



Fortnightly Update #68 - 02.07.2019

Welcome to this update.

There's news below on everything from Cheltenham's **cyber** future (we secured £150,000 in Government funding for cyber park planning following a meeting I held with the minister) to calls in Parliament for more emergency doctors to be trained for **Cheltenham General Hospital**.

I also raised once again the issue of the major growth in demand for **special educational needs provision** in Cheltenham. The surge in numbers over the last 5-10 years is putting our special and mainstream schools under pressure, and I've been calling for additional support. You can read my speech by clicking on the link below, in which several Cheltenham schools are mentioned by name. Staying on the schools theme, I also spoke with FCO officials to raise my concerns about the ongoing delay in the French investigation into the 2016 **Bournside coach crash**. It really shouldn't have to take this long.

I called for a debate to mark the 100th anniversary of **GCHQ** to allow MPs to pay tribute to the brilliant public servants who keep our country safe; and it was a pleasure to hold talks with the Governor of Massachusetts who was visiting Parliament last week. He was really impressive, and is my tip for a strong presidential run in 2024!

Closer to home, the **Armed Forces Day** event in Sandford Park was really memorable - particularly for the children who met WW2 veterans. And I was delighted to arrange for a "reverse vending machine" (see vid below) to visit Cheltenham's High Street. I teamed up with the **Marine Conservation Society** to get it here, as part of my campaign for the UK to introduce a plastic bottle deposit scheme. The details of such a scheme need to be got right, but it could be an important tool in the battle to stop our rivers, beaches and verges being ruined by discarded drinks containers.

Oh, and my brilliant office managed to get **Virgin Media** to repaint that terrible graffitied **broadband cabinet on Rodney Road**. For some reason it had been spray-painted with the word CRYPT... It's fixing the little things that can be the most satisfying! (Before and after pictures below).

Many thanks for reading.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alex Chalk".

Alex Chalk MP

P.S Please note that these fortnightly updates are intended to be no more than an overview. If you would like an in-depth update on my various campaigns (from **restoring night-time A&E services at Cheltenham General** to adolescent mental health and cracking down on the town's 'grot spots') please do get in touch.

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[CLICK HERE](#) TO WATCH THE REVERSE VENDING MACHINE IN ACTION ON THE HIGH STREET

Since the last update, Alex has:

IN PARLIAMENT

- Hailed the **NHS funding boost** (rising from £122bn this year to £149bn in 2023) which he said would allow **Cheltenham General Hospital** to "plan for the future with confidence", but Alex also called for resources to be allocated towards **training and recruiting emergency doctors** to staff Cheltenham's **A&E**. Responding, the Health Secretary agreed and called Alex "*the best advocate for Cheltenham the House has ever seen*" [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Rebuked Labour for creating a **schools funding formula** that disadvantaged rural authorities (like Gloucestershire) in favour of urban authorities (like Manchester and London) [READ MORE HERE](#)

- Called for more funding for **SEND** (special educational needs and disabilities) because of the surge in demand in Cheltenham. Responding to his speech, the Minister indicated that additional support was being sought from Treasury in the Spending Review and added that *"there is no more assiduous champion for school funding and schools in Cheltenham than my hon. Friend"* [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Made representations to the **Foreign and Commonwealth Office**, regarding the delay in completing the investigation into the **Bournside coach crash** in France. Despite the accident taking place in July 2016, the outcome of the investigation by the French examining magistrate is still awaited. Alex has called on the FCO to take this up with their counterparts (see further below)
- Raised concerns on behalf of **senior Cheltenham clinicians** who are facing **large tax bills** as a result of breaching the pension pot limit. This is forcing some to cut back on shifts and even retire early - what Alex has called "a shining example of the law of unintended consequences" [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Held talks with Local Government minister Kit Malthouse MP, to press him to award Cheltenham £150,000 to assist with **Cyber Cheltenham** design and scoping work. Those representations were successful
- Called on the Prime Minister to increase pressure on **Russia** to allow the extradition of nationals suspected of serious crimes in the UK - such as the Salisbury poisonings and the murder of Alexander Litvinenko [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Paid tribute to **All Saints' Academy** and **Cheltenham College** for their formal partnership to share expertise and best practice - driving up standards, increasing extra-curricular opportunities for pupils and professional development opportunities for teachers [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Called for a debate in Parliament to celebrate the **centenary of GCHQ** (originally the Government Code and Cypher School) [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Welcomed investment of more than **£20 million in education in Cheltenham** in the form of the planned new Leckhampton school [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Called on the **Saudi** Government to allow independent investigation of alleged human rights violations, with the conclusions to be shared with the British Government. Alex argued that such reports should form part of any British assessment into whether it is appropriate for the UK to grant **arms export licences** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- In a debate on court closures and access to justice, Alex stressed the importance of **magistrates**. Magistrates give up their time for free, and it is not reasonable to expect them to travel large distances to discharge their public duties [READ MORE HERE](#)
- In an intervention broadcast on **BBC Radio 4 (Today in Parliament)**, Alex raised concerns in Parliament about repeated administrative errors in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport - the latest of which led to the rollout of **age verification checks for pornographic sites** being delayed. Alex asked how constituents could have confidence that errors would not be repeated [READ MORE HERE](#)

- Spoke out about about **high rent levels in Cheltenham** and pressed the Government to press ahead with schemes such as the £3m government grant to the **North Place** homes scheme to help with viability [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Quizzed the Government on their assessment of the impact on the UK on his constituents following the **Gulf of Oman Oil tanker attacks** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Welcomed the **Net Zero Carbon Emissions by 2050** goal becoming law, adding that China should also take such similar steps to help tackle climate change [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Held talks with Treasury Minister Liz Truss to raise his concerns about the impact on UGlos and other education providers in Cheltenham about **teacher pension uplifts**
- Met **Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker** (tipped for a presidential run in 2024) for a discussion on shared issues of interest - including tackling climate change
- Held talks with new Department of Work and Pensions Minister, Justin Tomlinson MP, to secure support for Alex's campaign to ensure **better enforcement of the Equality Act 2010**. Alex is campaigning on this issue following an incident in Cheltenham when one of his constituents was refused access to a restaurant because of his assistance dog [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Held a Q&A session with pupils from **Lakeside Primary** visiting Parliament for the day
- Joined **Balcarras'** Young Enterprise group, **SUSTAIN**, to support them in the final Young Enterprise competition round in **City Hall** in London
- Hosted a Q&A with a group of **Cheltenham College** students and arranged for them to watch proceedings in the Commons
- Provided PPS support at a debate to mark **Armed Forces Day 2019**
- Provided PPS support at a Westminster Hall debate on **Combat Air Strategy**
- Welcomed over forty more constituents to Parliament on a **Constituency Tour Day**. If you'd be interested in joining one of these tours, please respond to this email

IN CHELTENHAM

- Supported the **Armed Forces Day** celebrations in Sandford Park, meeting Second World War veterans and listening to the Innsworth Military Wives' Choir
- Arranged for a "**reverse vending machine**" to visit Cheltenham's High Street to highlight Alex's support for a national **Bottle Deposit Scheme** and the need to tackle the **plague of plastic pollution** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Met Charlton Kings residents to discuss concerns about **air pollution near Cheltenham's schools**. Alex has encouraged the local Council to use their powers to crack down on engine idling, particularly near to local schools.
- Supported the **Belmont School Family Fun Day**

- Welcomed the approval of the £4 million plans to revamp the Playhouse Theatre [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Updated local residents about **BMW's plans to build a temporary car park** next to their Benhall site to help to relieve the **current parking pressures on surrounding roads** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Met a local constituent to discuss their plans for the **first fully outdoor kindergarten** in Gloucestershire at **Badger Wood**
- Welcomed the first artist impressions of **Cheltenham's new £20 million+ secondary school** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Supported the **Charlton Kings Business Connect** event
- Supported the **Cheltenham Neighbourhood Watch** event at John Lewis
- Opposed the **controversial proposals for the Oakley Farm AONB site**, which are currently at the pre-planning stage. Alex is a long-standing **supporter of the AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)** and has fought previous similar applications [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Visited **Cheltenham Ladies' College to speak to pupils** about his work as the town's MP
- Received the following update from the Foreign Office regarding the investigation into the **2016 Bournside bus crash in France:**

The French judge has very recently received a response from the British side and the most likely next steps are that she will complete her investigation and close the file. We expect there then to be a number of subsequent steps:

- *The investigating judge will write to the 'parties civiles' (the victims who have asked to have a role in the case), the suspects, and the prosecutor to advise that, in her view, she has completed her investigation.*
- *These persons will then have either one month or three months (depending on whether anyone is in detention) to make observations (for example, to ask that further enquiries are made etc);*
- *At the end of the deadline for this part of the procedure, the prosecutor will provide her 'requisitoire definitive' (the document where she gives her advice on the case). In it, she will state whether the case should be sent before a court.*
- *After the investigating judge has received this document, she will send it to the parties involved in the case, there will then be a deadline for making further submissions and the investigation judge, upon receipt of these submissions, will then make a decision as to whether a prosecution should be brought.*

We have been informed that in cases where there is an examining magistrate (judge d'instruction) but no suspects in custody, the judicial process can take a very long time in France – often in excess of two or three years.

- Supported '**WestFest**' at **Wentworth Court** in Hesters Way - a fantastic, 1960s-themed, celebration

- Supported the **SLG housewarming party** at their new offices at the Brewery - complete with a ball-pit...
- Joined local artists to mark the **Art in the Park 50th Anniversary** at **Cheltenham Town Hall**
- Joined volunteers at the **Civic Society** to take part in a street survey of grot spots across our town
- Supported the **Summer Fete at St Mark's School in Benhall**
- Went with his family to the **Great Get Together** picnic in **Hatherley Park** (arranged in tribute to Jo Cox MP who was murdered in 2016)
- Joined the founder of the new **Bar Padron on Regent Street**, near to the **Everyman Theatre** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Supported the **Monkscroft Care Centre** art exhibition
- Attended the **St John's School Fete**
- Expressed his **opposition to a second referendum** in a speech at Cheltenham Town Hall and reiterated his call for a sensible compromise Brexit deal to end the current impasse [READ MORE HERE](#)

IN THE MEDIA

- Written two articles for the **Gloucestershire Echo** regarding the **leadership race** and his campaign for a **bottle deposit scheme** to be introduced across the UK [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Been interviewed by **BBC Radio Gloucestershire** regarding the latest £150,000 investment secured from the Government for **Cheltenham's Cyber Park project**
- Awarded 'quote of the day' by the **Times Law** section as he set out the need to protect Legal Aid funding. As Alex said, *"If we don't want people taking the law into their own hands and settling their disputes in the streets, people must feel able to access the justice which sustains our global reputation abroad. If they don't, that reputation will start to fray."*

CONSTITUENCY SURGERIES

If you would like to book an appointment, please email reply to this email or email Alex on alex.chalk.mp@parliament.uk

CASEWORK

To raise a casework issue, please email reply to this email or email Alex.

Written Parliamentary Question

- To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government is taking to prevent postal vote electoral fraud.

Kevin Foster MP (Parliament Under-Secretary of State for Wales, and Parliamentary Secretary at the Cabinet Office): "Electoral fraud is unacceptable on any level. There are

already measures in place designed to enhance the security of postal voting. In response to the Pickles report on electoral fraud, the Government accepted recommendations to strengthen the postal vote system and, in line with our manifesto commitment, we are working to reform postal voting to ensure our elections are secure.

Cabinet Office coordinates cross-Government work to protect and secure our democratic processes and ensure those involved in delivering our elections receive cyber, physical and personnel security advice from experts at the National Cyber Security Centre and the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure.

High Street and "Grot Spot" Update

- A new tapas bar and restaurant has opened on Regent Street [READ MORE HERE](#)
- After considerable lobbying, **Virgin Media** have repainted this graffiti-covered broadband cabinet on Rodney Road. See before and after photos below:



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PHOTO GALLERY



With Punch and Judy at the Great Get Together picnic in Hatherley Park



Supporting Guide Dogs UK in Parliament



Enjoying Went Fest at Wentworth Court



In Hatherley Park



Supporting Greenpeace in Parliament



Meeting Cheltenham campaigners on Lambeth Bridge for the Time is Now environmental lobby



Meeting with the Governor of Massachusetts, Charlie Baker, to discuss their joint interest in protecting the environment



With the Reverse Vending Machine and the Marine Conservation Society on the High Street



With Charlie Baker, the Governor of Massachusetts

The greatest generation meets the latest



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