

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Taxpayers need to know their money is being well spent

The cloak of secrecy around the MP allowance system before 2009 inevitably allowed the abuses which were exposed day after day and week after week at the height of the expenses scandal.

The new system may be bureaucratic for MPs and costly to run, but it is a price worth paying for the transparency that it allows.

MPs know that every claim they make must stand up to scrutiny in the court of public opinion.

The majority of people understand that our elected representatives need the tools to do the job.

They need staff to deal with the often complex problems of their constituents and support them in understanding the impact of how they vote, office equipment and to be able to travel and stay in London during the week.

They should and mostly do stand ready to explain why they are spending what they are, and how they are providing a service to the taxpayer.

Many work incredibly hard on our behalf.

They know that we can collectively decide every five years if we are getting value for money and act accordingly.

The same cannot be said of the House of Lords.

This week's series will demonstrate that the cost of democracy is high. Sending representatives to Brussels, Westminster, even county and city hall comes with a multi-million pound price tag.

It is important for us to see what we are getting in return for the ever scarcer taxpayer pound spent on our public servant.

This is vital if trust in politicians is to be rebuilt.

Prioritising pollution

We are blessed to live in one of the greenest parts of the UK.

But visitors to the centre of Norwich could, on some occasions, be forgiven for drawing comparisons between our city and London or Birmingham.

That's because the air pollution in parts of the centre of Norwich is far too high.

With pollution comes a lower quality of life, and councillors must act quickly to resolve this.

Finding the right amount of vehicles that can use city centre roads is key.

It's important that enough vehicles can get through to our shops and businesses – but we can't overload our fine centre with exhaust fumes.

Otherwise the thousands of shoppers and tourists will be driven away.

Hoax call is no joke

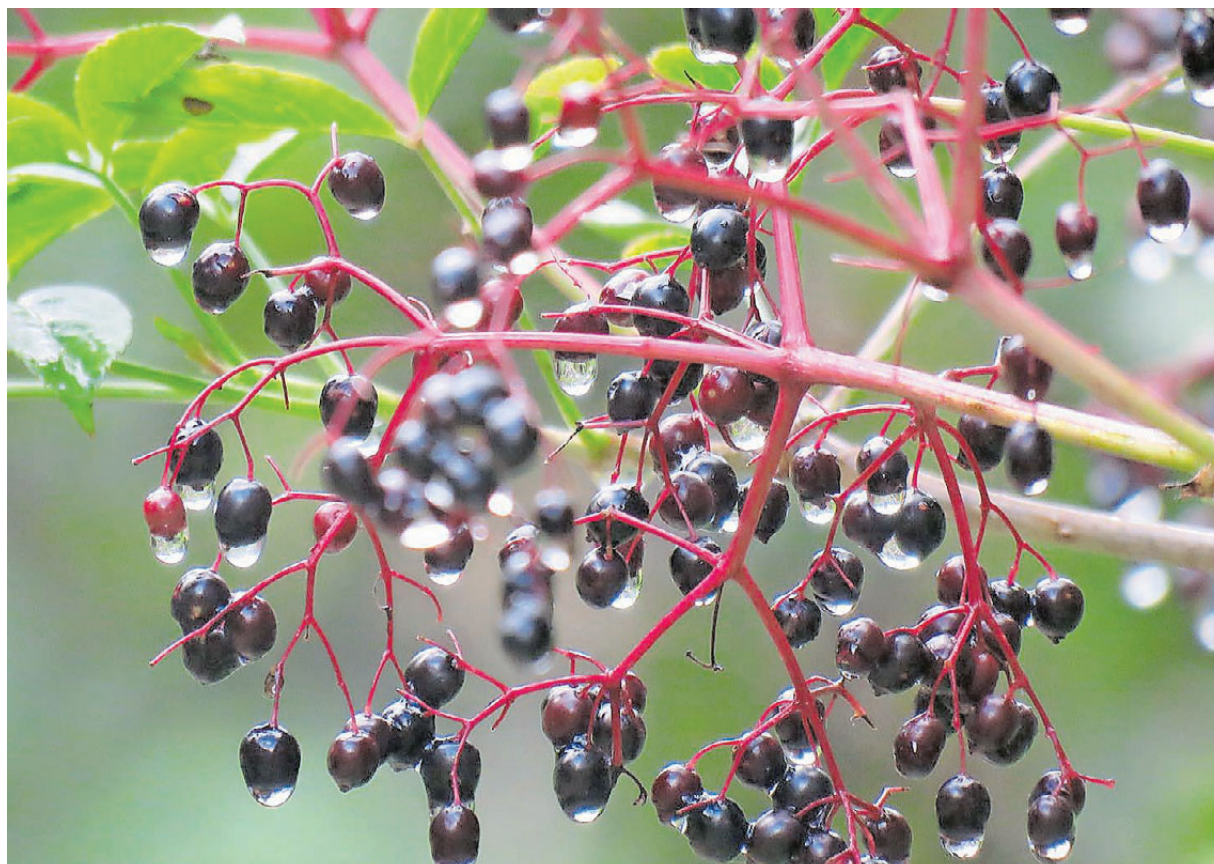
Lifeboat teams are the unsung heroes of our coastal towns, saving lives – and risking their own to do so.

So news that coastguard rescue teams from Mundesley and Happisburgh were scrambled in dangerous conditions in the small hours for what now appears to be a hoax call is disappointing.

It put the crews' lives at risk – and could have delayed them getting to a real emergency.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ Berries after rain were caught on camera in Hainford by Rosemary Howard. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Languages can be an opportunity - not a barrier

Peter
Trudgill



email: newsdesk@archant.co.uk

It is obvious that languages are barriers to communication. Most of us arriving for the first time in Moldova or Kazakhstan will not be able to communicate at all, unless we can find someone who has learned English.

It is easy to think, then, that the world would be a much better place if we got rid of our different languages. Surely, if we could all understand and communicate with one another in a single common language, then our planet would enjoy a more harmonious and peaceful future?

Well, it is easy to think that – until you remember the American Civil War, where both sides spoke English. Or the appalling genocide in Rwanda, where the Hutus spoke the same Bantu language, Kinyarwanda, as the Tutsis. Or the carnage in Yugoslavia which involved Croats, Serbs and Bosnians, who all spoke Serbo-Croat. All of the groups involved in these orgies of killing were able to understand one another perfectly well, but that did not help.

I prefer to think that barriers to communication are actually a Good Thing. Languages are barriers which can be penetrated – it is perfectly possible, and desirable, to learn foreign languages. But



■ A wayside cross in Moldova, where language could be a problem.

Picture: SUBMITTED

the separation of the world's population into groups speaking different languages does have the very beneficial consequence of helping to promote the growth of cultural diversity. And diversity can lead to the development of alternative possibilities for humankind for making social, political and technological progress: we are not all heading up the same, possibly blind, alley.

A world where everyone spoke the same language would be a less interesting place. But there is also a good chance that it would be a rather stagnant place too. If the entire population of the world consisted of native speakers of English, then we would probably not only all be watching

American soap operas on TV and drinking Coca Cola, we would also all tend to have the same values, the same ideas, and the same world-view. If diversity does lead to progress, then this would be a disturbing scenario.

It is already clear that English-speaking countries such as Britain and Australia are more vulnerable than many others to the infiltration of influence, not all of it beneficial, from American advertising, ideas and values.

I don't know the answers to the following questions – but have high school-leavers in Moldova actually started organising proms yet? Do children in Kazakhstan go trick-or-treating at Halloween?

lookingforGOD.com

Do not be anxious about anything,
but in everything, present your
requests to God.

Phil 4:6 tlcnorwich.com

tlc