

Dr Thérèse Coffey MP

Newsletter



Please find below my latest newsletter covering issues with which I have been dealing and meetings and events I have attended in February. I also update my website www.theresecoffey.co.uk and [Facebook](#) regularly. If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, there is a link to unsubscribe below. I am no longer a government minister so am speaking a lot more in Parliament. You can catch up at: www.theresecoffey.co.uk/parliament.

NEXT SURGERY

Please note casework can be handled without the need for a surgery appointment. The next surgery will be held on the 26th of April. Surgeries for the following months will provisionally be held on 30th May and the 28th June. Please contact my office for an appointment on 01394 248980.

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

Energy Infrastructure - Lionlink: I met representatives from National Grid Ventures. They have subsequently published their non-statutory consultation response, which includes a proposal for landfall into either Southwold or Walberswick with a huge converter station at Saxmundham and a substation at Friston. I completely oppose NGV's proposals and continue to make the case to National Grid ESO and government ministers that brownfield sites closer to London should be used instead, especially as a majority of the power will then be transported to London and the southeast. Now that Ofgem is not supporting the Nautilus project, I'm calling on National Grid to also investigate the Isle of Grain as their landing point for Lionlink, which they were previously investigating for Nautilus. Ultimately, though, there is still a long way to go before final permissions are granted, including NGV having to undertake a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment. That will not be easy for them to justify considering the impact this would have on the specially protected sites in the Blyth Estuary. I am already engaging with statutory bodies such as Natural England on their response to these proposals. It is welcome that NGV is no longer considering the other sites along the coast, though I recognise that Sealink is still a threat.

Environment Agency: I met the EA Area Director, Graham Verrier to discuss a number of matters, including Potters Bridge and flooding.

Martlesham Wilds: I visited Suffolk Wildlife Trust's newest nature reserve. We walked down to the Deben and along the river wall, which gave me an opportunity to understand their plans for wilding and saltmarsh creation, key for carbon sequestration.



HEALTH & CARE

Dentistry: I [spoke](#) in Parliament to welcome the government's plan for NHS dentistry that is exactly what patients in Suffolk have been waiting to hear. The plan offers a significant incentive to dentists to deliver valuable NHS care as well as mobile dental vans to take dentists and surgeries to isolated under-served areas. The plan will deliver 2.5m additional appointments over the next 12 months. When I was Health Secretary, I introduced the ABCD Plan for Patients focusing on Ambulances, Backlog, Care, Doctors & Dentists, so, I'm delighted that focus has led to this detailed plan for dentistry. As well as the additional incentives, I also welcome the plan to potentially tie in graduates to the NHS and I pressed the Minister to look again at the NHS' own rules that can restrict the rapid supply of dentists into the NHS. I was reassured that this would be happening and that crucially, this plan had been co-signed by the NHS. More information [here](#).

James Paget Hospital: I met Chief Executive to discuss the hospital and the new building project. I am following up on progress of the business case and land acquisition with the Health Minister.

Norfolk & Suffolk Mental Health Foundation Trust: I met Chair Zoe Billingham and Chief Executive Caroline Donovan to get an update on the trust, including its new team structure designed to give better continuity to patients in a particular area. What they set out makes sense to me on how to make sure as people move between different needs of support that they are well served in targeted handover of responsibility.

Live Well Hub – Focus on Dementia: I visited the Live Well Hub in Leiston when they were hosting people and organisations regarding dementia. This is a friendly setting to find out advice or speak to others struggling with this condition. Thank you to Combat Care for providing the coffee for all to enjoy.

EDUCATION

School Visits:

Farlingaye High School: I visited the school for a discussion with the headteacher and to enjoy a Q&A with the 6th Form Politics class. I also visited the temporary facilities the school is using at the moment as part of the RAAC issue. I am following up with the Department for Education to get some clarity on timetables for the building programme.

St Felix: I visited St Felix School to speak to students about life in Parliament and the Cabinet, including another Q&A session.

Suffolk New College: Huge congratulations to Suffolk New College for winning an Inenco Education for Sustainable Development Award from the Association of Colleges. I was delighted to join the team in Westminster as they received their award. As part of the initiative, Suffolk New College delivered a college-wide green skills programme, making sure to embed sustainability in projects, capital investments and curriculum development. Colleges play such an important role in ensuring our country has the important green skills we will need to meet Net Zero. Photo (below) with Charlie Simmans, the Head of Teacher Development and Quality Improvement and Emma Taylor, Director of Business Development and Major Projects.



BUSINESS AND FARMING

Legislation on Livestock Worrying: I am taking a Bill through Parliament to give more powers to the police to help with prosecutions against dog owners regarding livestock worrying. Police have asked for more powers regarding taking DNA samples and dental impressions. The Bill secured its second reading and will proceed to the next stage during April.

Beach Street: I met Charlie Manning who with his brother are the third generation to operate the well known Manning's Amusements in Felixstowe. We talked about their ever growing hub of food and entertainment, Beach Street. I was shown all of the incredible choices of cuisines available as well as some shopping and even Axe Throwing! They have some exciting plans for the future and I'm pleased that Felixstowe's Resort continues to be developed and improved.



Cookie Barista: I visited a new addition to Felixstowe High Street. Offering a great selection of homemade cakes and cookies, as well as considerable variations of the ever more popular Bubble Tea.



Rural Oscars: Congratulations to two local businesses who have been shortlisted as finalists in this year's Rural Oscars. The Wild Meat Company based in Woodbridge and Maximus Sustainable Fish from Farnham are doing battle in the Local Food and Drink category of the Countryside Alliances' annual awards after successfully securing their place on the East of England shortlist. Please do vote for them [here](#).

The Unruly Pig: I visited the Unruly Pig, which has been named the Number #1 Gastropub in the UK according to Estrella Damm. I met the owner Brendan Padfield and

we discussed the success of the business amidst some of the broader challenges facing the industry.



TRANSPORT

Potholes: I contacted the County Council regarding the series of potholes across parts of Thoroughfare in Woodbridge and Park Hill in Leiston. These potholes are dangerous and it is important that the Council deal with them in a timely manner. I have had responses to say that they will. I encourage all residents to continue to report any potholes to the Council [here](#) and I will keep pushing the repairs to be done quickly.

OTHER LOCAL MATTERS

North Felixstowe Masterplan: I attended East Suffolk Council's exhibition and public meeting on the North Felixstowe development – a masterplan for building 2,000 new homes and a new leisure centre over a 15-20 year period. Whilst providing homes for local people is absolutely essential, I do have significant concern about this proposed development. I encourage residents to share their view via the 'have your say' tab at: www.northfelixstowe.co.uk and also to let me know your views by emailing me at therese.coffey.mp@parliament.uk.

Barclays Bank in Leiston: I met the Head of Corporate Relations and the Customer Care Executive of Barclays bank to protest the impending closure of the Leiston branch and impress upon them the strength of local feeling to keep it open. Since its launch, over 1,700 people have signed my Parliamentary petition that requests that the House of Commons urges the Government to encourage Barclays to keep open their Leiston branch and to require the Financial Conduct Authority to publish its assessment of the justification given by Barclays. Last year the government changed the law so the Financial Conduct Authority can start investigating these closures and that's why I have continued to press the case with them, including at the Treasury Select Committee.

Post Office Outreach Services – Proposed Changes: I met the Post Office Minister, Kevin Hollinrake, regarding the closure of the Kelsale Outreach Post Office. The decision by the Post Office to close Kelsale entirely is part of a wider change to the network, including transferring other outreach services to a mobile van. I'm disappointed that the Post Office has taken this unilateral decision, despite the new postmaster's commitment to continue the service and the government subsidising rural post offices to the tune of £50m worth of taxpayer funding per year. Despite the relatively close distance between Kelsale and Saxmundham, many residents use the Kelsale service and it will be much more difficult for them to access services in Saxmundham than the Post Office realise. I'm grateful for Minister Hollinrake for listening to my representations and agreeing to

take this up formally with the Post Office.



Crime & Policing: I met Suffolk's Police and Crime Commissioner, Tim Passmore. We discussed several issues including anti-social behaviour, shoplifting, drug crime and the role of police in the closures of the Orwell Bridge.



Woodbridge Art Club: The club had a closing exhibition, after being forced out of their premises by Woodbridge Town Council. I popped to see the display by this community of artists and potters and bought this painting of the Tide Mill by local resident, Barbara

Ray. I have been trying to help the club resolve the situation with the Town Council. Responses from the Mayor have not been encouraging though there is the potential for the club to share the site in the future but no timeline has been given for the re-opening of the building. I would like the Mayor and the council to be more transparent on the commissioning of repairs and give a timeline.



Suffolk Punch Trust: I visited the Trust as they showcased their amazing work, including a parade of stallions. Sadly, Princess Anne was not able to join the event due to logistics issues.

Vigil for Ukraine: I joined the Ipswich Vigil for Ukraine in St Mary at the Elms, marking two years since the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Putin. The vigil brought people together from across Suffolk. Hearing the songs, hymns and poetry was very moving. I was invited to say a few words and reiterated the Prime Minister's message that we would stand with Ukraine and its people for as long as it takes. I also thanked those who had welcomed Ukrainians into their homes.

PARLIAMENT

Driving Licence Bill: For some time, I have been trying to get a change in the law to allow all drivers who pass their driving test to be automatically granted a D1 licence. I think there is a case for the C1 licence too. The D1 licence allows people to drive minibuses of a certain weight and C1 to drive medium-sized goods vans. Anyone who passed their test before 1997 would have these categories automatically on their driving licence. This first was brought to my attention by Halesworth Community Transport and the national Community Transport Association are supportive for the changes in D1. Regrettably, Labour politicians voted down the first reading of my Private Members' Bill which would have helped community transport with securing many more drivers. Even now, I am astonished on why people did this. You can read my speech on the Bill in Hansard [here](#).

Disposable Vape Ban: I joined the RSPCA and the Marine Conservation Society to welcome the government's announcement of a forthcoming ban on disposable vapes. Five million single-use e-cigarettes are thrown away every week and many of them end up as litter in our environment, our rivers and the ocean where they can cause harm to animals and marine life. I'll be doing my bit to ensure the legislation is passed.



MARINE
CONSERVATION
SOCIETY



Global Protection of the Environment: I was delighted to be elected to chair the All Party Parliamentary Group for Biodiversity in Overseas Territories. I know from my experience at DEFRA of the critical role that our OTs play for a thriving environment and the funding that the UK government gives to support such work. I warmly welcomed the government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI) extending its No Take Zones in the SGSSI Marine Protected Area, up from an area of 283,000km² to 449,000km². I made a [speech](#) on this in Parliament late last year and had lobbied internally when I was Environment Secretary. More information [here](#).

Global Oceans Treaty: I am a co-sponsor of Kevin Foster MP's legislative efforts to accelerate the ratification of the Global Ocean Treaty. In September 2023, when I attended the UN General Assembly, I joined our Foreign Office minister in signing the UK up to the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Treaty. This is one of the most important treaties that we will ever have to protect biodiversity in our oceans. The government has said it will prepare legislation and ratify in 2025. I hope we can encourage them to make progress this year.



Institute for Government: I was interviewed by the IFG and reflected on my nine years as government minister. You can watch the interview [here](#).

Treasury Select Committee: As part of my select committee work we had sessions with the Prudential Regulation Authority; UK Government Investments and the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England.

I also asked questions and contributed to a number of other debates in Parliament. More details [here](#).

OTHER VISITS/MEETINGS

- I enjoyed Hollesley Village Hall community breakfast.
- I visited Manna Popup Shop, Christ Church, Felixstowe.
- I dropped in to Wrentham Time 4 Tea.
- Attended a meeting on Active Travel in Woodbridge.
- Attended the Ocean All Party Parliamentary Group with the Minister, Lord Benyon.
- Attended the Environmental, Social & Governance APPG.
- Met the Chancellor ahead of the Budget.
- Attended the Postcode Lottery Reception.

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