

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Lobbying clean-up needed to restore faith in our leaders

The wounds to public trust in the political system after the MPs' expenses scandal are still not healed. Disengagement and disillusionment are evident in the shockingly low turn-out to the ballot box in many recent elections and declining memberships in the parties of the political establishment.

The latest row over lobbying, which centres around allegations MPs and peers agreed to carry out parliamentary work for payment, will do little to help heal this gaping sore.

Whether a few bad apples, or whether it is symptomatic of a wider culture in both houses of parliament, is yet to be seen.

Like the widespread expenses abuses, it is a free press which has exposed the dark side to lobbying and stopped it from going unchecked. The public interest case in this investigative reporting is clear.

Prime minister David Cameron warned more than three years ago that lobbying was the "next big scandal waiting to happen" but he has failed to act on the issue.

Such predictions should have been followed by tangible changes. A register of lobbyists, which was sidelined in the Queen's Speech, must now become a priority in light of these scandals and must result in a transparent lobbying industry, and one that is policed.

As a nation we have huge challenges ahead.

We must have confidence that our elected politicians and peers who have been handed power are making decisions of great importance with integrity, conviction and for the right reasons – not for the highest bidder.

Let's glory in Norfolk

Norfolk's magnetism is evident in the many families which can trace their local heritage back for generations, the love of the county by newcomers and the numbers who leave only to return to start a career, bring up a family or eventually retire.

We have long hailed the benefits of a holiday here, but we now want to express why this small corner of the world is so special.

We don't mind how you do it – whether you put pen to paper, use your smartphone or camera to take a photograph or video or use social media to share your thoughts – we would love to hear what Norfolk means to you.

One of our famous sons, Burnham Thorpe-born Horatio Nelson reportedly once said: "I am a Norfolk man and glory in being so."

This is your chance to glory in the county too.

Continued prosperity

It is testament to the success of Pleasurewood Hills that its mascot Woody Bear, who parachuted into the attraction to celebrate its 30th birthday this weekend, is still such a vivid childhood memory for so many.

This successful Suffolk business has not only been an important part of our tourist industry for many years, but a great link between generations. Those who once went as children are now the parents of the wide-eyed youngsters on their first trip to the attraction.

We wish Pleasurewood Hills a very happy birthday and hope it prospers for another 30 years and beyond.

WORDS FOR LIFE

I will give thanks to you with all my heart, O Lord my God.
Psalm 86:12



READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ Stan Groom took this picture of a lady bird on silver leaf flower in his Attleborough garden. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

If in doubt, leave out the problematic apostrophe

Peter
Trudgill



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Some people are very keen on apostrophes. Some people don't like apostrophes.

Jeremy Clarkson doesn't like apostrophes. Some people don't like Jeremy Clarkson.

Is any of this important? I reckon apostrophes come into the class of things which are "quite important but not as important as some people think". They play a role in distinguishing between well and we'll, hell and he'll, shell and she'll, wed and we'd, shed and she'd, were and we're, and, sometimes, ill and I'll. But nothing very serious will happen if you write Im instead of I'm, hes instead of he's, theyre instead of they're, dont instead of don't. Perhaps someone could confuse cant with can't if you omit the apostrophe, but I doubt it.

It's obvious that apostrophes can't be enormously important, because we don't use them when we're speaking. Some clever journalists have written about how it's absolutely vital to get the possessive apostrophe right: people will be confused, they say, if you don't distinguish between plural cats, singular possessive cat's, and



■ Missing apostrophes: Do they get you hot under the collar?

plural possessive cats'. But that can't be right – when we're speaking we pronounce them exactly the same, and I don't ever remember wondering, in all my many decades as a native English speaker, whether someone was really referring to more than one cat or not.

But if you are going to use apostrophes, it's a good idea to get them right (though even the self-appointed experts don't agree about everything – are we supposed to mind our ps and qs or our p's and q's?).

For instance, writing cat's for cats is a bad idea. And in fact writing cat's when you mean cats is much worse than writing cats when you mean cat's. It makes it look

as if you are trying hard to get things right but even so you are not clever enough to succeed. So if you advertise cucumber's and cabbage's, potential customers might just think that you are not a very successful greengrocer either. A good rule of thumb for using apostrophes before an 's' would seem to be: if in doubt, leave them out. And if you put them in, get them right. Often when I'm sending emails, I don't use apostrophes.

I'm such a slow typist that anything that saves time for me is a bonus. I also expect that if I leave some out when I'm writing for the EDP, they'll put them back in for me. Let's see.