



Fortnightly Update #69 - 15.07.2019

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(Or, in plain English, welcome to this update.)

This year is the 175th anniversary of the first use of **Morse code** to communicate between cities. More importantly, it is also the **centenary of GCHQ**. So last week I led a debate in Parliament to mark that milestone - concluding my speech with the first ever Morse code message in the House of Commons...

I called the debate because I wanted to pay tribute to the intelligence work that goes on in our town. The stark fact is that there are people alive today - civilians as well as soldiers - who would not be able to go home to their friends and families but for the skill of those serving at GCHQ. Thousands of people have also been spared the trauma of becoming a victim of serious crime, and countless more have avoided the misery of seeing their livelihoods destroyed by the action of cyber gangsters and hostile state actors. We owe them a debt of gratitude.

You can click the photo below or [HERE](#) to watch the speech in full.



GCHQ @GCHQ · 3h

.....-.-.-/-.-.-.-.-
[@AlexChalkChelt](#) [twitter.com/BBCParliament/...](#)

 BBC Parliament @BBCP... · 3h

Cheltenham MP Alex Chalk wishes Happy Birthday to GCHQ using Morse code:



CENTENARY OF GCHQ
Alex Chalk
Conservative, Cheltenham
BBC PARLIAMENT 11 JUL HOUSE OF COMMONS

6 31 152



Sir Alan Duncan MP
@AlanDuncanMP

Congrats to @GCHQ on their centenary. Great speech by @AlexChalkChelt, their MP, joined by Defence Secretary @PennyMordaunt. We all owe our safety to their fab work. 100 🇬🇧



Here in Cheltenham, I was delighted to help open the £2m+ Apollo theatre at **Cheltenham General Hospital**. It's an amazing facility, as good as any you'll find anywhere in the world, and includes a sophisticated ventilation system that pumps ultra-filtered air into the theatre, reducing the risk of post-operative infections.

The money comes from a **£10m Government capital grant**, over and above the £39m allocated to Gloucestershire Hospitals last year. I was asked by the Trust to help unlock that grant when progress with Department of Health officials stalled; it involved a lot of working behind the scenes at DH, but I'm delighted we heaved it over the line in the end.

There's other news below on the **parking proposals** (you can read my letter opposing plans to introduce charges at the previously free Pittville Pump Room, Sixways and Church Piece car parks). And there's news too on the scheduled opening of the **Cheltenham Spa station car park**.

Highlights of the last fortnight also include the ever-impressive **Red Arrows'** flypast over the Doughnut to mark the attendance of the Prince of Wales for the GCHQ Centenary. And I really enjoyed having a spin on the charity **pop-up velodrome** outside the muni - albeit wearing a suit, and on my fold-up Brompton bike...

I also wanted to say how wonderful it was, at the 80th anniversary celebrations for **Hatherley Park**, to meet someone who was *actually there* at its opening in 1939! Keith Jones can be seen, as a boy, in a contemporary photo playing on the 'witch's hat' apparatus (absolutely lethal, btw, and long since banned). It was so special to see him enjoying the picnic with everyone else.

Finally, I meet many inspiring people in this job, **but I wanted to pay tribute to local resident** Adam, who drove his wheelchair from Cheltenham to Northampton Silverstone (over 60 miles) on 11 July to raise money for the **REMAP** charity. A hugely impressive achievement. It's not too late to sponsor him [HERE](#).

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.

If you would like to stop receiving these emails, click 'UNSUBSCRIBE' below or respond to this email with the single word 'UNSUBSCRIBE'!

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I asked a question in PMQs about the London Bridge terror attacks. Despite the fact that the family of at least one of the terrorists received legal aid at the inquest, the families of the victims did not. Those relatives included my constituents in Cheltenham. It's an justice which needs to be put right. [CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE VIDEO](#)



CLICK ABOVE OR [HERE](#) to watch me tackling the Charity Velodrome on the Promenade in support of the Cheltenham and Gloucester Hospitals Charity's Breast Cancer Appeal

Since the last update, Alex has:

IN PARLIAMENT

- Led a debate to celebrate the **centenary of GCHQ**. You can [READ MORE HERE](#) or [WATCH HERE](#)
- At PMQs, called on the Prime Minister to fix the injustice which saw a family of a **London Bridge terrorist** receive legal aid for the inquest, but not the (Cheltenham-based) family of one of the victims [READ MORE HERE](#) or [WATCH HERE](#)
- Pushed for resources to be targeted at helping to train **A&E doctors** at **Cheltenham General Hospital**. Responding for the Government, the Health Secretary praised Alex as the “**the best advocate for Cheltenham**” who supports Cheltenham General “incredibly strongly” [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Spoke out against the appalling and unfair practice impacting on some of his constituents who, as leaseholders, are trapped by **doubling ground rents**, and on occasion left unable to sell their property [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Rejected SNP claims that the British Government has acted illegally in relation to the **Chagos Islands** (which include Diego Garcia) [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Made a speech in Parliament in favour of additional schools funding for special needs. The Minister responding called Alex an “**assiduous champion for school funding and schools in Cheltenham**” [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Called in Parliament for broader recognition in Britain of the contribution and sacrifice made by **Polish airmen and women** to the British effort in the [Second World War](#)
- Backed the ‘[One Last Push](#)’ campaign in Parliament to eradicate polio worldwide. Alex decided to back the campaign after hearing the powerful testimony of a Cheltenham polio survivor
- Attended the launch of the **Conservative Environment Network** manifesto, and made a contribution about the importance of international cooperation. Alex was a founding member of the caucus, and you can find the **manifesto** [HERE](#)
- Attended military briefing with Air Commodore Simon Edwards
- Met with **Cancer UK’s** ambassador for Cheltenham to discuss what can be done locally and nationally to help fight this devastating disease
- Attended the **NHS Parliamentary Awards in Parliament**. Alex had nominated a local carer for these prestigious awards
- Signed up to the ‘[People and Nature](#)’ pledge
- Spoke alongside barristers and other legal experts at a Politea meeting about the future of human rights post-Brexit
- Joined **BBC South West** for round table meeting with other South-West MPs. Alex joined other colleagues in expressing his concern about the decision to charge over-75s for their TV licence
- Attended a **GCHQ/NCSC** accelerator ‘demo day’ at the Royal Society of Arts in London. Alex introduced local tech start-up **Lujam**

- Backed **Alzheimer's Society's [campaign on dementia care](#)** meeting experts to discuss the future for care in the UK
- Visited the **[Permanent Joint HQ in Northwood with the Parliamentary Armed Forces](#)** scheme, to see first-hand how overseas military deployments are supported from the UK
- Met with representatives from **Versus Arthritis**
- Welcomed a **Cheltenham** teacher to Parliament, who had accepted Alex's invitation to take part in the **UK Parliament Teacher Ambassador Programme**
- Joined **BAE** at their parliamentary summer reception - BAE is a major Cheltenham employer
- Attended the most recent **APPG on Community Transport** meeting to plan the future programme of work in Parliament to support this vital sector. Alex is a champion of **Community Connexions** in Cheltenham which provides affordable transport for some of the most vulnerable people in Gloucestershire
- Celebrated **Action for Children's 150th anniversary** at an event in Parliament
- Provided PPS support at Defence Oral Parliamentary Questions. [WATCH HERE](#)
- Welcomed another forty constituents to Parliament on another **Constituency Tour Day**. You can join one of these by responding to this email. Alternatively, if you'd be interested in watching proceedings from the gallery, please contact Georgie (georgina.mack@parliament.uk)

IN CHELTENHAM

- Joined medical staff for the opening of the newly refurbished **£2 million+** state-of-the-art **Apollo Theatre at Cheltenham General Hospital**, funded by a **£10 million Government grant**. This funding is over and above the **£39 million** allocated to Gloucestershire Hospitals last year
- Responded to Cheltenham Borough Council's 2019 **Parking Consultation**, objecting to the proposals for a **further hike in parking charges**, and planned introduction of parking charges at free car parks including at **Whitefriars/Sixways, Pittville Pump Room and Church Piece**. You can read more about the plans [HERE](#) and read Alex's letter of objection [HERE](#)
- Welcomed, together with the Mayor, Director of GCHQ and hundreds of GCHQ staff, **the Prince of Wales** to Cheltenham for his visit to the "Doughnut"
- Hailed a key step forward in his vision for **Cheltenham as the leading UK cyber hub, with the announcement of a new partnership between Gloucestershire College and the University of the West of England**, which will lead to the rollout of GCHQ-approved computing qualifications
- Held talks with **Great Western Railway** regarding the **station car park expansion works** and the new **cycle rail link from the station to Lansdown Road**. GWR have written to Alex as follows:

"Work on the new spaces did get set back a little by the re-emergence of the Japanese knotweed in the high level car park near the large gas main. It was difficult to remove and that added about two weeks to the programme. It is now dealt with and we are on target to

complete the new spaces in August as planned. I should note that we will be losing some more spaces from this weekend as work moves to form the new access in the boundary wall.

This is the first phase of the car park and forecourt works. Once that is complete we move on to phases 2 and 3, which will mean working on the old car park (North Side) and finishing off the forecourt. This work will be done during September and October. When complete we will no longer lose spaces for construction, and we will get the full benefit of the extra spaces and the better layout.

I can report on the A40 cycle link we have appointed designers to work up plans for submission to Network Rail for 'Approval in Principle'.

This will need to be followed by more detailed design work, from which we can procure a contractor to build. We are also discussing the arrangements for ongoing maintenance and management with Network Rail and Cheltenham Borough Council. It is something we want to do, but delivery is subject to funding and securing Network Rail approvals."

- Took part in a panel discussion at the **University of Gloucestershire** with a group of Christians from **Ramallah** to discuss the persecution of Christians in the Middle East and beyond
- Addressed pupils at **Dunalley School** to discuss his **Net Zero Bill** and campaign to address **climate change**
- Completed a cycling time-trial on the **Velodrome** on the Promenade in support of the **Cheltenham and Gloucester Hospitals Charity's Breast Cancer Appeal**
- Joined **Kensington Avenue residents** for a meeting with Great Western Railway about the ongoing **car park expansion works at Cheltenham Spa station**
- Met a group of local **Extinction Rebellion** activists to discuss the Government's efforts to tackle climate change
- Addressed pupils at **Leckhampton Primary School** about his work as an MP
- Supported celebrations for the **80th anniversary of Hatherley Park**
- Met a local **horse riding** group to discuss how planned crossings of the new **A417 Loop carriageway can be designed with horse riders in mind**
- Held a constituency **surgery**
- Joined Dame Cheryl Gillan MP at **Cheltenham Ladies' College** as she addressed their Speech Day
- Travelled to the home of an inspiring disabled Cheltenham constituent to discuss his epic 11 July **Wheelchair Challenge** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Volunteered at the **Midsummer Fiesta in Montpellier Gardens**
- Visited **Holy Trinity School Primary School** to learn more about their **Play Therapy** sessions
- Supported **Teens in Crisis 25th Anniversary Celebration** at Highnam Court

COMING UP

- on 23 July, volunteers from local businesses will be undertaking a variety of clean-up works on Regent Street. The project is being coordinated by the local **Business Improvement District**
- Cheltenham's annual **Chilli and Cheese** Festival will be returning to Sandford Park on 3 and 4 August. [READ MORE HERE](#)

IN THE MEDIA

- Written two articles for the **Gloucestershire Echo** regarding the **Bournside bus crash investigation** and the opening of the **Apollo Theatre at Cheltenham General** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Been interviewed by **the Breeze** regarding **Cheltenham Borough Council's climate emergency declaration**
- Widespread national media coverage of Alex's **parliamentary debate regarding GCHQ** [READ MORE HERE](#)

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.

High Street, "Grot Spot" and Casework Update

- Sought clarification from the Borough Council regarding their food waste disposal process, following media reports that much of the food waste collected by Councils is sent to landfill. **The Council provided assurances that all waste in Cheltenham goes to Andigestion in Bishops Cleeve**
- Raised concerns about the **state of the War Memorial** in Cheltenham, following concerns about litter, dirt and other debris
- Congratulated **G Cafe in Springbank**, which works with young people in the local community, for securing planning permission to create its own Community Garden [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Written to the Borough Council to ask what support is available to residents who want to **recycle their garden waste but lack the financial means to pay for the Council's subscription service**
- Established that revised plans for the **Carlton Street Post Office** have been submitted to the Borough Council for consideration
- Written to **BT Openreach regarding poor mobile phone signal in the Leckhampton area**. Having visited the area to test the signal, BT discovered some faults which they have promised to investigate and resolve
- Welcomed plans to resurface a significant section of **Gloucester Road, near the junction with Tewkesbury Road, from 25 July to 13 August**

- **Kingfisher Flooring** are opening a new store on Bath Road. [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Received the following update from the County Council regarding **dangerous parking on the Lower High Street**:

"We have been working hard to arrange for the relevant officers to agree a date for a joined approach to enforcement in this area. We are currently following up with police, the blue badge fraud investigation team and the Cheltenham Westend Partnership.

We have kept an eye on this area and the patrols are still being increased regularly. It is difficult to measure how many PCNs have been issued as the exact location, near to the Frog and Fiddle pub, as all PCNs and observations for the 'High Street' come under the same street name location as all other restrictions on the entire extent of the street (i.e. From The Strand to Poole Way).

As previously stated, we are aware of the parking issues in the Lower High Street section of the town, especially regarding traffic flow concerns for the bus services. We often experience difficulty issuing tickets where vehicles drive off before a ticket can be issued, although we try to issue 'vehicle drive aways' whenever possible"

PHOTO GALLERY



At the newly refurbished £2 million+ Apollo theatre at Cheltenham General



Welcoming Alex's latest Cheltenham group to Parliament



GCHQ responding by Twitter to Alex's Morse code message



Speaking at the launch of the Conservative Environment Network manifesto in Parliament



With the Defence Secretary, Penny Mordaunt MP and the Foreign Office Minister, Sir Alan Duncan MP, following Alex's GCHQ debate in Parliament



Hearing from businesses vying to join GCHQ's cyber accelerator



Supporting the Fix Dementia Care campaign in Parliament



Alex is a strong backer of investment into cancer research



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Our mailing address is:

Alex Chalk MP

2 Henrietta Street

Cheltenham, GL50 4AA

United Kingdom

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