

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Let's Get Connected campaign is off to a telling, swift start

The voices of exasperation and frustration across Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire are at last being heard and counted, thanks to our Let's Get Connected campaign for a better mobile and broadband signal.

We are happy to be the mouthpiece of all those, especially in rural areas, who are completely fed up with trying to run 21st century businesses, or keep contact with loved ones, using technology which is either non-existent or unreliable for too much of our precious time.

We are paying the same for these services as those in well-served cities and towns.

The EDP will continue to hammer on the door of government and the telecommunications industries on your behalf, demanding that they take notice and accord our rural county the same attention and service which urban dwellers take for granted.

In just three weeks, more than 200 people have already returned coupons backing our campaign and many others have rated their broadband coverage on our online map.

This issue is more than a nuisance. It is seriously hampering Norfolk's drive to thrive at a time when those efforts are already hobbled by the national economic situation.

Thank you very much to all those who have responded to our campaign so far. You have helped us compile a dossier of evidence and build a picture of hot-spots and not-spots which will be invaluable when we ask companies further awkward questions.

For those of you who have yet to make contact, please do so. It will help give our growing campaign even more clout.

Scouting needs a hand

Scenes more reminiscent of fans greeting the latest boy band greeted the Chief Scout Bear Grylls when he made flying visits to a trio of outdoor activity days over the weekend.

The SAS man turned TV adventurer has undeniably made Scouting cool again since he became the 106-year-old movement's figurehead almost five years ago.

But while its star may be on the rise, the Scouts now have growing waiting lists across the country, because they desperately need more adults to volunteer to be leaders. Norfolk's new county commissioner has pledged to make recruiting them one of her main priorities.

Let's hope that she succeeds, because Scouting teaches so many life and personal skills, and offers young people opportunities for travel and adventure which remain unparalleled, even in this age of the internet and social media.

Blooming marvellous

Norfolk has returned from the national community gardening Oscars with a total of four awards showing what a blooming great place the county is.

Well done to Filby, which won gold, Norwich, which picked up a silver gilt, Mancroft, The Lanes in the city which was awarded a silver as was Great Yarmouth. But the Britain in Bloom finals are also about rewarding the work that people do to make their communities great.

looking for GOD.com

Joyful is the person who finds
wisdom, the one who gains
understanding.
Proverbs 3:13

tlc

tlcnorwich.com

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ A gull coming in to land at Southwold, as caught on camera by Anne Marks. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Punctuation is more important than spelling or grammar

Peter
Trudgill



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We hear reports that Michael Gove plans to "re-introduce" spelling-punctuation-and-grammar into our classrooms.

My fellow columnist Sharon Griffiths has also written about spelling-punctuation-and-grammar.

This rather common lumping together of these three very different aspects of writing English makes it seem as if they're equally important.

But they're not. Punctuation is by far the most important.

Writing is very deficient as a language medium compared to speech.

When we're speaking, we can pause, slow down, speed up, speak more or less quietly, hesitate; and in particular we can use intonation, changing the pitch of our voice to convey all sorts of different and subtle meanings.

We can't do those things in writing, and punctuation is our way of trying to make up for this inadequacy. Think of the difference between "You're leaving today", "You're leaving today!" and "You're leaving today?".

This usage of punctuation to compen-



■ Sidney Grapes, author of the Boy John Letters that appeared in the EDP.

sate for the deficiencies of the written medium doesn't include apostrophes. With apostrophes it's the other way round.

The difference between "the girl's house" and "the girls' house" is a distinction which can't be made in speech. And if

we manage without the distinction when we're speaking – which we do – it's hard to argue that it's a matter of life and death in writing, though clearly it's helpful if everybody gets it right.

But commas, full stops, colons, semi-colons, dashes, quotation marks, question marks and exclamation marks are different from apostrophes.

Punctuation will never be able to bring writing up to the level of subtlety and expressiveness of the spoken word, but there are many types of writing where we should try.

Speech is more important than writing in many ways. Human beings developed speech millennia before they developed writing. Most languages even today are not written down.

We learn to speak effortlessly in infancy, while learning to write is much more challenging and comes much later.

And according to one calculation, English speakers on average utter about 16,000 words a day – few people write that many words, not even the hard-working journalists at the EDP.

But writing obviously enables us to preserve language and transmit it from one place to another – and from one time to another. We can still read the wonderful Boy John Letters that Sidney Grapes wrote to the EDP in the 1940s and 1950s.

As he himself advised: "Aunt Agatha, she say, trust no memory however bright, put it down in black and white". I reckon th'ol' Boy John put all them commas in the right place, doon't you?