

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Heads are working together for the good of Norfolk

If you ask any local politician what the biggest challenge facing our region is, there is a good chance they will say education. And if you ask any local headteacher what the biggest problem facing education is, there is a good chance they will say teacher recruitment and retention.

It has become a truism that no education system is better than its teachers, but it illustrates why this matters so much for our region. Put simply, if our schools cannot attract the best teachers, or hang on to those they already have, our children will not receive as good an education as they deserve.

That is why this week's launch of the new Educate Norfolk campaign is so encouraging.

The strategy is broad in scope, covering everything from increasing the supply of people training to become teachers, and finding ways of keeping newly-qualified teachers in the profession, to aggressively marketing the benefits of teaching in Norfolk, and encouraging former teachers to return to school.

The strategy is also specific in detail about how to achieve these aims.

But, just as encouraging as the content of the Educate Norfolk campaign, is the very fact of its existence. Norfolk's headteachers have identified a serious problem, grabbed it by the scruff of the neck, and are working hard to find the solution together. Those involved come from primary and secondary schools, from academies and non-academies, and have worked with the council, unions, training bodies and others.

They recognise that by working for Norfolk's common good, rather than just their own individual schools, everyone will benefit.

Budget will hold steady

It was November when most of the detail of government's financial blueprint for the country was set out.

In it there were promises of money to upgrade parts of the A47 and a pledge to make a new rail company pay for new carriages on Norwich's main rail line to London, among other sweeteners.

On Wednesday, there will be little of this. The chancellor will be desperate to produce a "steady as she goes" budget on Wednesday – something that will not come unstuck before the General Election. The political consensus among the two main parties – the Conservatives and Labour – is that the books need to be balanced.

Where they differ is how it will be done. There are many voters who are still undecided about how they will cast their ballot – the chancellor will be hoping the details of where the limited resources will be spent will sway them.

Dock Green methods?

Newly-retired Southwold community police officer Chris Sadler has spoken of his guiding principle that a heavy-handed approach to policing is not always the best. Building up a relationship and getting to know people has been his watchword – and it has proved to be a success. It's a common sense approach which would have been only too familiar to Dixon of Dock Green – and which we would do well to remember as funding shortages hit all our police forces.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ A fox having a doze in the afternoon sun at Scratby was captured by Mike Arreff. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Ignoring foibles of speech would make us happier

Peter
Trudgill



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Norway is one of the most democratic, egalitarian countries in the world. It is also one of the happiest and most successful – many commentators believe that this isn't a coincidence.

Norway is the top country in the world on the United Nation's Human Development Index (Britain is 14th).

It is second on the worldwide Happiness Index (Britain is 22nd).

It is also the second richest, after Luxembourg, in terms of GDP by population (Britain is 23rd).

It comes third on the Quality of Life index (Britain is 27th). And it has the fifth lowest murder rate in the world (Britain is 30th, USA 117th).

Norway is also an enormously tolerant place.

Its philosophy manifests itself in attitudes to the way people speak. In England, speakers can be criticised for "speaking badly", or for their "bad English".

There's nothing like that in Norway: if you started talking about "bad Norwegian", no one would understand what you meant – they would be baffled.

As far as Norwegians are concerned, there are no dialects and accents of their language which are "bad".



■ Norway is one of the happiest countries in the world.

There's a long history of English children being told that the way they speak is incorrect: "Don't say 'I ain't got none' – it's wrong". In Norway, that would not happen. No Norwegian educator would want to say things like that, but even if they did, they would not be allowed to. It's against the law there to try to "correct" the way children speak.

In 1917 the Oslo Parliament approved a passage in the School Law which read: "Pupils are to use their own spoken variety, and teachers shall as far as possible adapt their natural spoken variety to the dialect of their pupils".

Teachers were not allowed to try to make children speak like them: if

anything, it was to be the other way round.

Today Norwegians still accept that pupils should use their local dialect in school. The current school law says: "For spoken language in the classroom, pupils and teaching staff decide for themselves which variety they will use. Staff and school managers, in their own choice of vocabulary and expression, shall also take into consideration as much as possible the local dialect of the pupils."

Achieving a more respectful and less hostile attitude to local accents and dialects in England might not make us as rich or successful as Norway. But it would surely make this country a fairer and happier place.

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Love... does not dishonour others,
it is not self-seeking, it is not easily
angered, it keeps no record of
wrongs.

1 Corinthians 13:5

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