

Eastern Daily Press

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So little light at the end of the tunnel for those wanting to buy

The issue of young people finding it difficult to get on the housing ladder is not new.

But there is no doubt that the situation is becoming rapidly more serious.

The National Housing Federation report into rural housing is alarming – particularly the fact that people working in rural areas would need a 150pc pay rise to be able to afford an average house.

Remarkably, house prices in parts of Norfolk and Suffolk are 13-20 times the average salary.

The depressing situation is exacerbated by Bank of England governor Mark Carney's announcement that banks will be urged to limit mortgage agreements to 4.5 times income.

His decision is understandable, for with house prices rising at a tremendous rate, something must be done to avoid a bursting of the housing bubble.

Nonetheless, that does not mean that there should be no sympathy for the innocent victims: the people living and working in rural East Anglia, who want to buy their own place and put down roots.

With wages rising slowly and house prices rocketing, many people must wonder whether they will ever be able to afford to buy.

Their despair will deepen when they see more and more people coming in from outside with the money to buy a first or second home in our idyllic counties.

Housing associations and charities are working hard to help local people.

But it is difficult to offer more than a crumb of comfort, which is a crying shame for local people and the balance of our communities.

Iconic mills may be lost

Standing tall on the Broads landscape, Norfolk's historic mills feature on many a postcard.

But with hundreds of the iconic structures dotted across the county and many in need of repair, Broads Authority bosses face an unenviable task.

Funding is finite, though a £3m lottery funding bid seeks to preserve some of the architecture of 'Britain's Magical Waterland'.

John Packman, chief executive of the authority, said there needed to be a "sustainable strategy" and not all mills could be kept.

In other words, the authority faces the question: which mills will be saved, and which left to ruin?

It will be a sad day when a conscious decision is made not to repair a mill that is in grave need.

For once they are lost, they are lost forever.

Do your little bit for terns

We have beautiful landscapes and wonderful buildings - including the myriad mills and drainage pumps.

But our region also has extraordinary wildlife like the small but perfectly formed little tern.

Sadly, they are rare and fragile. So - encouraged by the National Trust, which does so much to sustain and protect them - we really must take care around their nests. For a little reaping of thought, there is much joy to harvest.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ Cromer Pier bathed in the gorgeous colours of sunset, as photographed by Kate Royall. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Why is 'on' used for 'of' in Norfolk and Suffolk dialect?

Peter
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A letter-writer to the EDP tells us that she overheard someone on a bus saying "I was only told on it yesterday - I suppose you heard on it ages ago". She asked why "on" was used here instead of "about".

One answer to this question is: why not? It's what people say in these parts.

You might as well ask: why do Americans say "elevator" instead of "lift"? Well, they just do. That's what Americans say.

I also think we should be careful with the phrase "instead of", which makes it seem like there's something strange or wrong about using "on" in these contexts.

There isn't. It's entirely normal in Norfolk and Suffolk to say "What do you think on it?", or "There were two on 'em", or "What are you a-doin' on?"

And these examples make it clear that the word "on" was not being used on that bus as the equivalent of "about".

Our local usage of "on" corresponds to "of". Older people may remember hearing the request, when someone wanted a cigarette: "Any on yuh any on yuh?" = "Have any of you any on you?"

But the question this correspondent asked really is an interesting one. How did it come about that we use "on" in this



■ 'Any on yuh any on yuh?' - an old-style request for a cigarette.

way? The answer lies in the common linguistic process of reinterpretation.

There's a clue to this in another question she also posed in the same letter: why did someone else she overheard say "He reckoned he could get a top of that there hill"?

Well, here, "a top" is being used rather than "on top"; and in fact "atop" is a perfectly good English word, where the a- is historically derived from "on", as in many other words like alive, asleep, abroad, afoot. The full form "on" has been reduced to the weakened, unstressed a-

Now, it so happens that the same reduction to a- occurs with "of".

We don't normally say "a cup ovv tea" but "a cupp a-tea". So a- can be a weak form corresponding both to of and on. Because of that, the a- in "what do you think a-that?" became reinterpreted as the weak form of "on" rather than the weak form of "of".

At some stage in our language history, when a full form was called for, "on" started being used where "of" had been used before.

And that's what I think a-that.

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God our Father loved us and by his kindness gave us everlasting encouragement and good hope.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

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