

LETTERS

Our fine fenland is in peril from greedy farmers

WE ARE lucky enough to live next to, and own part of, one of Britain's most wonderful wildlife sites — Catfield Fen in Norfolk.

This is such a special place that the Environment Agency describes it as 'the finest unpolluted valley fen in Western Europe'.

Straddling two river systems at the top of the Norfolk Broads, Catfield Fen is host to an exceptional range of plant and animal species.

Among them are the swallowtail butterfly, Britain's largest, found only in Broadland; the Fen orchid, found only in three places; the Norfolk hawk, a brilliant local dragonfly; plus really impressive birdlife, including the majestic marsh harrier; the common crane, a fabulous visitor; the secretive water rail and the booming — in sound — bittern. If you are interested in bugs or plants, the complete list is truly impressive.

As readers probably know, East Anglia once had miles and miles of fenland — Ely was indeed an island — but then man decided to drain it for farming. These few pockets of wetland are therefore immensely valuable.

Sadly, we feel this very special corner of England is under threat from those same processes that lost us the rest of the fens by pumping water and drying them out, which would destroy the diverse habitats completely if continued.

The authorities in charge of our natural heritage seem unwilling to take the threat seriously, although one fen, East Ruston, was recently lost to these processes.

Five years ago, the Norwich And Norfolk Naturalists' Society warned that pumping water for farming was drying out our fen and endangering it. Since then, we have battled to get Natural England and the Environment Agency to do something about it.

Of course farming has its needs, but some increasingly popular crops such as potatoes or salads require gallons and gallons of water. Exceptional natural sites deserve to be looked after as well.

The agencies concerned have done nothing to help, and despite our excellent local MP, Norman Lamb twice requesting him to do so, they advised the Agriculture Minister not to call the question in for independent expert investigation.

We have no financial interest — in fact, this process, including hiring lawyers and experts to try to get the question reconsidered, is costing us a great deal. We just want to keep this wildlife haven intact for

Straight to the POINT

■ **WHAT a wonderful breath of fresh air — Godfrey Bloom!** If you upset the BBC and Guardian readers, you're standing up for what the UK majority thinks.
P WEBBERLEY, Preston, Lancs.

■ **HOW we agree with your TV critic.** What appalling rubbish this summer is. One more cookery programme and you will hear me screaming from Evesham to London.
ROSALIE DAUBNEY, Evesham, Worcs.

■ **THE Arab Spring is in danger of becoming a nuclear winter.**
D. A. HUTCHINGS, Crowthorpe, E. Sussex.

■ **IF WE are daft enough to pay billions to African countries to send people into space, could they take Cameron, Clegg and**

Milliband? One-way tickets please. I'd give them another fiver.
R. TAYLOR, Fraddon, Cornwall.

■ **NEWSNIGHT'S Jeremy Paxman has gone from not wearing a tie to refusing to shave. Next week, tattoos, piercing and sandals. Or becoming a Tory.**
BRIAN CHRISTLEY, Abergele, Conwy.

■ **SENDING the fleet to Gibraltar? What fleet? An aircraft carrier without planes. Why not send the tank regiment that has no tanks?**
R. ATKINSON, Ruislip, Middx.

■ **I HAVE just read the funniest thing on your Letters page: the words 'European Union' and 'optional' in the same sentence.**
BRIAN SKINGSLEY, Leighton Buzzard, Beds.

future generations. But you have to ask whether the two agencies concerned are fit for purpose. Let's hope wiser counsel soon prevails.
TIM HARRIS CBE, Catfield, Norfolk.

Ban danger dogs

HOW many more children, pets and adults will be seriously injured, or even killed, before the Government takes action over dangerous dogs?

We do not allow people to carry guns or knives, and we should not allow them to keep dangerous animals of any description.

The very least we should be doing immediately is to ensure that all dangerous dog breeds are muzzled and kept on a lead while in a public space. There are enough CCTV cameras on the streets to enforce this. A permanent ban on the keeping of dangerous and 'exotic pets' should become law as soon as possible.
V. R. MANNING, Oxford.

Immigrants clean up

I NOTE your coverage of Shadow Home Office minister Chris Bryant, relating to major private companies giving preference to East Europeans over British candidates for jobs. What about the Government itself?

I work for the Ministry Of Justice at its headquarters in Westminster. Office cleaning of all MoJ HQ

buildings is done by employees from Portugal. Most have poor English, which confirms they are recent arrivals, as do emergency instructions posted in the cleaning rooms, which are only in Portuguese.

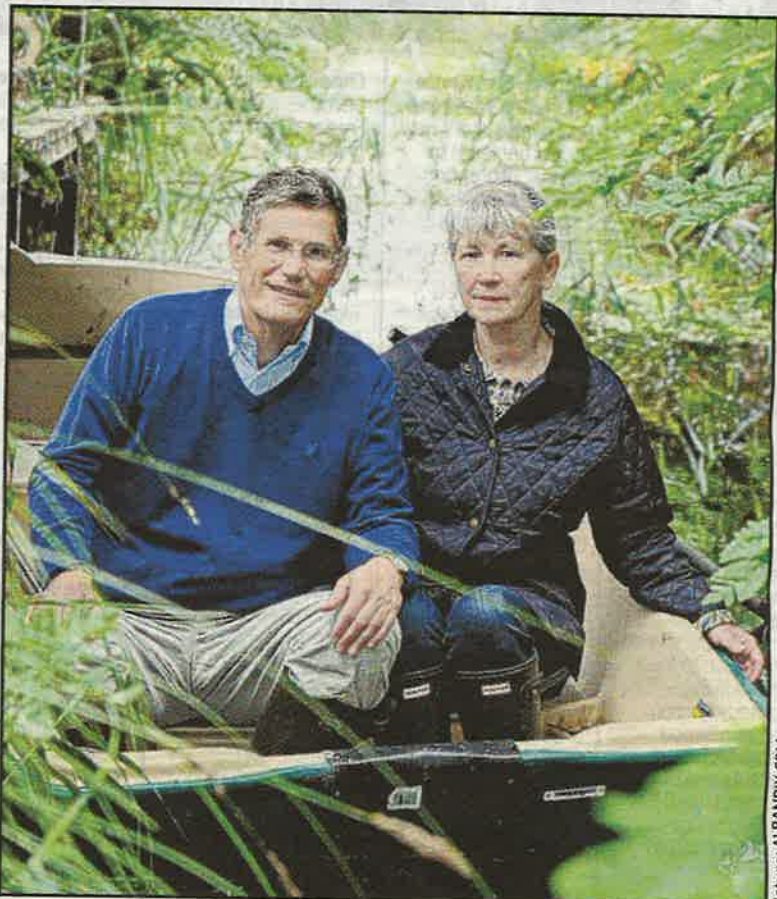
None of the MoJ staff have any complaints about the standard of service given by these contracted workers. We are a diverse workforce ourselves, and none of us would take exception to the recruitment of suitable workers from across the EU. But here — none of the workers is British born.
Name and address supplied.

Stop 'the breastapo'

THERE is no chance of me being called a prude, but there are some things I feel go beyond the limits of good taste, and breastfeeding an infant in a public pool in full view falls into that category.

I have no objections at all to a woman sitting poolside and feeding her child, discreetly, under cover of a blanket. However, this woman in Manchester seems to belong to that group of women referred to as the 'breastfeeding mafia' who feel it is their right to get their breasts out at any time, anywhere, regardless of anyone else's morals, feelings or religious beliefs.

Please, ladies, show a bit of respect for others.
W. J. CARPENTER, Higham Ferrers, Northants.



Precious wildlife: Tim Harris with his wife Gell in Catfield Fen

Stay-at-home truths

MY SON was born in 1973, and I stayed at home until he was 12 or 13, when I had the opportunity to join our family business and therefore could be flexible about hours and school holidays.

We might not have had all the gadgets and high-tech home appliances, but we had fun improvising with cardboard boxes and the like for toys. School holidays were spent playing with other local children.

I don't understand the constant pressure for mothers to work. If more mums (or dads) stayed at home to look after their children, more jobs would be available for the unemployed.

Surely it would be better to help financially the best people to look after the next generation, i.e. a parent, than to just keep doling out money to those who don't work.

I'm not a stick in the mud, and I understand that some mums have a need to work, whether that's financial or otherwise. But I'm sure some parents would, given a little help, be glad if they or their partner could stay at home to care for their children.

Both this and the previous government kept saying how important the family was, yet they punish families who want to have a parent on hand to raise that family that they are so concerned about.
JUDITH KAYE, Longridge, Lancashire.

Police farce

FOLLOWING the antics of a Gwent firearms officer (caught — literally — with his trousers down having sex with a married woman while on duty) and the fact he is still serving, I can only conclude the police force has become morally bankrupt.

I retired as a firearms officer 11 years ago after 30 years' service. When I joined the force, the involvement of an officer with a married woman, even off duty, was viewed as disreputable conduct and could have resulted in

dismissal. Any involvement of this kind on duty, and the officer's feet would not have touched the ground.

Years and years of touchy, feely 'call me Ken' senior officers have eroded the discipline of the police.

There are still good people of all ranks within the force, but they never seem to be heard, probably because they are too busy doing the job for which they joined.
BARRY S. SMITH, Felton, Somerset.

Aid cashback plan

I HAVE a Baldrick-style cunning plan... we ask all those countries who do not need the obscene amounts of aid David Cameron insists on giving them to lend it back to us at a lower rate of interest than we paid to borrow it in the first place.

Cameron could then spend it on services that are urgently required here. The countries that lend it to us will be getting the interest on money they didn't want in the first place.
S. K. CANT, Slinfold, West Sussex.

Cut the licence fee

THE profligacy of BBC directors in paying off people with large amounts of licence-payers' money plus the junkets for staff and gagging clauses is appalling.

Yet there is no sign that they plan to reimburse the licence payers. Surely, it is only fair that these vast sums of money should be added up and the total deducted from the annual licence fee.

We have seen this fee increase steadily year on year, and we were unaware what exactly it was being used for. Now we know: it was lining the pockets of BBC executives.

Why can we not see an annual reduction in the licence fee until the BBC gets the message?
EDWARD HARRISON, Swindon, Wilts.

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

SINCE God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
1 John 4:11

LETTER OF THE WEEK

■ THE writer of our Letter Of The Week wins a leather Arc Notebook exclusive to Staples and a beautiful Parker pen. Colours may vary. A5 size. For Arc products, go to www.staples.co.uk/arc. The Readers' Letters editor will announce the Letter Of The Week each Friday. Write to: Daily Mail Letters, 2 Derry Street, Kensington, London W8 5TT, fax on 020 7937 7493 or email letters@daily.co.uk — including your full postal address and telephone number.



that was easy: STAPLES

DEBATE Was the Rev's rude sticker just divine comedy?

WHEN I read about the Rev Alice Goodman's bumper sticker, WTFWJD [What The F*** Would Jesus Do], I knew she would be in for criticism, and Vic Ready's letter confirmed this. Alice Goodman was once vicar at Norton-on-Tees before she left for Cambridgeshire. When my sister, Pamela Chipchase, died in 2007 after a brave fight against a brain tumour, Pamela's sister-in-law asked the Rev Goodman if she would come up to Norton to officiate at Pamela's funeral.

She obliged and delivered a marvellous tribute to my sister, relating the true character of Pamela. Alice was wonderful, and we were deeply grateful that she came back to Teesside for this special favour. So to Vic Ready and other detractors of this lovely woman: loosen up — Alice is a modern vicar, but at the core a true Christian and what is probably needed in the Church Of England.

MARK S. BRADSHAW, Billingham, Co Durham.

WHERE IS the respect in the case of the lady vicar with the bumper sticker WTFWJD? I don't mean respect for the Almighty, who might or might not see the funny side and will eventually deal with her appropriately. I mean what about the respect for the Church and her parishioners, many of whom, surely, would be deeply offended by her approach.

I do think you can be modern, fun or humorous without using obscene language. It just isn't appropriate for the job.
SIMON CAMPBELL, Glasgow.