

Letters/emails/texts

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Poverty fears for the disabled

In her monthly diary (EN, May 13) Chloe Smith tries to present the changes to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) as a way of 'improving it'.

Last Wednesday up to 10,000 disabled people and their supporters marched on parliament in the largest disability demonstration ever. Our members lobbied Miss Smith and the other Norfolk MPs to challenge the Coalition government's approach to disability and the cuts to benefits and local authority services, including DLA.

I find it strange that Chloe fails to mention this in her column.

Norfolk Coalition of Disabled People (NOCODP) challenges this disingenuous position.

Neither the Conservatives nor the Lib Dems had reforms to DLA in their manifestos or in the Coalition agreement.

When Miss Smith attended our pre-election meetings in Norwich just over a year ago she actually stated: "I have been speaking up in Parliament to keep DLA and attendance allowance (AA) for over 65s. Scrapping them fills me with outrage."

"The fact that a non-means tested benefit can be taken away from those who need it and passed back to Whitehall, concerns me."

What we are dealing with here is a democratic deficit – a Coalition government attacking the rights and living conditions of disabled people.

NOCODP is against the proposed cuts and rationing of DLA.

We believe these proposals are a regressive measure which will disproportionately penalise disabled people, who rely on DLA to meet the increased costs of their disability.

NOCODP believes the effect of the cuts and changes in benefits and tax changes imposed by central government and cuts to local authority services will disproportionately affect disabled people, children and their families and carers.

They are discriminatory and if implemented will result in further isolation, institutionalisation and unprecedented levels of poverty for many disabled people and their families.

Nationally the average income of a household with a disabled person in it is about a fifth lower than that of other households. This was the understanding that underpinned the introduction of DLA – to mitigate the effects of the additional costs of disability. However DLA is being cut by 20pc and the eligibility bar is being raised.

NOCODP commissioned UEA economist Dr Chris Edwards to investigate and provide the hard evidence to prove it. This is what he found: "As a direct consequence

of the changes to benefits and cuts to Norfolk County Council services, the poorest 53pc of disabled people in Norfolk, about 100,000 people and their families, will see their living standards decline by a third over the next four years."

This is the real cost of the cuts. **Mark Harrison, CEO, Norfolk Coalition of Disabled People.**

Cattle market was fascinating

The Evening News asked "What's your favourite place in Norwich?" (EN, May 11). Mine is the old city of Norwich – the area between King Street and Ber Street, the oldest thoroughfares in Norwich, where in my youth (1940s to 1960s), I grew up – now changed, after being part of the slum clearance in the 1960s.

The Castle Mall, where once the old cattle market stood, was a fascinating place for a young child to be. It sold fat cows, bullocks, sheep, pigs, chickens, rabbits, and all kinds of livestock and wares.

The innocent, country red-faced lads and farmers would arrive in their hundreds from the surrounding areas on Saturday's market day (who remembers?). It was a city in a city; a metropolis alive and bustling, with a mob of good-natured people.

Pubs were open all day and did a roaring trade. Many young country lad would stagger from one to another, well oiled.

In its heyday, Ber Street was a thriving area, with many yards and courts leading off, with nicknames such as Blood and Guts Street, with slaughterhouses, butcher's shops and allied trades. The drovers (I was among them) would drive the herds of cattle to and fro from the old Trowse railway goods yard.

Who remembers the sawdust on the floors of the many public houses? No one disapproved if an under-age lad (like myself and my pal) ordered and supped a pint of good old Bullards and Steward and Patteson local beer.

John William Armstrong, Meredith Road, Norwich.

Best wishes to Roy Blower



I read your article on Roy Blower's retirement from public life (EN, May 13).

I have known Roy for a long time and can certainly pay testament to his hard work, commitment and reliability.

I was clerk to the governors when Roy was governor to the former Earlham High School (now City Academy). As he mentioned

The big debate

Give us back our £4 million

When Norfolk's district councils ran the bus pass scheme they were funded by government up to £11m. Some districts made money and Norwich lost.

When Norfolk County Council took over the scheme they were only funded for £7.228m. The Coalition government had robbed them by £4m.

Blind people who had a 24/7 pass in Norwich have had their entitlement slashed and any disabled person, blind or otherwise who needed to be accompanied by a carer, have found that the carer's free pass has been deleted!

People caring for disabled children and adults who need to be supported and accompanied only ride the bus to meet the disabled child or adult's needs. Most people affected don't drive or can't afford a car, and are already suffering financially.

But the city council didn't cut the blind or the carers' passes, even when they had a massive £2m excess to find.

We estimate the blind pass holders cost the city only £7,500 in a year. All the blind pass holders in Norfolk would, at the very most, cost £55,000 extra and in reality would cost a lot less.

The people of the city cared

he gave 32 years service to the school (marked by a presentation on his leaving). He was meticulous in this role, reading all paperwork thoroughly. As you point out, he will be sorely missed by the many organisations that were lucky enough to have his work ethos and expertise ... and yes, his awful jokes which I have suffered plenty of on his many visits to school!

Well Roy, have you heard the one about having a lovely retirement and letting others take the strain now? John and I wish you all the very best and you know where I am if you are desperate to impart



Bus travel: Changes are being made to the concessionary bus pass scheme.

enough to make sure that disabled people were not hit. Surely Norfolk people care too?

County cabinet members on made the decision on January 24 to cut blind, disabled and carers' passes but this decision we are told was also supported by Lib-Dems and Greens.

An officer at County Hall writes: "This decision was also supported unanimously at Overview and Scrutiny Panel, who agreed that any scheme should fit the funding envelope that is provided."

Surely the Greens, Lib-Dems and even the Tories would not have agreed to these cuts if they

knew what they meant? Were they given the information?

We call upon the Lib Dem and Tory MPs to stand up for Norfolk, stand up for blind and disabled people and their carers, and reverse the government cut and give the people of Norfolk back their £4m. We also call on all county councillors to change the policy, and give blind people their 24/7 bus pass back, and give carers their passes back too.

Norfolk people should hang their heads in shame if this awful cut is allowed to continue.

Bert Bremner, Member of Norfolk County Council for University Division, Norwich.

yet another howler! Our very best wishes.

Val and John Stimpson, Joy Avenue, Newton Flotman.

Can you trace missing items?

Missing from my home since January are the following:

→ RAF pilot's wartime flying log book, which contains details of my early days as a trainee pilot.

→ RAF navigator's log book containing details of both my training and all my bombing sorties I carried out over Europe.

→ My "release" book from the RAF.

→ Most importantly, my court-style mounted medals, comprising my Distinguished Flying Cross; the 39/45 Star; the Aircrew Europe Medal with the France Germany Clasp; the 39/45 Defence Medal; the Exemplary Police Service Medal.

Searches have failed to trace these missing items in the house. Have I been the victim of a thief, and if so, have they all been sold on? Any information would be gratefully received.

Harold Johnson DFC, Norwich.

→ If you have any information, email eveningnewsletters@archant.co.uk

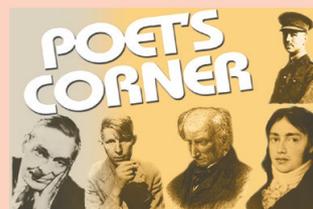
My Favourite Norwich

I've lived in this city these 20 years
 And had my share of smiles and tears
 But it's always been a friendly place
 And I've met many a welcome face.

The Evening News has asked us where
 Our favourite spot is to appear
 Which is our bestest little nook
 To chat or walk or read a book.

I bet I'm not the only one
 With happy memories set in stone
 Of Norwich Castle tall and proud
 With its gems and roaring lion loud.

Since I was small I've been with glee



The apes and polar bear to see
 And bought a present in the store
 A book or brand-new pen to draw.

It's nice to get a little fright
 When the ancient mummy comes into sight

Or see the cavemen in their lair
 Looking all tough and covered in hair.

And now that I am not so young
 It's fun to see all this still goes on
 There's brand-new toddlers, I can tell,
 Still fascinated by the Wishing Well.

Bill Jacobs, Norwich.

We're looking for talented wordsmiths who would like to see their poems in the Evening News. If you'd like your poem to be considered, send it to Poets' Corner, Evening News, Rouen Road, Norwich NR1 1RE, or email eveningnewsletters@archant.co.uk

The big debate:
Bus passes
 Is it right that the concessionary bus pass scheme for disabled people and their carers be cut?
 Write, email, text or visit www.eveningnews24.co.uk/forums
You tell us...