

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

We demand answers from phone firms as we launch campaign

Today's front page lampoons the phone companies by using the familiar face of ET to drive home the point about the region's abysmal mobile phone coverage.

We recognise that the situation is far from a laughing matter but, sadly, reliable signals are alien to too many people.

Deep into the 21st century, in a world dominated by instant communication, parts of our region remain stranded in the 20th century when it comes to their mobile phone connectivity.

An area that has the expertise and clout to transport Britain out of recession is being restricted by a signal straitjacket.

It is not just a nuisance: it is a body blow to our productivity, our tourist trade, our ability to attract investment and, most importantly, it threatens lives.

Too often, we hear of business people who fear that they will have to relocate from this beautiful area because the mobile signal is so intermittent that they are losing trade. That should never happen.

And we hear of people whose health is threatened because they cannot make an emergency call when they are in trouble in a "not spot". That should never happen.

Time and again, we cannot get through. But, with fierce determination reinforcing our Let's Get Connected campaign, we will get through to the phone firms and the government to get this ridiculous situation sorted out.

If we as a region unite behind this campaign, they will not be able to leave our calls unanswered, and we will Get Connected at long last.

Preparing for future

There are understandably parts of the Liberal Democrat party in Glasgow who feel bruised by being in the coalition government as poll ratings slump. Some activists still feel badly let down by the party's tuition fee U-turn.

But despite the inevitable differences on some policy areas, the party is in a surprisingly upbeat mood.

Ministers have been taking to the stage one by one to reel off what they have done to stop the "bad" Tories in their tracks. Lib Dem poll ratings may not make easy reading, but there is a sense that the party is preparing to be part of a government again. There is a real chance that neither Labour nor the Tories will get a majority at the next election, and the Lib Dems need to think carefully about what they would do.

Protecting our past

Norfolk is rich in heritage, be it our wonderful medieval churches, glorious country houses or the village stocks.

And who better to make sure those buildings and sights are protected from going to rack and ruin than the very people who live and work among them?

Broadland District Council's heritage warden idea is a very good one – it's a kind of neighbourhood watch for our precious past.

It will be interesting to see if the idea blazes a trail, because this sounds like a scheme other councils might be wise to adopt.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ A long tailed tit in Rosemary Howard's garden in Hainford. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Most of us go with the flow when it comes to pronunciation

Peter Trudgill



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A correspondent has written an interesting letter to the EDP about my column on pronunciations such as "fing" and "bovver". I wrote that when it comes to natural language changes of this type, we've got no choice but to – as another correspondent put it – "go with the flow". Her response was "er, no actually".

I'm afraid she's wrong, though, because she already has – gone with the flow, I mean.

I have never met this correspondent. But I know for a fact that her own speech demonstrates very clearly the truth of what I say. Does she pronounce meet and meat, see and sea, team and team the same? Of course she does. She has gone with the flow. Pairs of words such as these were originally pronounced differently, which is why they're not spelt the same. But then the two vowels merged, like th and f are doing now. And all English speakers went with the flow.

Does she pronounce the k in know? Of course she doesn't. All English speakers used to pronounce it, which is why there is a k in the spelling, but now no one does.



■ 'Am I bovvered?' Catherine Tate's comic catchphrase reflects a change in the way many of us speak.

Do people in this part of the world have the original hard g at the end of words such as long and tongue, like people from Liverpool and Manchester? No we don't. People from the north west haven't gone with that particular flow yet, but we have.

Do you pronounce Wales and whales the same? Fur and fir? Moor and more? Many Scottish people haven't gone with these flows, but most of the rest of us have, including even those East Anglians who dislike "fing" and "bovver".

Does our letter writer pronounce the r in car and cart, as Americans do? I'd be surprised. If she doesn't pronounce

farther and father differently, she has gone along with everybody else in the south-east of England in accepting this change. No doubt when the r-sound in these words was being lost by younger people, older people complained that they weren't "enunciating" clearly. But that made no difference.

Old English used to have an h-sound at the beginning of words such as ring and roof. If you feel your ancestors were remiss in going with the flow and not enunciating these hs, you are of course free to start saying hring and hroof if you want to. But I think you'll be on your own.

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The Lord is my strength and my defence.
Psalm 118:14

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