

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

We need to change priorities but not at the expense of lives

Chancellor George Osborne is warning the nation to brace itself for more spending cuts as he prepares for this week's budget.

Ever since the banking crisis sent the global economy into recession, our national political leaders have chosen to follow a path of strict financial prudence to ensure we can ride out the economic storm.

But those policies are forcing some of the organisations responsible for delivering our local services to wrestle with some very difficult decisions as they struggle to meet challenging budgets.

Threatened cuts to the fire service, libraries and children's services have all been mooted in the past. This newspaper's Save Our Stations campaign was launched in response to the financial assault launched on vital, local services. But now, it would seem there is a new threat.

They are unsung heroes who stand out in all weather, come rain or shine, waiting for a break in the traffic before stepping out into a busy road to ensure young children can safely cross. They are the lollipop men and women who ensure our children's safe passage to school.

But now their very existence is under threat as Norfolk County Council's children's services committee debates their future. The county's 97-site school crossing service costs £270,000 a year to run in its current form but its budget for 2016-17 is just £128,000.

If that shortfall, of a little over £140,000, is the cost of ensuring just one young person's life is saved, then it is money well spent.

Some things in life are sacrosanct. Protecting the lives of our children from danger should be of them.

Engage with EU debate

The fact that there are still 100 days until voting day in the European Union referendum may cause one or two hearts to sink.

The battle of the personalities is well and truly up and running.

But this referendum is about more than the people arguing on either side.

We urge people to look at the arguments on all sides and come to their own conclusions.

Parallels are already being drawn between this and the Scottish independence referendum.

We hope the enthusiasm for debate (but not the antagonism) which was seen north of the border as the Scots decided whether to remain part of the United Kingdom will be replicated.

Like that momentous vote, it is one which will shape our future.

Heart of the matter

Talking about the National Health Service, like the weather, has become a national pastime.

It is the subject of constant argument and debate, a political football under constant scrutiny. Is it good enough? How do we pay for it?

But today we are going to leave the final word to Norfolk farm worker Mark Baker who, 20 years ago at the age of 30, underwent a heart transplant operation.

Then again, there's probably no need to ask him.

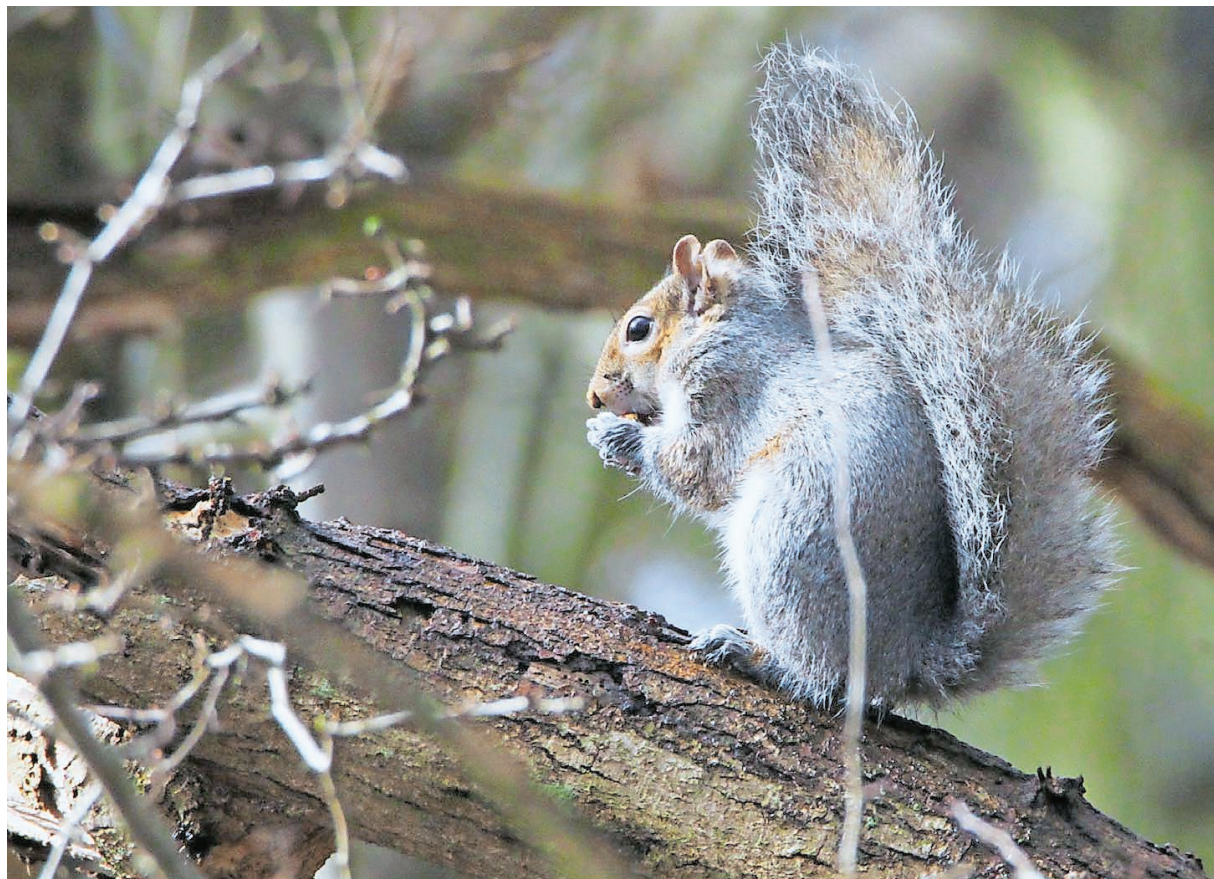
Thought for the day

Jesus asked them, "Who do you think I am?" Simon Peter answered: "The Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Matthew 16 v 15 and 16

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ This photo of a squirrel nibbling a nut was captured by Val Bond. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Sure thing, Shirley and surely are pronounced the same

Peter
Trudgill



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A friend of mine who doesn't have a Norfolk accent confesses to sometimes wondering for a split second, when she's talking to people here, why they seem to be calling her Shirley. Her name is Sue.

The explanation is that in Norfolk we pronounce Shirley and surely the same. In our accent, sure rhymes with fur. So do pure, endure and mature. And mural, plural and rural rhyme with referral. People with true Norfolk accents pronounce the Ber in Ber Street in Norwich and the Bure in the River Bure the same, and even those of us who put a "y" sound in "Byure" still make the two names rhyme.

Norfolk people who have moved away and lost much of their Norfolk accent are generally still recognisable as Norfolk Dumplings from the way they say "Are you sure?". It's a very good diagnostic feature for detecting Norfolkness.

Our pronunciation is distinctive because elsewhere in the country people pronounce sure and surely as "shore" and "shorely"; and those who don't do that pronounce sure as "shoo-er" and surely as "shoo-er-ly".

But if we look beyond England, it's good to see that Norfolk is not alone in the world in having this pronunciation. There are very large numbers of Americans and



■ 'Surely you can't be serious?' - a memorable moment with Leslie Nielsen and Peter Graves in the classic 1980 comedy Airplane!
Picture: PARAMOUNT PICTURES

Canadians who also rhyme fur and sure, as you can tell from the famous piece of dialogue in the American film Airplane! which goes: "Surely you can't be serious?" - "I am serious, and don't call me Shirley!". The two people who live in our house grew up 4,000 miles apart, but we both agree that surely and Shirley are pronounced exactly the same.

I have been wondering which Americans do and don't have surely and Shirley as homophones - pairs of words which sound the same - and an American linguist colleague put a query on Facebook asking

about this. Fascinatingly, it turns out that there is a geographical pattern over there as well, but it's exactly the reverse of what we find here. In America and Canada, most people pronounce these two words identically, except in the east! A majority of people who report that they do make a difference in the pronunciation come from eastern areas such as Newfoundland, New York City, New Jersey, Philadelphia, and North Carolina.

If Sue decides to make a trip to the USA some time, she should stay on the east coast if she wants to avoid being called Shirley.