

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Now is the time to transform the train service in our region

We're at a crunch time for our railway services.

In the next few months the government will decide which of three bidders will get the franchise to run the region's main operation for the next nine years.

It is vital they get that decision right – and follow through on the list of key expectations that have been drawn up.

For too long the region has had to put up with a Cinderella service when it comes to the railways.

Delays, over-running engineering works and technical faults have been an all-too common disruption to so many people's lives.

A new franchise, whether taken on by the current operator or someone new, offers a perfect opportunity to look again at priorities, improvements needed, the views of the public and start to put things right.

But, as our series will this week explore, none of these improvements will be possible to achieve by the franchise holder alone.

It will come as a shock to many that on the region's busiest service, seven out of 10 delays are recorded as the fault of Network Rail.

That figure is higher than the national average, which suggests the company needs to put more of a priority on the region than it currently does. It needs to look at its finance model and ask whether it is fair for all.

We are in an era when people are being increasingly challenged to leave their cars at home and look to alternative modes of transport.

But if those alternative options turn out to be more hassle, it is unrealistic to believe that things will change.

Support for appeal

It is a heartbreaking story of a young life taken too soon – in February last year, Beatrice Smith died of a rare heart condition at just three months old.

Since then her mother, Leigh, has shared the tragic story many times to raise awareness of East Anglia's Children's Hospices (EACH), moving thousands, including the Duchess of Cambridge, to tears.

So news that a poignant picture of Beatrice on her mother's shoulder will be used in a new poster campaign to help the charity is as inspiring as it is touching.

EACH is trying to raise £10m for the nook appeal, which will see a new children's hospice built to help hundreds more families in unimaginably tough situations. So, when you spot one of the 106 First Eastern Counties buses, we hope you will be inspired to support the appeal – and help Beatrice's legacy live on.

A lesson in kindness

We live in a world which serves up tragedy, terror and misery on an almost daily basis but every now and again something happens to lift us from the gloom.

The tale of Shylow Murphy is a case in point. Without the intervention of selfless stranger Abbi Claxton, the 20-year-old might still be on the streets. Thanks to Miss Claxton – and the generosity of many others who supported her social media campaign – he has a new start in life. The rest of us could learn from this humbling and heartwarming tale of human kindness.

Let the message of Christ dwell
among you richly as you teach and
admonish one another with all
wisdom.
(Colossians 3:16)

www.tlcnorwich.com



READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ A bright blue sky shows Little Snoring Church off in stark beauty in this photograph by Neil Sidell. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Anti-semitic? You had better mind your language

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Some commentators have pointed out that it is a tactic used by the Israeli political establishment to argue that foreign criticism of Israeli government policies is motivated by anti-Semitism.

In fact it's obviously perfectly possible to disapprove of Israeli government actions without being at all anti-Semitic: anti-Semitic means demonstrating prejudice against or hostility to Jews as an entire ethnic or religious group.

For a linguist, though, the interesting thing here is that, while the word anti-Semitic is widely used to mean anti-Jewish, Semitic doesn't mean Jewish. Although, in deeply racist Victorian England, the term Semite came to be used as a kind of distorted euphemism for Jew – a word which was considered 'not very nice' in polite society (much as in living memory we used to say Negro instead of Black) – Semitic actually refers to many more peoples than just the Jews.

In linguistics, Semitic refers to the family of languages which descend from Proto-Semitic, which was spoken somewhere in the Middle East in about the 4th millennium BC. Hebrew, which most of the Old Testament was written in, was one of many ancient Semitic



■ The modern Israeli language, which is Hebrew, is a semitic language – as are those spoken in Eritrea and Ethiopia.

languages. Another was Aramaic, which eventually became the most powerful language in the Middle East. By the first century BC, the widespread adoption of Aramaic had led to the death of Hebrew and other local languages like Phoenician; and Jesus and his disciples would have been mother-tongue speakers of Aramaic.

Hebrew did survive as the liturgical language of the Jews; and after many centuries it was artificially resurrected as the national language of modern Israel. A number of linguists, however, argue that modern Hebrew – they prefer to call it Israeli – is as much a European as a Semitic language, since many of its structures come from Slavic languages

like Polish and from the Germanic language Yiddish.

Aramaic is still spoken by small endangered groups of Syriac Christians, Muslims and Jews in parts of Iran, Iraq, and Syria. But the major Semitic languages in the world today are Amharic, which is the official language of Ethiopia; the Tigre and Tigrinya languages of Eritrea; and Arabic, which is actually better regarded as a group of related languages. You may not realise that one of the official languages of the European Union is also Semitic: that's Maltese. But if you do feel like criticising Malta for some reason, no one is going to call you anti-Semitic.