

Surrey's Big Guns ganging up

11 September 2023



Surrey is set to benefit from a deepening of ties between **Surrey County Council** and the **University of Surrey** through a new **Civic University Agreement** being developed between the two institutions.

Opportunities to work even more closely are being discussed at a special event today that hopes to explore new areas for collaboration including initiatives for economic growth, health and sustainability. The event will be opened by University of Surrey President and Vice Chancellor **Max Lu** alongside leader of Surrey County Council, **Tim Oliver**.

Both institutions recognise the huge potential that can flow from more consistently combining Surrey County Council's leadership, capacity and resources with the University of Surrey's research and innovation strengths, enormous economic contribution to the region and multiple global specialisms.

The University of Surrey has a good track record of working in and for the local community from hosting a space industry round table with the Science Minister; delivering air quality research that has benefitted local communities and schools; and carrying out health research that is helping earlier diagnosis of cancers in Surrey residents. The University also makes a significant positive impact on the Surrey economy - supporting 17,500 jobs in the county and contributing £1.3 billion to the county's economy. (Figures taken from a report by independent economic consultants Biggar Economics).

Other examples of current joint working include the Surrey Climate Commission and One Surrey Growth Board - both projects that are key to the sustainable prosperity of the county, and involving significant contributions from academics at the University of Surrey.

Professor Max Lu, President and Vice Chancellor of the University of Surrey, said:

"The University of Surrey is a global community, with our students, staff and collaborators from all over the world, and our research has tremendous global reach and impact. But we are proudly anchored in Guildford and Surrey, and have a symbiotic relationship with our region and county.

"In particular, we have a long and proud record of collaborating with Surrey County Council and many regional stakeholders. The Civic University Agreement that we are launching today will give us a bold and visionary framework for harnessing our world-leading research to help put Surrey on the world map, to help transform lives in Surrey for the better today, and to work together to build Surrey's future prosperity, to enrich lives and protect the planet."

Cllr Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, said:

"The University of Surrey has long been a powerful asset and a trusted partner for the County. This agreement will take that to the next level. Combining our own high ambitions for Surrey with the Universities world-leading research strengths will help us bring the best of tomorrow to Surrey today, and to project Surrey's greatest strengths on a global stage. Our residents, our communities and our economy will be the beneficiaries of this deepened partnership with the research and education powerhouse with which we share our name."

The new Civic University Agreement is part of a national movement to elevate to a strategic level the relationships between universities and the communities in which they are based. The agreement will focus on enhancing life in Surrey through:

- driving sustainable economic growth
- tackling health inequalities
- enabling a greener future
- empowering thriving communities.

University centres of excellence that will contribute to delivery of these priorities include:

- The Institute for Sustainability - which has been founded to be a critical player in the global transition to sustainable living - through research, innovation, partnerships, education and civic engagement
- The People-Centred Artificial Intelligence Institute - which is driving research and innovation that places people at the heart of the future of AI
- The Centre for Sustainability and Wellbeing in the Visitor Economy - focusing on transport, tourism, hospitality

and events

- Interprofessional expertise across human and animal health - including the combined strength of the University's School of Veterinary Medicine, School of Biosciences and new School of Medicine
- Surrey Space Centre - which is a key partner with the growing space sector in the region
- 5G/6G Innovation Centre - representing decades of experience at the forefront of high-speed and reliable mobile communications with multiple economic and societal applications.

Today's event is the first step in building closer ties between organisations that share a strong purpose to help society in the local region, and brings together an experienced team from across the University's faculties, schools and institutes, with leaders from all the directorates of Surrey County Council. It is focused on identifying creative opportunities for deeper collaboration, with the potential to deliver transformational change for our community. Other local stakeholders will be invited to join the agreement in the future.