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We can all help to bring down waiting times to see a GP

For most of us, our GP is the first and most important link we have to the NHS.

So for one in seven patients to have to face a wait of at least a week to see one seems to suggest a system in need of some correction.

Doctors blame an ageing population and a recruitment problem. There are, apparently, dozens of unfilled vacancies in Norfolk and Waveney. But is the recruitment problem worse here than elsewhere? If not, they why is the situation worse here than elsewhere?

Labour think they have a solution – an eye-catching pledge that if they are voted into power, they will introduce a 48 hour maximum waiting time to see a GP.

It looks almost too good to be true and doctors seem far from convinced by the scheme, which would apparently be paid for by investing £100 million Labour thinks can be saved by cutting bureaucracy.

Clearly, in the eight months leading up to the general election, we can expect much more of this to-ing and fro-ing over the NHS by politicians of all sides, and various pledges that seem to offer a magical solution.

It is hard to envisage exactly how all the NHS' problems can be solved. But for all of our sakes, that is what must be achieved.

In the meantime, there is something we can all do that may help to improve the situation over waiting times, and that is by making sure we only call on our doctors when we really need them.

To ensure the most in need are able to swiftly get the available slots, the so-called "worried well" need to stay at home.

In the right direction

Is Thetford moving forward? That's the question asked today, as we evaluate the £25m of investments the town has seen in recent years.

One of Norfolk's undoubted jewels, Thetford – like many towns – has been through hard times, caused, in large part, by the loss of several major employers. It is always a long way back from such setbacks. Yet there are signs that Thetford is moving in the right direction.

The recent investment has been much needed, but has it been well-directed? That seems to depend on who you ask. Those behind the projects speak of their success, but many of those who live and work in the town sound like they still need some convincing.

Thetford is moving forward, but there is work still to be done. The pace can still be quickened.

All they need is love

How many husbands will today feel a little tinge of inadequacy, on reading of the outlandishly romantic gesture made by 67-year-old Gordon Olley, to mark the 50th anniversary of his first date with his now wife Mary, 65?

Not only did he take her back the same cinema they had visited on that day in 1964, but he went to the trouble of hiring it out so they could watch the very same film, *A Hard Day's Night*, starring The Beatles.

Well, hats off to him, The world needs more old romantics like the Olleys. After all – as the Fab Four themselves put it – All You Need is love.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ A sunny bank holiday at Hunstanton by Paul Bushell. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk.

Our dialect is just as moving and lyrical as any other

Peter
Trudgill



email: newsdesk@archant.co.uk

When he was conducting his 2012 anti-Norfolk dialect campaign from the safety of the other side of the Suffolk border, one thing former EDP columnist Ken Hurst did was to contrast the Norfolk dialect with the dialect of North Yorkshire. He quoted the famous Lyke Wake Dirge: "When thoo frae hence away art passed, ivvery neet an'all..."

"There, Norfolk dialect lovers," he wrote gleefully, "is proper dialect for you!"

You can see what he means. The language is impressively different. But Ken was being provocative – and I'm provoked into saying that he was being unfair. The Lyke Wake Dirge dates from the 1500s, so it's bound to look very different from modern English. The word "lyke", by the way, means "body". We still have it in Norfolk in the form of "lych", as in the lychgate to churchyards, where the first part of funeral services used to be held.

Northern dialects do seem more "dialectal" than southern dialects like ours because Standard English originated in London, with some input from Oxford and Cambridge – and from Norfolk. Norwich was the second-largest city in the realm and there was a lot of immigration into



■ A poem on the death of Dick Bagnall Oakeley shows the beauty of the Norfolk dialect, says our columnist.

London from Norfolk. So it's not so much the case that Norfolk dialect is quite like Standard English as that Standard English is quite like the Norfolk dialect!

Today, dialects north of the River Humber are more conservative than English dialects anywhere else in the world. Linguistic changes in England normally begin in London and spread outwards from there. So the far-northern dialects still have medieval pronunciations like "hoose", "moose", "oot" rather than modern "house", "mouse", "out". The London-based change from the one vowel to the other, which reached Norfolk centuries ago, hasn't arrived there yet.

But you don't have to go to Yorkshire to

find dialect poetry which is moving and lyrical. You need look no further, I reckon, than the poem by our own dialect writer, the late John Kett, which was written in 1974 on the passing of his friend Dick Bagnall Oakeley.

Dick – a naturalist, teacher, writer, and all-round Norfolk Renaissance man – was a great speaker, friend and defender of our dialect.

John Kett's poem begins: "This arter-nune I see the swallers flyin by the pond; They'a come agin, a-glidin trew the air: An baads in thousans there mus' be, A-comin in acrorst the sea. But he int watchin on the marshes there...."

And that's proper dialect for you.

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The man who lives an upright life
and speaks the truth... that is the
man who shall dwell on the
heights.

Isaiah 33:15

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