



REPORT TO WESTLETON PARISH COUNCIL

Jenny Riddell-Carpenter MP, Member of Parliament for Suffolk Coastal **Annual Parish 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 Westleton Parish Council for the opportunity to provide this written update. Westleton is a village with a strong sense of place and community, and throughout the year I have heard from residents on a range of issues including energy infrastructure projects and their coordination across Suffolk coastal, the protection of the natural environment, local infrastructure, access to services, and the importance of ensuring that rural communities 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 Westleton. 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 rural communities like ours.



You may 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/>.

Elsewhere, 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.

More recently, I have been working hard to mitigate the impacts of the conflict in the Middle East. We have seen sharp rises in heating oil and LPG prices, as well as energy prices more generally. In Parliament and with Ministers, I have been leading the calls for stronger protections for households reliant on heating oil and LPG – and I have been calling for these markets to be capped. Working with rural colleagues, I am determined to see change and protections for customers that match the same standard “gas-grid” customers enjoy. I have been clear throughout that this is not just an economic issue, but a matter of fairness for rural communities.

I have been pushing Suffolk County Council to make sure that the £1.5 million that the Government has allocated to support the most vulnerable households who are reliant on oil and LPG is delivered as quickly as possible. I am also pushing for that support not to be restricted to those in receipt of benefits but made available to households that are struggling – either in work, retired or otherwise.



In March, I was delighted to host a roundtable in Suffolk Coastal with the farming Minister, Dame Angela Eagle DBE MP, and local farmers – allowing local farmers and growers to speak directly with the Minister and share the challenges (and opportunities) facing farming in east Suffolk.

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.

As part of my work on rural 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.

3. Energy Infrastructure Development

One of the other key issues I have focused on over the past year has been the coordination of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) across Suffolk Coastal. I have consistently raised concerns about the cumulative impact of these developments and the need for a more joined-up approach, rather than decisions being made in silos without proper consideration of what that means for the communities affected. I have repeatedly made the point that residents are being asked to shoulder the combined impact of multiple major energy projects, without the coordination or strategic oversight that should come with that. I have led two Westminster Hall debates on this issue, where I set out the lack of coordination along the Suffolk coast and called for a stronger national framework to move away



from what I have described as a fragmented “whack-a-mole” approach to development.

Alongside that, I have held a significant number of private meetings with developers, Ministers and officials in the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to raise constituents’ concerns directly and press for better coordination, communication and accountability. I also convened a coordination meeting bringing together senior representatives from the main energy projects, to press for better alignment of delivery, less disruption for local communities, and clear accountability to local residents.

I have been clear throughout that I will continue to challenge developers and hold them to account, both individually and collectively, and I will keep using every parliamentary and ministerial route available to me to push for better coordination and to ensure that communities are properly heard and protected here in Suffolk Coastal.

4. 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. As well as a significant volume of casework relating to the energy infrastructure projects and engagement with developers, where my team hold regular meetings with Sizewell C to raise constituent concerns directly.

In villages such as Westleton, 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.

In October, I was pleased to welcome the Nature Minister, Mary Creagh MP, to Suffolk Wildlife Trust’s Martlesham Wilds, and used the visit to raise concerns with her in the context of national planning and policy. This included reinforcing the importance of holding energy developers to account and ensuring that major infrastructure delivery is properly coordinated and responsive to local community impacts and concerns.



5. Future priorities

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

That means continuing to press for a planning system that respects local communities and rural character; protecting Suffolk Coastal's rivers and the wider natural environment; holding water companies and regulators to account; continuing to hold energy developers to account where major infrastructure is being delivered; and lobbying Government for further legislative change to better reflect the cumulative impact of development, alongside standing up for farming and the rural economy.

I will also continue to make the case in Parliament and with Government that rural and coastal communities must not be an afterthought in national policymaking. Too often, the needs and realities of villages such as Westleton are overlooked or poorly understood, and I will keep working to ensure that rural voices are heard clearly and consistently at the heart of decision-making.

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