



Fortnightly Update #71 - 7.9.2019

Chaos, tumult, uproar. This week the Government lost a vote on the Commons taking control of the order paper. Parliament is reeling. 21 Conservative MPs, good people and friends of mine, have lost the whip. The PM's brother has resigned. A general election looms.

How on earth did it come to this?

MPs only have themselves to blame. Whether it was Theresa May's deal, or indicative votes for every option under the sun, the only thing this House of Commons has been able to agree upon is how to disagree. MPs disagreed on the Norway option, the EEA option, a customs union, and more besides. Very many MPs (the purists on both sides) insisted on absolute victory, failing to recognise that those who insist on absolute victory risk absolute defeat.

This week's latest vote is just more of the same. The Bill that has now been passed does not rule out no deal. Unless MPs can finally agree on something, it merely pushes the cliff-edge back. That's because the only way to avoid no deal is with a deal - and it's why many of us voted for Theresa May's deal three times. It's also why I voted for a customs union, which would have honoured the result whilst protecting jobs and peace in Northern Ireland.

And now, to make matters more exasperating, 17 opposition MPs have come out of the woodwork to say, in effect, they made a mistake and would now vote for the Withdrawal Agreement if it came back. Why didn't they heed the warnings at the time?

So where do we go from here? The short answer is, in all likelihood, a general election. When that will happen is less clear - as indeed is what it will solve. That's because whether it's Boris Johnson or Jeremy Corbyn in Downing Street, if MPs aren't prepared to compromise, our country will be condemned to more of the same.

Cheltenham

I have included in this email other updates from over the summer - in particular regarding the future of **A&E** at Cheltenham General Hospital (see my letter to

the Trust leadership below) as well as information on the very welcome **fundingboost for Cheltenham's schools**. It was nice to see the Chancellor, in making his statement in the Commons this week, specifically name Cheltenham as one of three constituencies in the country that had campaigned particularly hard for additional schools funding. There's also an update below on the **Lido** - and Cheltenham's **potholes** of course!

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 **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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HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

[REDACTED]
Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group
Valiant Court Delta Way
Sanger House
Unit 5220
Brockworth
GL3 4FE

19 August 2019

Dear [REDACTED]

We were dismayed to learn recently that Gloucestershire NHS leaders had drawn up plans to close Cheltenham's A&E. This is a proposal that the CCG and Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (hereafter 'One Gloucestershire (OG)') are well aware from our regular meetings is strongly opposed by us.

A&E at Cheltenham General Hospital is a vital resource for Cheltenham and the surrounding villages, and there is simply insufficient capacity at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital to meet current demand, let alone future demand from housebuilding plans. That is no reflection on the staff who do a brilliant job, but simply on the scale of facilities.

The OG Document

Page 18-19 of the document entitled 'FIT FOR THE FUTURE – Developing urgent and hospital care in Gloucestershire' contains proposals set out under the heading 'Our ideas for the next two to three years'. There then appears a sub-heading of 'Accident, Emergency and Assessment Services (A&E)'. What follows, under the summary banner of 'What we need to consider changing', is as set out below.

'We are committed to local access to services, where it can be delivered without compromising on the quality of care you receive, your experience, health outcomes and safety. However, if you have a life and limb threatening illness or injury that needs a 999 response, evidence suggests that you have the best chances of survival and good recovery if you receive treatment in a centre with the right staff expertise, facilities and equipment.'

The inference for Cheltenham General's A&E is clear, in light of the reference to 'What we need to consider **changing**'.

Context

And of course, this document is not without context, as you know. You will recall that we wrote on 22 January 2019 in relation to a leaked email dated 20 December 2018, in which an intention was indicated by the leadership to seek to close Cheltenham's A&E.

As we noted in our letter responding to that leak, that was in contradiction to what we had been led to believe. We were further deeply disappointed to note that the Trust leadership appeared in that email to be proposing a staffing arrangement (a single doctor in the proposed Urgent Treatment Centre) principally as a public relations-led, not clinically-led, solution. We wrote in our letter that the lack of openness was 'bitterly disappointing' adding that it reflected what appeared to have become 'something of a standard operating procedure when engaging with MPs.'

The leadership wrote back claiming that the Trust was 'keen to ensure that the risks which are now evident, in respect of a break-down in trust between ourselves, does not materialise' adding that 'My personal commitment, in this respect, is to ensure that my own dealings with you reflect the values of openness and transparency that you rightly cite as the basis for a trusting relationship.'

And yet within months of that email, plans had been drawn up by for 'engagement' between 5 August and 3 September (when many are on holiday and Parliament is not sitting) regarding a proposal to close Cheltenham A&E. Those plans had been drawn up and the process of briefing councillors begun without having notified MPs.

OG's Position on A&E

We are concerned that steps taken in recent days have done nothing to increase transparency. OG has circulated to its staff an update stating that there are no plans to close the A&E 'in September'. But no one is credibly suggesting that A&E would close in September. What people want to know, and what we are asking for, is confirmation that OG has no plans to close A&E in Cheltenham at all.

We have always been willing to engage, but we feel that there has been a pattern of unwillingness to demonstrate clarity and detail about the Trust's plans.

In the circumstances we seek answers to the following:

1. Will OG now categorically rule out as part of its 'Fit for the Future' process consulting on proposals to close Cheltenham's A&E?
2. What steps have been taken by the Trust to recruit additional ED doctors since recruitment difficulties were cited in 2013 as the reason to downgrade Cheltenham's A&E?

3. What analysis has been done regarding recruitment projections in light of the NHS Long Term Plan, which will see the NHS budget rise from around £122 bn this year to £149 bn in 2023-24?

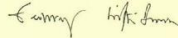
General Surgery

On a related point, no response has been received to Alex Chalk's email dated 2 July regarding General Surgery. He received an email on 9 July stating he would have a response within two weeks.

Best wishes,



Alex Chalk
MP for Cheltenham



Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown
MP for the Cotswolds



Laurence Robertson
MP for Tewkesbury

Since the last update, Alex has:

IN PARLIAMENT (N.B Parliament was in recess from the end of July until 3 September)

- Held talks in Parliament with Gloucestershire NHS managers about the future of **urgent and hospital care** in Gloucestershire. At that meeting Alex, Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP and Laurence Robertson MP (on behalf of a combined total of over 200,000 local people) called for the closure of Cheltenham's A&E to be ruled out
- Spoke out in Parliament to seek specific reassurance about the **supply of medicines** in all Brexit eventualities [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Welcomed **additional funding for Cheltenham's schools**, announced in the Spending Review. The proposed rises amount to 6% in 2020-21 and nearly 5% in the following two years. Further education (e.g. GlosCol) will also get a £400m boost. Announcing the plans the Chancellor stated:

"Nearly every other Department I am announcing today will be funded for just one year, but we recognise the importance of schools being able to plan, so we are announcing today a full three-year resource settlement for schools, levelling up education, improving standards and giving every young person the same opportunities in life wherever they live in our great country. 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."

- Voted for an amendment to the European Union Withdrawal Bill to give MPs a further (fourth!) opportunity to back the Withdrawal Agreement already agreed with the EU in the event that no fresh deal is secured [READ MORE HERE](#). Insufficient MPs supported the amendment and it was not carried
- Backed the Raise the Rate campaign in support of local **Further Education** colleges
- Gave a speech at a **Net Zero roundtable event**, which brought together scientists and other experts to assess technological innovations to assist with meeting the UK's commitments to reducing carbon emissions to net zero by 2050
- Supported the **RSPB** annual reception

IN CHELTENHAM

Hospital/Healthcare Campaign

- Wrote to hospital managers to express "dismay" at the apparent plans for A&E, set out in their "engagement document" (see photograph of letter above)
- Launched a **petition**, which has amassed over 13,000 signatures from Cheltenham and beyond opposing the closure
- Met with local cross-party campaigning group **REACH** (Restore A&E at Cheltenham Hospital) to plan and coordinate opposition
- Met the local representative of the **Royal College of Nursing** to discuss issues ranging from the growth in nursing associate numbers to Alex's campaign to save **Cheltenham's A&E**

Cyber Update

- Took part in the **West Cheltenham Cyber Central Cluster Board** seminar, together with representatives from GCHQ, CBC and academia to discuss **next steps in delivering the vision for Cheltenham** as a cyber hub
- Held talks with the new Digital Minister to secure continuing **Government support for Cheltenham's Cyber Park**
- Visited **Hub8**, Cheltenham's new 7,000ft² co-working space in the Brewery Quarter dedicated to enabling the growth and development of the flourishing cyber technology ecosystem, ahead of its official launch in September
- Visited **Cheltenham's Cyber Accelerator** (the Government funded facility in the heart of Cheltenham where start-ups are nurtured by GCHQ staff) to meet the latest cohort of businesses

Broadband

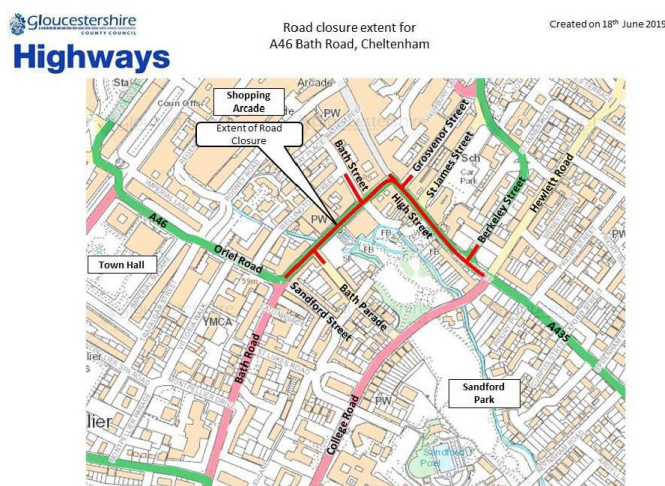
- Welcomed the latest progress in Alex's **broadband campaign**, with news that Cabinet 179 (serving Arden Road in **Leckhampton**) will be upgraded to superfast broadband imminently and that plans have been approved for the upgrade of **Bafford Lane** by the end of the year

- This follows the recent upgrade of Cabinet 129, which saw a significant section of **Cirencester Road** and the adjoining roads connected to superfast services.

If you are experiencing slow broadband speeds, please respond to this email and Alex would be very happy to investigate your specific situation further

Roads

- Welcomed news that the County Council have allocated funding for an improvement study regarding the **traffic light network on St Margaret's Road** - Alex is concerned that the ring road is often congested due to the poor coordination of the traffic lights
- Met **Highways England** to review their plans for the proposed **Cheltenham-Gloucester Cycle Link**
- Welcomed the long overdue resurfacing of the **junction of Bath Road/High Street** (which was in a very poor condition). This scheme follows on from the **resurfacing of Berkeley Street**. Both roads were on Alex's list of priorities for resurfacing which he presented to the highways team at the County Council [READ MORE HERE](#)



Transport & Bus Services

- Written to GWR to seek **urgent clarification regarding apparent staff shortages**, which have led to the cancellation of a number of services from Cheltenham to London
- Sought reassurances from the County Council about the **future of the Cheltenham-Winchcombe bus services, following the end of the current Marchants contract**. GCC confirmed that they are currently out to tender until 2 September and are inviting bids from operators to take over the services

Charity Support

- Visited **Parklands Community Centre** to meet members of the **Everyman Club** for individuals with learning disabilities
- Given a speech to **Cheltenham Rotary Club**

- Attended a charity auction in aid of the **Campbell Burns Metabolic Trust** at Naunton Downs Golf Club
- Addressed members of the **Cheltenham North Rotary Club**
- Visited Cheltenham Open Door as they **celebrated a valuable donation made by the Sir Charles Irving Trust** to support vulnerable local people

Military/Veterans

- Made keynote speech at dinner reunion in Gloucester of Fijian veterans from the **23 Pioneer Regiment**

Tours

- Welcomed **50 constituents** to Parliament for a tour and Q&A. Alex has now arranged for nearly 1,750 local people to tour this historic building

Community

- Presented the awards at the **Reddings Horticultural Fete**
- Supported a get-together at the Midland Hotel on Gloucester Road of Cheltenham's "Saints" - those born or with links to the British Overseas Territory of **St Helena**
- Spoken to the **Cafe Church** group at **St Mark's Methodist Church**
- Visited the **Secret Garden Hub** at the **Lilian Faithful home** in Suffolk Square
- Held several constituency **surgeries**
- Supported the **Cheltenham Festival of Cycling** in Montpellier Gardens

Other

- Attended a briefing with fellow **Gloucestershire MPs** at the **Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters** in Quedgeley
- **Met with Evenlode Films & Productions (based in Montpellier)** who created the brilliant projection animation for the Cheltenham Remembers commemorations, "They are Remembered" in 2018. They are now planning a new animation to mark the centenary of GCHQ. If you are interested in sponsoring this, contact catherine@evenlodefilms.com
- Visited **Inchcape VW on Tewkesbury Road** to discuss their investment in Cheltenham and the future of electric vehicles in the UK
- Visited **Cheltenham Library** to support the **Read Easy** campaign which provides one-on-one coaching to adults seeking to improve their basic literacy
- Met **Nailsworth Terrace** residents in St Paul's who are concerned about the demolition of the wall close to the Post Office that previously protected homes from traffic pollution and disturbance
- Written to the County Council to highlight **Springbank** residents' concerns about the **lack of accessibility to the bus stop on Pilgrove Way**

- **Addressed protestors** outside his office, regarding prorogation and Brexit in general, in an encounter that was widely covered in the UK and beyond in social and mainstream media (see photograph below)
- Met the Chief Executive and Leader of Cheltenham **Borough Council** to discuss Alex's concerns including:
 - the future of the **Lido** - Alex opposes any plans to claw back vital car park revenue from the Lido
 - state of Cheltenham's **High Street** (Alex is concerned that work has stalled in the stretch between Bath Road and John Lewis)
 - proposals to introduce **parking charges** in car parks ranging from Pittville Pump Rooms to Church Piece in Charlton Kings - Alex opposes the introduction and increase of parking charges at a time when high streets need support
 - the future of **Swindon Road recycling centre**

Environment

- Supported the **Divest Parliament** campaign at a photocall with campaigners at his office
- Took part in the **Plastic-Free Picnic** and **Cake Sale** in Pittville Park

Cheltenham Businesses

- Visited **Vinnie's Restaurant** on Crescent Terrace - specialising in vegan food
- Supported the launch of **Maison Chaplais** in Montpellier

"Grot Spot" and Casework Update

- Received the following update from the County Council regarding unsightly tarmac infills in the town centre:

"We held off on the replacement the tarmac in fills outside Carphone Warehouse due to expected improvement works around the Rodney Road, High Street Junction. Looking at draft plans the slabbed area outside Carphone warehouse will not be effected by any future works as the plans stand at the moment. A job is now being raised to make a permanent repair to this area.

Western Power works:

I have spoken to the GCC Streetworks team who expected a permanent repair to be started on the weekend of the 27th July continuing the following weekend. This clearly has yet to be started. Streetworks are chasing Western Power and their contractors for an up date. I will keep you informed as soon as we have an update."

- Received the following update regarding the former **Jones the Bootmaker** store on the Promenade:

"We are currently undertaking some roof works, which were not envisaged at the outset of the project. Once the works are finished, the scaffold can be removed and final clean

undertaken. We are hoping to conclude the project by the end of the month". **THESE WORKS ARE NOW PARTIALLY COMPLETED**

- A planning application has been submitted to convert the **Millets store on the High Street into a gym**



- The **Gourmet Deli Company** has opened on the High Street



- Works have begun to create a **new cinema at the Regent Arcade**



- Works are progressing on the **former HMV site next to John Lewis**



- Chased the Council regarding the **planned resurfacing works on Montpellier Drive/Parade**
- Requested an update from the **Council regarding the coned off area on Cirencester Road and received the following update:**

"The temporary speed reduction is currently in place until 8/1/20, as it was extended by a further 6 months."

- A new retailer is expected to be moving into the former **Game store on the High Street** shortly



IN THE MEDIA

- Written several articles for the **Gloucestershire Echo** regarding his campaign to save Cheltenham's A&E [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Spoken to **BBC Radio Gloucestershire, Heart, BBC Points West and ITV** about his A&E campaign

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 launch of Maison Chaplais in Montpellier



Opposing the Oakhurt Rise plans with local Battledown Councillor, Louis Savage



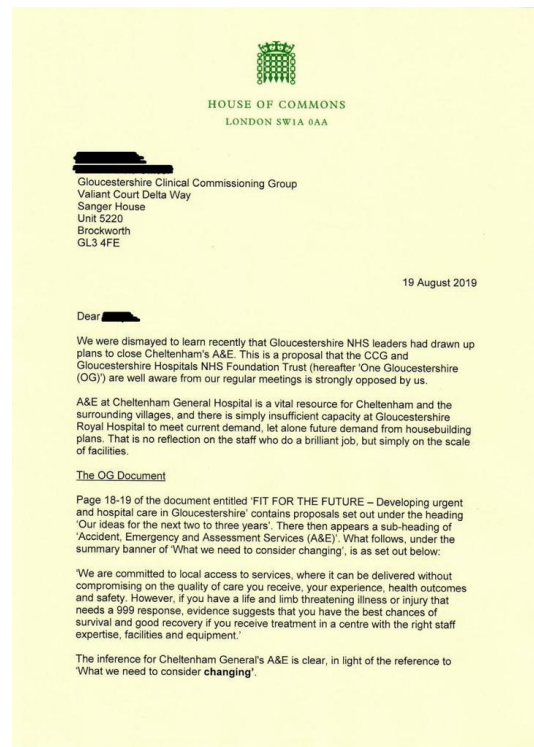
Meeting local tech start ups at Cheltenham's Cyber Accelerator in the town centre



Visiting VW Inchcape on Tewkesbury Road



Celebrating the reunion of the Ex Fijian Pioneer Regiment



With Connor, who is being helped to improve his literacy



Mary James is at Alex Chalk.

6 hrs · Cheltenham · 🌐

Alex Chalk MP addresses us, possibly as many as 200 people hastily gathered together. Thank you Police for holding off the traffic. Impromptu questions to Alex. To be fair, he was quite brave to speak when he could have lurked in his office.



👍 5



An example of the Twitter coverage following events in Henrietta St



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United Kingdom

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