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

19th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Epsom and Ewell Times annual neutrality audit

21 November 2024



Epsom and Ewell Times Neutrality Council Annual Report.

The unedited and full responses from members of the Neutrality Council together with our response can be read HERE

Introduction: The Epsom and Ewell Times (EET) established the Neutrality Council to provide an independent assessment of its political neutrality. The council consists of representatives from the main political affiliations. The following sections summarise the contributions of each member.

Contribution from Robert Leach – Residents Association

1. Overall neutrality rating: 10/10.
2. Fair representation of political viewpoints: Yes.
3. Instances of bias: None noted.
4. Fair representation of Residents' Associations: Yes.
5. Handling of controversial issues: "Well."
6. Reporting quality: Moderate, with a noted lack of council item coverage and human interest stories.
7. Separation of opinion and news: Yes.
8. Coverage of local community issues: Fair, with potential for increased diversity.
9. Suggestions: Expand reporting to include information from other organizations and businesses.

Response from EET: We thank Robert for his detailed feedback and positive remarks regarding neutrality and representation. We aim to address the need for more council coverage, human interest stories, and broader engagement with local organizations.

Contribution from Alison Kelly – Liberal Democrats

1. Neutrality rating: 9/10.
2. Fair representation of political viewpoints: Yes, with occasional gaps due to lack of comments from opposition.
3. Bias instances: None significant but noted balance could improve in regional coverage.
4. Handling of controversial issues: Factual and balanced.
5. Reporting quality: High, with engaging content like "Opinion Polls" and "The Strange Maths."
6. Community engagement: Effective, with suggestions to include faith groups and increase coverage in the North Borough.
7. Suggestions: Extend coverage to faith organizations like the Hook Road Islamic Centre.

Response from EET: We appreciate Alison's thoughtful analysis and actionable suggestions, particularly regarding faith groups and geographic coverage. These insights are invaluable as we expand our community engagement efforts.

Contribution from Mark Todd – Labour

1. Neutrality rating: 9/10.

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2. Fair representation: Yes, with balanced representation of political viewpoints.
3. Instances of bias: None observed.
4. Coverage of controversial issues: Well-handled.
5. Reporting quality: Exceptional, especially on elections and green belt issues.
6. Community engagement: Effective and inclusive.
7. Suggestions: None; praised as an “amazing community newspaper.”

Response from EET: Mark’s praise for our coverage of elections and green belt issues is encouraging. We remain committed to delivering high-quality reporting on critical community matters.

Contribution from Emma Ware – Conservative

Emma expressed dissatisfaction with the perceived bias toward the Liberal Democrats and anti-green belt campaigners. She cited specific articles as examples of bias:

1. **“Belted up on Green Belt” (15 January 2024):** Allegedly one-sided with minimal counterarguments.
2. **“Democracy at Work or Strange Mathematics” (July 2024):** Criticized for unsupported assertions.
3. **“Surrey Lib Dems Majority Tale on Thames Water” (July 2023):** Lacked context, appeared biased.
4. **“Local MP Comes to Our Defence” (September 2024):** Claimed biased language.
5. **“Epsom Pensioners Gather Less Winter Fuel Pay” (30 September 2024):** Inappropriate imagery and unsubstantiated quotes.
6. **“Surrey Schools Kids Country Walk” (November 2024):** Pejorative language. [**Ed: This was a BBC report**.]
7. **“Epsom Town as a Safe Place to Live”:** Exaggerated comparisons and unsupported assertions.

Response from EET: We regret Emma’s dissatisfaction and take her concerns seriously. While our intention is always to provide balanced reporting, we acknowledge where improvements can be made, such as ensuring better context and avoiding inappropriate imagery. We remain open to constructive input and encourage diverse contributions from all community members.

Conclusion: The Neutrality Council has provided a diverse range of insights into the performance of the Epsom and Ewell Times over the past year. While the majority view reflects favourably on our efforts, we recognise that there is always room for growth. We thank each member for their time, dedication, and honest assessments.

As always, we welcome further feedback from our readers and the wider community. Transparency and accountability remain at the heart of everything we do.

The unedited and full responses from members of the Neutrality Council can be read HERE

Annual Epsom and Ewell Times neutrality audit

21 November 2024

Here we reprint the contributions of the four members of the Epsom and Ewell Times Neutrality Council in full.

EPSOM & EWELL TIMES Neutrality Council

Epsom and Ewell Times admin@epsomandewelltimes.com
12 October 2024 at 01:22

To: Robert Leach (Residents Association), Emma Ware (Conservative), Mark Todd (Labour), Alison Kelly (Liberal Democrat)

Dear Member of the Epsom and Ewell Times “Neutrality Council”,

By way of reminder, here is the link to our public announcement on the creation of the Council.

Below is a set of questions that may assist in guiding your appraisal. It is not mandatory, but if followed, there will be a consistency of approach that may make easier reading for the public.

We ask you to bear in mind during your appraisal that we are all unpaid volunteers, save for the contributions from the BBC’s Local Democracy Reporting Service (Emily Dalton, Emily Coady-Stemp, and Chris Caulfield). Also, we ask you to bear in mind that persons and parties in power can expect greater scrutiny than those who are not.

We ask you to complete your appraisals by the end of this month of October with a view to publication in November.

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ISSN 2753-2771

Thank you very much indeed.

Epsom and Ewell Times

Robert Leach – Residents Association

14 October 2024 at 16:03

1. Overall neutrality rating: 10/10.
2. Fair representation of political viewpoints: Yes.
3. Instances of bias: No.
4. Fair representation of Residents' Associations: Yes.
5. Handling of controversial issues: Well.
6. Reporting quality: Moderate. Many council items are not covered, and there is little human interest or coverage of other EE events.
7. Separation of opinion and news: Yes.
8. Coverage of local community issues: Fair. See comments for 6.
9. Suggestions: The paper is very good and fair. I believe there is much more that could be reported. Perhaps other organisations and businesses could be encouraged to provide info.
10. Additional comments: Although not asked, I believe I have been fairly reported as a councillor.

Kind regards,
Robert Leach

Alison Kelly – Liberal Democrat

16 October 2024 at 14:41

1. Overall neutrality rating: 9/10.
2. Fair representation of political viewpoints: Clearly attributes quotes in reports on council meetings and tries to include a view from each party. Most instances where there is no opposition opinion, it was because they made no comment.
3. Instances of bias: None stood out. Some felt less mention of Lib Dem comments in areas like Mole Valley could improve balance.
4. Fair representation of Residents' Associations: As the ruling group, they seem to get a good hearing.
5. Handling of controversial issues: You reach out for opinions and tend to remain factual rather than showing political bias.
6. Reporting quality: Editorial content is limited but strong. Liked "Opinion Polls" and "The Strange Maths."
7. Separation of opinion and news: None that caused concerns.
8. Coverage of community issues: Effective and relevant, though less coverage seen in the North Borough.
9. Suggestions: Consider including more on faith groups and their activities. The Hook Road Islamic Centre revamp could be an interesting feature.
10. Additional comments: Generally find the paper useful, interesting, and balanced.

Mark Todd – Labour

9 November 2024 at 16:27

1. Overall neutrality rating: 9/10.
2. Fair representation of political viewpoints: Yes. I think everyone has been fairly represented.
3. Instances of bias: None observed.
4. Fair representation of Residents' Associations: Yes.
5. Handling of controversial issues: Well done.
6. Reporting quality: Exceptional, particularly on elections and green belt issues. Hustings coverage was a triumph.

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7. Separation of opinion and news: Yes.
8. Coverage of community issues: Adequate and diverse.
9. Suggestions: No suggestions. Congratulations on an amazing community newspaper.

Emma Ware – Conservative

20 November 2024 at 16:11

It is with a heavy heart that I have to admit I have stopped reading the Epsom & Ewell Times, so I don't feel able to answer your detailed questions. I stopped shortly after the election because, in my opinion, it has become a mouthpiece for the Liberal Democrats and to a lesser extent, the anti-green belt campaigners.

Here are seven examples of clear bias in favour of the Lib Dems and unsupported political opinions masquerading as facts:

1. "Belted up on Green Belt" (15 January 2024): Felt one-sided with limited counterarguments and no context for affordable housing shortages.
2. "Democracy at Work or Strange Mathematics" (July 2024): Contained unsupported assertions and lacked global economic context.
3. "Surrey Lib Dems Majority Tale on Thames Water" (July 2023): Used pejorative language with no explanation of long-term trends.
4. "Local MP Comes to Our Defence" (September 2024): Headline and article tone were biased.
5. "Epsom Pensioners Gather Less Winter Fuel Pay" (30 September 2024): The image was inappropriate, and the claims were unsubstantiated.
6. "Surrey School Kids Country Walk" (November 2024): Descriptions of the Conservative-controlled County Council were overly pejorative. **[Ed: This was a BBC report.]**
7. "Epsom Town as a Safe Place to Live": Over-the-top comparisons and unsupported assertions.

Thanks,
Emma Ware

Editor to Emma Ware

Thank you very much.

I appreciate all the comments you make and just want to be certain that you are content for them to be published in full?

It is proving to be challenging to sustain a perfectly balanced micro-sized local news service that seeks to serve the public interest in holding civic powers to account. The previous news services in Epsom and Ewell died over 20 years ago due to the cost of print and journalists. Epsom and Ewell Times joins a growing number of "indies" up and down the country that rely on the volunteer "citizen contributor" model.

"For the community, by the community" effectively means our content reflects the community's input. There maybe the appearance of imbalance arising from the choice or time constraints of other voices. We constantly appeal for more contributors.

The point I am making is that anyone with a criticism or disagreement with any of our published content is always welcome to contribute and within reason will be published. Equally other voices can initiate content.

I am a little surprised you should accuse EET of being a LibDem "mouthpiece" following our very fair and balanced coverage of the General Election candidates.

When Chris was MP we never criticised him and published a number of "Westminster Views" penned by him. Now we have a new and first ever female MP, she was surely entitled to a little honeymoon? And that is over as shown by our publication of a critical letter on her position on the location of a new hospital.

I am not inviting you to re-think but I have to say I think your criticisms are somewhat selective and overall very harsh and they are not shared by the others, including the RA.

Kind regards,
Epsom and Ewell Times

Epsom and Ewell Times adds we have published numerous press releases from Conservative run Surrey County Council extolling its achievements with extensive quotes from Conservative Councillors. We have also frequently quoted Epsom and Ewell's two Conservative Borough Councillors, Bernie Muir and Kieran Persand and hinted at no criticism of their efforts and service.

We hope Emma Ware's reaction post 4th July will not deter a new Conservative undertaking the role of membership of our

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Neutrality Council.

Music of mass creation in Epsom

21 November 2024



Two mass settings in the same concert – too much of the same thing or the starting point for a creative programme of music?

During his time as music director of **Epsom Chamber Choir**, **Jack Apperley** has demonstrated a flair for devising intriguing programmes, whose themes emerge as you listen and learn about the music, revealing fascinating links that stitch the pieces together in interesting and often surprising ways.

In Saturday evening's concert at St Martin's Church in Epsom, we were invited to compare and contrast the mass settings of two composers, **Stravinsky** and **Bruckner** – the same liturgical texts but different musical language; the same instrumental forces but different ways of using timbres of woodwind and brass to accompany the choral textures. More on these pieces later but, linking them to the present, Peter Burton, a member of Epsom Chamber Choir, deliberately used the same forces in his setting of words from Psalm 19, "The heavens declare the glory of God", which opened the concert. Peter captured the essence of the Psalmists' words in music which expressed awe and wonder through a series of luminous chords before growing to a soaring climax.

The influence of Mozart then emerged as one of the programme's themes in the next piece, Jonathan Dove's Movements from Figures in the Garden. Commissioned by Glyndebourne for their 1991 Mozart bicentenary celebrations, this wind serenade was designed to be played outdoors before a performance of The Marriage of Figaro. Each movement subtly weaves snippets of arias, recitatives and musical phrases from the opera into more abstract musical textures, causing a ripple of amusement at moments of recognition amongst both the players (Chameleon Arts Wind Ensemble) and audience.

We then learned from Jack's introduction that Stravinsky had spent much time listening to Mozart's Missa Brevis during the period 1944 – 1948, when he was writing his mass setting. It is not easy to tell what effect this may have had on him but we can certainly hear the influence of Stravinsky's Russian Orthodox faith in the syllabic setting of much of the text, especially in the Credo. The choir's excellent clear diction made this particularly effective. The final a cappella 'Amen', sung with great beauty and stillness, brought a peaceful sense of calm to the close of the first half of the concert.

The second half took us from Stravinsky's rather austere neo-classical style to the more lush, romantic sound world of Bruckner and the choir embraced this shift with delight. There was a good sense of ensemble and balance between the players and singers and a palpable sensitivity to the text. Particularly beautiful were the close harmony exchanges between a cappella female then male voices in the Qui tollis and Benedictus passages, where intonation and balance between the voices was flawless. Other highlights were the radiant beauty of the Crucifixus and the perfectly executed suspensions at 'miserere' in the Agnus Dei.

Two mass settings framing a varied musical menu and subtly woven themes: this was a creative programme that both challenged and delighted. I'm looking forward to the next one!

Carolyn Boulding

Surrey carers getting digital support

21 November 2024

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Surrey County Council is rolling out additional support for tens of thousands of unpaid carers living in the county as part of a new digital service.

At least 90,000 people in Surrey provide unpaid care for friends, family members or neighbours. Through the new initiative, these unpaid carers will gain access to a wide range of free on-demand services, aimed at supporting individuals with the day-to-day realities of caring.

The initiative is being delivered by Mobilise – a carer-led digital community – in partnership with Surrey County Council. It will provide a complementary layer of added support that can be accessed remotely via an online hub by anyone caring for a loved one in the county. New digital support services which carers in Surrey are set to gain access to include:

- **An online peer community** of thousands of fellow carers from across the UK – with the chance to share advice and experiences through a community forum and during regular events, such as the 'virtual cuppa'
- **Easy-to-use, self-service tools** outlining the different forms of support which carers may be entitled to – including Carer's Allowance – and guidance on how to navigate eligibility criteria and access various benefits, for example
- **Tailor-made support guides** on everything from how to balance caring with full-time work, to managing personal health and wellbeing while looking after someone else
- **Information on carers' rights** and relevant social care law, in line with the latest government guidance

An AI-powered 'assistant' is also available to help carers quickly and easily find the specific information, resources or support that they need.

Martin, a carer from Surrey who looks after their partner, said: *"I'm delighted to have come across Mobilise. It's great to know that there is a wide community of carers who can, without judgement, share their honest views and experiences on such a wide range of topics. It's reassuring to know that there are like-minded people out there and that we're not alone."*

Suzanne Bourne, Co-Founder and Head of Carer Support at Mobilise, commented: *"An increasing number of us are taking on caring responsibilities, with one million additional carers set to emerge in the UK over the next ten years. The reality of caring will look different for each of these people – including the 90,000 people who are looking after their loved ones in Surrey.*

"For some, it will start with needing to check in with family members more frequently, with caring responsibilities increasing over time. For others, it might be a case of having always needed to support relatives with their medication, self-care, and appointments, or even full-time care. But in each and every case, having the right support is vital.

"That's why we're proud to be partnering with Surrey County Council to deliver additional support for carers living in the county. Through our community of carers – the largest of its kind – carers in Surrey will gain access to a powerful peer support network, as well as round-the-clock advice, resources, and guidance from experts. We're delighted to be able to work to connect carers in Surrey to this added support and to each other."

Sinead Mooney, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, said: *"Carers play a crucial role in families and in our local communities by supporting people who would otherwise struggle to cope alone which is why it's so important for us to make sure carers themselves are cared for.*

"We're pleased to be partnering with Mobilise to reach more carers across Surrey and support them in new and different ways. I'd encourage anyone who looks after a family member or friend to visit the Mobilise online community and explore the additional support available."

Vicky Stobbart, Director of Long Term Planning Delivery and Senior Responsible Officer for Carers at Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Board, added: *"This initiative with Mobilise is a wonderful way for carers across Surrey to gain additional, digital support with their day-to-day caring duties. We're delighted that it's being rolled out and look forward to seeing the benefits as our carers start to use it."*

For more information about the support now available in Surrey, visit Surrey's Mobilise community. To start accessing support, the Mobilise app can be downloaded via the Apple App Store or Google Play, with more information available on Mobilise's website.

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Another solar power story – Leatherhead

21 November 2024



A four-year fight to install solar panels in a Leatherhead car park has left those behind the green project both “disappointed and very exited”.

Mole Valley District Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and has been trying to decrease its carbon emissions ever since, with the goal of reaching net zero by 2030.

Now, a pilot scheme set to be approved could to be a step in the right direction – but has left some wishing for a “far more expansive” roll out, after funding was approved to cover just 20 bays in Leatherhead with the new tech, the size of about two tennis courts.

Bays in the centre’s car park will have new coverings with solar panelling installed on top. Electricity from the panels will be used to help power Leatherhead Leisure Centre although it will fall well short of delivering its full need.

It is anticipated that the electricity generated annually by the solar panels will be 37,498 kWh or about 2.7 per cent of what the centre uses – although it would still be enough to reduce the council’s carbon footprint by about 9.7 tonnes a year.

Hope is not lost for those wishing to see greater role out of the panels as the council has said that, should key milestones and performance targets be hit, “the intention is that further role out of solar carports across other Mole Valley District Council carparks including Pippbrook Offices and Reigate Road will be implemented”.

Cabinet Member Councillor Claire Malcomson said: “It’s taken four years to get this far.

“I’m disappointed and very excited about this because at long last we’re going to be doing it, I would love it to be far more expansive but it is only a pilot therefore hopefully it’s going to open some really good doors for us.”

The £175,000 project is expected to take about 16 years to cover its costs and the levels of energy produced too low to require battery storage units.

Regardless, the system will be plugged into the national grid with any spare capacity sold into the network – the most likely scenario here being on days the centre is closed.

She said: “It would take 16 years to pay itself back and I just hope we will consider it as its a very good step in the right direction because other councils are taking over but it was actually Mole Valley that initiated this in the first place.”

A similar project is already in place in the Elmbridge Civic Centre car park in Esher.

Cllr Andy Smith (Independent; Ashtead Lanes and Common) said: “This is a very good scheme indeed.

“I share the disappointment that its taken so long to get off the ground but I’m very keen that we seize the opportunities for this type of solar project rather than using up productive agricultural land with solar arrays.”

Final sign off on the plans are dependent on cabinet approval.

Leatherhead Leisure Centre (Image Google)

Surrey’s focus on independent lives is “good”.

21 November 2024



Surrey County Council’s adult social care services have been rated as ‘good’ by a health watchdog – despite some inconsistencies. In the local authority’s first ever overall rating, the Care Quality Commission found SCC ‘good’ at keeping

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ISSN 2753-2771

people independent for longer in communities.

The new report, published November 20, comes from the CQC's new responsibilities to assess how local authorities meet their duties under the Care Act. The watchdog assessed SCC in nine areas, including how the local authority works with people, safeguarding and leadership.

The CQC's report found one of the county council's strengths was that a "variety of measures were in place to prevent, reduce and delay people's needs". People could access information and advice where needed but improvements could be made to streamline this further.

CQC assessment teams reported 70 per cent of the service's provision should be rated "good". The report did highlight some areas that needed improvement, which the council said it would be working on.

Sinead Mooney, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, said: "The dedication of our staff shines through the report and I'd like to thank them publicly for their hard work making a positive difference to the lives of thousands of people in communities across Surrey.

"Our ultimate goal is to deliver the best possible services for Surrey residents and this 'good' outcome will help instil confidence in the services and support we are providing and that we are on the right path to making further improvements."

Partners with SCC gave positive feedback about how the authority worked with them to support people's independence, according to the report. Data for Surrey showed 86% of people who have received short term support didn't need ongoing longer-term support which is positive compared to the England and regional average of 78%.

Inspectors praised Surrey for their "ambitious" plans to increase supported living by at least 500 spaces to help encourage people's independence, choice and control. The council is also working to keep people in their homes for longer and avoid unnecessary hospital admissions, reducing pressure on A&E departments.

Good, but inconsistent

However, the CQC found there was room for improvement. Although a lot of the feedback seemed positive in the report, inspectors noted experiences of receiving care and support in Surrey varied.

The report said: "One person was assessed and felt listened to, achieving the outcome they wanted, which was to return to live at home. Other people had similar good experiences with staff focusing on what people wanted plus their future wishes, people described staff as being empathic and showing them respect."

Safeguarding was judged to be effective, slightly above the national average, but has some shortcomings. Staff and partners raised concerns about some new safeguarding processes that were not yet fully embedded with knowledge and understanding of some staff.

Staffing challenges were also flagged as an issue, leading to some reviews not carried out in a timely way and leading to a backlog. Partners working with SCC told inspectors the cost of living crisis had affected people on low incomes, and Surrey was an expensive place to live, making it hard to recruit and retain staff and then impact on care services, the report said.

But the report noted SCC has long-term plans to address recruitment challenges which had been created with staff. The local authority stated they were making improvements to manage risks until staffing levels had improved, by making better use of existing resources.

James Bullion, CQC's chief inspector of adult social care and integrated care, said the county council "should be proud of this assessment and the foundation they've created on which to build improvements and further innovation".

He added: "The local authority was very aware that although Surrey is an affluent county, there are pockets of deprivation where residents have high levels of need and disadvantage. The authority knew of these very differing needs of its population and were doing some creative work to meet those needs and help people keep their independence."

Commenting on the report's feedback for improvement, Mrs Mooney said: "As we celebrate this achievement, we also recognise that there are areas where we need to learn and develop and we are actively working to address all feedback from the CQC through comprehensive improvement plans. Our new director of adult social services recently started with us, so we're well-placed to build on this result to further raise the bar for our residents."

Photo: Sinead Mooney, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care *(second from right*), pictured with people who draw and care and support alongside staff from the provider Dramatize, which supports adults with learning disabilities after they leave education, offering a wide range of activities including day provisions and employment and life skills programmes.

A poll on polling – Epsom and Ewell consults

21 November 2024

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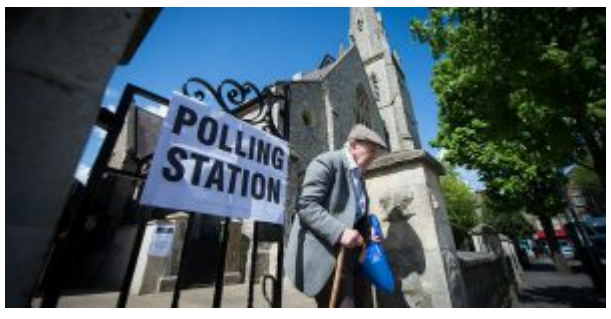

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will launch a six-week consultation into proposed changes to the polling district and polling places within the borough from 21 November 2024 to 2 January 2025.

In 2023, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England carried out a review of Surrey County Council's electoral boundaries. The resulting Surrey (Electoral Changes) Order 2024 is anticipated to be passed by parliament and will make changes to the County Council's electoral division boundaries.

This consultation will propose changes to Court and Horton wards in order to bring the areas in line with their new County Council electoral division and ensure ballots are placed in the correct ballot box.

There are no proposed changes for any other wards, as issues arising from the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May were resolved for the Parliamentary elections in July.

Jackie King, Chief Executive of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council said,

"I would like to encourage all residents in the borough to have their say on the proposals in this consultation. It is important to review our polling district and places now to ensure the council is fully prepared for next year's County Council election and the changes to the electoral divisions."

The consultation can be accessed via the following link: https://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/council/elections-and-voting/electoral-boundaries

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Surrey University Launches UN-Affiliated Centre to Tackle Climate Change

21 November 2024



Drastically improving the UK's ability to address climate change is the grand challenge that the new United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)-affiliated CIFAL centre at the University of Surrey will tackle.

CIFAL Surrey will be officially launched on Monday, 25 November, with a ceremonial UN flag raising, a Signing Ceremony and a panel event. In attendance will be a senior delegation from UNITAR, including Alexander Mejia, Head of the CIFAL Global Network and Director of the Division for People and Social Inclusion at UNITAR, other UNITAR delegates, Zöe Franklin, M.P. for Guildford, alongside a range of the university's collaborative partners in business and government.

Drawing on the University's strong research heritage and active engagement in sustainability, the new CIFAL Centre (Centre International de Formation des Autorités et Leaders), known as 'CIFAL Surrey', will work with UNITAR (the UN's training branch) and the CIFAL Global Network among other stakeholders to lead both training and capacity-building initiatives in sustainability. In doing so, CIFAL Surrey will make a unique and much-needed contribution to empowering climate leadership through enhanced climate literacy within and beyond Surrey.

As part of its activities, CIFAL Surrey will work in partnership with national and local government, industry, civil society, and beyond, developing sustainable economic practices, and helping to advance action towards the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Situated within the University's Institute for Sustainability, CIFAL Surrey will draw strongly on multi-disciplinary expertise in delivering both training and capacity building on a wide range of sustainability challenges, to help facilitate knowledge exchange among leaders in government, the private sector, and civil society – locally, nationally and internationally, as well as UK-based international organisations.

Professor Amelia Hadfield, the University of Surrey's Associate Vice President for External Engagement, and the new Director of CIFAL Surrey, said:

"Sustainability is far more than just a philosophy limited to net zero here at the University of Surrey. For us, and our community, sustainability reflects our deep, shared commitment to rebuilding a thriving planet for future generations.

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ISSN 2753-2771

From the fundamentals of climate change to advanced policy implementation, CIFAL Surrey will provide hands-on training and resources to national and local government, businesses, and community groups, helping them deliver on the demands for a more sustainable future.

“Focused on knowledge sharing, skills building and decision-making, CIFAL Surrey will connect local expertise with global insight, fostering collaboration across government, the private sector, civil society, and the United Nations system to drive sustainable progress. As CIFAL Surrey Director, I’m delighted to be working with our own Institute for Sustainability, other CIFAL centres around the world, and UNITAR itself to deliver these critical goals.”

CIFAL Surrey is the second UN-affiliated centre on campus, following the 2023 launch of the Centre of Excellence for Ageing, which appointed its first cohort of Fellows in June 2024.

Nathalie Hinds, co-founder of the Institute for Sustainability at the University of Surrey, said:

“If the UK is to be a leader on sustainability, leaders need more than just an awareness of net zero – they need the skills to create real change. CIFAL Surrey’s training gives leaders hands-on experience with sustainable practices and governance, focusing on systems thinking and breaking down silos across sectors. Alumni of CIFAL Surrey will leave not only with world-renowned accreditation but they will also be part of a global network of alumni, gaining access to our Sustainability Innovation Hub for insights, research partnerships, and ongoing support.”

Mr Alex Mejia, Division Director at United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), said:

“We are honoured to inaugurate CIFAL Surrey, hosted by the University of Surrey, a renowned global institution at the forefront of innovation and learning. This new centre will mark an important step in our mission to advance sustainable development and capacity-building worldwide. It will serve as a vital hub for fostering collaboration, innovation, and knowledge exchange across the United Kingdom and beyond.”

Deputy Leader and Lead Councillor for Regeneration at Guildford Borough Council, Cllr Tom Hunt, said:

“We are proud to support the launch of CIFAL Surrey and be a key partner in the project. This initiative will play a big role in driving sustainable development. It will give us the chance to work together to share knowledge, improve skills and deliver practical solutions for our communities. One of our key priorities as a council is to create a more sustainable borough. Our partnership with CIFAL gives us a unique opportunity to work alongside local, national and international experts to ensure a bright, sustainable future for Guildford.”

Councillor Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth at Surrey County Council, said:

“It’s a pleasure to be able to welcome the team from the United Nations to launch this new international centre in the heart of Surrey. The CIFAL centre will play a key role in promoting sustainable development at home and abroad while also opening up opportunities for our communities. It also reinforces the region’s global reputation for innovation, research and knowledge exchange.”

Party divide on Surrey solar farm?

21 November 2024



Plans for a Surrey solar farm have been questioned as an MP has called for the government to look again at the “nationally significant” decision. Jeremy Hunt, MP for Godalming and Ash, has supported the request of Compton Parish Council to call in the application.

The University of Surrey was granted permission to build solar panels on a 43-hectare site west of Blackwell Farm, Hog’s Back near Guildford on November 6. In partnership with SEE Energy, the solar farm is said to provide 34% of the University’s current electricity needs. On its own, the facility will increase total renewable energy generation in Surrey by 13%.

Mr Hunt, whose constituency covers the southern and western part of the site, has written to the Minister of Housing, Communities and Local Government Angela Rayner to express his concern on the facility’s impact on the countryside. The southern parts of the site are assessed as meeting National Landscape criteria and recommended for inclusion within the revised part of the Surrey Hills boundary.

In his letter to Mrs Rayner, who is also the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Hunt said he was worried the development “may set a precedent for emerging policy relating to National Landscape land”. He wrote: “Rather than selecting brownfield, this site selected is high value farmland in a geographically significant and nationally important landscape.”

He added: “Given the national importance of this decision, I support the view of Compton Parish Council and CPRE that the application should be called in and determined by a Planning Inspector.”

The secretary of state decides whether to review a planning decision based on government policies after a request to call in has been made. If approved, the Planning Inspectorate will hold a public inquiry into the proposal and produce a

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ISSN 2753-2771

recommendation.

Surrey Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) charity also wrote to the deputy PM in November, arguing the decision for the solar farm on green belt land be overturned. John Goodridge, Surrey CPRE chair, raised concerns on the impact of "agricultural land, encroachment on the green belt, harm to ancient woodland, the land's legal status as candidate for inclusion in the Surrey Hills National Landscape".

However, Guildford's MP Zöe Franklin has defended the solar farm plans and she support's the university's aims through the investment.

The new Liberal Democrat MP said she "recognise[s] that solar farms can be contentious "important part of providing renewable energy for a sustainable, low-carbon future". Mrs Franklin said: "This solar farm proposal is a move towards clean, affordable, local energy production and supports our local grid capacity in Guildford and our villages."

She expressed her confidence in Guildford Borough Council's planning committee having made the decision in line with planning regulations. But, the Guildford MP added she would also like to see the university include solar installations of their existing buildings and car parks.

A spokesperson for the University of Surrey said: "We are proud to play our part in reducing emissions – not just through this facility, but also through adding solar to the large roof on the Surrey Sports Park, progressing feasibility studies to maximise other on-campus generation – for example on our car parks – and a comprehensive energy efficiency programme.

"We hope others will follow our lead, as there is no time to waste in increasing renewable generation to reduce emissions and increase Surrey and UK energy security. This project is firmly in line with local and national planning policy priorities, and we look forward to bringing it on stream in the near future."

Related report:

Surrey University to get a third of its power from the Sun

£12 million bus boost for Surrey

21 November 2024



Surrey County Council has been allocated £12,074,800 from the Department for Transport, to further improve and protect local buses.

The council will work with bus operators to allocate the funding, which is likely to generate more frequent buses on popular routes, protect services in rural areas and improve punctuality.

The investment will also be used to help Surrey bus services grow their passenger numbers and to support people who rely on them to make essential journeys.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Growth at Surrey County Council said, "I'm delighted that Surrey will benefit from this essential funding which will help us to build upon our own significant investment and encourage more people to take the bus.

We've recently added 54 new zero emission buses to our fleet, invested £6.3m in more ultra-low and zero emission community transport minibuses, £9m in bus priority measures to ensure Surrey buses turn up on time, and £1.4m in improving information for passengers at bus stops.

Our Surrey LINK card gives young people half-price bus travel and we've expanded our on-demand Surrey Connect bus services to cover areas where there are limited fixed bus routes, giving more options to travel by bus for all residents right across Surrey, particularly supporting our rural areas."

26 million journeys were made by bus in Surrey during 2023.

Conflict on Epsom's Green Belt plans of another kind?

21 November 2024

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EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
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19th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



On the eve of an important meeting of the Licensing, Planning and Policy Committee on the future of the Borough's Local Plan, housing and Green Belt development, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) is under fire following allegations of inadequate handling of a perceived conflict of interest involving its planning consultant, Mr. **Derek Stebbing**, and his employer, **Strutt & Parker** (S&P). The controversy centres on Mr. Stebbings' advice to permit housing development on Green Belt land in the borough while S&P maintains a business relationship with the Church Commissioners (CC), significant landowners of Green Belt land in the area.

EEBC has also been accused of silencing public concerns. Campaigner **Sam Bentall** was barred from addressing a key council meeting after being accused of making defamatory claims about the alleged conflict. Emails exchanged between Ms. Bentall and the council reveal a contentious and somewhat opaque process.

Ms. Bentall attempted to raise her concerns at a meeting of the council's Licensing, Planning, and Policy Committee (LPPC). However, she was refused the opportunity to speak. The council justified its decision by claiming her assertions of a conflict of interest were defamatory. In an email exchange seen by the Epsom and Ewell Times, Ms. Bentall expressed frustration, stating, "I am being silenced for highlighting genuine concerns about transparency in the planning process."

The crux of the controversy lies in Mr. Stebbing's dual roles:

As a consultant to EEBC, Mr. Stebbing has advised on the Local Plan, including housing developments on Green Belt land such as Horton Farm. Strutt & Parker's website states it "has appointed Derek Stebbing as planning policy consultant to advise its national development and planning team in assisting clients in navigating the planning process."

S&P have the Church Commissioners, owners of Horton Farm, as one of its clients. During a telephone interview with Epsom and Ewell Times, Mr. Stebbings denied any direct advisory role to CC, stating: "I do not advise the Church Commissioners at all, whether in Epsom & Ewell or elsewhere." He acknowledged, however, that CC is a major client of S&P and asserted that "Chinese walls" within the company prevented any conflict of interest.

One Councillor, who asked not to be named, confirmed that the consultant advised Councillors of the need to allow Horton Farm to be developed for housing. "I accept that he may not have known the owner of the land was a client of his employer but the perception of a risk of a conflict of interest cannot be ignored."

The Council was invited to comment and replied it had no comment.

Some local groups have sharply criticized the council's draft Local Plan, which includes proposals to develop nearly 60 hectares of Green Belt land. In a letter to the Epsom and Ewell Times, the Epsom Green Belt Group challenged the council's justification for building on high-quality Green Belt areas like Horton Farm.

"The draft plan proposes the loss of almost 60 hectares of Green Belt land, of which 87% is ranked as High Quality. Horton Farm is one of the highest-ranked areas and unsuitable for development due to flooding risks, traffic impacts, and lack of infrastructure," the group wrote. They argue that the plan unnecessarily sacrifices pristine Green Belt land when alternative solutions exist.

The council has faced widespread criticism for delays in finalizing the Local Plan, now eight years overdue. While the Epsom Civic Society has urged swift adoption to prevent speculative development, other voices, including the Green Belt Group, caution against rushing a flawed plan.

"Submitting a bad plan, unnecessarily and inappropriately destroying huge areas of Green Belt, would be unforgivable," the Green Belt Group warned. They advocate revising the plan to remove high-quality Green Belt sites like Horton Farm before submission.

Related reports:

Epsom Civic Society say Local Plan should be agreed on Wednesday

Epsom and Ewell Green Belt battle lines drawing near

Call to Epsom and Ewell Council to speed plan denied

Epsom Local Plan controversy heats up

Time to press the gas on Epsom's Local Plan?

Epsom and Ewell Brace for Government Housing Targets

Epsom and Ewell business Oscars night

21 November 2024

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19th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



Last night Epsom Social in the Epsom Square hosted the Oscars of local businesses. The annual Epsom and Ewell Business Awards recognised excellence in 9 categories with the cafe in the park “Park View” scooping the Best Overall Winner. The Mayor of Epsom and Ewell **Steve Bridger** bestowing the final prize.



Park View is a family run business operating in Alexandria Park in Epsom. “Our story began in 2020 with a successful pitch to the Epsom Council for a café in Alexandra Park. Since then, we have worked hard to create a special place, which we have opened to our customers in July 2021. It has become a thriving meeting place for the local community”.

Michaela and Erik of the Your Park View Cafe Team – The Pavilion. Alexandra Park, Epsom, KT17 4BU, proudly hold their awards.

Another notable winner (pictured above) was **Emily Fry**. A local artist with an extensive portfolio of styles and genres. “A key mission of my art is to create unique and passionate work that personally touches my clients. My most common enquiry is pet commissions. With a photo of your beloved companion I will transform them into a unique, personal piece of art. Despite this I am able paint anything from people to animals, cars to trains, buildings to landscapes. I really enjoy having the ability to produce any piece of artwork which means so much to my client.”

The full line up of winners. First **in bold** the winner and runners up in no order below the winner.

The Sponsors:

EPSOM & EWELL BOROUGH COUNCIL, EPSOM DOWNS RACECOURSE, EPSOM SQUARE, GO EPSOM, NESCOT, AMBER GROUP, THE FEDERATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES and TWM SOLICITORS.

Judging Panel:

CLLR NEIL DALLEN, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, JULIE KAPSALIS Chief Executive & Principal at NESCOT, JACKIE KING Chief Executive, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. KAREN PENGELLY Epsom Bid Manager, PAUL TAYLOR What’s on in Epsom, LEE WIDDOWS University for the Creative Arts, MARY ZOELLER Deputy Lieutenant

Award Categories & Finalists:

BEST RETAIL BUSINESS – Sponsored by Epsom Square:

Randy Cow
Camille
The Secret Garden

BEST INDEPENDENT BUSINESS – Sponsored by Federation of Small Businesses:

Emily Fry Art
Grow Cook Enjoy
The Secret Garden

BEST ENTREPRENEUR -Sponsored by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council:

Dave Weller of Randy Cow

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Yolanda Artal
Itay & Zia Zilkha

BEST BUSINESS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE -Sponsored by Amber Group:

Snipperty Do Dahs
Cronos Protection Ltd.
The Personal Agent

COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY – Sponsored by TWM Solicitors:

The Well Being Therapy Hut
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BEST BUSINESS FOR FOOD & HOSPITALITY – Sponsored by Epsom Downs Racecourse:

Park View Café
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The Secret Garden

BEST BUSINESS FOR HEALTH & BEAUTY – Sponsored by Nescot:

Honey & Bamboo
Aphrodite Aesthetics
Snipperty Do Dahs

GO EPSOM BEST BUSINESS IN EPSOM TOWN CENTRE – Sponsored by GO Epsom:

Epsom Picturehouse
Epsom Foot Care
White House Health and Wellness Centre

BEST OVERALL WINNER:

PARK VIEW

Epsom Civic Society say Local Plan should be agreed on Wednesday

21 November 2024



The **Epsom Civic Society** (ECS) (motto being “Shaping the future, safeguarding the past”) has urged councillors to support the borough’s draft Local Plan, warning of the risks associated with further delays. In a press release issued yesterday, ECS Chair **Margaret Hollins** emphasised the importance of progressing the Plan to protect Epsom from speculative and inappropriate development.

“For the past eight years, our newsletters have chronicled the ongoing saga of Epsom’s efforts to adopt a new Local Plan,” Ms Hollins stated. “Without an up-to-date Plan, the Borough remains vulnerable to developments that may not align with the character and needs of our community.”

The Society acknowledges the challenges posed by central government planning reforms, which have increased housing targets and tightened timescales for Local Plan updates. While the draft Plan falls short of fully meeting housing targets, ECS believes it represents the borough’s best chance of success in the face of these constraints.

In a letter to members of the council’s Licensing and Planning Policy Committee, ECS highlighted the consequences of rejecting the draft. “Having no meaningful Plan to take forward to the next stage is significantly more threatening,” the letter warns. “Without an up-to-date Plan, the Borough faces prolonged vulnerability to speculative development, which could lead to inappropriate urban projects and greater threats to the Green Belt.”

The letter acknowledges the difficult compromises required in the draft Plan, including limited encroachments on less strategically important Green Belt land. However, ECS views this as a necessary trade-off to protect higher-value areas and secure much-needed housing. The Society is urging councillors to act swiftly, particularly given anticipated changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which may increase housing pressures further in the new year.

“Some compromise now is the best way to defend the rest [of the Green Belt],” the press release concluded. ECS is advocating for the adoption of the Plan as recommended in the council’s report, emphasising the risks and costs of restarting the process.

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19th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

The Licensing and Planning Policy Committee will meet tomorrow to consider the draft Local Plan. The decision could shape the future of development in Epsom for years to come.

Councillors now face the challenging task of balancing housing needs with the preservation of the borough's character and natural assets, while navigating increasingly stringent national planning policies. All eyes are on Wednesday's meeting to see how they respond to the Civic Society's call for decisive action.

Related reports:

Numerous. Search "Local Plan"

Proposed Battery Energy Storage System Near Ashtead Common Faces Objections

21 November 2024



Plans to install a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) near Ashtead Common have sparked significant opposition from local conservation groups and residents. The proposed facility, intended to support renewable energy integration and grid stability, has raised environmental and safety concerns, particularly given its proximity to a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Ashtead Common National Nature Reserve.

The Proposal

Bluestone Energy Ltd has submitted plans to Mole Valley District Council for the installation of a BESS facility near Barnett Wood Lane, Ashtead. The project includes underground cabling, access roads, security fencing, and biodiversity enhancements. Proponents argue that the facility is vital for managing energy supply fluctuations, particularly with the increasing reliance on renewable energy sources.

Benefits of BESS Technology

Battery Energy Storage Systems play a crucial role in modern energy infrastructure:

- **Renewable Energy Support:** BESS allows for the storage of solar and wind energy for use during periods of low generation, helping to stabilise energy supply.
- **Grid Stability:** These systems can manage fluctuations in electricity demand, reducing the strain on power grids.
- **Emergency Power:** They provide backup electricity during outages, making them indispensable for critical infrastructure.
- **Environmental Gains:** By reducing reliance on fossil fuel-powered plants, BESS supports the UK's transition to a low-carbon energy system.

Potential Hazards

Despite their advantages, BESS technology carries significant risks:

- **Fire Hazards:** Lithium-ion batteries, commonly used in these systems, are susceptible to thermal runaway, leading to fires that are difficult to extinguish and can reignite.
- **Environmental Impacts:** Manufacturing and disposal of batteries contribute to pollution if not carefully managed. Additionally, construction can disrupt local ecosystems.
- **Noise and Light Pollution:** Ongoing operations may disturb nearby wildlife and residents.
- **Land Use Concerns:** Large-scale facilities can lead to habitat fragmentation and loss of natural landscapes.

Objections Raised

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ISSN 2753-2771

1. Environmental Concerns

The City of London Corporation, which manages Ashtead Common, highlights the potential harm to local wildlife, including bat species protected under national and international law. Their letter of objection emphasises the detrimental impact of light, noise, and habitat fragmentation on these species. Ashtead Common is home to ancient oak pollards and biodiversity of national significance, further underscoring the ecological risks.

2. Fire Risks

Ashtead Common has a history of significant biodiversity loss due to wildfires. Objectors express concerns over the fire hazards posed by lithium-ion batteries, particularly given the facility's location and prevailing winds. The proposed water tank is deemed insufficient to address thermal runaway events effectively.

3. Green Belt and Landscape Impact

Councillor Andy Smith notes the intrusion on Green Belt land, citing concerns about coalescence, encroachment, and loss of openness. He argues that such developments undermine the distinct landscape qualities of the countryside and suggests that the facility's location does not align with local conservation goals.

4. Questionable Site Selection

Critics question the necessity of placing the facility adjacent to Ashtead Common when closer alternatives to the Chessington substation could reduce environmental impact and energy loss. They argue that the benefits outlined by the developer are generic to any BESS project and fail to justify the chosen location.

5. Opportunity Cost

The City of London Corporation suggests that the land, currently transitioning to a natural habitat, offers better long-term biodiversity potential if left undisturbed. They challenge the proposed biodiversity net gain enhancements, arguing that natural succession would achieve similar, if not superior, outcomes without artificial intervention.

Public Sentiment

While there is broad acknowledgment of the need for renewable energy infrastructure, local stakeholders believe this project's costs outweigh its benefits. "We need to modernise our energy systems, but not at the expense of our precious natural habitats," commented one resident.

Next Steps

The planning application is under review by Mole Valley District Council. Public and expert feedback will weigh heavily on the decision, particularly given the sensitive location and environmental stakes.

Balancing Progress and Preservation

The debate over the proposed BESS facility near Ashtead Common encapsulates a broader challenge: balancing the urgent need for renewable energy infrastructure with the equally critical imperative to protect natural ecosystems. As local authorities deliberate, the outcome may set a precedent for future developments in similar areas.

Epsom Schools Unite for Children in Need

21 November 2024



Schools across Epsom and Ewell, along with Banstead, joined forces to support this year's **Children in Need** appeal, raising impressive amounts through creative and engaging activities.

Danetree Primary School – Guess the Bear's Name

At **Danetree Primary School** in West Ewell, children participated in a range of activities designed to both entertain and

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ISSN 2753-2771

educate. Younger pupils in Early Years and Key Stage 1 enjoyed a “guess the name of the teddy” competition, while Key Stage 2 students took on the challenge of guessing the number of objects in a jar, with winners taking home the prize-filled jar.

The school also held a non-uniform day, contributing to a fundraising total expected to exceed £800. Reflecting on the event, Reception Class Teacher **Tracy Willemse** highlighted its broader significance:
“Events like this support teaching children about the importance of charities – how they help people in need and promote community values such as diversity, equality, and inclusion.”

The Vale Primary School – Spotty Fun and Coin Trails

Staff and pupils at **The Vale Primary School** embraced a spotty theme, donning polka-dotted outfits for their fundraising efforts. The school organised a variety of activities, including a coin trail created from donations brought in by pupils, and a raffle for Pudsey Bear toys donated by the PTA.

Year 6 pupils enthusiastically sold raffle tickets ahead of the event, with winners announced during a celebratory assembly. Classroom activities also helped pupils learn more about the work of Children in Need. The Vale aimed to raise over £500, a testament to the community’s generosity.
“Preparing children as active and empathic citizens is central to our ethos,” said Co-Headteacher **Cathy Browne**.

Warren Mead School, Banstead – Make Life Lighter

At **Warren Mead School** in Banstead, the theme “Make Life Lighter” inspired a vibrant day of fun-filled activities. Pupils and staff came dressed in costumes ranging from disco outfits to Pudsey Bear-inspired ensembles. The day began with an energetic assembly featuring a “fizzy drinking challenge,” setting the tone for the festivities.

Children participated in a **Pudsey Maths Challenge**, treasure hunts, and group art projects, with a focus on mental health and emotional resilience. Younger pupils enjoyed learning the Piggle-Wiggle dance and taking part in a school disco. An after-school fun run brought together staff, parents, and the local community, rounding off a memorable day.

Assistant Headteacher **Jess Moylan** expressed pride in the school’s efforts:
“The smiles and camaraderie displayed throughout the day reflected our commitment to fostering compassion, unity, and resilience.” Warren Mead aimed to raise £500, building on the success of previous years.

A Collective Effort

All three schools are part of the **GLF Schools Multi-Academy Trust**, which collectively raised thousands for the cause. The enthusiastic participation and creative approaches from Danetree, The Vale, and Warren Mead highlight the local commitment to supporting those in need, while also instilling important values in the next generation.

Community Spirit Shines

Across Epsom and Ewell, these Children in Need events have shown the power of community spirit, creativity, and compassion, making a real difference for children and families in need.

League victory takes Epsom & Ewell up 3 places

21 November 2024

Cobham 1-2 Epsom and Ewell. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Saturday 16th November 2024

Momentum is a funny thing! At times this season, we have found ways to lose matches that we ought to have taken points from, yet on Saturday we managed to take three points from high flying Cobham on their own ground, when we probably didn’t deserve them. However, last week’s Vase win has given the players some confidence and this may have been the difference in our 2-1 win.

This second win in a row, and our first in the League for eight matches dating back to September was achieved despite a continual rotation of our squad in recent weeks, with three more players making their debuts in this contest. Callum Wilson came in for Toby Young at the back, while Conrad Essilfie-Conduah came in for Craig Dundas who had an afternoon spent mostly on the bench. Will Kendall came in for Oblitey and looked much more his old self in this one, scoring the winner with one of the worst free kicks you’ll witness!

We took the field at the Reg Madgwick Stadium in our yellow kit and kicked towards the main entrance end, which we didn’t do that often in our season as tenants here, so I assume we lost the toss. Either way though we made a fast start and Kendall fed Luke Miller, only to see our tricky winger’s shot on target well blocked by a defender, before Adam Green also saw his shot blocked and cleared in the opening ten minutes. We were doing most of the attacking, although our

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ISSN 2753-2771

hosts forced Dan O'Donovan into a good low save soon after, with the follow-up shot blocked by Anthony Nazareth, playing against his old club.

We continued to press and an Ali Fofahan cross was just reached by Ryan MacLean in front of his keeper and the ball was cleared. Our boys were looking the more dangerous of the two sides at this stage and approaching the half hour a Fofahan corner was met by a glancing header from Kendall that hit the post and went away, with only our man ending up tangled in the net instead.

Elijah Simpson then got through, winning a one on one with Nazareth, but O'Donovan was out to smother the opportunity quickly. It also transpired that our defender had only been beaten to the ball as he had been injured a few minutes previously and his replacement at the back was Nicolas Bostan, who had joined us from Hampton & Richmond Borough in the last 24 hours.

However, by the time of that substitution we were already ahead, as another Fofahan corner required an intervention from Conrad Knight, who tipped the ball over his crossbar but from the next set piece, Fofahan sent the ball over to Ethan Nelson-Roberts on the left wing, and he cut inside onto his right foot before drilling the ball straight between the legs of MacLean and completely wrongfooting Knight as it flew into the bottom corner of the Cobham net from about twelve yards in the 39th minute.

Unfortunately, we held the lead for just five minutes before Cobham drew level with a good run down the right and delivery to the near post, where Derick Hayford was able to head the ball powerfully into the net from a few yards out via the crossbar. It was a proper centre-forward's header and they always seem to look more spectacular when they go in off the frame of the goal!

We went in at the break level, but within 55 seconds of the second half played Kendall was sitting on the bench as a result of something he said. The hosts clearly saw this as an opportunity and began to push us back. We had a lucky escape when Patrick Murray struck the ball wide from close range and had to make some timely defensive blocks, but Kendall came back on after serving his ten minutes and at that point I thought we would take control again.

But it didn't really work out that way. Cobham remained the more dominant of the two teams and at this stage it looked like a matter of when, not if they would take the lead. Wilson made a couple of great blocks and the game started to get broken up. That wasn't helped by O'Donovan needing a couple of sessions of treatment for an injury that had earned Charlie Alexiou a yellow card earlier. There would clearly be a fair amount of injury time required! Before that though the home side continued to press and a ball in from the right bounced straight into the path of a Cobham player who smashed the ball at goal, only for O'Donovan to make an astounding save to deflect the ball over the crossbar from close range.

Blessing Hombessa, late of Knaphill, joined the fray as a substitute ahead of Miller, but his first contribution was to lose the ball in midfield, leading to a Cobham counter attack that earned a corner. Fortunately though it came to nothing and his second contribution was far better as his pass put Kendall through with just MacLean to beat, and the defender brought him down on the edge of the penalty area, earning a card of his own. As Adam Green lined up to take the set piece in the 85th minute, Will Kendall ran in and smashed the ball straight at the wall instead, at what you might like to call "upper groin height"! Nine times out of ten this free kick would be blocked by the wall, but on this occasion it parted like the Red Sea and Knight was once again left with no chance as the ball flew into the net.

There were nine minutes of injury time, during which Cobham pushed for an equaliser, but their attacks came to nothing. Kionte Gillfillian-Waul picked up an injury in the closing stages and was replaced by Jack Torbett, who became the third player to join us from Langley, but apart from one close range effort that went just over our bar it wasn't a particularly nervy ending and the final whistle confirmed that the points were heading to Epsom. For those who love a stat, this win was our first ever League win on this day at the ninth attempt in the last hundred years!

This victory also lifted us up three places in the League and helps to reinforce most people's belief that we are too good to go down. However, despite our performance, we had been struggling to pick up the points, so these were most welcome even if we have played better before this season and lost. We now visit Chipstead in pursuit of what would be our first ever League "double" against them. They go into our meeting having lost 7-0 at AFC Whyteleafe, but I'm sure that was just one of those days. Let's hope we can keep our momentum going against the Chips as our tour of former landlords continues on Tuesday.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Niall Stillwell, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Anthony Nazareth, Callum Wilson, Luke Miller, Conrad Essilfie-Conduah, Will Kendall, Ali Fofahan, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Nicolas Bostan for Nazareth (40), Blessing Hombessa for Miller (74), Craig Dundas for Fofahan (83), Jack Torbett for Gillfillian-Waul (93)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom born baritone to bring requiem to life

21 November 2024

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

19th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



Epsom-born baritone Mark Nathan will feature as one of the soloists in Verdi's Requiem, performed by the Epsom Choral Society on Saturday, 23rd November at 7:30 pm at St Martin's Church, Epsom. Known for his commanding stage presence and dynamic voice, Mark is delighted to perform this dramatic piece with his hometown choir.

Mark Nathan has earned acclaim for roles across opera stages in the UK and Europe. A former Emerging Artist with the Scottish Opera, he has captivated audiences as Joseph de Rocher in Dead Man Walking (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland), which garnered praise for his intense portrayal and powerful baritone. His notable performances also include Schaunard in La Bohème Maximilian in Candide, with Welsh National Opera, Giuseppi in Scottish Opera's The Gondoliers which was televised for BBCTV, the title role of Don Giovanni with Opera Loki, and roles with Garsingto Opera, Waterperry Opera. Critics have celebrated his performances as "commanding" and "emotionally rich," and he continues to expand his repertoire with roles for Scottish Opera and English Touring Opera this season.

In addition to his operatic work, Mark is an accomplished concert soloist, with oratorio performances that include Vaughan Williams' Five Mystical Songs, Fauré's Requiem, and Saint-Saëns' Requiem. His versatility and vocal warmth make him an ideal choice for Verdi's Requiem, a piece known for its dramatic intensity and sweeping emotional range.

"Performing Verdi's Requiem with the Epsom Choral Society in my hometown is very special," said Mark Nathan. "The power and emotional depth of this music are incomparable, and to share this experience with my community is a privilege."

This special performance by the Epsom Choral Society uses an innovative arrangement by Michael Betzner-Brandt, making Verdi's Requiem more accessible for local ensembles without sacrificing its grandeur. For Mark, who has returned to his roots in Epsom, the opportunity to perform this iconic piece with the Epsom Choral Society is especially meaningful.

For tickets and more details on this powerful evening of music, please visit the Epsom Choral Society website

www.epsomchoral.org.uk .

Event Details:

- Date: Saturday, 23rd November 2024
- Time: 7:30 pm
- Location: St Martin's Church, Church Street, Epsom KT17 4PX
- Tickets: Available online https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/epsom-choral-society/t-ojydkvp

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