



REPORT TO FELIXSTOWE TOWN COUNCIL

Jenny Riddell-Carpenter MP, Member of Parliament for Suffolk Coastal **Annual Town Meeting 2026**

1. Introduction

Representing Suffolk Coastal as your Member of Parliament remains a real privilege. Over the past year, I have continued to spend as much time as possible out across my large and diverse constituency - through workshops, community coffee mornings, surgeries and meetings with residents.

It has always been important to me to be visible, accessible, and rooted in the day-to-day lives of the villages and towns that I represent. Each of the conversations I've had over the past year have been invaluable in shaping my work in Westminster and in trying to bring change here in Suffolk Coastal.

I am grateful to Felixstowe Town Council for the opportunity to provide this written update. Felixstowe is the largest town in Suffolk Coastal, with a population of over 20,000 people, and has a strong sense of place, community, and local identity. Throughout the year I have heard from residents on a range of issues including access to local services, planning and development, the protection of the natural environment, local infrastructure, banking services, post-16 provision, and the importance of ensuring that coastal communities like Felixstowe continue to have a strong voice in national decision-making.

This report provides an overview of some of the work I have undertaken over the past year both in Parliament and across the constituency. If there is anything you would like to know more about, or if you need any support, please do email me at jenny.riddellcarpenter.mp@parliament.uk.

2. My Work

My work in Parliament has been shaped by the issues facing communities right across Suffolk Coastal, including Felixstowe. That has included education, healthcare, farming, transport, the environment, energy costs and access to services - all areas where decisions made in Government and Whitehall are felt very clearly in communities like ours.



I was delighted that, after lobbying Ministers and making the case in Westminster, Felixstowe West is going to receive £20 million over the next ten years through the Government's Pride in Place programme. This is a huge opportunity for Felixstowe, and what matters most is that the funding will be led and shaped by the community itself. Local people will have a real say over where this money is spent and how it can make the greatest difference. A new community-led board is now being recruited to help oversee the programme and develop the plans for how this funding should be used. If you are interested in joining the board and helping to shape the future of Felixstowe West, you can express your interest here: <https://getcampaiging.co.uk/pride-in-felixstowe/s/prideinplaceboard>.

Education has been a major focus of my work over the past year. This year I was pleased to secure a new SEND school in Saxmundham, after campaigning hard both locally and in Government departments to secure the necessary funding. This new school will provide 126 places for children with the most severe mental or physical needs who can't be taught in mainstream school. I think that this is one of my personal top achievements over the past 12 months and means the most to me personally.

Alongside this, I have been working hard to protect and strengthen post-16 education provision in Felixstowe. Following concerns about the future of Felixstowe Sixth Form, I met with the Minister for School Standards to raise the strength of feeling locally and the impact that any closure would have on young people, families and the wider town. The Minister confirmed that the Trust must run a formal consultation before any final decision can be made, and I would encourage residents to contribute to this consultation. I also convened and chaired a roundtable in April with major post-16 providers in the area to discuss how we can improve access, choice and opportunity for young people locally. I will continue to follow this closely and push to ensure that students and families in Felixstowe have access to the education and training opportunities they deserve.

Elsewhere, road safety has been a major priority in my parliamentary work this year. In November, I brought forward the Road Safety (Schools) Bill as a Ten-Minute Rule Bill to create a legal duty on councils to work proactively with schools to improve safety outside school gates. You may be aware that, in my constituency, Bucklesham School had been campaigning for 25 years to get the road that their school sits on reduced down from 60mph to 40mph. Once I got elected, I supported their



campaign and took it to Parliament, and we finally saw action this year. I have been very clear in challenging the myth that councils can only act after a serious incident occurs on our roads. There is no truth to this at all – and all councils can make roads safer without waiting for an accident to happen first. I will continue to hold Suffolk County Council to account on this, to make sure proper safety measures are delivered outside schools where they are needed.

You may have also seen my campaign to get a banking hub open in Felixstowe, following the loss of the town's final two banks last summer. Right now, residents and businesses are being left to rely on Post Offices, which were never designed to replace full bank branches. For too many people, especially older and disabled residents, travelling to Ipswich is simply not a realistic option, and local businesses are also feeling the strain. That is why I am calling for a dedicated Banking Hub in Felixstowe, giving people access to essential in-person services in one place. More than 900 people have already signed the petition, and I will continue pushing hard for this. If you have not yet added your name, you can sign the petition in my office or online here: <https://www.jennyforsuffolkcoastal.org/bankinghub>.

As part of my work on transport, I am campaigning for major improvements to local rail services, including better early morning and late evening trains, a regular half-hourly Ipswich–Lowestoft service, and a renewed effort to reinstate the Lowestoft–London line. I have already received over 450 responses to my rail survey and will be publishing a report shortly. I have also launched a rural bus survey, which is gathering evidence about the impact of infrequent and unreliable services. I will be convening a roundtable with local bus operators to discuss these issues directly, as I continue pressing for more reliable and accessible transport across rural communities.

The Port of Felixstowe makes Felixstowe central to our local, regional and national economy, and I am conscious of the importance of making sure that the ports and maritime communities have a strong voice in Parliament. I am pleased to be Chair of the Maritime and Ports All-Party Parliamentary Group, where I am working with colleagues and the sector to raise the profile of ports, coastal economies and the maritime workforce. For Felixstowe, this is particularly important — the port is not only a major employer, but a vital part of the town's identity, infrastructure and future growth.



You may also be aware that in Parliament I founded and now chair the Labour Rural Research Group, which brings together more than 40 rural and semi-rural Labour MPs from across England, Scotland and Wales. Through that work, I have been pushing to make sure the realities of rural life are far better understood at the heart of Government and Whitehall, and that rural communities are no longer treated as an afterthought in national policymaking. The LRRG is focused on developing the research, evidence and policy ideas needed both to unlock the potential of rural communities and to confront the challenges they face. Our recent report, *Poverty in Rural Britain*, made clear that hardship in rural areas is too often overlooked or misunderstood, and set out the case for policies that reflect the higher costs, and reduced access to services that many rural residents face. You can read more about the Labour Rural Research Group and its work online here:

<https://www.labourruralresearchgroup.com/>.

3. Local Casework and Support

Over the past year, my team and I have supported thousands of residents across Suffolk Coastal with a wide range of casework, including housing, access to healthcare, SEND provision, pensions, local infrastructure, and difficulties navigating public services.

In towns like Felixstowe, that often means helping residents work their way through systems that can feel slow, frustrating or difficult to navigate — whether by contacting public bodies directly, following up on outstanding issues, or pressing for answers where they are needed.

I have continued to raise concerns about access to essential services, particularly where residents are being asked to travel further or rely on systems that do not properly meet local need. In a town of Felixstowe's size, people should be able to access key services locally, and I will continue to press for services that reflect the needs of the community.

In October, I was pleased to welcome the Nature Minister, Mary Creagh MP, to Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Martlesham Wilds, where I raised concerns about the need to better protect nature and local communities within national planning and environmental policy. For coastal communities like Felixstowe, protecting the



natural environment, improving water quality, and ensuring that development is properly planned and sustainable must remain important priorities.

4. Future priorities

Looking ahead, my focus will remain on the issues that matter most to communities like Felixstowe.

That means continuing to press for better access to local services, improved in-person banking services, more accessible post-16 education opportunities, greater investment into Felixstowe, a planning system that respects local character, and proper accountability for water companies and regulators — especially when it comes to protecting our rivers, coastline and wider environment.

I will also continue to support the delivery of the Pride in Place programme in Felixstowe West, making sure that local people are at the heart of decisions about how this funding is spent and that it delivers lasting benefits for the town's future.

Felixstowe is a town with huge strengths, from its port and maritime economy to its community spirit, local businesses and coastline, but it also needs proper recognition and investment. I will continue making the case in Parliament and with Government that coastal towns like Felixstowe must not be an afterthought in national policymaking, and that Felixstowe's voice is heard clearly at the heart of decision-making.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide this report. It is a privilege to represent Felixstowe and the wider Suffolk Coastal constituency in Parliament.