

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Conservative rifts on Europe stay sealed, for once

An unusual thing has happened. The Conservative Party has united over an EU membership issue – not normally the outcome when that thorny topic gets raised.

In a national newspaper yesterday, Adam Afriyie, a man touted as a Tory leadership candidate, suggested voters were “not convinced” about the prime minister’s pledge of a public vote on EU membership in 2017.

The Windsor MP said he wanted to “strengthen” David Cameron’s hand in renegotiating the UK’s membership by amending legislation aimed at enshrining that promise in law.

There was a time when such a proclamation would have sparked Conservative in-fighting. But not now.

Conservatives, on both sides of the Europe debate, criticised Mr Afriyie, with some of those who had rebelled against Mr Cameron’s failure to include a referendum bill in the Queen’s Speech, among the most critical.

Their big fear was that, rather than guarantee the in/out referendum, the amendments could play straight into the hands of those who do not want it.

It’s not often the Conservatives agree on their approach to Europe, but yesterday was a rare example where they did, even if pragmatism was the spur.

While Mr Afriyie thinks the hostility to his suggestion will be short-lived, the Conservatives, with a general election getting ever nearer, simply cannot afford the divisions over Europe to come to the fore again.

Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg knows that, which is exactly why he will stoke the flames again this week with an attack on the referendum promise.

Cuts are going to hurt

There’s no doubt that, with Norfolk County Council looking to make £189m of savings over the next three years, services are going to suffer.

One of the proposals is to make cuts to the council’s trading standards service. And, on the face of it, that might seem like not much of a big deal.

But the reality is that, if those cuts go ahead, then work to tackle fraudsters, rogue traders and businesses which sell alcohol to children will be hit.

Inspections of the county’s farm businesses, including checks on animal welfare and diseases, will have to be scaled back.

It’s easy to forget what important work trading standards officers do. Much of their work is, by its very nature, hidden. But it would be a big loss if their work is curtailed by cuts.

Go running to get fit

We are delighted today to celebrate the growing craze of park runs. Around our great region, enthusiastic people are donning their trainers and getting out to have fun and get fit. Yes there is a competitive element to it and well done to those who are winning the races and clocking up personal bests. But equal praise to the beginners who are giving it a go and joining in. May every town soon have its own park run.

looking for GOD.com

If you mean yes, say yes. If you mean no, say no. Do this so that you won't be condemned.

James 5:12

tlc

tlcnorwich.com

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ Nick Appleton photographed this otter at Hardley. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Can words ending in 'man' apply equally to women?

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■ Royal Mail bicycles, for use by postmen, postwomen or post-ladies....

Everybody who lives in my part of Norwich agrees that we have a truly wonderful, helpful, popular, and very efficient postman. Her name is Kelly.

Can I call her the postman? She calls herself our post-lady, which is very reasonable since she is, obviously, not a man.

But these words ending in -man are very interesting. Can they apply to women? Does it feel OK to you to say “she’s a postman”? I don’t find it too bad. After all, we don’t say “post man”. We say “postm’n”. “She’s a milkman” does sound odd to me, though. Is that just because there aren’t many female milkmen around? Postwoman sounds OK – but milkwoman doesn’t, does it?

In the 1970s, there was a lot of fuss about ‘chairman’. Feminists argued it made no sense to call a woman a chair-man: it was an outrage to imply that only men were suitable for such a position. Some people said a woman should be called a “chair-woman”. Others preferred “chair”. Yet others didn’t want to be called after a piece of furniture.

Personally, I thought “she’s the chairm’n” sounded all right. Arguing that chairman

meant ‘chair-man’ was, I reckoned, an example of ‘the etymological fallacy’, which holds that the current meaning of a word should be the same as its etymology, its historical meaning. This isn’t so. Obviously a chairman was originally a man in a chair. But a cupboard was equally obviously originally a board for cups; and a saucer was obviously originally something for serving sauces in. A word means what it means, not what it used to mean.

But a real sexist outrage did, in a way, occur – even if it happened very many centuries ago. The word “man” originally meant ‘human being’ or ‘person’ – as in “mankind” or “man is destroying the

planet”. But then there was a gradual shift of meaning so that ‘man’ mostly ended up meaning ‘male person’ – as if men were normal as human beings and women less so. Nobody seems to find the word “woman” sexist, even though it ends in -man too.

It comes originally from the Anglo-Saxon “wif-mann”, where “wif” (modern “wife”) meant ‘woman’, and “mann” meant ‘person’. (The old Anglo-Saxon word for ‘male person’ was “wer”.) There was no such thing as posting letters in early Anglo-Saxon Norwich but, if there had been and we’d been alive then, everyone round this way would most certainly have wanted Kelly to be our post-mann.