

# Thérèse Coffey MP

## Newsletter



*Please find below my latest newsletter covering issues I've been dealing with and events I have attended from August until the end of October. I also update my website [www.theresecoffey.co.uk](http://www.theresecoffey.co.uk) and [Facebook](#) regularly. If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, there is a link to unsubscribe below.*

I have now left the government after serving continuously since July 2014. Through that time, I have continued to focus on key constituency interests. Moving forward, I will be able to speak regularly in Parliament, discussing various topics and scrutinising the government. My speeches and other interventions like written questions are updated automatically on my website [here](#).

### **Energy/Environment:**

**Storms Babet & Ciaran:** The flooding arising from Storms Babet & Ciaran affected parts of Suffolk really badly. I saw the impact in Kelsale and Leiston areas particularly and again at Potters Bridge. I spoke with the Chief Executive of the Environment Agency during and after both weather events to assess what had happened and to consider future risks. As Secretary of State, I also quickly developed a government compensation scheme to provide financial assistance to households and businesses. Having already invested £2.6 billion to better protect over 300,000 homes between 2015 and 2021, we are also investing a record £5.2 billion by 2027 in flood and coastal erosion schemes to better protect hundreds of thousands more properties across the country.

**Potters Bridge:** In better news, the Environment Agency finally secured a warrant to enter land to undertake works to sort the drainage in the area by Potters Bridge. However, with the fields particularly saturated, heavy rain will continue to have an impact there and indeed in several other places for people travelling. I encourage people to sign up to flood alerts for the future at [www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings](http://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings) and to get advice on what to do before and during a flood at [www.gov.uk/help-during-flood](http://www.gov.uk/help-during-flood).

**Lionlink:** I responded to National Grid Ventures' Lionlink consultation. Lionlink, one of a series of energy projects planned for East Suffolk, is designed to transport offshore wind generated electricity to the UK. It is my strong view that onshore connections should be placed on brownfield land much further down the coast at Bradwell in Essex, the site of a disused nuclear power station. This is particularly the case as East Suffolk will already be hosting the new Sizewell C nuclear power station. Therefore, for good reasons, I once again opposed all the options set out in the consultation. You can read my full submission [here](#).

**Water Quality:** I welcomed Water Minister, Rebecca Pow to Woodbridge as I chaired a roundtable meeting of local community groups, environmental regulators, farming representatives, water companies and local councillors to discuss actions to improve the River Deben. The meeting provided a forum to discuss delivery of the government's Plan for Water, which will bring increased investment, tougher enforcement and tighter regulation to the water sector. Key areas of discussion included the designation of bathing sites; pollution resulting from storm overflows, wastewater treatment and agriculture; water resources and how all these issues may be addressed through catchment plans.

**Halesworth Climate Action Conference:** Congratulations to the organisers who put on a whole weekend of events, including the panel at which I spoke.

**Holton Pits:** I met members of the Holton Pits Preservation Group as we celebrated their success in receiving £133,000 from the government's Community Ownership Fund. It means the disused sandpit previously owned by CEMEX will now be protected, ensuring continued public access to the site. I had written personally to the Secretary of State for Communities, Michael Gove, on two separate occasions to get this funding application over the line and I'm thrilled that it paid off.



**Green Methanol boat visits Port of Felixstowe:** I visited the Port of Felixstowe as we celebrated the maiden call of the Laura Maersk, the first container ship in the world to complete a voyage powered by Green Methanol. Shipping is one of the more challenging sectors to decarbonise and I am pleased to see Maersk Line taking the lead in the adoption of green fuels.



#### Health & Care:

**Ambulances:** I followed up with the Chairman and Chief Executive of the East of England Ambulance Service following the revelation that 239 ambulances were off the road at some point in August. The latest figures which show an increase from July, amount to almost half the total fleet. I routinely hold the senior leadership of our ambulance service to account on behalf of patients, so I have asked for a meeting to find out how and where they are prioritising ambulance locations, what they are doing with maintenance and whether they are following up with the manufacturer to ensure more ambulances are kept on the road. It is critical for patients that the trust gets a grip on this situation.



**Social Care:** The government announced an additional £600m worth of funding to local authorities - including £4.96m here in Suffolk - to help boost the social care workforce capacity and improve retention. This is key recognising our ageing population and also will help people who no longer have clinical needs to move out of hospital more easily.

#### **Education:**

**School Holiday Support:** I visited the Schools Out Activity Programme in Felixstowe with Suffolk County Councillor, Steve Wiles. The County Council has been funded by government to provide free meals and activities to children from disadvantaged backgrounds during the school holidays as part of a £200m national scheme.



**School Visits:** I welcomed students from Felixstowe School to Parliament. They enjoyed a tour of both the House of Commons and Lords, a workshop on debating & lawmaking and I hosted a Q&A. If you would like to arrange a visit, you can find out more at [www.theresecoffey.co.uk/school-visits](http://www.theresecoffey.co.uk/school-visits)

#### **Business & Farming:**

**Back British Farming Day:** Alongside the Prime Minister, I welcomed farmers to 10 Downing Street to thank them for their vital work in putting food on our plates. I also spoke at the NFU event in Parliament, announcing a number of measures to support British farmers and securing a fair deal for food producers.



**Brampton Plough Day:** I attended the Plough Day and County Fayre. It was so popular, they even had to open up another field for parking. It was very good to see so many young farmers in the ploughing competition.

**Explore Suffolk BID:** Following contact by a number of businesses that had reservations about the Explore Suffolk Business Improvement District, I raised my concerns about their business plan. If the BID proposals had gone ahead, it would have meant an additional levy on businesses with a rateable value over £24,500 but it was ultimately rejected.

#### **Transport:**

**Funding for A12 improvements:** I was pleased that after some long-term lobbying, the government allocated £54m of funding for the A12. Planned works will see the roundabouts from Seven Hills to Woods Lane upgraded with a new dual carriageway replacing the single carriageway between the B1438 and B1079. It was important to secure the funding recognising the extra development, including Sizewell C. I think this will be particularly welcome in the widening of the stretch of the A12 between Seckford Hall and Dobbies Garden Centre, avoiding those long queues heading north.



**Community Transport:** Services that support older and vulnerable passengers will receive a 60% funding boost as part of an uplift in the government's Bus Service Operators Grant. This additional funding will benefit the Felixstowe Community Area Transport Scheme and the Coastal Accessible Transport Services based in Leiston, which do so much to support people who don't have access to their own vehicle or public transport. Helping people get to the shops, social occasions and vital appointments is particularly important for rural residents here in East Suffolk.

**Bus Fares:** The government again extended the £2 fare cap to the 31st December 2024, to make sure bus travel remains accessible and affordable for everyone. This is just one of the ways we are helping ease the burden of the cost of living.

**Railways:** The government decided to curtail parts of HS2 expansion and opened up the £36billion of financing to allow other projects to proceed, particularly the improvements to the rail network used by the Port of Felixstowe which means that Ely Junction in Cambridgeshire will be upgraded. I was particularly pleased that Haughley Junction in Suffolk will be upgraded as that will help with resilience for the network. The increase in capacity to these vital parts of the rail network will help passenger trains and freight. More information [here](#).

#### **Constituency & Suffolk Matters:**

**Energy Support Payments:** Residents of both Priory Park and Whitearch Park Home sites received their £200 energy support payment. The majority of residents applied to the scheme via the dedicated hotline or website but then had no contact from officials. I

subsequently shared my concerns with East Suffolk Council, their revenues team and the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero. While it took some time, I am pleased that the situation was resolved satisfactorily. I hope any similar future payments to residents in park homes will be significantly more streamlined.

**Bank Closures:** I met senior representatives from Barclays to question their disappointing decision to close their Woodbridge and Southwold branches from the 1st of December and to identify what alternative non-online services they are planning on offering customers. This seems to be primarily through the post office, with face-to-face access to cash withdrawals and deposits and the ability to pay in cheques. Details [here](#).

**Woodbridge Art Club:** I met the Chairman, Jean Maxwell, to hear about the challenges they were experiencing in renewing their lease in Tide Mill Way. It's clearly a very active club and I was impressed by their range of work from pottery to painting, bringing vibrancy and community to the Whisstocks area. However, after fifty years and despite the club being in almost daily use with over 120 members, I was disappointed to hear that Woodbridge Town Council have recently confirmed that their lease will not be renewed beyond March 2024. Since my visit, I have written to both the Mayor and the Town Clerk to seek answers on behalf of the club. Sadly, I have not yet received any detailed explanation as to why they haven't been offered an extension.

**Halesworth 800:** What a glorious day in Halesworth to celebrate 800 years as a market town. The market charter was granted by Henry III and a re-enactment of the occasion in the market square, followed by a procession through the Thoroughfare ending up in the park. I enjoyed being part of the banner procession with the chairman of the Town Council.



**Tour of Britain:** I was in Felixstowe with Cllr Steve Wiles as the town hosted the start and finish of Stage Five of the Men's Cycling Tour of Britain. It was a great day for Felixstowe families and combined with the hot weather a real boost for our tourism sector at the end of the summer season.



I also enjoyed Felixstowe Art On The Prom, purchasing work from Frances Vincent & Rebecca Pymar, both of which now hang in my Westminster office.



**The Dolphin Hotel re-opening:** I visited the Dolphin in Felixstowe on its grand re-opening day and it was buzzing with a new lease of life under new landlord John Flett and his team. John is already well known in the area with his other pub, The Dooley Inn. I hope that the announcement by the government on protecting the price of a pint by increasing the generosity of Draught Relief – meaning the alcohol duty paid for a drink on tap at the pub will be up to 11p less per pint than you would pay in a supermarket. This will benefit about 90 pubs in the constituency, including the Dolphin.



**Artificial Intelligence at Adastral Park:** I visited BT's Adastral Park to see how world-class UK science and technology are leading the way on unlocking AI opportunities.

#### **Parliament & Ministerial Matters:**

**Flood Management:** I announced £25 million to invest in natural flood management projects. The new funding is available to environmental groups, businesses, farmers, catchment partnerships, flood risk management authorities and community groups. More information [here](#).

**Microplastics:** Wet wipes containing plastic break down into microplastics over time, which can be harmful to the environment and human health. I have, therefore, launched a consultation to ban them across the UK and deliver on the commitments set out in the Government's Plan for Water. More detail [here](#).

**International Meetings:** I attended a series of meetings including the G20 and the United Nations General Assembly

**The UN:** I represented the UK government in New York. This was a key week to engage with governments and stakeholders of many countries around the world, including indigenous communities. In particular, this provided the opportunity to press for the establishment of the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund to be established by the end of the year. Working in collaboration with countries like Canada and Germany, our financial

contributions have now allowed this to happen. I witnessed the United Kingdom sign the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Treaty to protect our oceans. I chaired the first ever Commonwealth Climate and Environment Ministers' Meeting. I was also able to discuss with allies the negotiations on key environmental challenges, including deforestation and plastics.

**The G20:** At the G20 meetings in India, I was also privileged to visit the world's second largest mangrove. It was an amazing experience and I enjoyed meeting the community who preserve the mangrove and rely on it. Bang for buck, conserving mangroves is the best nature-based solution for tackling climate change bringing additional benefits of aquaculture and reducing coastal erosion.

### **Other Meetings and Engagements:**

I addressed the Farmers' Weekly Annual Awards dinner. I enjoyed visiting fetes and festivals in the summer, right across the constituency with Orford dog race continuing to be a highlight. The Love Felixstowe Festival attracted a lot of people and I hope that event goes from strength to strength.

**Next Surgery:** 15th December. Please [contact](#) the office for an appointment. Provisional dates for 2024 are January 19th, February 9th and March 15th.

**Work Experience:** After a break due to the pandemic, I'm once again giving opportunities to local people for work experience in my Parliamentary office. Where young people get to join the office for up to a week, getting a taste of how Parliament works.