

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

High time to solve asbestos problem once and for all

Local teachers' unions are today calling for the government to fund the removal of asbestos from all our schools.

The widespread use of this material in the last century has left a terrible legacy – the human cost of lives destroyed by mesothelioma decades after exposure, and the crippling financial cost of removing it from buildings.

Today, hundreds of schools in our region contain asbestos, but it is important not to panic or scaremonger. The advice is that asbestos is safe if it is not disturbed, and our county councils are confident it is being managed properly.

Mesothelioma is a terrible, painful disease, and by the time it is diagnosed, it is almost always incurable. It is also a disease that can be triggered by very little exposure.

So while we must not exaggerate the risk, neither must we ignore it. MPs have said much asbestos in schools is in places that could be damaged by children.

The current strategy for dealing with asbestos relies heavily on containment, unless there is a pressing need to remove it. But as long as the asbestos remains in schools, there will be an indefinite need to spend money on dealing with it, not to mention worries about wear and tear, degrading the physical safeguards currently in place.

It is clear that the only way to definitively remove the danger is to remove the asbestos, but our schools, academy trusts and councils cannot afford to do so.

The government is the only organisation that could come up with and fund a national strategy to solve this issue once and for all. It should do so.

Ed's wonderful gesture

It is quite a coup for a wonderful local charity: a Suffolk pop sensation with a worldwide following will perform at a £250-a-ticket fundraiser in London to help boost their cause.

More than that, it will be the only live performance Ed Sheeran will give this year.

The beneficiary could hardly be more deserving: the East Anglia's Children's Hospices' nook appeal, which is backed by the EDP and hopes to raise £10m to build a new centre for children with life-threatening illnesses.

This is just the latest in a series of high-profile fundraising events that have attracted the support of the great and the good – not least the Duke and the Duchess of Cambridge.

But it not just the elites that are involved. Teenage cyclists, bowls clubs, miniature railways and dog walkers are all among those who have chosen this special charity for their fundraising efforts, and helped EACH get closer to that all-important target.

So, well done to Ed Sheeran for choosing this charity for this special performance, and to everyone else who is playing their part too.

Vital to have detectors

Odourless, invisible and deadly – if inhaled, carbon monoxide can kill within minutes.

So the story of a couple from Taverham whose lives were saved by a detector they had installed just six weeks earlier is a sobering, and timely, reminder of the importance of being prepared.

After ignoring its beeping once, Eric and Joyce Watkins discovered potentially fatal fumes had been leaking from their boiler.

As the colder weather sets in and gas heating kicks into use, now is the time to make sure you are protected.

Checking you have a detector – and buying one if not – takes a few moments. It's not worth taking the risk.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ Sunrise over north Denes, Lowestoft, by Richard Sagon. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Where English is being replaced by a native language

Peter
Trudgill



email: newsdesk@archant.co.uk

The story of English spreading around the world, killing off other languages as it goes, is a sad story. But it is not the whole story – not quite.

In the Americas, in the 16th century there were several thousand languages spoken between Alaska and Greenland in the Arctic, and Tierra del Fuego – where the southernmost languages in the world were spoken – in the far south of Chile and Argentina. Now, most of the languages of North America, where they are threatened by English and French, are likely to be extinct within a hundred years. And the future isn't much brighter for the languages of Central and South America, where very many of them are endangered by Spanish and Portuguese.

But in one small area of the continent, there has been a remarkable reversal of the normal tragic pattern of English killing off indigenous languages. In Paraguay, English is actually being replaced by a Native American language. The language is Guaraní, the main indigenous language of Paraguay, which is spoken by most of the population and has official status in the country.

The way this came about is a fascinating tale. The presence of English in Paraguay



■ Asunción, capital of Paraguay.

Picture: FELIPE ANTONIO

is the result of a utopian socialist settlement in the 1890s, when a colony of around 400 English-speaking people was established. The story started in Australia, during the Great Shearers' Strike in Queensland in 1891, during which over 10,000 agricultural workers went on strike and demanded the nationalisation of private property.

William Lane, one of the leaders of the movement, wanted to establish an egalitarian socialist society as an example for others to follow.

He chose Paraguay as the ideal place for this experiment because the government there was encouraging European settlement, in the aftermath of a disastrous war between Paraguay and its neighbours

which had killed much of the adult male population.

Many of the descendants of these New Australia colonisers can still be found in and around the town of Nueva Londres (formerly Nueva Australia) in Paraguay, where they still bear English-language surnames and remember their Australian origins and customs. But over the decades, members of the community have gradually assimilated with the native Paraguayans, including through intermarriage, and large-scale language shift has taken place.

English is being lost as a native language as younger members of the originally Australian community have become native speakers of Guaraní. This is the just linguistic revenge of the Native Americans.