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SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Osborne tests economic weather, but Cyprus casts a long shadow

All the talk this morning will be of what George Osborne can do in his budget statement today to help the British economy.

But Mr Osborne's biggest levers may amount to little more than matchsticks when faced with shifting away the lead-like difficulties forming in the Mediterranean sea.

An £8.6bn bailout for Cyprus has been agreed by the EU and IMF, but in order to access it the Cypriot government must hit all bank depositors in the country with a one-off levy.

Thankfully it is a stretch at this stage to say that the banking crisis will cause a run on banks in Italy and Spain.

Conditions in Cyprus are very specific; it is a country with 19bn euros in economic output, but with banks that hold 68bn euros in deposits, much belonging to rich Russians.

But there will be ramifications. There will be depositors who feel the time is right to remove money from any southern European bank, something which will weaken them.

Meanwhile the very concept of directly taxing a bank's customers to bail out the bank is a Rubicon that has now been crossed and if needs be in the future can be revisited.

For now the British government must do what it can to help British expats who find themselves unable to access cash in Cyprus.

But it must also look just a little more into the future to put up what blocks and muster what international action is necessary to protect this country from the fall out of this deeply worrying situation.

Driving our responsibility

The death toll on Norfolk's roads has reached agonising levels in recent weeks showing just how treacherous our highways can be.

There are too many heartbreaking bunches of flowers on roadsides – a constant reminder of how dangerous driving can be.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital trauma consultant Alistair Steel and many other hospital staff in the region, along with emergency service workers, see the full extent of what a car crash can do.

About 300 people are seriously injured on Norfolk's roads each year – and 34 die as a result of their injuries. Just last week seven people died in four separate crashes at Horstead, Sandringham, Hevingham, Little Fransham and Thorney, in Cambridgeshire.

Campaigners are calling for improvements to road infrastructure, but each time we get behind the wheel we must take responsibility, treat the road with respect and think of the consequences.

We must heed Dr Steel's warning that: "A moment's inattention can change so many lives".

Keep the show on the road

Organisers of the Royal Norfolk Show are right to think creatively to address parking problems.

Accessing the site remains the biggest headache on what should be one of Norfolk's showpiece weekends.

And those who travel miles to attend the show are unlikely to return if their abiding memory is not of a family day out celebrating the best of our county, but of hours spent gridlocked on the way there and back.

Delays are almost inevitable given the popularity of the show – even clever traffic management cannot cause 7,000 vehicles to vanish – but improvements must be sought for the benefit of the event as a whole.

We must hope a solution can be found, so that our visitors remember the show for the right reasons.

WORDS FOR LIFE

Let go of your concerns! Then you will know that I am God.
Psalm 46:10



READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY



HARRY READ

SMALL WONDER: A tiny but inquisitive harvest mouse pokes its head through a mossy hole. If you would like to submit a picture for this feature, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Decline in local accent is a sign of the times

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When I was at school in the 1950s and '60s, at the CNS – or as it's now called, CNS – 30 out of the 32 boys in my class had been born in the Norwich area. Of their 60 parents, something like 50 had grown up in the Norwich area too.

Things aren't like that any more.

Nearly all of those 30, too, spoke with a local accent, to a greater or lesser extent. Things aren't like that any more either:

"To a greater or lesser extent". Yes, some of us were more 'Norwich' than others. The elephant in this room is social class. Discussions of local dialects often ignore the importance of social background. Unlike in more egalitarian nations, the higher up the social scale you go in this country, the fewer regional features there are in people's accents – until you get to the top, where there are no regional features at all. You can tell our prime minister was educated at a so-called Public School, but you can't tell where he's from.

When the City of Norwich School took part in the nationwide BBC radio quiz show Top of the Form, we were as puzzled by the team selection as we were many decades later by some of Glenn Roeder's Norwich City eleven. Were these really the four cleverest boys in the school? And why did the headmaster select this boy to be school captain rather than that one?

Now I'm older and wiser, I realise what



SOCIAL CHANGES: Fewer people in Norwich now speak with a local accent.

was going on. Speaking with a local accent hindered your chances of selection. You'd be lucky to even get on the bench. The headmaster used to talk about his "better boys". If you came from Norwich, and sounded like it when you spoke, you probably weren't one of those.

The good news is that people aren't quite that blinkered any more, though we've still got a long way to go to get rid of prejudice against local accents altogether.

But the bad news is that our headmaster would have had a bigger squad to select from these days. Many fewer people in Norwich

have a local accent. East Anglian speech is on the defensive. It's gradually receding geographically.

Essex used to be East Anglian. Now most of it isn't. But our speech is receding socially too.

In modern Norwich, if you want to be absolutely sure of hearing local accents, it's no good going to Waitrose. You have to go on the Market and buy yourself some chips.

■ **Peter Trudgill is president of Friends of Norfolk Dialect.**
■ **What do you think? Email: EDPletters@archant.co.uk**