

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Childcare voucher threshold seems to be set far too high

Consultation starts today over a government plan which, they tell us, will help working parents with their childcare and make it easier for mothers to go out to work.

The scheme will offer up to £1,200 a year per child to couples where both parents work, with an estimated £2.5m households set to receive the vouchers.

In theory that sounds very admirable. New research, which tells us more than two million working mums are their family's main breadwinner, shows how important it is that the barriers must be removed for mothers who do want to get back to work.

Most families in the current climate, where so many companies have frozen pay rises for a number of years, need two earners to enjoy a decent standard of living, so this will help.

But surely the limits for being eligible for these vouchers should be set rather lower. Under the current plans they would be available to anyone earning under £150,000.

One suspects that people earning anywhere near that amount will hardly be struggling to get by and it gets even dafter when you consider that couples with a combined income of £300,000 could benefit from these vouchers.

Surely the threshold should be set lower? Otherwise the government will be effectively subsidising people who, quite frankly, do not particularly need the help.

As our story on child poverty today demonstrates, there is a real and increasing problem in Norfolk with families living on the breadline.

Perhaps a rethink on the childcare voucher threshold could free up money to give them extra support.

Launch is a life-saver

Some doubters have questioned why the Broads Authority needed to spend more than £110,000 of its diminishing budget on a new launch for Breydon Water – however, a day out with the rangers would surely convince them otherwise.

It may look a picture-postcard sight, but Breydon Water is the most treacherous part of the Broads.

And despite advice from boatyards and clear guidance in the Broadcaster magazine given to holidaymakers, many still set out across Breydon at high water when they have no chance of getting under the low Yarmouth bridges and have to be turned back.

The packed incident log book on the new Spirit of Breydon – which also includes daily occurrences of boats grounding on the mud – clearly shows that she was money very well spent.

A special landscape

The familiar charms of this region's well-trodden tourism trail need very little introduction.

But while the enduring appeal of the north Norfolk coast, the serenity of the Broads or the bright lights of Norwich will always entice visitors, there is a comparatively undiscovered gem nestled on the Norfolk-Suffolk border. The Brecks is a landscape of evocative beauty, intriguing history and prolific wildlife – and there is no shortage of local enthusiasm to elevate it among our other natural treasures. All that's needed now is the money to unlock its undoubted, yet untapped, potential.

WORDS FOR LIFE

If any of you needs wisdom to know what you should do, you should ask God, and he will give it to you.

James 1:5



READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ A stunning sunset on the Norfolk coast, captured on camera by B Cornish at Waxham. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

From squatters to landowners... this name has a story



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Visitors to Norwich often comment on the name of that rather important thoroughfare in our city, Unthank Road. The word Unthank seems to strike them as being unusual and even amusing. "Why is it called that?", they ask.

Well, it's a very long story, but it's called Unthank for a very good series of reasons. Originally, the road was called "Unthank's Road" – this was the 19th-century name – because it ran across land owned by the wealthy local Unthank family. When I was younger, I remember hearing older people talk of their memories of a prominent member of the family they called Colonel Unthank. He was born in Heigham, or Ham, as we say, but the family originally came from the north-east.

The first Unthank to make an appearance in Norwich was called William. He was born in 1721 in Northumberland; and it's interesting that the well-known contemporary folk-group The Unthanks, led by Rachel Unthank, also come from that part of the world.

But why was William named Unthank in the first place? Like many surnames,



■ Unthank Road was named after a wealthy local family – whose roots were far from grand.

Unthank was originally a place name. In mediaeval times, if a man called John moved from a place in Lincolnshire called Huckerby to go elsewhere, he might then be called "John (from) Huckerby" to distinguish him from other Johns. So we can assume that one of William's ancestors had grown up in a place called Unthank and then left it for somewhere else. There are several little villages called Unthank in England which he could have come from: in Leicestershire, Cumbria, Yorkshire and Derbyshire. But the most likely place in his case is one of two hamlets called Unthank in Northumberland, one near Haltwhistle and the other near Alnham.

But why are these villages called

Unthank? It's significant that they are all small, and are often referred to as hamlets. In Anglo-Saxon times they went by the term "Unthanc-es", which meant more or less what it said. People were living there "un-thank" – without acknowledging that the place belonged to someone else, so "without consent".

Every day when I walk into the city along Unthank Road, I can think that this major Norwich road owes its name ultimately to the fact that, a millennium and a half ago, at a spot somewhere in the Old English kingdom of Northumbria, some people, who were certainly far from being as wealthy as Colonel Unthank, started a squat.