

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Action needed to stop the ambulance postcode lottery

The gulf in response times to patients who need medical help urgently is too big.

This beautiful and tranquil region owes much of its joys to the rural environment, but that should not come at too great a cost.

At the moment the luxury of living in one of the area's quiet and serene villages could be costly.

Our map today shows just how much the emergency response times of the East of England Ambulance Service fluctuates – causing a risk to people who may one day find themselves in desperate need of treatment.

And while no one is expecting a patient in Briston to have as short a wait as a person on St Stephens Street in Norwich, there is no doubt that the gap in response times between the two needs to be narrowed.

This is not a new problem.

The postcode lottery of ambulance response times has been an issue in our region for many years – yet the discrepancies endure.

Both paramedics and the operational managers in charge of delegating ambulances to incoming 999 calls do a marvellous job, particularly in the face of a rapid rise in demand. But patients in rural areas have the right to expect a service that is in accordance with NHS targets.

And it appears that those standards may need changing to reflect the challenging geography of counties like Norfolk.

Nevertheless, any relaxing of targets in rural areas should not deter the ambulance trust from focusing more on resolving the problems of the postcode lottery.

A huge challenge ahead

US presidential elections have always attracted the attention of the world.

But this year's extraordinary contest has captivated people on foreign shores more than ever.

For many in the United States, Tuesday cannot come soon enough and they hope a result will bring a close to the rancour and division.

Whoever wins has a huge job to do and needs to put the bitter contest behind them.

They not only have to deal with widespread dissatisfaction at home. Just 29pc of Americans feel satisfied – one of the lowest ratings in recent history. But outside his or her own borders, the world is becoming increasingly hostile and conflict-riven.

From Syria to Yemen, and in many other places across the globe, despicable and evil acts are happening as dictators and tyrants go unchecked.

It is resulting in vast migration as people seek safety from human rights abuses, and many others look for a better life on more prosperous shores.

This is something all world leaders need to confront – including the new president of the United States.

Refreshing decision

It's a sad fact that the reaction to falling revenue is often to make cuts or raise prices.

And so it is refreshing to hear that Broads Authority members rejected a suggestion that tolls should be raised for boaters at the historic Mutford Lock to cover a shortfall.

The lock, at Oulton Broad, is the only remaining lock on the Broads, and is one of two accesses from the North Sea.

Now, instead of raising prices in a bid to cover the costs of keeping it in operation, the authority will take a more active part in marketing "the gateway to the southern Broads" to encourage more people to use it.

A positive way to keep a vital route open while balancing the books.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ This tranquil scene at Brancaster beach in north Norfolk was sent in by Jackie Moore. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

The Maori language may be alive – but it is not well

Peter
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I wrote recently about the role that is being played by English in killing off indigenous languages around the world. I pointed to the Pacific as an area where English is doing some of the greatest damage, and I singled out the Polynesian languages, Hawaiian and New Zealand Maori, as being particularly endangered.

Mr Oldfield from Acle then kindly wrote to the EDP to assure me that I could stop worrying about Maori; and his letter was published under the heading "the Maori Language is Alive and Well".

I wish that that was true; but sadly it is not. The Maori language is alive. But it is not well.

A language is only truly alive if it has native speakers and if those native speakers can pass their language on to their children naturally in an environment where they can use the language on a normal basis in their everyday lives. A language which has no native speakers is dead. And a language which is losing its native speakers is dying.

Mr Oldfield points out – perfectly correctly – that some schools do teach Maori. The language is employed to an extent on TV. And Maori words are used



■ The Maori language is dying out like so many others, says Peter Trudgill.

Picture: WAYNE DROUGHT/AP

in New Zealand English. But the 2013 census showed that only 14pc of adult Maoris can speak Maori well. So the sad truth is that only about 2pc – one in 50 – of the population of New Zealand today are fluent speakers of the indigenous New Zealand language.

Even this 2pc seems set to decline because things are not moving in the right direction: 39pc of Maori over 65 report being able to speak the language, but this is a substantial drop from 53pc in 1996. Amongst Maori children aged five to nine, only 17pc can speak Maori compared to 22pc in 1996. And anyway, very many of these child speakers speak something

which is not really Maori. They have grown up speaking English as their native language. They have learnt Maori through educational programmes. And their "Maori" often consists of sentences containing Maori words but using English grammatical structures.

Mr Oldfield's contention that English is more likely to die out than Maori is very wide of the mark. There are no monolingual Maori speakers left in New Zealand. The majority of Maori are monolingual English speakers; and the number of Pakeha (European origin) Kiwis who can speak Maori fluently is extremely small.