Surrey getting greener?

Following its declaration of a climate emergency in 2019, **Surrey County Council** has been on a mission to combat climate change and significantly slash carbon emissions. The council aims to achieve net-zero status for its own operations by 2030 and is rallying for county-wide support to hit the same target by 2050.

Organizational Emission Reductions:

In a comprehensive effort to curtail its carbon footprint, Surrey County Council has assessed key areas within its operations. Notable accomplishments include:

- 7% of the council's vehicle fleet is now comprised of low-carbon alternatives.
- The council has scrutinized 83 buildings across the county to gauge their potential for low-carbon integration.
- Over 3,300 staff members have undergone climate change awareness training, reinforcing the commitment to sustainability.
- 83,000 low-energy streetlights have been installed throughout the county, contributing to substantial energy savings.
- £2.8 million has been saved in the council's annual energy bill through dedicated efforts in energy efficiency.

Empowering Residents and Businesses:

Surrey County Council has not limited its endeavors to internal initiatives but has actively engaged residents and businesses in the fight against climate change. Highlights of these collaborative efforts include:

- Facilitating the planting of an impressive 470,000 trees, contributing to enhanced biodiversity and carbon sequestration.
- The introduction of 31 electric buses now operational in the county, marking a significant stride in public transportation electrification.
- Hosting 13,000 electric vehicle charging sessions across the county, promoting the transition to cleaner transportation options.
- 88 Eco-Schools have been awarded green flag status, recognizing their commitment to sustainable practices.
- A collective effort has resulted in saving an estimated 20,000 tonnes of carbon emissions.
- Addressing fuel poverty, the council has treated 1,350 homes, ensuring they are energy-efficient and economically sustainable.
- Over £1.9 million in grants have been awarded to support small to medium-sized businesses, yielding an annual saving of £821,000 through improved energy efficiency measures.

For those eager to delve deeper into Surrey's climate change initiatives, a wealth of information is available on the council's dedicated climate change webpage.

Related reports:

Draft advice may lead to energy savings

Surrey schools fly their green flags

Local action to tackle global climate crisis

Image courtesy SCC

Catalogue of errors - death inquest

A Woking family has spoken of their "incredibly difficult time" after losing their son saying "there is nothing that can take away the pain". Their comments came after an inquest concluded a catalogue of failures by Surrey County Council and other bodies contributed to the death of 18-year-old diabetic Jake Baker.

Jake, who also had learning disabilities, died on December 31, 2019, while visiting his family home.

It was the first time he had stayed away from his care facilities for more than two nights in a row, since being placed in the care of the Surrey County Council when eight years old, his family lawyers said.

The teenager arrived home on Christmas Eve, became unwell on December 28 and was found unresponsive on New Year's Eve by his mother and stepfather, neither of whom had been trained to recognise or seek medical advice for a deterioration in Jake's diabetes.

According to the family's lawyers, Coroner Carolyn Topping said Jake's death was avoidable and, if he had been admitted to hospital any time before 5pm on December 29, he would have been successfully treated.

They added that the coroner said there had been "a systemic failing on the part of Surrey County Council to adequately train and oversee personal advisers about their legal obligations in preparing pathway plans for children leaving care".

In a statement, the family said: "Losing Jake has been incredibly difficult for our family, especially as he died in our home at what should have been a happy time. We trusted Ruskin Mill Trust with Jake's care, and we have been let down by them in the worst possible way. Jake was an enthusiastic and determined young man who always put his mind to things. He was happy to help out in the garden or with DIY.

"He had a kind soul and would get very excited when meeting new people. He loved dogs and playing pranks on his brothers and sisters. Jake wanted to be more independent and was keen to learn but to anyone who met him it was clear that he needed help, particularly in handling his diabetes.

"Before Jake turned 18, he had a key worker that we trusted and who he had a great relationship with. We were able to spend time together as a family safely, knowing that Jake was well supported by the staff at Burbank children's home. This changed when Jake moved from Burbank to Ruskin Mill College. We were told it would be his road to independence and from this point on we didn't have much contact with the people who were supposed to be supporting Jake. We were never made fully aware of how severely his diabetes could affect him, or how he should be managing it.

"As a family we did all we could to make sure that Jake was looking after himself and was well taken care of, but those that were put in charge of his care didn't give us the information necessary to ensure Jake's safety. There is nothing that can take away the pain of losing Jake, but it is our hope that lessons will be learned from his death so that another tragedy is prevented."

The cause of death was given as diabetic ketoacidosis.

Jake had been living at a residential college run by Ruskin Mill Trust in Stroud, for 15 months.

The trust is a charity that provides specialist education for young people with learning difficulties and special educational needs.

The coroner also said the trust failed to ensure Jake's safety when he went home for contact with his family. Following his death Transform Residential Limited, the body responsible for providing care services to Ruskin Mill Trust, was ordered to pay a total of £22,721.04 at Staines Magistrates' Court, after pleading guilty to causing a resident avoidable harm, the Care Quality Commission said.

Jake had been a resident at Glasshouse College since November 18 2019. Previously he lived at Ruskin Mill College, run by the same provider.

According to the family's lawyers, the coroner said Jake lacked the ability to be wholly independent in managing his diabetes and was not given any information about the dangers for him to have unsupported contact if his blood sugars became imbalanced.

They added that Ms Topping said those involved in making decisions for Jake, from the Surrey Care Leavers team and Children's Services, failed to ensure Jake's safety when he went home for overnight contact from March 2019 and that Ruskin Mill Trust failed to ensure Jake's safety.

Anna Moore, who represented Jake's family, said: "The coroner's detailed investigation and critical findings illustrate a catalogue of failings that led to Jake's death. Jake's family welcome these conclusions and hope that lessons will be learned from his death. What is particularly important is that those authorities entrusted to look after children and support them through their transition to adulthood are doing so properly.

"The evidence heard at the inquest showed that no one with current responsibility for Jake had a clear picture of needs and what support he required. Very worryingly, those at Surrey County Council who were meant to be supporting Jake into his transition to adulthood were not aware of the scope and extent of this important role. This needs to be urgently addressed so that children and young adults, and particularly people like Jake with additional needs, are given the support they need when they turn 18 and beyond."

Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning at Surrey County Council, said: "Our deepest sympathies remain with Jake's family and friends at this difficult time. The services provided to Jake fell short of what he and his family needed to keep him safe, and we are very sorry for our part in that. We have taken a number of actions over the past four years to improve our support for young adults leaving care. While we have already made changes, we know there is still further to go and we will carefully consider the coroner's findings as we take our next steps."

Ruskin Mill Trust took over responsibility for residential care from Transform Residential Limited in August 2020. A spokesperson said: "Jake's death was heart-breaking and our thoughts remain with his family. He was well known to our staff and his loss came as a profound shock to everyone here. We deeply regret that in this instance some key measures that should have been in place for his visit home were overlooked. We aim to provide the highest standards of care.

"Since this tragedy occurred, the overnight risk assessment protocol has been fully reviewed and we have taken steps to strengthen practice, policies and procedures to ensure this kind of incident never happens again."

Green Belt off or relaxed a notch?

Excitement has been stirred by **Michael Gove**'s announcement 19th December that housing targets are advisory not mandatory. This change *may* mean a shift in **Epsom and Ewell**'s Draft Local Plan away from earmarking any Green Belt for housing developments.

The local campaign group **Epsom and Ewell Green Belt** has reacted to the news. In a press release issued today they urge **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council**: "Together with the Surrey Branch of the **Campaign to Protect Rural England** (CPRE), is calling on the Council and its Councillors to instruct the planning officers to republish its Local Plan within the next few weeks, removing all greenbelt sites, reducing the housing target to a rational approximately 3,500 homes for the Plan period, and focusing on developing all available brownfield sites. We have produced a list of the changes that would need to be made to the draft Plan so that it complies with the Government's revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)."

However, accompanying the publication of the revised NPPF Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities Michael Gove said "The new NPPF was not a route to the evasion of responsibilities. Local authorities must provide rigorous evidence justifying their departure from assessed housing needs. They must do everything to identify other lands suitable for development." He added "While the planning inspectorate will respect well-made cases, it will not accept undershooting that is not firmly rooted in environmental or other safeguards. This is about sensitive adjustment in housing targets, not their abandonment."

Related reports:

Green Belt development objections excluded

Public meeting on Local Plan dominated by greenbelters.

Green-belters belted up and beltless

Green-belters seeing red on Local Plan?

and many more - search "Local Plan".

Epsom Pianist scores 50 out of 101

In 2022 **Epsom Choral Society** celebrated its centenary. For very nearly half that century **Marion Lea** has accompanied the singers on the piano.

Marion Lea, an acclaimed freelance pianist and accompanist, has performed in recitals and concerts of the highest calibre, working with the likes of the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Bolshoi Ballet. As well, Marion has played an integral part in the local music scene. She has accompanied Operatic Societies, Choral Societies and any number of other talented musicians. As she approaches her **50th anniversary with Epsom Choral Society**, they celebrated the immense and invaluable contribution she has made to the choir with a presentation on Saturday at their annual Christmas concert.



In 1973, **Jon Pullinger**, the ECS president, suggested to Marion that she should apply to become the new rehearsal pianist for the Epsom Choral Society. On arrival at the audition, Marion fell into conversation with the then Musical Director, **Richard Fentiman** and Chair, **Dr Barbara Mitchell**, and happened to mention that, as a student, she had been invited to perform at one of Vaughan Williams' famous parties. They realised it was testament to her exceptional musicianship and waived the audition!

Since then, Marion has been the ECS rehearsal pianist for innumerable Wednesday nights; has accompanied the choir in hundreds of concerts; playing continuo on harpsichord and little organ; and even taken the spotlight on occasion as soloist.

She has supported learning of all styles of music, from the renaissance to the modern. She has played Debussy solos for ECS; played piano duets and, of course, most recently, played the 'concerto' piano part in Lambert's Rio Grande, to great acclaim.

As ECS approach Marion's Golden Anniversary with them, Isobel Squire, Chair, reflected on how

lucky they are to have had such an accomplished pianist all that time: "On behalf of all our singers, I want to say how privileged we feel to be able to work with Marion, and how much we value her wonderful support in our rehearsals, and enjoy her sparkling performances in our concerts."

Related reports:

Epsom Choral works 100 years

Epsom Choral Society opens its centenary celebration 2022

Expect miracles from Epsom Choral Society

Photo credit: Anne Richardson

Wish their paths had not crossed?

Epsom & Ewell FC 0-2 Tadley Calleva*. Combined Counties League - Premier Division Tuesday 19th December 2023.

On a rather chilly Tuesday evening at the Madgwick in front of less than 70 hardy souls, Tadley Calleva made the long journey over to Surrey and returned with the points after defeating us fairly comfortably by two goals to nil.

Anyone who just looks at the results would have seen Tadley's heavy defeat at the weekend, but anyone who actually studies them in detail would have seen that it came against Farnham Town and written it off as an anomaly. Far more relevantly, their three matches prior to that had been won and there was little doubt that they would collect the points here as they controlled the first half, scored twice and then kept us at arm's length for the majority of the second period, despite an improvement from our boys.

Toby Colwell kept his place in goal, but Ollie Thompson was unable to go following his injury at Colliers Wood United that will keep him out over the Christmas period at least. In his place came Steve Springett while Ethan Nelson-Roberts also returned which enabled Nick Inwugwu to switch over to right back, releasing Rory Edwards to play back in midfield again. Further forward Jaan Stanley and Tijani Eshilokun were unavailable, so Sirak Negassi and George Owusu came in for starts with Luke Miller dropping to the bench and Nick Wilson retaining the Captain's armband he had been holding since Thompson's injury.

We nearly had a shocking start as the visitors swept downfield and Alex Miller struck our post with a curling shot inside the first ten seconds. A regular supporter near me advised the time as six seconds, which, if it had gone in would have represented the earliest goal ever scored in an Epsom match as far as records could prove. We escaped this time, but apart from a Negassi shot that was well blocked by a defender, we created little in the first half and were often confronted with the sight of watching the match at distance as much of the opening "forty-five" was played in our half. Colwell made a couple of good saves midway through it, with the second of these right out of the top drawer to deny Sheldon Wright.

We made a little progress in the 33rd minute when Thompson Adeyemi fed Negassi who beat two men, but shot weakly at Craig Atkinson in the Tadley goal from a good position. However, we were back on the defensive soon after and the visitors opened their account in the 35th minute with a deep corner that was met at the far post with a downward header by Brad Neal. Although one of our defenders cleared the ball away, it had already crossed the line. Bad became worse when a second followed just four minutes later with a low drive from Ousman Darboe which nestled in the far corner from the edge of the penalty area.

We could have no complaints about the score to this point, although it was disappointing that we had created so little, particularly after drawing a blank at Colliers Wood in the previous match. The second half looked like it might follow a similar pattern as Colwell was forced into another good low save just after the restart, but things got better and we nearly pulled a goal back in the 57th minute when a deep corner found Ade Batula who controlled the ball and shot at goal, only for the ball to be blocked on the line by a defender with the grateful Atkinson falling onto the ball before we could get that vital touch.

On the hour we saw the return of Tommy Williams after he had completed his four match suspension, although it was originally meant to be in relief of Reece Tierney whose number came up, only for a quick change of mind by our Management team after they had spotted that Nelson-Roberts had just picked up an injury and he was the man who came off instead.

Batula was asking a few questions with his pace and he was brought down in the corner for a free kick just a couple of yards in from the touchline, but the Springett delivery was headed over the bar by Adeyemi. Then Batula broke through the offside trap and bore down on goal, although his shot was a good height for Atkinson who parried the strike on goal. The visitors had a couple of strikes from distance, both of which only just missed our top corner, but this was a much better half and Adeyemi climbed to win a good header which he sent back across goal. It wasn't clear whether it would have crept inside the post, but it didn't matter as a defender was there to hook the ball away in any case.

As we entered the final few minutes of normal time Darboe picked up a yellow card for a clumsy challenge and two minutes later collected a second card, leaving the visitors with ten men for the remaining two minutes, plus five more of injury time. In between the two bookings we had our best chance of the match after Adeyemi made a good run and pass to Miller who then put another substitute through in Tino Carpene, who clipped the ball over Atkinson, only to see the ball miss the far post and also the incoming Springett by inches.

Our final chance came in the first minute of injury time, but as we sent a long throw in from Williams to the head of the towering Adeyemi it was apparent that there was no one actually beyond him to finish off a chance should one arrive! The flick on was duly won, with the ball dribbling past the far post for what would have been a certain tap in, had we gambled. It set the seal on a disappointing evening, although it must be remembered that our opponents are looking good for the playoff spots and were very solid last night.

The League table shows us third from bottom with 14 points from 19 available which currently provides a healthy gap between us and the two clubs below us. For some reason our club has chosen not to put a League table in its match programmes, which is a shame because it looks a lot better than it did at the end of September! Hopefully, we can continue to increase the number of points between us and the single relegation place when we visit Horley on Saturday for another important League fixture.

Epsom & Ewell: Toby Colwell, Nick Inwugwu, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Steve Springett, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson ©, Ade Batula, Thompson Adeyemi, George Owusu, Rory Edwards, Sirak Negassi

Subs: Tommy Williams for Nelson-Roberts (59), Luke Miller for Owusu (74), Tino Carpene for Batula (80), Kiyo Brown for Negassi (80)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

The word Calleva means "where the paths cross".

Caught the Christmas Epsom Stagecoach to Paris

20 DECEMBER 2023: Gifted students from local **Stagecoach Performing Arts Epsom** were chosen to take part in Disney's festive show, Let's Sing, in Disneyland Paris at the weekend.

The troupe of 21 students, aged between nine and 19, performed alongside Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Donald and Daisy Duck, and Goofy, as well as professional Disney singers, in a magical and spectacular choral story that was performed four times over the two days.

Taking to the specially decorated stage with scenes from Disney's Main Street USA and the Disney Christmas tree, the students gave a heart-warming performance of festive songs.

The students also took part in a choral workshop with Disney choirmasters and professional stage rehearsals and sound checks, learning how large-scale productions such as this are put together. Skills they can take forward for future performances and productions, and into their professional lives.

Stagecoach Epsom Principal Rachel Crouch said: "We've taken part in Stagecoach's event, Disney Dance the Dream, before, but this was the first time we had performed at Christmas time. The students thoroughly enjoyed it and learnt a lot from the experience. It was fantastic to watch them on the stage singing alongside such iconic Disney characters, and lovely to be there for the festive season."

Stagecoach Performing Arts opened its first school 35 years ago and, since then, it has seen more than one million students unlock their creative potential. Provided with the support and dedication of the experienced Principals, the students learn so much more than how to sing, dance and act. Stagecoach helps them blossom into well-rounded individuals, ready to embrace life and all its exciting opportunities.

With a network of over 55,000 students and more than 3,000 extra-curricular performing arts schools worldwide, Stagecoach aims to make a difference in its students' lives by teaching Creative Courage for Life and many children have gone on to study and work in performing arts from blockbuster films to countless roles in local theatre productions. Early stages classes are available for children aged four to six and main stages classes take place for six to 18-year-olds every weekend during term time.

For more information about Stagecoach Performing Arts Epsom, please visit www.stagecoach.co.uk/epsom or phone 01737

669504.

About Stagecoach

Stagecoach Performing Arts was founded in 1988 and continues to grow as the UK's largest network of extra-curricular performing arts schools for children, with over 50,000 students enrolled in our weekly classes worldwide.

One of the first extra-curricular children's performing arts schools in the country, we aim to inspire our students, making a difference in their lives by teaching *Creative Courage For Life* ®.

With 350 franchisees and 3,000 teachers worldwide, Stagecoach operates over 2,000 schools and classes and has a presence in eight countries including Canada, Germany, Malta, Spain, Gibraltar, Lithuania and Australia.

Notable alumni are Emma Watson, Jamie Bell, Eleanor Tomlinson, Tuppence Middleton, Tom Fletcher, Dani Harmer, Josh Cuthbert, Danny Mac, and Charlotte Jaconelli.

Find Stagecoach on Facebook at www.facebook.com/stagecoachtheatrearts and on Twitter at www.twitter.com/stagecoach gbr.

For more information visit the website www.stagecoach.co.uk.

Gatwick 2nd runway sneaking in?

Protesters against the expansion of Gatwick airport have said a new consultation on planning changes is an attempt to "sneak" a second runway through the back door.

Gatwick Airport is polling residents about changes it wants to its multi-billion pound expansion plans.

The operator wants to double capacity and create the equivalent of a second Heathrow Airport in the south east by creating a fully functioning two-runway airport capable of handling 75 million passengers a year and space for an extra 100,000 flights.

The bid is due to be examined by planning inspectors during a six-month hearing, expected to conclude in June 2024. These last minute tweaks by the airport will be submitted it says after the public has its say.

Critics however argue the changes are anything but minor and the timing of the changes could result in people who have already had taken part thinking they have played their role.

The Campaign Against Gatwick Noise Emissions (CAGNE) said: "These are not minor changes to the application for a new runway and Sussex Gatwick. CAGNE feel they should consult all who have already registered an interest with the Planning Inspectorate. This added consultation would appear to be a way for the airport to implement changes that could be sneaked through due to people believing that they have already passed judgement on the plans for a new runway.

"What is proposed could see a vast increase in lorry movements by replacing an incinerator with a waste sorting plant, not included in the Development Consent Order, traffic modelling or air quality, an incinerator that at the time of obtaining planning permission was meant to heat the north terminal.

"We do not accept that a reed bed will deal with the flooding issues that a new runway will create with significant increases in new construction field side and with a new highway and the ever-increasing heavier rainfall predictions by the Met office."

"CAGNE, the umbrella aviation community and environment group for Sussex, Surrey and Kent, has requested that they be permitted to be party to this consultation but as yet Sussex Gatwick management have not responded favourably."

The airport is proposing three separate changes.

The first is to increase the North Terminal International Departure Lounge southern extension; the second to reduce the height, and change the purpose, of the replacement Central Area Recycling Enclosure; and the third is to revise Surface Water Treatment Works.

It will be for the Planning Inspectorate to decide if the changes can be made to the application and included in the examination. The consultation will close at 11:59pm on January 21 2024.

Airport operators say expansion would create around 14,000 new jobs and inject £1 billion into the regional economy every year.

Tim Norwood, Chief Planning Officer, London Gatwick, said: "Our engagement with the public and stakeholders to date has been invaluable in helping us shape our Northern Runway plans. However, since the submission of our DCO application we have identified a number of small improvements we would like to make to our proposal. "We are therefore asking for views on three

discrete changes to our plans and would welcome any feedback people may want to make."

Related reports:

Gatwick expansion plans revealed

Gatwick to get 2nd runway?

Classic growth versus environment dilemma

Report against airport expansion

Image: Gatwick Plans (Image PINS / Gatwick)

Local hospital plea to use 111 unless urgent

A spike in very unwell patients has put indescribable pressure on St George's, Epsom, and St Helier's emergency departments - and with Christmas and doctors' strikes on the way, demand could snowball further this winter.

Senior clinicians are warning of severe disruption to NHS services over the coming weeks - and are calling on members of the public to help by going to NHS 111 online when their healthcare need is less urgent.

Some people may think that going to an emergency department – even when it is not an emergency – means they will be seen more quickly. This, however, is not the case.

In reality, because of the high number of severely unwell patients requiring urgent intervention, waiting times to be seen for less severely unwell patients will be significantly longer than usual. Other settings of care will be quicker and easier to access than the hospital ED.'

More than 560 people with winter-related illnesses, many of whom were very unwell, came to the hospital Group's three emergency departments between 4 and 10 December – about 10% of all attendances. Hand-washing is one of the most effective ways to stop the spread of bugs like norovirus, and vaccines are good protection against flu and Covid.

Dr Rebecca Suckling, Site Chief Medical Officer at Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust, said: "Winter has arrived. Our hospitals are under extraordinary pressure, not just because of the numbers coming to our emergency departments, but the sheer volume of very sick people we are seeing.

"We are here for people when they genuinely need us. But on behalf of the nurses, doctors, and everyone else working so hard in our hospitals, I would urge people who are unwell over the Christmas period to consider whether our emergency departments are the best place to come.

Dr Luci Etheridge, Site Chief Medical Officer at St George's Hospital, said: "With further strike action on the way, and Christmas just around the corner, we face a very challenging few weeks. And following a record-breaking summer, it barely feels like we've come up for air.

"The best Christmas present the public could give our hardworking staff this year is using NHS services wisely and going to NHS 111 online when their health need is less urgent - helping us to prioritise the very poorly people who are coming through our doors."

Last month, 219 people going to St George's, Epsom and St Helier emergency departments were redirected to other services more appropriate for their healthcare need, including GP surgeries, pharmacies, and urgent treatment centres.

When someone has an urgent healthcare need that isn't an emergency, NHS 111 online – a 24/7 service – should be the first port of call, as this can direct where to go. Pharmacists are highly skilled and can provide advice on minor health concerns from skin rashes to earaches and flu. Many local pharmacies stay open late, and no appointment is needed. Some will be open over Christmas.

During strikes, people should continue to attend GP appointments, unless contacted and told otherwise. When it's an emergency or life-threatening, people should always ring 999 or go to an emergency department.

People can also take steps to stay safe and well this winter, including getting vaccinated for flu and Covid through their local NHS vaccination service and washing hands regularly with soap and water to stop the spread of illnesses.

With many people more vulnerable to colder weather – including those aged 65 and over, babies and young children, and those with long-term conditions – take the time to look in on vulnerable family, friends, and neighbours.

A lot of older and vulnerable people have been affected by winter illnesses – and as they often need to spend longer in hospital, additional demand has been placed on NHS services.

People who use medication should ensure they collect prescriptions well in advance of the bank holidays.

Junior doctors strikes take place from 7am on Wednesday 20 December to 7am on Friday 23 December, and from 7am on Wednesday 3 January to 7am on Tuesday 9 January.

St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Epsom and Ewell MP's Christmas message

This has been a particularly challenging year for many people locally, and so in my Christmas message I want to pay particular tribute to all of those working for local voluntary groups who do so much to help those who are struggling. We are very fortunate to have so many people locally who are willing to give up their time to help the multitude of local charities and other groups who make such a difference.

You may remember last year that I worked with Citizens Advice and the Good Company, which runs the local foodbank, to provide extra support for people struggling with high energy bills. Thanks to the generosity of local people we raised around £50,000 to help those who needed it. The Epsom and Ewell Energy Support Scheme provided help to local families who were struggling with energy bills to make their homes more energy efficient. In total so far the scheme has helped nearly a thousand people with short term financial help, energy advice and the purchase of low energy appliances. This is what some of those who took part said afterwards.

- "I found the workshop very helpful and really enjoyed talking to the other participants, sharing tips on how to save energy. The takeaway tips are also very informative. Thank you so much for your kindness and giving me really useful information about the cost of energy and how to reduce usage and keep warm and safe this winter, which like many people has been scaring the life out of me." (Denise, group workshop)
- "The scheme is very helpful and opened my eyes to certain areas of wasted electricity in my home. I certainly think more about what appliances are on and what we don't need to use.... Have already used air fryer and not had oven on for a few days. Great help, thank you." (Tim, 1-to-1 consultation)
- "I found the consultation very helpful definitely more conscious of how you can save money... Because of my mental health, I find phone calls to these big companies very daunting, and they kindly offered to sign me up to a friendlier way of getting through with a specialist team if I need to get in touch... Thank you also for the top up and offer of appliances to help me save on my bill. So grateful for the opportunity." (Michele, 1-to-1 consultation)

We are running the scheme again this winter, and would be very grateful for contributions, however small. Details of the scheme and how to contribute are at www.justgiving.com/campaign/epsomewellenergysupportscheme

This will be my last Christmas message as your local MP, as I am not standing again at the election. But I will be there doing what I can to help with local issues right through to the election as always.

In the meantime, though, I hope that you and your family have a good Christmas and that 2024 proves to be a good year for everyone.

With best wishes

Chris Grayling

Somewhat resigned by Reigatians

Sutton & Epsom RFC 21 - Old Reigatian 38. Saturday 16th December.

In the reverse fixture Old Reigatian finally subdued a stubborn Sutton and Epsom 35-29 after a game of fluctuating fortunes. This time the Black & Whites were enjoying a run of five victories whilst the visitors were lying third and snapping at the heels of the leaders. For the hosts it was a red-letter day for hooker Chris Farrell who was celebrating his 100 th 1st XV league appearance. In stark contrast Ben Green was making his debut for S&E and was one of four changes to the starting line-up. Old Reigatian continued their upward trajectory with a very impressive 38-21 triumph.

Freddy Bunting kicked off with the wind favouring the hosts. Moments later he was impressively putting his team onto the front foot with a probing 50-22 kick. It was a fast and furious opening ten minutes as each side were eager to gain the early advantage. It was most competitive at the breakdown and both defences held firm. On the quarter hour Lawrence Elliott was adjudged to have obstructed the OR kicker as the ball rolled off the back of the pitch. The penalty was kicked into the corner. Sterling Sutton defence halted the visitors but they were brought back for another penalty. The second attempt improved on the dress rehearsal as a perfectly executed catch & drive saw prop Ciaran Nestor touch down for the first try of the afternoon. Lucas Overtoom stroked over the conversion for a 7-0 lead for OR.

#	Team	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	+/-	ТВ	LB	Pts
1	Beckenham	13	9	0	4	394	322	72	8	3	47
2	Old Reigatian	13	9	0	4	380	300	80	10	0	46
3	Battersea Ironsides	13	9	0	4	395	274	121	7	2	45
4	Reeds Weybridge	13	9	0	4	354	235	119	4	3	43
5	Old Colfeians	13	7	0	6	324	331	-7	5	2	35
6	Medway	13	7	0	6	290	338	-48	5	2	35
7	Old Alleynians	12	6	0	6	321	306	15	6	3	33
8	Sutton & Epsom	13	6	0	7	372	364	8	4	4	32
9	Cobham	12	5	0	7	319	343	-24	7	1	28
10	Gravesend	13	4	0	9	257	382	-125	4	3	23
11	Sidcup	13	3	0	10	283	353	-70	3	4	19
12	London Cornish	13	3	0	10	280	421	-141	4	2	18

England Rugby Regional 2 South East table

Top image: Chris Farrell playing in his 100th 2st XV league match. Credit Robin Kennedy.

Though the hosts pressed hard to get back on terms with a couple of visits to their opponents' 22 the men from the Geoffrey Knight Fields stood tall with an impregnable defence. S&E got to the line but were denied the chance to level the score as they lost possession at the critical juncture.

In fact it was the team from Reigate who lifted the temporary siege and scored their second try with their second visit to the Sutton 22. On the half hour mark a sweeping play with great continuity provided by adept passes out of tackles saw Reigatian centre Gareth Stephens chip over the defence re-gather the ball and complete a stylish score. Though the conversion never threatened the uprights Old Reigatian had a healthy12-0 advantage.

Sutton & Epsom were in need of a score to get a foothold in the game and despite Willem Ratu charging ahead like Jehu support was not at hand to benefit from the break. Sutton did not aid their chances by conceding penalties and from one given for a high tackle the Reigate side kicked into the corner. Despite spoiling the lineout the loose ball was touched down in the host's in-goal area resulting in a 5-metre scrum to OR. A fine tackle by Josh Pulvirenti and a knock on appeared to have saved S&E but once more the referee brought the sides back to an earlier infringement by the Rugby Lane XV. Following another scrummage and multiple carries Max Coyle popped over from short-range. Lucas Overtoom added the extras for a 19-0 lead.

A thoroughly downcast home team restarted and promptly conceded a soft score. The kick was taken and returned with a vengeance through apologetic tackles. Gareth O'Brien's attempt to clear the ball from his 22 was impeded and the voracious hands of the visitors collected the loose ball. It was relayed to lock Jack Baart who powered in at the corner. The touchline conversion bisected the uprights and Old Reigatian led 26-0 with a bonus point already in their back pocket. Timely words were uttered under the Sutton posts and the hosts desperately attempted to get a score before the interval but to no avail. OR turned around 26-0 ahead leaving S&E with an Everest-like challenge to maintain their winning run.

It is the modern vogue for coaches and pundits alike to highlight the conversion rate for teams when visiting their opponents' 22. For sorry Sutton the first half recorded 0% whilst Old Reigatian were on 100%. In addition the normally faultless Bunting boot had erred twice. The 26-0 deficit may not have accurately reflected the balance of the game but it highlighted that one side was ruthlessly clinical whilst the other was most profligate. The Black & Whites held back on making changes at the break no doubt planning to get an early score to exert maximum pressure on the visitors. They would have to reverse the trend of the first period and take every opportunity to score if they were going to get anything out of this fixture.

An early score for the hosts was not only essential to make a contest of the match but also for Sutton's self-belief. However, within five minutes the visitors were crossing the whitewash for a fifth time. A kick through, a ricochet and a helpful assist from a Black & White boot gifted Gareth Stephens his second try. Despite the missed conversion Old Reigatian looked over the horizon and far away leading 31-0. Sutton & Epsom rang the changes as Alex Mount returned to the fray and Ross Parsons had his first taste of action replacing Chris Ballard. A few minutes later George London was the last pair of fresh legs as Isaac Lea took a breather. Two penalties on the bounce to the home team propelled the Rugby Lane team to a lineout 10 metres out. Though they were thwarted this time another penalty meant they had a second chance from a 5-metre lineout. The forwards controlled the ball and the try was scored. It could not have been a more popular try as it was the outstretched arm of Chris Farrell on his 100 th appearance who touched down. Freddy Bunting added the conversion for 7-31.

Ten minutes later Sutton & Epsom were again benefiting from Reigatian indiscipline as they kicked a penalty into the corner. From the five-metre lineout the visitors defiant defence thwarted initial attempts until Alex Mount side-stepped would be tacklers to score. Freddy Bunting added the extras as the home crowd dared to dream of a miracle at 14-31. Those dreams swiftly became a nightmare as the Black & Whites conceded an interception try just outside their 22 a minute later. Max Coyle had his second try and Lucas Overtoom his fourth conversion and the visitors had the healthy cushion again leading 38-14.

Sutton were not finished and it was Alex Mount who scored again. If the prop's first try owed much to nimble footwork his second was from brute force and determination as he muscled his was over the line. Freddy Bunting did the necessary to trail 21-38. With ten minutes remaining there began the game within the game as the Black & Whites went in search of bonus points as one more try would secure at least one consolation point. Though the hosts dominated territory

and possession they failed to add to their tally. The resolute Old Reigatian defence were in no mood for any charitable Christmas presents for their opponents. The final whistle concluded the contest with OR victors by the commanding margin of 38-21 and excellent value for their success. Old Reigatian played splendidly with a ruthless efficiency. Once again their three-quarters were of the highest quality playing with confidence, fluency and an enviable slickness with Max Coyle a constant threat. Their pack had the edge in the set scrum and were disruptive at the breakdown with Finlay Lock, like all good 7s, a constant irritation. In defence they tackled forcefully and closed down Sutton rapidly. However, it was their ability to convert pressure in the 22 into points that was the key difference. For S&E too often their breaks by Willem Ratu et al lacked support. Most frustratingly speculative offloads were lured into the hands of their opponents as if they were victims of sirens without an Odysseus to rescue them. The result had far more to do with the quality of the play of the Old Reigatian team than the failings of Sutton and the win has put the visitors very much in the title race.

The league enters its festive break and returns with Sutton's trip to Battersea Ironsides on 6 th January. If one is looking for a barometer for how competitive this league has become there is no other league in England that is topped by a team with four defeats but in Regional 2 South East there are four clubs with a nine-four win-loss record. For S&E lest we forget that their campaign has been transformed with five wins from the last six starts and the Rugby Lane faithful should approach 2024 with cautious optimism.

Sutton & Epsom:

Gareth O'Brien, Matt Symonds, Willem Ratu, Tom Lennard, Lawrence Elliott, Freddy Bunting ©, Tom Boaden, Chris Farrell, Alex Mount, Ewan McTaggart, Ben Green, Isaac Lea, Josh Pulvirenti & Rob Hegarty.

Replacements: Callum Gibson, George London & Ross Parsons.

Old Reigatian:

Conor Woods, Harrison Mitchell, Gareth Stephens, Max Coyle, Finn Coyle, Lucas Overtoom, Alex Skinner, Ciaran Nestor, Harry Plowman, Toby Collister, Oli Brooks, Jack Baart, Sam Foreman, Finlay Lock & Ryan Travers.

Replacements: David Niven, Ed Cox & Ben Holder.