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We must face up to the growing impact of diabetes

What is shocking about our story today on the growing impact of diabetes in our region is not its financial but its human cost.

What should be of greatest concern is not simply the mounting budget required to treat those affected – although, of course, this is something that we must all bear, and with no endless source of money from which to pay it.

Rather, it is the effect it is having on those with diabetes.

This is a chronic, debilitating, potentially life-shortening condition.

The numbers concerned continue to mount and there are some alarming predictions being made about how they will continue to do so.

Indeed, sometimes such warnings can seem unhelpful, for there is a danger they can become self-fulfilling.

They make the situation sound unavoidable, irreversible, inevitable. It need not be.

Nine out of ten diabetes patients in our region have Type 2 of the condition, with its clear, intrinsic links to obesity.

There are measures each one of us can take to guard against its onset, therefore.

And they could hardly be more simple – healthy eating and exercise.

This is not to say, of course, that they are easy, with our modern lifestyles. If they were, then there would be no problem.

But ultimately, it will not be money that defeats the challenge of diabetes.

Planting knowledge

There are few greener parts of the country than ours. And there are few areas where they take gardening quite so seriously as we do.

So our story today – suggesting a widespread lack of knowledge of all things green-fingered among young adults – causes something of a jolt.

For many of us, childhoods were spent almost exclusively in gardens, in country lanes and in parks. It was almost impossible to avoid picking up a basic grasp of the plants that surrounded us.

Perhaps something has changed, between the generations, which means that young adults have not amassed the same level of knowledge of the outdoors by the time they leave childhood. But let us not despair.

Gardening is something you grow into. There is still plenty of time to explore the joys and wonders to be found in the garden. And what better time to start, by the way, than on a bank holiday Monday – whatever the weather.

Formula for success?

On the subject of the great outdoors and our changing attitudes to it, there is surely one activity that, through the generations, shows no sign of waning – Poohsticks.

For almost 90 years it has been an egalitarian contest, allowing the novice to compete on an equal basis with more experienced veterans of the game.

But now that a scientific formula has been devised to supposedly help identify the perfect stick, could all this change? We suspect not.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ Stubble lines and lines of bales at Cawston. Picture by Peter Jarvis. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

A flock of seagulls, or should that be gulls? Discuss...

Peter
Trudgill



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I've got quite a few friends who are birdwatchers. Some of them have taken to calling themselves birders.

This is an Americanism, though not a particularly ancient one: in 1962 the Boston Globe reported that an assembly of enthusiasts "had rejected the term 'bird watchers' by which they had been commonly known, and adopted the designation 'birders'". This was rather unfortunate as the original meaning of birder was "one who catches or hunts birds" – but of course it's up to them what they call themselves.

My bird-watching friends are all extremely nice people, but they do have this annoying habit, as soon as anyone utters the word seagull, of chanting the mantra "There's no such thing as a seagull".

What can we say? Of course there are seagulls! Millions of them! As it happens, I can see one from where I'm sitting right now.

But actually, of course, it's the word seagull which birdwatchers object to, for some reason. Their objections, though, are in vain. Seagull is so well established as an English word that a Google search produces 25 million hits. Our famous



■ Both Milton and Dickens used the word seagull, our columnist points out.

Picture: PA

writer and poet John Milton used the word. Our famous novelist Charles Dickens used it. The name of Chekhov's famous play is always "The Seagull" in English-language productions. And if saying seagull is some kind of mistake, as certain ornithologists would have us believe, it's a pretty venerable mistake: the first recorded usage of seagull was in 1542.

Bird-watchers reckon we should say gull. Well, people do say that too, including me – gull and seagull basically mean the same thing – but it's probable that seagull came to be the most common term in everyday usage in order to avoid confusion with one of the several other meanings of gull,

especially the word gull meaning fool, as in gullible. Gull was not originally an English word. The first recorded usage was not until the 1400s, and it's thought to have come into English from Welsh – the modern Welsh form is gwylan.

The original English word was mew, which is related to German Möwe and Dutch meeuw. Birdwatchers will hardly be pleased to know that the forms sea-mew, Seemöwe and zeemeeuw also occur. In Norse-influenced regions of Britain you can also find maw or sea-maw, with the old Norfolk form of this being mow, as reported by Sydney Cozens-Hardy in his 1893 book Broad Norfolk. And, yes, I'm sorry, there's also sea-mow.

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