

# Eastern Daily Press

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## The trouble with our slow trains is not a minor matter

So, the managing director of Network Rail for the Anglia region says travelling from Norwich to London is like “driving a Morris Minor up the M1”.

There will be many train users, tired of the time it takes to travel a little over a hundred miles to and from the capital, who will agree with that sentiment.

But is he right to say that the answer lies in better trains, rather than better track? Is Richard Schofield simply passing the buck on this one?

Well, yes and no. As anyone who has travelled on other train services around the country will testify, boarding a train from Norwich to London can feel a little like stepping back in time.

The stock is old but, given Abellio only have a short-term franchise, you can hardly blame them for holding back the big buck investment.

Of course, if they win the contract beyond 2016, then they can expect to shoulder the blame if trains still crawl to the capital.

But Network Rail, as owner and operator of the actual track and infrastructure, clearly does have a part to play.

Mr Schofield is correct, that the government has not announced “a load of money” which can be spent on the Anglia route.

No, this region is once again in the role of Cinderella. The big money always seems to be spent in other parts of the country.

The £43bn High Speed Rail 2 route from London to Birmingham and beyond is just the latest – and highly controversial – example of that.

## A city in mourning

The names of those who perished in the horrendous helicopter crash at the Clutha Vaults pub in Glasgow are starting to emerge, bringing home the human cost of this tragedy.

Yet in the midst of the darkness which has engulfed the city, the very best of human nature has shone bright.

Firefighters have worked non-stop to work their way through the wreckage, passers-by rushed to the scene to help, hospital workers went in on their days off to treat the victims and people queued to give blood to help save lives.

And the church, which plays such a crucial role in the Scottish city, has been offering much-needed support to its people.

This is a time for mourning, but it is also a time of coming together.

## The joy of Christmas

How wonderful to see thousands of people come together for the switching on of festive lights this weekend.

It's great that communities in places such as Wymondham, Swaffham, North Walsham, Bungay, Lowestoft, Thorpe St Andrew and Wisbech take such pride in their celebrations.

Winter nights are cold, but the twinkling of lights helps warm our hearts.

## READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ Eve Stoneburgh captured this scene as the mist rose near Thetford when the sun went down. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit [www.iwitness24.co.uk](http://www.iwitness24.co.uk)

## And there are rules. But I don't know what they're for

Peter Trudgill



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When children go to school, they're taught arithmetic because they don't know arithmetic. They have French lessons because they don't know French. And teachers teach them geography because they don't know geography.

English is different. Children aren't taught English because they don't know English. If they didn't know English, they couldn't be taught arithmetic or geography – or anything. Teachers teach children to read; they teach them to write – well, we hope; and they teach them English vocabulary. They also, I expect, teach them about the grammar of English and other languages: everyone needs to know something of grammatical categories like nouns, verbs, and conjunctions.

But what else is there left for them to teach? Not much. When I went to school, they could have taught us about English dialects, or the history of our language. But they didn't. Instead they invented things to teach. They took some made-up 'rules', and taught them to us. They could do that because the rules were fantasy rules. Since they weren't real, we didn't know them, and so the teachers could



■ Children at school are taught made-up 'rules' about English, says Peter Trudgill

spend time telling us about them! What a foolish waste of time and energy.

One of these imaginary rules was “you mustn't start a sentence with a conjunction”. My response is: why not? Who says? But an EDP correspondent has kindly written to query the fact that I start sentences with ‘and’ and ‘but’ myself, and says she believes it's important that one shouldn't do this. I'm always genuinely grateful to people who care about language, but in this case I would like to refer the her to the respected Chicago Manual of Style which says that this ‘rule’ has “no historical or grammatical foundation”. Conjunctions do conjoin, but they

can conjoin sentences just as well as they can conjoin phrases into sentences. English conjunctions have always been used to start sentences – though we have to note that the idea of the ‘sentence’ itself is a new one. After all, no one speaks in sentences. The notion that a written sentence should begin with a capital letter, contain at least one verb, and end with a full stop dates only from the 1600s.

Another imaginary rule we were taught at school was “you mustn't end a sentence with a preposition”. We didn't know that rule either – because there's no such rule! In English a preposition has always been a good thing to end a sentence with.

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The Lord will look on you with  
favour and give you peace.  
Numbers 6:26

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