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To Catch a Bike Thief – not easy in Surrey

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Epsom and Ewell Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate and former Royal Military Police officer **Helen Maguire** has revealed that 991 bike theft cases in Surrey were closed in 2022 without a suspect being identified – 91.9% of total reported cases.

Meanwhile, only nine bike thefts reported in Surrey last year resulted in a suspect being charged or summonsed – just 0.8% of the total 1098 cases recorded.

Mrs Maguire claimed these figures showed the Government was effectively ‘decriminalising’ bike theft. She went on to say “This is letting criminals off the hook for the robbery of thousands of pounds worth of property”.

She is calling for a return to proper community policing, where officers are visible and trusted and given time to focus on tackling local crime. She said, “The number of PCSOs has fallen in Surrey to just 69 by the end of March – down from 136 PCSOs just over a year ago in February 2022. It’s worse in Epsom and Ewell where we should have eight and now have half of that number.

“Theft is such a personal and terrible crime. To see so many go unsolved in Surrey is a poor reflection on this government’s record of reducing crime. We need to see a return to proper community policing, making our streets safer and ending this free-for-all for criminals.”

In response a spokesperson for Surrey Police stated: “We appreciate how distressing it is to be a victim of any theft and our efforts remain ongoing to tackle bicycle theft as robustly as we can. We are also continuing to raise awareness of steps which can be taken to prevent these thefts from occurring in the first place by ensuring effective prevention measures are in place. More advice on protecting your bicycle can be found on our web site https://www.surrey.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/keeping-vehicles-safe/how-safe-is-your-bike/

“In some cases, there may not be enough intelligence or positive lines of enquiry for police to act on. This does not mean that a crime is closed indefinitely or that intelligence or information is ignored. This information will be collated and monitored to identify emerging crime hotspots and any trends or patterns.

“The public can also help in the pursuit of offenders by reporting suspicious activity, and also by reporting to the police those selling stolen property or those involved in burglary offences via 101, by webchat on our website https://surrey.police.uk/ online https://www.surrey.police.uk/tua/tell-us-about/cor/tell-us-about-existing-case-report or anonymously via the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Residents are also able to upload video footage and images in relation to any suspicious activity through the use of a public CCTV submission portal here: https://surrey.police.uk/suspiciousactivityportal“

In response to Ms Maguire’s statements about PCSOs Surrey Police stated: “We know how important a visible police team with local knowledge is to residents in each of our boroughs. A trusted, knowledgeable, and proactive local policing presence is just as important to us, and PCSOs are a valued and integral part of that. We are currently actively recruiting to increase our PCSO establishment level. If you wish to apply to join Surrey Police as a PCSO, you can apply here: https://www.surrey.police.uk/police-forces/surrey-police/areas/careers/careers/pcso/

“There are currently three full-time PCSOs and one part-time PCSO in Epsom and Ewell. The borough also has one rural PCSO who deals with rural matters.”

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