

Picture: NICK BUTCHER



PREMIERE NIGHT: From left, Suzi Leverell, George Donson and Lottie Leverell at the first showing of Canute.

NORFOLK

Hospital booking is savaged by minister

Norfolk has been described by a government minister as one of the country's worst performers on a new hospital appointments booking system.

The EDP has previously reported a string of problems with the 'Choose and Book' system, which is supposed to allow patients to make a hospital appointment at the time and hospital and with the specialist of their choice, before they have left their GP surgery.

But in practice it rarely works that way and many Norfolk GPs have been reluctant to use it or found that there are no slots available at local hospitals.

Health minister Ben Bradshaw, speaking in an adjournment debate in Westminster yesterday, said "Norfolk is one of the poorest performers in the country."

He was responding to concerns raised by North Norfolk MP and Liberal Democrat health spokesman

By SARAH BREALEY
Health correspondent

Norman Lamb.

Mr Lamb said: "Norfolk's performance is very poor. It is one of the lowest in the country. There are real problems with Choose and Book. Clinicians and patients find it very frustrating.

"Ben Bradshaw's claim was that the problem related to implementation and training by the PCT rather than the system, but I am not convinced that is the case."

Patients in Norfolk and Suffolk have reported problems including long delays and being unable to get through on the phone line, while GPs have found that slots at local hospitals have not been available.

National figures published last week by the Department of Health showed that, in November, Choose and Book was used for just 33pc of first hospital appointments in

Norfolk PCT area, compared with 57pc nationally.

The Suffolk figure was also 33pc and the Yarmouth and Waveney figure 40pc.

NHS Norfolk has improved to 38pc for January, and is hoping to reach the 90pc target by June.

Steve Davies, interim director of performance for NHS Norfolk, said: "We are aware that there have been serious performance problems with Choose and Book and this is something we are addressing as a priority."

He said a multi-agency team had been set up, working with GPs and hospitals to encourage use of the system and availability of appointments.

Local helplines have also been set up.

He added: "All of this work is already showing dividends but we have set ourselves a very stringent improvement target."

BECCLES

Fresh fundraising efforts for pool

The campaign to keep Beccles open-air swimming pool alive continues to gain momentum with new fundraising events being organised.

The Friends of Beccles Open Air Swimming Pool (FoBOASP) are holding monthly coffee mornings at the Friends Meeting House in the town to raise funds for the pool, with the next on Thursday, February 19 between 10am and noon.

A fundraising dance with the David Drain Band is being held at the Kings Head Hotel in Beccles on Saturday March 7 from 7.45pm to 11pm.

Plans are also afoot to set up a lottery with a monthly cash prize draw. Organisers are drawing on experience from Chipping Norton Lido in Oxfordshire, where such a lottery provides an important and regular source of funds.

Maureen Saunders, director of Beccles Lido Limited, said: "These relatively minor fundraising events are really significant when brought together and are an important strand in the business plan that we have developed for Beccles Lido. We are very grateful to FoBOASP for their continued support."

Beccles Lido has also been approached by local business VC Cooke, which has offered to provide a wheelie bin service for the pool free of charge.

Beccles Town Council will decide on their level of support for Beccles Lido during the next few weeks.

A final decision by Waveney District Council on the future of the open-air pool will be made at a meeting of the council's cabinet on April 2.

Beccles Lido Limited is being registered at Companies House this week and will initially have three directors, Shaun Crowley, Maureen Saunders and Suzanne Gibbons.

It is seeking to take on the long-term management of the open-air pool and is developing a business plan for the operation of the pool for the next three to five years.

It will shortly be applying for charitable status and is currently advertising for additional directors with a broad range of skills and experience.

■ For more details e-mail Maureen Saunders at info@beccleslido.com or call 01502 714911.

■ Tickets for the dance at the King's Head Hotel cost £7 and are available from the Gazette Bookshop in Beccles on 01502 712688.

HALESWORTH

Canute film hopes to turn public tide in favour of coastal villages

A film and radio programme highlighting the future of Norfolk and Suffolk's threatened coastline has received its premiere.

The programme made by a group of youngsters aged from 13 to 19 was shown at The Cut arts venue in Halesworth on Friday.

With its apt title Canute, the film details the youngsters' concerns over the loss of land and homes to the North Sea due to global climate change.

The group, under the tutelage of Suffolk-based theatre director James Holloway, recorded scenes at Easton Bavents, near Lowestoft.

The environmentally-concerned

students interviewed Peter Boggis, who recently won a landmark victory over the right to set up sea defences at his Easton Bavents home, and Suffolk Coastal MP John Gummer.

The drama students will send copies of the programme to the prime minister and schools and will post a version on the internet to support the fight for coastal communities.

Canute is being funded by Media Box which provided £20,000 for the project with Crank Media and the Mouth Theatre also supporting the students.

■ To view a clip of the film, visit www.edp24.co.uk/video

SAVE with Desira today!
Over 350 Used cars and vans in stock

Stock changing daily:
Call your local branch for details

08/08 Reg Fiat Grande
Punto 1.2 5dr Actives

• PAS • CD • ABS
• Low Mileage

FROM
£5,995



DESIRA FIAT
0845 346 0650
Heigham Street, Norwich,
Norfolk NR2 4TG

DESIRA FIAT
0845 346 0651
North Quay, Great Yarmouth,
Norfolk NR30 1RD

DESIRA FIAT
0845 346 0652
Victoria Road, Diss,
Norfolk IP22 4GS



Opening Hours: Monday - Saturday 9.00-5.00pm
• Sunday 10.00-4.00pm • Calls Charged At Local Rate *Finance subject to terms and conditions. †Limited to 2 years, 24000 miles. *Against Original Cost New

www.desiragroup.com

Why choose Desira

- Over 350 Used Cars and Vans in Stock
- We have been established for over 35 Years
- One of the largest independent Franchised Dealer Groups in UK
- Manufacturer partners Fiat, Alfa Romeo, Nissan and Citroen
- With 8 branches across the East of England

At Desira Approved Used Cars we welcome Part Exchanges and provide expert advice on the best purchase and protection options for you and your vehicle. You know you're in safe hands with Desira Approved. Every Desira Approved Used Car includes:

- ✓ A Comprehensive Vehicle History Check
- ✓ A Vehicle Mileage Check
- ✓ A Multi point Preparation and Safety Check
- ✓ Comprehensive Parts and Labour Warranty
- ✓ Full Internal and External Valet

Frank Spurgeon Butchers

Est 1924
Park Farm, High Green,
Brooke, Norfolk



Did you know that our sausages have a meat content of 82% and are made from only prime cuts of British Locally Sourced Pork!

So why not treat your family to some quality Norfolk Sausages and be assured of quality and goodness

Spurgeons famous sausages
Winners of the Bidwells Norwich
& Norfolk Food Festival

Shops in:
Brooke 01508 558123
Long Stratton 01508 531731
Norwich 01603 621650
Harleston 01379 852230



08 (08) Ford Transit 350
TDCi 100ps LWB H/Roof
ONLY £11,999

Out of hours contact
Alan Nash 07846 793159

www.richardnash.co.uk



- ✓ Remote Central Locking
- ✓ ABS
- ✓ Ply-Lining
- ✓ Drivers Air Bag
- ✓ Steel Bulkhead
- ✓ CD Player

Vulcan Rd Sth, Norwich (01603) 495000