



Alex Chalk, MP for Cheltenham

Fortnightly Update #72 - 22.9.2019



Welcome to this 72nd update! Apologies for sending this a little late on a Sunday evening.

A&E

With apologies to those of you who have also signed up to receive my health briefings, and have therefore already read some of the below, but I wanted to provide an update on the campaign to save **Cheltenham's A&E**.

The campaign continues at pace. Last week I hand-delivered (see pic above) hundreds of responses to NHS bosses' "engagement exercise" about the future of healthcare in Gloucestershire. That came on top of nearly **17,000 signatures** from local people on my petition to protect A&E. Together in Cheltenham we are arguing, passionately but with reason and logic, that this vital service needs to stay. Thank you so much if you're one of the people who has signed up. Numbers really do matter, and I am confident from some of the conversations I've been having that the sheer weight of opinion is being felt.

"One Gloucestershire", the body running the "engagement", maintain that no decisions have been made about A&E. But given leaked correspondence, such assurances don't cut it I'm afraid. I'm calling on them to go further and **rule out closure**. It's the only way to allay legitimate concerns.

In the last fortnight I also joined over a hundred local people at Cheltenham General Hospital, to hear presentations from senior managers and clinicians. We heard that Gloucestershire Hospitals' **budget went up by over 7% last year** - from £498m to £533m.

As for patient numbers, 140 patients are seen every day at Cheltenham A&E with 280 going to Gloucester. It begs the question: how can GRH conceivably absorb an additional 140 patients a day? No criticism of Gloucester's excellent A&E team, but it would increase their workload by 50%.

And with an additional **£920,000 having been invested in refurbishing Cheltenham's A&E**, why are managers spending taxpayers' cash on an A&E service that they refuse to rule out closing?

General Health Update

In positive health news, Cheltenham's brilliant **oncology centre** continues to go from strength to strength, treating patients from as far away as Powys in Wales. I am delighted to have helped CGH secure a total of four LINACs (the latest radiotherapy machines which deliver ultra-precise doses). Clinicians have also taken delivery of a new £1.25m hi-tech cancer-treating robot.

Other

There's more news below on everything from the **Air Balloon** roads investment scheme to my meeting with the Chief Constable to discuss how Gloucestershire's **additional police officers** (part of the 20,000) might be deployed. It's up to the police of course, who should be operationally independent, but my pitch is for some to be allocated to foot and cycle patrols. And if you missed the story of 90-year old Betty's abseil down the Eagle Tower, you should definitely catch up on that!

With the Supreme Court judgment still awaited I deliberately haven't majored on Brexit this week. Please do not hesitate to email if you would like more information - including about my backing for the recent cross-party initiative called "MPs for a Deal".

Many thanks for reading.

Best wishes,



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 the Air Balloon scheme to improving adolescent mental health and cracking down on the town's 'grot spots') please do get in touch

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website [HERE](#)

Since the last update, Alex has:

IN PARLIAMENT

- Held talks with the **Transport Secretary**, alongside the other Gloucestershire MPs, to discuss the latest developments on the **Air Balloon** scheme. Permission has now been given to progress the scheme to the Development Consent Order (DCO) planning application stage. **Highways England will conduct a public consultation** on the updated design, to run from 27 September to 8 November. After locking down the Option 30 design, this is a crucial milestone towards the goal of saving lives, boosting Cheltenham's economy and cutting air pollution. For a clip of the Air Balloon being raised in Parliament click [HERE](#)
- Stated it was not credible for certain MPs to call for a second Brexit **referendum** in circumstances where they have admitted they will not accept the result if they lose [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Met ministers and officials at the **Foreign and Commonwealth Office** to discuss issues including the situation in:
 - Hong Kong
 - Iran
 - Kashmir
- Held talks with with the **Minister for Pensions** and Financial Inclusion at the DWP, to discuss state pension inequality for women - in particular the unfair impact of **guaranteed minimum pensions provisions**. In light of Alex's representations, the Minister agreed to write to pensions providers to demand early compliance with Government guidance to remedy the inequality. (This is a technical area, and if you would like more information please email Alex).

IN CHELTENHAM

Cyber Update

- Supported the launch of **Hub 8**, a 7,000 ft² dynamic co-working space in **Cheltenham's town centre**. This site is dedicated to enabling the growth and development of the flourishing tech and cyber sector in Cheltenham. It will allow established cyber professionals to work alongside local start-ups before Cheltenham's cyber park comes on-line
- Attended the **Local Economic Partnership (LEP), GFirst's**, Annual Review event at the University of Gloucestershire, which included a section on Cheltenham's cyber future, and how the £22m in Government funding for local roads infrastructure will be spent

Charity Support

- Cheered on the charity abseil in aid of local charity **CCP at the Eagle Tower**, with the brilliant 90-year-old Betty following her recent wingwalk with an abseil down Cheltenham's tallest building
- Supported the **YMCA Annual General Meeting** on Vittoria Walk - hearing about the phenomenal support YMCA provides to vulnerable people in Cheltenham. YMCA's work includes helping to run the 'homelessness hub' funded from £950,000 invested in Gloucestershire as part of the Government's 'Rough Sleeping Strategy' [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Attended the **Maggie's Charity Lunch** at the Daffodil
- Taken part in a charity quiz organised by **Perry Bishop** in aid of **Winston's Wish** at the Beehive pub. Winston's Wish is a Cheltenham-based charity which helps support children who have been bereaved following the loss of a parent
- Helped to present the awards at the Gloucestershire **Local Business Charity Awards** in Bishops Cleeve. The awards were generously sponsored by Jelf Insurance and Ageas insurance and celebrated local businesses

Police

- Spent a morning with **Gloucestershire Constabulary. During his stint at HQ Alex,**
 - met staff responsible for despatching officers to Cheltenham from the Force Control Room
 - **held talks with the Chief Constable** about the additional officers that Gloucestershire is forecast to get (the Force is expected to expand by approximately 10%). Whilst respecting the operational independence of the police, **Alex called for more officers to be on foot or cycle patrol in Cheltenham**
 - toured the state-of-the-art custody suite, including the facility for holding **suspected terrorists**

Climate Change

- Addressed a large crowd at a demonstration in front of the municipal offices for the global **Earth Strike climate protest**
- The UK has reduced emissions faster than any other major developed economy (down by 42% on 1990 levels) but Alex believes much more needs to be done. That's why he introduced the legislation that has made the UK the first country in the G7 to legally commit to **net zero carbon emissions by 2050** - reflecting the overwhelming consensus of climate scientists at the IPCC conference in October 2018 that this is what is required to keep the planet within the 1.5 degree warming limit agreed as part of the Paris Climate Accord

Military/Veterans

- Taken part in the Battle of Britain memorial service at the Cheltenham Minister, and thereafter at the War Memorial. Once again, cadets from 125 (Cheltenham) Squadron marched with pride and professionalism

Community

- Supported the quiz night at the **Royal in Charlton Kings**
- Visit **Faithful House in Suffolk House** to meet local residents and discuss issues ranging from Brexit to pavements
- Supported the **Cheltenham Bowls Festival** in Suffolk Square
- Met the local representative from the **Library and Information Centre (CILIP)** to discuss Alex's support for a vibrant future for **Gloucestershire's libraries**
- Held a constituency surgery

Schools/University

- Visited the **Ridge Academy** to meet the Headteacher of this excellent special school. Alex has long campaigned on behalf of Cheltenham's special schools, raising in Parliament at PMQs the issue of the "explosion" in student demand. The Chancellor has announced an increase in schools funding (see highlighted text from the Spending Review speech below):

*"Next year...every secondary school will be allocated a minimum of £5,000 for every pupil...and every primary school will be allocated at least £3,750 per pupil, on track to reach £4,000 per pupil the following year. This funding will mean that teachers' starting salaries can rise to £30,000 by 2022-23, so that we can attract more of the best graduates into teaching. We have allocated nearly £1.5 billion per year to contribute to teachers' pensions, and **we are providing over £700 million to give more support to children and young people with special educational needs—an 11% increase compared with last year.***

Let me particularly thank my hon. Friends the Members for Bexhill and Battle ([Huw Merriman](#)), for Cheltenham ([Alex Chalk](#)) and for [St Albans](#) (Mrs Main) for championing schools."

- Attended the **Freshers Fayre at the University of Gloucestershire** to meet Cheltenham's new students
- Spoken to pupils at **Dean Close Prep School about his work as Cheltenham's MP**

Cheltenham Businesses

- Joined local business representatives, including the **Cheltenham Trust, Beard Jewellers and Harrison Clark Rickerbys** for a business lunch
- Attended an event at John Lewis to discuss the future of **Cheltenham's High Street** and the need for a clear economic plan to ensure Cheltenham remains a vibrant place for businesses (Alex's prior commitment to the Winston's Wish charity event meant he was unable to stay until the end)

High Street Changes

- Welcomed news that a new restaurant, **GL50**, will soon be opening in Cheltenham to replace the White Spoon [READ MORE HERE](#)

- Plans have been submitted to create much needed new housing above shops on the Promenade, which will also help to reinvigorate our High Street [READ MORE HERE](#)

IN THE MEDIA

- Written several articles for the **Gloucestershire Echo** regarding his campaign to save Cheltenham's A&E [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Been interviewed by Channel 4 and Newsnight regarding his local campaigns in Cheltenham

NOTICE BOARD

Alex has been asked to publicise the following, and is happy to do so:

- A new **nutrition centre** is opening in Charlton Kings - Ami Sheward Nutrition
- **The National Apprenticeship Show is returning to Cheltenham Racecourse on Tuesday 1 and Wednesday 2 October.** After a successful debut show last year with over 8,000 visitors the show is set to return. The event is FREE to attend and will have opportunities from intermediate to advanced, higher and Degree from companies including Vets 4 Pets, Pets at Home, Rolls Royce, Taylor Wimpey, Hitachi Rail, AXA, NHS Gloucestershire Trust and more. If you are interested in finding out more about the event then please [CLICK HERE](#)
- If you or anyone you know are affected by **kidney problems**, you might be interested in the event below:



**Kidney
Patient Information Day**
with

Renal Team Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

*Drop in Event at
Oxstalls Tennis Centre Conservatory
Gloucester GL2 9DW*

*on Tuesday 15th October
10.30a.m – 12.30pm*

*An informal event to talk to healthcare
professionals and kidney patients.
Friends and family welcome.*

Contact Karen Williams GRH 03004226890
Lily Gidley GKPA 01452 311199 gloskpa@gmail.co.uk

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.

PHOTO GALLERY



Supporting the Local Business Charity Awards



Speaking at the climate protest outside the Council offices



Alex has welcomed the newly resurfaced Bath Road



Supporting the Winstons Wish quiz organised by Perry Bishop at the Beehive



Supporting Betty as she abseils down the Eagle Tower in aid of CCP



At the Battle of Britain ceremony

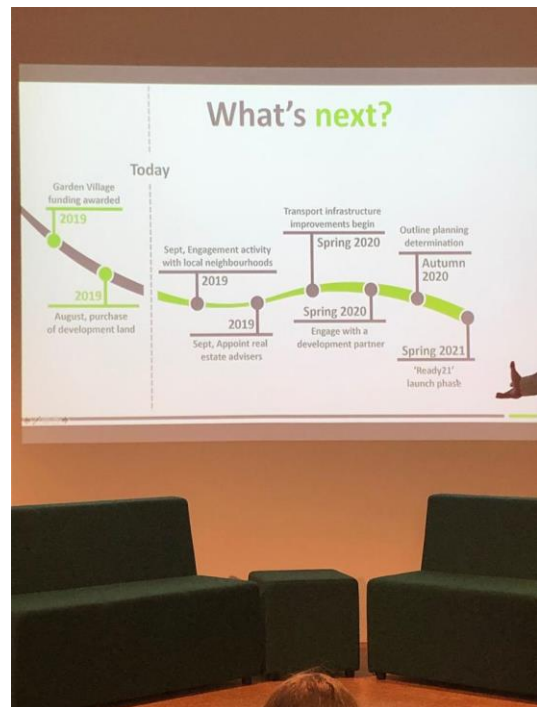
A&E: Here when you need us most

Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

- We have two A&E departments:
 - One at Cheltenham General Hospital (CGH)
 - One at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital (GRH)
- Both are open 24/7; nurse led at CGH from 8pm to 8am.
- We treat and care for patients with a wide range of conditions
- No longer unusual to be treating patients in mid 80s into 90s. Only a decade ago, that would've been people mainly aged 60 and 70
- Patients are increasingly frail often with complex, long-term conditions
- On average 140 patients a day at CGH and 280 at GRH.

www.glosters.nhs.uk BEST CARE POSSIBLE

Some facts and figures about Gloucestershire A&E from a presentation Alex attended



A timeline for Cheltenham's Cyber Park



Supporting the Cheltenham Bowls Festival in Suffolk Square



At the Force Control Room in police HQ in Waterwells



Hand delivering Save our A&E petitions to the local NHS on behalf of local residents



Being interview by Channel 4 at the Uni of Glos Freshers Fayre



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