

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Rail accident report should be published as soon as possible

Broadland MP Keith Simpson summed up the feeling of many when he said it was “only by the grace of God” that a tragedy was averted in the village of Lingwood.

On Friday a maintenance train ploughed through two sets of closed crossing gates and across a road open to vehicles and pedestrians.

Fortunately no-one was hurt.

But Mr Simpson, other politicians from all tiers of local government, local people and rail experts have united to demand answers about how it could have happened.

We support those calls and want to see the report published by the rail authorities as soon as is possible.

The crossing is close to the village school and it doesn't bear thinking about what may have happened if children had been in the area when it happened.

It was half-term but in many other weeks the area would have been busy.

Local people report this is not the first time the gates were shut to the railway line and open to traffic, when they should have been closed to traffic and open for the railway. This troubles us greatly.

A bridge has been suggested but ruled out as it would cost £1m. Should a price be put on the safety of our residents, especially children?

We quote a Norfolk-based rail expert as saying this is an “eye-opener” for the railways of Norfolk.

It must be taken seriously, questions answered and not brushed aside.

Rest assured this newspaper will be rigorous in our scrutiny of this issue.

Amazing festive treat

It started out as a sing-song in a cow shed for a few hundred people. Thirty-seven years later, Thursford's festival spectacular rivals anything seen on the stages of the West End and brings a £10m Christmas present to our county's economy.

It also brings joy to the 130,000 or so people, young and old, who make a pilgrimage to rural Norfolk each year to see John Cushing's incredible three-hour extravaganza of song, dance and stunts.

They come from far and wide, up to 50 coach-loads a day, with many of them making a winter holiday out of the trip to see the show.

One thing's certain. When the curtain goes up on Saturday, after four months of rehearsals for the 130-strong cast, Christmas really will be on its way to Norfolk.

Walk-in centre crucial

City councillors will this week decide whether to sanction a potential new home for Norwich's popular walk-in centre.

The centre, currently in Castle Mall, has a crucial role to play in the city. It does a vital job of keeping pressure off the accident and emergency department at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital.

It's essential it stays in the city centre and Rouen House, just a stone's throw away from its current location, seems an eminently sensible choice.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ A stonechat and a ladybird share a fence at Cley in this quirky image captured by Nick Wakeling. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Speaking 'properly' isn't necessarily speaking correctly

Peter
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There are a few people in England who aren't fortunate enough to have a regional accent.

They include many of the men who are currently in charge of the nation. David William Donald Cameron, George Gideon Oliver Osborne, Nicholas William Peter Clegg, and Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson all have the misfortune of not seeming not to come from anywhere in particular at all when they speak English.

You can tell they hail from England, rather than Ireland or Canada or New Zealand. But that's about it. They're nowhere men.

This is because their parents paid large sums of money – £30,000 a year for Eton, currently – for them to go to schools for deracinated upper-class people where they, quite naturally, came to speak like all the other deracinated upper-class pupils.

There are about 220 of these so-called Public Schools in England, out of a total of around 4,000 secondary schools, so little more than 5pc of the total.

The upper-class accent which is transmitted from one generation to another in these schools goes by different names.

Linguistic scientists call it RP.

This stands for Received Pronunciation,



■ Public school pupils such as Boris Johnson have accents which bear no trace of their roots.

an old-fashioned Victorian/Edwardian term meaning “accepted in the ‘best’ social circles”.

Linguists don't much like this term, but we seem to be stuck with it now. Other people have called it the BBC accent, or Oxford English, or the Queen's English.

The accent is non-regional because the Public Schools were traditionally boarding schools.

Upper-class children, originally mostly boys, were first taken from their homes at a young age and sent to board at Preparatory Schools.

Then, at the age of 13 or so, they were sent to spend most of their adolescence at a Public School away from their family home.

So the RP accent tells listeners very little about where its speakers come from geographically, but a lot about their social background.

This is very odd. On a world-wide scale, the RP accent is a freak – just about everybody else in the world betrays their geographical origins to a greater or lesser extent when they speak.

Speakers of this freakish accent are sometimes said to be “well-spoken”.

This is, if you think about it, outrageous. Why should “speaking well” mean sounding like George Osborne?

Why can't it mean speaking clearly and articulately; and being able to say exactly what you want to say?

You can do that in any local accent.

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The teaching of your word gives light, so even the simple can understand.

Psalm 119:130

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