

A New Westminster Constituency | A New MP:



Waveney Valley Magazine

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Meet... **Richard Rout** **OUR NEXT MP?**

Feature Interview
His childhood,
His politics,
His... dogs.



New Boundaries
Waveney Valley
is a new seat for
Norfolk & Suffolk



Town And Country: Richard's spent his life living and working in and around market towns in our region

“ My grandparents were farmers, and we've still got a small farm today. So I've always been acutely aware of how hard the agricultural community has to work to make a living.



Who is Richard Rout?

Meet the man who could become our new MP in Waveney Valley...

Come on in!” beams Richard Rout, as he beckons Waveney Valley into his home in rural Suffolk. His fiancée Caroline is holding back a small collective of the couple's excited rescue dogs. “Those two were only supposed to be temporary fosters but we just couldn't part with them!”, she says with a mix of embarrassment and adoration.

As we're led into Richard's reassuringly formal home office, he explains how the couple take in foster dogs and support local charity 'Our Special Friends'. “They're a great charity, who support the benefits of animal companionship. They do things like help people stay active and in their home longer and help people who are ill keep their pets, by ensuring they get exercise.”

Smalltalk over, Mr Rout sits behind his desk and ceremonially claps his laptop shut, as if to indicate we have the full undivided attention of a man who is otherwise in full preparation mode to campaign to be elected as MP for the new Waveney Valley constituency.

Mr Countryside

We start by asking Richard about his connections to Suffolk and Norfolk:

“I've always lived in East Anglia.” explains the Suffolk County

Councillor since 2017. “Whether it was growing up near Bury St Edmunds or spending time at our farm near Ipswich. Caroline's family home is near Diss and I had grandparents from both sides of the Norfolk-Suffolk border, so I'm no stranger to the friendly rivalry!

My grandparents were farmers, and we've still got a small farm today. I've always been steeped in rurality and acutely aware of how hard our agricultural sector has to work.”

When Richard talks about farming and countryside issues, his pace quickens and the arms become animated. How important is it that the next Waveney Valley MP “gets” rural issues, we ask:

“Oh, hugely important! **British meat and dairy is the finest in the world and here in Waveney Valley, we're home to that. We can't give in to fringe groups that would have us ban it or sign up to plant-based ideologies – like the Greens and Labour did at Norwich City Council.** It would put countless people out of work and trash our local economy. It's all about personal choice, not lecturing people.

We also rely on our cars here in the countryside and so many of our properties are off the gas grid. Some are not, and never will be, suitable for heat pumps. People need someone willing to stand up for them and say that.”

Learning Resilience From Tragedy

From his peaceful surroundings today, you'd be forgiven for presuming Richard Rout, 44, had lived something of a charmed life. But growing up was far from an easy ride:

“My dad died when I was a year old and for the early part of my life, I watched my mum come to terms with that and work hard to look after us. I don't mind talking about it at all. In fact it's shaped me.

My father was a consultant at West Suffolk Hospital. At the time he was the youngest consultant in the country. He met my mum there who was an Occupational Therapist.

I have no memories of my dad but his legacy in the community has taught me a lot and is what inspired me to public service.

People still stop me in the street to talk about him. That's what I aspire to if I'm elected, for people to stop my children in the street one day and say ‘your dad was a great MP’, ‘we always saw him shopping on the local market’, ‘he was always vocal on what mattered to us’, and – importantly – ‘he got things done’. **Of course, I want to shape national policy too but it all starts here in our communities, improving lives and being a true part of the place.**

My mum too, although I don't tell

her enough, was and remains an inspiration to me. She taught me resilience, the value of hard work and unconditional love. Watching her husband fight cancer, then seeing him die, followed by raising seven stepchildren, alongside me, is some feat.”

The Boy Done Good

Does that mean Mr Rout was a bit of a wild child when he was a young ‘un then?

“Ha no! Not really anyway.” he laughs. “When I was ten, my mum remarried and that did bring some big changes. Suddenly, I had four new step siblings. I struggled academically for a few years after that but, fortunately, found a mentor in a retired local businessman called Pete Bailey who helped get me back on the right path.

He inspired me academically and sparked my interest in politics. He'd retired early due to health issues and I got to know him earning pocket money washing his cars and mowing his lawn. We quickly developed a strong bond – he introduced me to *The Daily Telegraph* and I introduced him to *Friends*. It was a fair swap.

I learned more about how he grew his business and the importance of supporting innovation, freeing businesses from over-burdensome regulation and the value that

How Richard was chosen as our MP candidate...



The process of getting approved began for Richard two years ago when he applied to be a candidate, after being a parish, district and county councillor in Suffolk for almost a decade.

Our local Conservative councillors and grassroots members have extensively interviewed Richard with the tough questions you want answered.

Richard was our number one choice among many applicants, thanks to his deep knowledge of local issues and having the character we're looking for in our local MP.

Richard Says:

It was an incredibly thorough process but very enjoyable too – I like standing in front of people and being challenged, putting forward arguments and debating how we can make our area and our country a better and fairer place.

private enterprise brings to our communities.

Later, I'd use those lessons to open two local businesses, a gym and a wedding and events venue. It's just won a local award for best wedding venue. Is that advertising? Sorry!"

It's a drive and work ethic bred into Richard from a young age:

"Watching my mum, as a single parent, and my grandparents, as farmers, strive day in and day out taught me the value of hard work, the power of the individual to improve their lot in life, and the need to support our countryside, agriculture and small business."

A Conservative is born.

The Politician

So, what was the leap to becoming a parish, district and county councillor in Suffolk for the best part of a decade?

"Frustration. I think the same is true for many people, the sense that the wrong decisions are too often made and, perhaps arrogantly, you think you can do a better job. For me, that was local planning decisions, housing coming forward without the

correct infrastructure, a poor quality of design, not enough local backing and not meeting the needs of residents.

Once I was elected to the County Council in 2017, I quickly realised that a lot of the answers to the issues facing our area lie in national policy – I want to be an MP to shape that policy so that places like Waveney Valley get the support and investment they deserve. I know how frustrated many people in the countryside and market towns feel, I can be a voice that shapes policies that help our area but also promotes it for all the fantastic things it does so well.

I've learned that, despite what people say about politicians, most people, of all political parties, come into it for the right reasons. We might hugely disagree on the right way to bring positive change but we all want to improve communities for the better. There's a lot of abuse of elected representatives but it takes guts to stand up and be counted."

Richard Rout is the Conservative MP candidate for the new Waveney Valley constituency at the next general election.

Enough of the fluff. We subject Richard Rout to...

The Grill

Politicians are all the same, aren't they?

No. We're all very different and from diverse backgrounds but we all come into this wanting to make lives better. I know that's difficult to believe and our focus is often on where people have made mistakes. We absolutely need to correct that and improve behaviour in public life but we also need to recognise and celebrate the great work that goes on.

You're just going to be Westminster's voice in East Anglia, rather than the other way round, aren't you?

You've been reading too many daft leaflets! I've been a local councillor for the best part of a decade now. I know exactly the local issues that need raising nationally. At my selection, I quite literally said 'I won't be Westminster's agent in Waveney Valley, I'll be Waveney Valley's champion in Westminster'. I intend to stick to that, you can hold me to it!

Your lot just take people's votes for granted round here, don't you?

I never take anything for granted. Nobody has a right to be elected, that trust has to be earned, and I know people's trust in politicians of all parties has taken a hammering. We need to work hard to rebuild that and that's what people will see me doing.

You know you're toast if you don't sort the pylons?

Short of lying down in front of bulldozers, if they arrive, I don't think there's more I could already be doing to ensure off-shore alternatives are properly investigated and these proposals are delayed while we find the best way forward. I hope local people see that work and know I'll be fighting for the best possible outcome for communities. The proposed route goes right in front of Caroline's family home in Mellis, so the pressure is on in more ways than one!

From the Family Album:



Bittersweet: A baby Richard at his Christening (mother left) - one of the last photos of his father (right) who died when Richard was just one.



Norfolk & Suffolk Through-And-Through: Richard was born and raised in Suffolk and continues to live in the county and has grandparents from Norfolk.



It's Me And The Dogs: Animal lovers Richard and fiancée Caroline adopt and foster rescue dogs and hope to get a date for their big day sorted soon.

1 Services: NHS, Banks & Post Offices

I share people's worries about shops, banks and post offices closing.

We can do more to help them stay open, by looking at shared premises or 'hubs'. It's cheaper rent for them and all the services are under one roof for us.

And let's reform planning so more people can live in town centres and use businesses there.

Dentist and GP appointments are top of people's minds. We've got to get the contracts for NHS dentists right. Why not take the same 'hub' approach here too? GPs, pharmacies, blood tests and dentistry in one place.



2 Schools, Housing & Jobs for Young People

Norfolk and Suffolk schools get lower investment per pupil than other areas. The way schools are funded assumes families here are better off than they really are. I'll campaign to get this formula tipped in our favour, to give our children the very best possible start.

There must be high quality jobs waiting for school leavers too.

Our area is already a leader in agricultural innovation. If we can attract rapidly growing sectors like automation and AI, young people won't need to leave to find good opportunities.

Affordable homes for young people are essential too. I'd explore ideas like community land trusts that set aside new-build housing specifically for local young people, so they can own or rent a home near their families.

3 Backing Farming & the Countryside

I grew up around farming in this area. I know we have some of the best meat, dairy and arable farmers in the country. But we need to protect the industry, so we rely far less heavily on imported food.

That means embracing science, removing bossy rules, trusting farmers, and helping them get a better deal with the supermarkets.

We also need to stand firm against the nonsense of 'plant-based' treaties we've seen from Greens / Labour in Norwich.

These would obliterate a key industry and jobs here.

Instead, let's promote the environmental and health benefits of good quality, local produce – meat, dairy and plant! And give our farmers, and communities, more tools to look after nature and the environment.



4 Policing

For victims, there's no such thing as 'petty' crime. People want our police to be visible and for crimes like theft to be investigated.

I sense a growing public suspicion that police spend more time monitoring people's opinions than our streets.

I'll work with Police and Crime Commissioners to make sure this is never the reality in Waveney Valley.

261 new frontline officers have been recruited in Norfolk. 201 in Suffolk. That's great progress.

Let's get them out there, so we don't have to tolerate blights like anti-social behaviour and fly tipping.

5 Modern Rural Counties

Being well connected is essential for growth and living standards.

That means we've got to invest in faster broadband, satellite internet and better mobile coverage rurally.

We need to improve our local roads. Residents and businesses rely on them. As does good public transport, which we need to do more for in rural areas.

Cars and HGVs are only getting cleaner. We should do more with rural charging points and lead on switching HGVs over to hydrogen.

But in the meantime, I'll campaign for lower fuel duty to ease the cost of living and give motorists a break.



6 Pylons, Solar & Energy Security

The invasion of Ukraine has shown us that to keep bills down, we mustn't rely heavily on energy from abroad.

But we shouldn't rush through projects that show no regard for our landscape, local communities or best agricultural land either.

The strength of feeling on this locally is colossal.

I'd know because I've led on the opposition to the Norwich to Tilbury pylons. I've driven

calls to explore an offshore alternative.

I'm one of the UK's most experienced politicians at dealing with large energy projects. I have tabled serious policy reforms to government that will **protect our best agricultural land from vast solar schemes**, while not risking energy security.

I'll ensure our communities get proper communication from government, coordinated, not piecemeal, projects and fair treatment.

Reader offer!
Tell Richard what issues are important to you:

✉ campaign@richardrout.com

🌐 www.RichardRout.com

🌐 www.snwvca.org.uk/waveneyvalley

📱 @richard4waveneyvalley

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