupils' personal development to be 'outstanding'.

The school was inspected in January and graded 'good' overall, recognising the ongoing improvements made since joining **The Howard Partnership Trust** in 2021, at which time it was judged as 'requires improvement.'

Principal, Mrs **Claire Gungah** said "We are absolutely delighted that the inspection report confirms that Linden Bridge School is a good school with an outstanding provision for the personal development of students.

"In highlighting the many strengths in our school, we are particularly pleased that the report recognises that we are delivering on our core mission, and acknowledges the hard work of staff, the Trust and support from our community in developing the school".

Noting that the report celebrated students being a credit to the school, and demonstrated their strong relationships with staff, she added

"A huge thank you needs to go to the students who were at the heart of the process and as always, made us proud throughout the inspection showcasing their maturity, friendships, communication skills and pride in their achievements."

The report says both the school and the Trust have 'rightly prioritised' improving the curriculum. Work had started at the last inspection, but it has 'gone from strength-to-strength.'

"The school's carefully designed curriculum is now well established in most subjects," notes the inspector.

"Learning to read is given a high priority. A new phonics programme has been introduced since the last inspection and is now securely established. Comprehensive training has ensured that staff are confident about teaching phonics," says the report.

"The school provides an extensive and ambitious range of events and activities. For instance, all pupils experience a sporting event and the oldest pupils are involved in organising events such as sports week."

Surrey's vulnerable without expert legal advice

22 March 2024



Surrey has become a 'legal aid desert', marked by a critical shortage of support services, leaving vulnerable individuals without expert advice on key issues such as, community care, education, and immigration.

The Access to Justice Report, by South West London Law Centres (SWLLC), was launched at the University of Surrey's School of Law Access to Justice Clinic on Wednesday, 20 March, by His Honour Sir Robin Knowles CBE, Chair of the Commercial Bar Association of England & Wales. Sir Robin is a member of the Civil Justice Council and chairs its Standing Committee on access to justice for those without means.

The report highlights the need for accessible legal aid and representation and raises awareness of the challenges faced by vulnerable people in Surrey.

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It catalogues the gaps in legal aid within Surrey; it highlights cases where people have had to rely on non-legal advice services instead of specialist legal services. The lack of specialist legal advice is particularly acute in employment, education and immigration.

The report shows that most social welfare advice is provided by voluntary or not-for-profit agencies, with Citizens Advice taking the leading role; however, there is a lack of specialist legal services.

People were left without expert legal advice on areas such as:

- School admissions and appeals
- School transport
- Special Education Needs
- Community care packages and complaints
- Immigration advice.

Stacey Edgar, Deputy CEO, South West London Law Centres, said:

“At the South West London Law Centres, we have directly observed the significant difficulties faced by individuals and families lacking proper guidance on matters such as immigration and education.

“Our findings now confirm that Surrey has limited mechanisms for accessing justice, signalling the urgency of leveraging insights from this new research to implement a strategy that addresses community needs.

“We’re pushing to fill these gaps because access to justice shouldn’t depend on where you live or what you can afford.”

The report proposes new initiatives to improve legal support, including a Family Law Court Help Desk, an Education Rights Advice Project, and Immigration and Asylum Caseworkers in Surrey.

Currently, the research proposals are transforming into a project to create these mechanisms in Surrey, and SWLLC is welcoming donations, volunteers, and partners to be involved in expanding access to justice to meet the needs of impacted community members.

Liz Williams, Associate Professor and Director of Clinical Legal Education at the University of Surrey, said:

“The Access to Justice Clinic at the School of Law understands that social transformation and legal impact is only possible through a collaborative approach. The Clinic has been a flourishing initiative since its launch four years ago and plans to expand in partnership with South West London Law Centres, local charities and legal professionals on a broad range of collaborations to help solve the access to justice crisis in Surrey.”

Professor Veronica Rodriguez-Blanco from the School of Law added:

“The School of Law is committed to placing access to justice at the centre of legal education in developing social sensitivity among the future lawyers that we are educating.”

Sutton and Epsom blow the Cobwebs away

22 March 2024



Sutton & Epsom RFC 49 Cobham 13. Saturday 16th March.

Having lost to the basement boys of London Cornish, the Exiles gaining their first win on the road for over a year, Sutton and Epsom supporters arrived at Rugby Lane with a sense of mild trepidation. Could the proverbial lightning revisit with the arrival of eleventh-placed Cobham who had lost their last eleven matches. For those fearing that the wheels had come off the Black & White charabanc it appears, on Saturday’s evidence, to have passed its MOT and was in perfect working order as the team ran in a magnificent seven tries for an emphatic 49-13 triumph. The victory mathematically secured Sutton & Epsom’s position in Level 6.

Freddy Bunting kicked off into the breeze and initiated a period of high tempo attacking rugby that saw his team living in the Cobham 22 for the majority of the opening 15 minutes. The visitors defended impressively none more so than when from a tapped 5-metre penalty Josh Glanville was held up over the line by a superb tackle. Having had all of the game Sutton & Epsom conceded the first points when, on their first sortie into the S&E half, Jonathan Holmes kicked a penalty for a 3-0 lead. A few minutes later and the Black &

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Whites received a second dose of unpalatable medicine as Holmes made it 6-0.

It was at this stage the classic debate of whether to kick for points or seek greater rewards was raging amongst the crowd. The hosts approach was to turn down every kick at goal and seek the higher tariff score. In the course of the first period they were to reject many kicks with several in front of the uprights. Finally on the half hour their bravery was rewarded. The ball went wide and Lawrence Elliott, running a superb line, broke through and using all of his strength powered over. Freddy Bunting splendidly bisected the uprights for a 7-6 lead. Cobham's attempt to regain the lead with a third penalty failed as the first period neared its conclusion.

Approaching time added on Cobham were reduced to 14 when Mr Priddle issued a yellow card to blindside Max Hales who departed as a result of the cumulative effect of infringements in the 22. Sutton & Epsom went for the tap penalty and it was the redoubtable Alex Mount who stretched out to secure the try. Freddy Bunting added the simple conversion for a 14-6 lead. The restart is often the most dangerous moment and the Black & Whites conceded a penalty but the visitors attempts to secure a platform to attack the Sutton line faltered and the referee blew for half-time. S&E had a vital 14-6 lead with a man advantage to take into the second period with the wind behind them.

The Rugby Lane team pressed hard to extend their lead in the opening exchanges of the second half attempting to benefit from their numerical and meteorological advantages. The Bunting boot put his team in the 22. Cobham survived for ten minutes before hooker Chris Farrell collected his sixth try of the campaign. Captain Bunting made it three out of three as Sutton led 21-6. The visitors then showed the fighting spirit one would expect from a team teetering on the brink of relegation. Awarded a penalty in the 22 they tapped and went. Sutton & Epsom had failed to retreat and they repeated the option with captain and scrum-half Ryan Saunders scoring. Jonathan Holmes converted to put Cobham back in the hunt trailing 13-21.

Barely had the inspiring words of encouragement of a comeback drifted on the wind and Cobham were standing behind their posts awaiting another Sutton & Epsom conversion. From the restart Dan Jones gathered the ball from a ruck outside the visitors' 22 and exploited a gap to streak away for the try. With the extras S&E led 28-13 and had secured their try bonus point. That score thoroughly demoralised the men from the Memorial Ground as it inspired the Rugby Lane XV. The game entered the final quarter and the hosts provided their faithful fans with their most exhilarating rugby seen at home this season.

Sensible tactical kicking by half-backs Munford and Lennard kept the hosts on the attack. A wonderful break from Tom Lennard at 10 looked certain to lead to a try but he was felled by a tap tackle close to glory. The crowd did not have to wait long for try Number 5. The ball went to the opposite flank and a training ground routine was executed to perfection from a lineout. The ball was secured, the line-break made and the overlap exploited as Ciaran Mohr strolled in at the corner. Freddy Bunting made light of the testing conversion for 35-13.

Try number six again owed its success to repetition on cold winter nights. A 5-metre lineout was secured and the pack advanced forward to provide Rob Hegarty with his eighth try of the season. It was a fitting reward for the quality of the lineout from the triumvirate of McTaggart, Pulvirenti and Glanville who had given Sutton & Epsom an excellent platform all afternoon. With a degree of inevitably Freddy Bunting converted and it was 42-13. For the first time this season at Rugby Lane the home crowd could enjoy a relaxing conclusion to a match. Previous contests might have been thrilling for the neutral observer but had provided far too much anxiety. Cobham attempted to end on a high point and looked destined to secure an otiose try. However a wayward pass bounced into the grateful hands of Angus Findlay who sped away from his own 22 for his first 1 st XV league try. Freddy Bunting completed a perfect afternoon with the boot and the match concluded with Sutton & Epsom enjoying a resounding 49-13 win.

Apart from the security of success it was a red-letter day for two of the Sutton and Epsom side. Steve Munford in playing his 215th league match for the club surpassed Steve Warnham's total and lies second to the 251-game Sam Frost. Meanwhile, with his first successful kick of the afternoon, Freddy Bunting broke Sam Hurley's 2015-6 record of 208 points in a league season. It was a redemptive afternoon for the skipper after he had appeared to have supped at the river Lethe on his last outing. Sutton & Epsom may be breathing easier but carnivorous creatures circle the Cobham carrion as descent into the abyss of Level 7 seems probable after Gravesend's victory over Beckenham. With the 'Jersey Reprieve' there will be the incongruous site of Cobham supporters googling the results of Chosen Hill FP, Kirkby Lonsdale and Old Crossleyans in the weeks to come. Next Saturday S&E enjoy their last away day of the campaign with a first visit to Horn Park since January 2007 to take on Old Colfeians who they defeated 21-17 in December.

Sutton & Epsom
O'Brien, Huie, Elliott, Bunting ©, Findlay, Lennard, Munford, Mount, Farrell, Gibson,

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Glanville, McTaggart, Jones, Pulvirenti & Hegarty.
Replacements: Boaden, Tame & Mohr.

Cobham
Penfold, Springett, Boswell, Burnett, Yorke, Holmes, Saunders ©, Aujla, Muirhead, Bliss, Westgarth-Taylor, Farmer, Hales, Blackwood & Porter.
Replacements: Nunn, Keefe & O'Connor.

Image courtesy Robin Kennedy

Surrey Uni taking lead on future network security

22 March 2024



A national effort is needed to train the next generation of the United Kingdom's workforce in intelligent and resilient telecom networks, says a world-leading 5G and 6G expert from the University of Surrey.

The comment comes as the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) announced that Surrey's 5G/6G Innovation Centre will lead a new £8 million Centre for Doctoral Training in Future Open Secure Networks (FORT).

Over the next eight years, FORT will train more than 50 post-graduate researchers, who will become leaders with unique expertise in wireless communications, cybersecurity, networking, and artificial intelligence (AI). Surrey's future cohort will influence the roadmaps of future open networking and security technologies and their applications.

In partnership with Queen's University Belfast's (QUB) Centre for Secure Information Technologies, FORT also enjoys support from more than 21 industry partners. These partners include: Amazon Web Services, Ampliphae, Angoka, AWTG, Catapult Satellite Applications, Codasip, Ericsson, Hewlett Packard Enterprises, HP, Intel, Interdigital, Keysight Technologies, Kyndryl, National Physical Laboratory, Nvidia, OpenWeb, Qualcomm, Rolls Royce, Virgin Media O2, and Viavi Solutions.

Regius Professor Rahim Tafazolli, FREng, Director of the 5G/6G Innovation Centre at the University of Surrey and Principal Investigator of FORT, said:

"I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to EPSRC for backing the Future Open SecuRe NeTworks (FORT) initiative. I am equally thankful for the support of our 21 industry partners and look forward to working closely with colleagues from Queen's University Belfast. This powerful team has a unique vision, expertise, and mission of making the UK a powerhouse for future telecommunications.

"In a world evolving at breakneck speed, our programme is designed with this dynamic future in mind. We're committed to nurturing future visionaries and leaders with in-depth knowledge of advanced space and terrestrial networks, environmental considerations, and AI technology. The UK's focus must now shift towards upskilling individuals capable of addressing the cyber security challenges posed by AI and take advantage of opportunities presented by societal shifts, environmental concerns, and industrial advancements."

Along with providing a world-class education with access to industry, FORT will create an environment for students to research new and better ways to build communication networks that are safe, reliable, and ready for the future. FORT is committed to conducting responsible, ethical research in cybersecurity, AI technologies, and future networks, with a strong societal focus. This approach is designed to generate world-class academic contributions and establish a pipeline of talent for the future.

Dr Jesus Martinez del Rincon, Co-Director of FORT and Research Director of Secure Intelligence at CSIT at QUB, said:

"With the FORT programme, we aim to create a community of 50 PhDs who will become the future, industry-conscious thinkers and leaders on secure, trustworthy and autonomous future network communications."

Along with Professor Tafazolli and Dr Martinez del Rincon, FORT will be led by: Dr Tim Brown from Surrey, who will serve as Director of FORT, and Professor Máire O'Neill from QUB, who is Co-Investigator of FORT.

Balham, gateway to the …. defeat

22 March 2024

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Balham 2-0 Epsom & Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 16th March 2024.

On Saturday we made our second visit of the season to the Mayfields Stadium and received our second defeat. Five weeks ago we were unfortunate to lose there 5-2 to AFC Croydon Athletic, but this 2-0 loss to their tenants Balham, was far more disappointing, In fact the few supporters who were there will not remember this match for very long, not even the home ones, as this was a very uninteresting encounter, full of errors and scrappy play from both sides, and even when Balham finally did break through, there was an element of a defensive contribution towards both of the goals. I felt we were deserving of a point from a goalless draw, but could have no real complaints at the end of the match.

We made three changes from our encouraging draw at Redhill seven days previously. Carl Oblitey was injured, while Reece Tierney and Callum Wilson were unavailable, so Matt McGillivray came in for his first start at the back, while Club Captain Nick Wilson returned after his two match suspension, although it was interesting to note that Ethan Nelson-Roberts retained the armband for this match, maybe because we had done well in the previous two matches, or maybe due to Wilson's excessive number of cards in recent matches. Further forward, Zach Ingham-Wright also had his first start for the club.

We kicked off slightly late after the referee took exception to Luke Miller's blue long sleeved undershirt, even though our away colours are yellow and blue. Yes, you've guessed it, he was being assessed! Officially though, I was advised that the term is now "observed" as the previous term is now seen too much as a critique of the referee. Well, my observations were that it was fortunate that no major decisions were required on this occasion, although we had a confusing early incident after our keeper Faebian Witter was blocked as he tried to drop kick the ball, yet moments later Adam Green picked up a yellow card for us, for pulling his man back. Whilst you couldn't complain about the card for our player, it was hard to see why one wasn't given for the Balham offence.

The first half contained little to write home about. Witter rushed out to claim the ball and did well to keep it inside the penalty area, despite 95% of him being outside it, while at the other end Haydn Read was alert to leave his area to head clear after Ingham-Wright had threatened to reach a Thompson Adeyemi pass. However, these were not even half-chances really, and indeed the only event of note during the first forty-five minutes came when our Secretary Spencer Mitchell was stung by a bee on the sideline. No physio was required!

We went in at the half unsurprisingly goalless and the second half started off in a worryingly similar pattern. A Jaevon Dyer header was accidentally dropped over the goal line by Read for a corner after a few minutes, but our winger was having a quiet day and was replaced by Sirak Negassi in the 52nd minute. Balham's defence had clearly done their homework and cancelled out the threat from our wings almost entirely. We were also missing the physical presence of Oblitey who had been really impressive in the last couple of matches and although Ingham-Wright was well involved in the match, he never looked likely to add to his goal from the previous week.

In fact, neither team looked like breaking through at any point, so when the home team actually opened the scoring in the 65th minute it came as a bit of a shock. A deep free kick was headed back out by Adeyemi, but he wasn't able to get a decent purchase on the next delivery back in, and inadvertently flicked it to the back post where it was volleyed back into the danger area for Jack Banks to strike the ball into the net from close range.

We then had our best chance of the match in the 70th minute when Adeyemi was brought down right on the edge of the area in a central position. The ball was placed literally one foot from the penalty area, yet the referee seemed totally happy to allow the defensive wall to congregate along the penalty spot, no more than six and a half yards away. Even when the referee had this pointed out to him he paced eight small steps back and moved the wall back about a yard! Ironically, had the wall stayed where it was originally, Adam Green's free kick might have taken a slightly larger deflection to put it out of Read's reach, but instead he was able to dive to his left to parry the ball out for what became a fruitless Epsom corner.

At this point we changed our shape. Reggie Savage and Jerry Antwi came on and we switched to three at the back, but to be brutally honest, it didn't work. From this point the home side seemed to find more space and although an overhead kick was sent well over our bar, former Salt Ash Snadden was set up for a strike from just twelve yards that was headed off the line by Wilson with Witter beaten. Moments later Witter made a good save down to his right, but the ball was recycled and a long shot from James Anderson from a central position around twenty yards out took a heavy deflection off Nelson-Roberts and bounced into the other side of the net to where Witter had been standing in the 84th minute.

Anderson picked up a late booking for clattering into Wilson in injury time, but it made no difference and Balham gave their slim hopes of a playoff place a huge boost with this win, while many others around them floundered this week.

It is difficult right now to compose a report without reference to the two teams below us, as we still need to keep looking over our shoulder to see how they got on. This will clearly continue for a while yet as Colliers Wood United and Sheerwater both won, making things a lot tighter at the foot of the table. I still believe 30 points will be enough to see us to safety, but while we remain on just 24, concerns remain.

Epsom & Ewell: Faebian Witter, Ayran Kugathas, Ethan Nelson-Roberts (c), Adam Green, Nick Wilson, Matt McGillivray, Luke Miller, Thompson Adeyemi, Zach Ingham-Wright, Tijani Eshilokun, Jaevon Dyer

Subs: Sirak Negassi for Dyer (52), Jerry Antwi for Eshilokun (73), Reggie Savage for Kugathas (73)

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Work starts on Surrey's respite centre for autistic people

22 March 2024



Families set to benefit from new short breaks accommodation being built in Woking helped mark the official start of work at a milestone groundbreaking ceremony.

The purpose-built £5.7m facility will enable autistic people and those with learning disabilities to enjoy new experiences while their families take a break from caring. It's part of Surrey County Council's drive to create the right homes with the right support for people who need it and represents a major investment in specialist accommodation to help people achieve greater independence.

Enjoying some early spring sunshine, families were joined at the site in Goldsworth Park by representatives from the county council as well as architects AtkinsRealis and contractors Neilcott Construction. Also marking the occasion were Woking MP Jonathan Lord and representatives from Woking Borough Council and local community organisations.

The new accommodation on the site of the old Lakers Youth Centre will provide eight ensuite bedrooms as well as a sensory room, a communal lounge / dining room and landscaped gardens. It will provide the first such service in this part of the county and will ultimately add almost 2,500 nights of additional short breaks capacity per year for adults with additional and complex needs.

Guests will be able to enjoy new opportunities, make friends, gain new skills and connect with their communities during short stays without their family carers, who will be able to take some time away from their caring responsibilities to focus on their own wellbeing.

The event on March 14 marked the first 'spade in the ground' for an ambitious county council strategy which aims to deliver more than 1,400 units of specialist accommodation for adults with support needs across Surrey, including the redevelopment of another short breaks site in Banstead. Supported independent living accommodation for those with learning difficulties and mental health needs is also part of the plan, as well as extra care housing for older residents which will have support workers on hand if needed.

Sinead Mooney, Surrey County Council cabinet member for Adult Social Care, said: "*Unpaid carers across Surrey do an amazing job in ensuring that their loved ones can continue to live in their own homes, but it can take a toll on even the most dedicated partner or relative. The new accommodation will represent a state-of-the-art facility designed to provide the person being cared for with the support they need, while offering their carer the chance to recharge their batteries by taking a break themselves.*

"*We're delighted to have broken ground and eagerly await the opening of the new accommodation next year. We want our residents to be able to live their best lives and our ambitious building programme to provide the right homes with the right support will help us achieve that.*"

Natalie Bramhall, cabinet member for Property, Waste and Infrastructure said; "*We're pleased to have broken ground on the site in Goldsworth Park. The site of this new short breaks service is one of many projects being delivered by our Land & Property Capital Programme team in partnership with Adult Social Care to help people stay independent, safe and well so they can live the lives they want.*"

The star of the day was Jodie, a potential future user of the centre who currently visits the council's short breaks service in Banstead.

After watching an architectural 'flythrough' video of the new accommodation alongside assembled guests, **Jodie's mum Jean**, voiced her approval: "*The one thing you want from a respite centre is to know that your children – young adults – are secure, safe & happy." She further explained: "Having respite breaks is absolutely a 'must' for parents and to have a facility that's been purpose built… is totally invaluable.*"

Andrea, mum to Brandan, who also currently attends the service in Banstead, added: "*Brandan needs 24-hour care seven days a week – it does not stop for us as parents – and this will be an invaluable service so near to our home. But it's not only for us, it's about Brandan. We want him to feel it's like a holiday. We can be happy and relaxed knowing that he is happy.*"

Image: *(left to right) Jonathan Lord MP, Jodie, Jodie's Mum Jean, and Cllr Sinead Mooney*

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Surrey Borough running ahead on bio-fuel

22 March 2024



The first Surrey council to switch its entire vehicle fleet from diesel to waste fats and cooking oil said the move could cut emissions by about 90 per cent. **Runnymede Borough Council** said the decision, unanimously approved by its environment and sustainability committee last week, will stop about 650 tonnes of C02 from being released into the air each year.

The shift to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) is expected to take place over the coming months as about 80 of the council's refuse trucks, minibuses, vans, street sweepers and other vehicles make the switch.

It makes Runnymede Borough Council the first in Surrey to go all in on HVO with the change expected to make greater inroads into reducing the council's operational carbon emissions than any other initiative explored to date.

Details on how much it will cost have been kept private and confidential but the day-to-day operating costs of moving over to HVO are expected to be higher than with diesel, the council confirmed, but said it had set aside an additional £100,000 to cover fuel costs.

A statement issued by the council said it demonstrated the desire "across all parties to make an effective and lasting positive impact on Runnymede's climate and environment".

Committee chair Councillor **David Coen**, said: "It is great to know that in the coming months our fleet, from our bin lorries to our road sweepers, will continue to provide the same high level of service whilst producing less harmful pollution into the environment and people's lungs.

"We've committed that by 2030 all our council operations will be carbon net zero. Switching over to HVO has the potential of hugely reducing the council's overall carbon emission."

HVO can be used with the council's existing fleet without the need for engine modifications or new machinery.

Cllr **Don Whyte**, leader of the Liberal Democrat group and member of the environment and sustainability committee added: "It's a positive move. Runnymede is very late coming to the climate crisis declaration. This is a small step, but it's an important thing."

Should we be going to.....?

22 March 2024



The Specsavers Surrey Youth Games is back. Following on from the success of the games last year, a wide range of activities are available in **Epsom & Ewell** again, including tennis, judo, swimming and more. The Games are the largest multi-sport youth programme of their kind in the South East, offering **free** local training for 7-16 year olds across Surrey, leading to a final celebratory event for the whole family.

The Games are ideal for beginners who may not get the opportunity to attend clubs or are put off by the thought of competing against others. Supportive coaches will help participants join in, have fun, learn new skills, and boost their confidence.

Registration is now open for the free training sessions which start after Easter and are aimed at those who live or go to school in the borough. Following the training, teams can unite for a family-friendly event at the Surrey Sports Park in Guildford on Saturday 15 June.

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, (RA Ewell Village) Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, said "I'm so pleased that we are running the Specsavers Surrey Youth Games in Epsom & Ewell again this year. The initiative provides a fantastic opportunity for young people who are still building their confidence in sport to access training free of charge.

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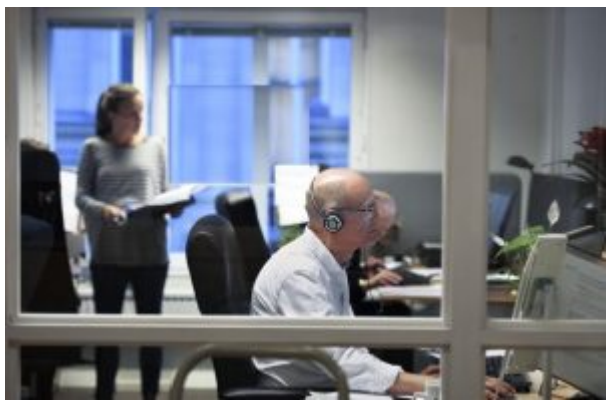
"I hope that everyone in our borough will take a look at what's on offer and even tell friends and family about the initiative, so that we can ensure that as many children as possible can access the training."

You can find out what's on offer in the Epsom & Ewell borough and register for a place by visiting www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/syg

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Better private – public health communications could prevent deaths

22 March 2024



A young woman tragically took her own life in Surrey prompting a warning from a coroner over communication barriers between hospitals. Meghan Chrismas, who suffered from anxiety disorder, depression, complex PTSD and ADHD, died by suicide on October 20, 2021 at a Premier Inn in Guildford.

Less than three weeks prior, Meghan had impulsively attempted suicide by overdose and was admitted to Royal Surrey Hospital on the following day. She was offered further psychiatric treatment through the NHS at this time, which she declined in favour of continuing with her private treatments at The Priory Hospital. Information about Meghan Chrismas' attempted overdose was only sent to her GP and not her private psychiatrist.

Meghan took her own life the same day as her private psychiatrist said she was "progressing well". Following Meghan's inquest Coroner Darren Stewart OBE wrote in a Prevention of Future Deaths report to NHS England over the 'concerning' communication barriers between private and public healthcare services.

He wrote: "At a time where pressures on the NHS exist, particularly for mental health services, it is of concern that measures which could alleviate this pressure (where someone sources private care) do not exist. There is little or no policy, guidance or other effective arrangements to share important clinical information about patients between private and public healthcare sectors."

"The passage of information between NHS and private healthcare providers is hindered due to the absence of an adequate structure to share important clinical information about patients in a timely and effective manner. Action should be taken to prevent future deaths ."

Meghan was prescribed antidepressants after a face-to-face appointment with her GP in February 2021. She started seeing a private psychiatrist around July, and received prescriptions both privately and from her GP.

The coroner also raised this as a key concern. They wrote: "This means Mrs. Chrismas had access to double prescriptions. Healthcare professionals treating Mrs. Chrismas placed significant reliance on the perception that she would be open and honest in her communication with them."

The coroner also raised concerns around police forces communication between each other. It was at, 4.54pm that Meghan contacted Surrey Police to explain that she was fine. At 5.18pm, the call handler in the Hampshire Police control room communicated with Surrey Police only via email.

After receiving no response from Surrey Police, the handler in the Hampshire Police control room communicated with them via telephone Surrey Police then attended the location in Guildford and found Meghan's room barricaded. Upon gaining access to the room, officers found that Meghan had sadly died.

Officers attempted to resuscitate Meghan and her heartbeat restarted. After resuscitation, Meghan was transported to Royal Surrey County Hospital where she died two days later on October 20, 2021 from a Hypoxic Brain Injury.

The coroner wrote: "The handling of the incident involving Mrs. Chrismas in Hampshire Constabulary's Force Control Room which resulted in a hour delay in determining that an important communication (being a request for assistance) had not been received by a neighbouring force." It was not concluded however that this shortcoming contributed to her death.

Hampshire Constabulary have since said they have made significant improvements to their process. These measures included: Revision of training provided and the introduction of additional training for supervisors and control room staff. Implementation of National Policy concerning Missing Persons, including documentation to assist in control room responses to similar circumstances. Revision of the recording of risk assessment measurements on the computer aided dispatch record (CAD) system.

It was further explained to the court that the measures should be seen in the context of wider cultural change management in the supervision and leadership being undertaken by Hampshire Constabulary in the operation of the Control Room.

A spokesperson for Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust said: "Following Meghan's death an

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amendment was made to our Psychiatric Liaison Service policy stating discharge letters will be sent not just to the GP, but also to any other relevant external professional – provided we have the explicit consent of the individual to do this. The measure was welcomed by the Coroner."

SABP added it has developed new guidelines for both community and in-patient clinicians to ensure it routinely and actively seeks a person's consent to contact and share information with or from their private practitioner.

The Priory Hospital did not make an additional comment. NHS England has been approached for comment.

Soni of Stagecoach Epsom lands lead role

22 March 2024



Vishal Soni student of Stagecoach Performing Arts in **Epsom** landed the lead role in the National Theatre's musical production of Roald Dahl's **The Witches**.

Vishal fought off strong competition in auditions to land the role of Luke in a rip-roaring musical version of Roald Dahl's timeless tale. In the original the boy at the centre of the story is unnamed. "Luke" follows the 1990 film version which gave the boy the name.

Performing on stage at the National Theatre for the 11-week production, Vishal shone in his remarkable portrayal of the courageous young protagonist.

The Witches is a rip-roaring musical version of Roald Dahl's timeless tale, filled with wit, daring and heart. The Witches have come up with their most evil plan yet, and the only thing standing in their way is Luke and his Gran.

Vishal has been a student of Stagecoach Performing Arts in Epsom for nine years and has an impressive resume under his belt, including standout performances in The Sound of Music at Chichester, a UK tour of Les Misérables, and The Prince of Egypt in London's West End.

His upcoming role in the 2024 film adaptation of musical, Wicked, is a testament to his unwavering passion and undeniable talent.

Commenting Rachel Crouch, Principal of Stagecoach Epsom, said: "I've always been immensely proud of Vishal. Not only has he gone from job to job, but he has done so with such a professional and humble attitude. He's an absolute star and we couldn't be prouder. Thank you also to HF Management, his fabulous agents."

The Witches run at the National Theatre has now closed. Wicked is due to be released later this year.

Vishal in the production at the National Theatre. Photo credit: Marc Brenner

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