



Fortnightly Update #70 - 1.8.2019

Welcome to this update!

It's few days overdue because I've been with the **British Army** (2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment) in the UK Sovereign Bases in **Cyprus**, as part of the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme. I've been meeting RAF Typhoon pilots, as well as service personnel guarding the UK's radar and signals station high up in the Cyprus mountains, and those on Op Tosca (the UK's contribution to the **UN mission** to police the buffer zone between Republic of Cyprus forces and those backed by Turkey). There was also time for weapons training too - see pic below!

Here at home I put my first question to the **new Prime Minister**. If you're wondering why it was concisely expressed, the Speaker was getting irritated by verbose colleagues and called me with a typically Bercow-esque preamble: "The model of brevity from Hove must now be matched by that from Cheltenham"(!) Mindful of new data that has shown that all ten of the warmest years in recorded history have been since 2002, I called on Boris Johnson to continue the Government's robust approach to protecting the environment. He responded positively, as well as generously about the contribution that **Cheltenham** has made in addressing this vital challenge.

Let me say a word or two about Theresa May: she did not succeed in the central task she faced, but she was and remains a hugely decent public servant that has always sought to put the national interest first. And I was delighted that she took the historic step of agreeing to enact into law my Bill requiring the UK to be the first major economy to legally commit to achieving Net Zero carbon emissions by 2050.

In other news it was a pleasure too to receive a letter from the **Polish ambassador** thanking me for my remarks in Parliament drawing attention to the contribution of Poles to the British war effort in WW2. Polish personnel served in all RAF commands and across all operational theatres and were some of the most skilful Allied pilots. And I was delighted to take part in the Bill Committee which progressed legislation to increase sentences for **animal cruelty** from six months to five years' imprisonment.

Here in Cheltenham, after a lot of work behind the scenes I am so pleased that **GWR** have finally and formally agreed that the fastest journeys between Cheltenham and London will

come in at 1 hour 57 minutes. The changes will take effect later this year as the new timetable is rolled out.

This is something I pledged to try to secure as part of my local manifesto back in 2015 because I know how important breaking that psychological two-hour barrier is for boosting jobs and opportunity in Cheltenham, and also the **cyber park** project. It's why I led a delegation from GE, GCHQ, Superdry and others to Parliament last year to lobby ministers to push GWR to bring journey times down.

Staying on infrastructure, there's a **pothole update** below (of course!) setting out upcoming resurfacing projects in Cheltenham. And on **broadband**, I shouldn't have had to use the 'bully pulpit' of Parliament to get BT to pull their finger out and honour their promises. I pointed out that once again BT had broken their commitment to residents in Cirencester Road to connect their broadband cabinet. A few days later BT had done the work...

On **recycling**, the Borough Council have launched a consultation regarding their proposed changes to our recycling services, which could see the Swindon Road centre closed to general rubbish and garden waste, as well as a reduction in the number of recycling banks across the town. I oppose these changes. In my view, they risk:

1. More fly-tipping, and the illegal burning of green waste (wet wood produces more smoke than dry wood, and releases more pollutants and small particles into the air)
2. Driving up costs for Cheltenham residents who have to travel further to a recycling bank
3. Increased car pollution as vehicles drive further
4. Fly-tipping and vermin.

The financial logic behind these proposals doesn't seem to stack up either. They would save just £33,000 a year; but the astroturf, hot tub planters etc at Boots Corner alone cost £30,000. You can respond to the consultation [HERE](#)

Lastly, you might like to take your family to the Regent Arcade's indoor beach this summer [READ MORE HERE](#).

Many thanks for reading. I'll be taking a bit of time with the f

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 **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

P.P.S. The Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre, which offers help and support to women across the county of Gloucestershire who have been affected by sexual violence, are holding an auction in October to raise money for this good cause. They are looking for prizes for their auction

P.P.P.S I thought you or someone you know might be interested in this Revenue and Benefits Apprentice **vacancy** at the Borough Council. You can read more [HERE](#)

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

In line with data protection regulations, Alex Chalk's office processes constituents' data for policy and casework purposes under the lawful basis of public task. In instances where this lawful basis is not sufficient and explicit consent is required, a member of staff will get in touch with you to establish consent. You can find our full privacy notice on our website [HERE](#)

[Vision 21 25th Anniversary Celebrations](#) - you might be interested in the competition below



Imagine you have time travelled **25 years to 2044** and we've met the challenges of climate change and sustainability.

What does the world look like?
What have we changed?
How do we live, travel and eat?
How do we act as consumers?

Show us any aspect of our sustainable lives.
 The winning entries will be displayed at **The Gardens Gallery, Montpellier, Cheltenham** at our **25th birthday event** on **Saturday 19 October 2019**, with our winners invited to attend as our special guests.



Closing date: **Friday 6th September**
 Age Categories: **11 and under, 12-15, 16+**

Name _____
 Address _____
 Telephone _____
 Email _____
 Age _____ (on 6 September)

Size: A3 maximum.
 Anything that will stick to an A3 page and hang on a wall! Paint, pencil, collage, photographs, words and pictures. Let your imagination run wild.
 Data supplied will only be used for purposes of competition.
 Tick box if you want to join our mailing list:
 All entries must be your original work and not previously exhibited.

Entries to **Reclaim Unit 25b Lansdown Ind Est. Gloucester Road CHELTENHAM GL51 8PL**
 FAO Marta at **office@vision21.org.uk**



Pittville Breast Cancer Ball - Important fundraiser below!

Pittville Breast Cancer *Ball*



In aid of Cobalt Health and Focus Charities

Live Band And DJ

Dance The Night Away

Saturday 26th October 2019

Dress Code: Black Tie (Wearing a splash of **Pink** is optional)

Tickets: £75 Individual and Tables of 10

Drinks Reception & Bar: 7.00pm Three Course Dinner: 7.45pm
Live Auction: 9.45pm Live Band: 10.30pm
D.J.: 12.00am Carriages: 1.00am

Enjoy an evening of dinner, dancing, live auction and fun!
The Pittville Breast Cancer Ball event celebrates breast cancer survivors
and remembers those who have lost their battle, whilst raising funds
to save lives around Gloucestershire.

- Contact: 07907811744 • Email: pittvilleball@gmail.com •
- Book Online Tickets: www.bookwhen.com/pittvillebreastcancerball •
- Pittville Pump Rooms, East Approach Drive, Cheltenham, GL52 3JE •

Designed By Jessica Farrier



This week I questioned our new Prime Minister for the first time regarding his commitment to tackling climate change. [WATCH HERE](#)



I raised in Parliament the frustration of Cirencester Road residents, who have received a series of broken promises from BT regarding upgrading their cabinet to superfast broadband. [WATCH HERE](#)

Since the last update, Alex has:

IN PARLIAMENT

- Called on the new Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, to **continue to prioritise protecting the environment**. The new Prime Minister praised Alex on the work he has done in this field [WATCH HERE](#)
- Quizzed the Government on what they are doing to **support victims in allegations of domestic abuse**, such as video-recorded evidence and video link cross-examinations. Alex was praised for bringing his “expertise as a criminal practitioner into [the] Chamber” [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Called out **BT’s “hapless delivery of broadband”** in relation to those living on Cirencester Road in Cheltenham [FIND OUT MORE HERE](#). Within days of Alex's intervention the work had been done. If you'd like to receive broadband updates from Alex, please respond to this email
- Spoke out about the illegal **Iranian seizure of the Stena Impero ship**, and pointed out that if the vessel had submitted a Notice of Passage, as requested, HMS Montrose would have been better able to protect her [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Sat on the **Public Bill Committee for the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill** which progressed legislation to increase the maximum sentence for cruelty from six months to five years. You can find Alex's contributions [HERE](#) and [HERE](#)
- Praised the **Cheltenham Festival for Performing Arts** for many years of helping young people locally build their confidence and develop a lifelong interest in the arts [READ MORE HERE](#)

- Questioned the **Government on what they were doing to ensure local authorities and companies do not illegally export refuse and recycling abroad** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Pressed the Government on what was being done abroad to tackle the effects of **climate change and** improve water security resilience [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Pressed the Government on ensuring **bottle return deposit schemes** are rolled out as quickly as possible. [READ MORE HERE](#) and [HERE](#)
- Met with representatives from the **Royal College of Nursing** to discuss nursing pressures and pay, and what more Alex can do to **support nursing staff in Cheltenham**
- Welcomed **Emily Ashman, from Specsavers Cheltenham**, to an event in Parliament celebrating Responsible Business Champions [READ MORE HERE](#)
- In his capacity as a founding member of the Conservative Environment Network Caucus, met with senior officials from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and members of the Hydrogen APPG to discuss the **potential role hydrogen can play in Net Zero carbon emissions targets**
- Celebrated **70 years of Legal Aid at a Parliamentary event** - Alex is a strong believer in the role of legal aid in allowing people of all incomes to secure access to justice
- Provided PPS support at a debate on **defence spending**
- Attended the launch of the **Disability Benefits Consortium** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Pressed Ministers from the **Ministry of Justice to provide legal aid for families of terrorism victims at inquests**. Alex has previously raised this in the Chamber. [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Welcomed representatives from Happerley to Parliament to discuss food provenance. You can find out about their worthwhile project, **which originates from Gloucestershire**, [HERE](#)
- Attended reception at 10 Downing Street on Theresa May's final evening as Prime Minister
- Joined colleagues at the 1922 Meeting to hear from the new Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, shortly after the leadership ballot announcement
- Attended a reception on **'Blue Collar Conservatism'** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Met with representatives of the **Marine Conservation Society in Parliament to discuss the Single Use Plastics Directive**. Alex has frequently worked alongside MCS, and is a strong supporter of their work. [READ MORE HERE](#) and [HERE](#)
- Welcomed another **50 constituents to Parliament on another Constituency Tour Day**. Please respond to this email if you'd be interested in attending a tour
- Met with representatives from the Police Federation to discuss policing in Cheltenham and discuss Alex's support for a variety of police campaigns
- Attended the **World Dog Alliance summer reception**, to campaign for a ban on the consumption of dog meat in the UK

- Spoke alongside **then-interim Energy Minister, Chris Skidmore MP**, at a **Conservative Environment Network event to celebrate the UK's new [net zero target by 2050](#)**

IN CHELTENHAM

- Warmly welcomed official confirmation from **Great Western Railway that Cheltenham will soon be benefitting from sub-two hour train services from Cheltenham to London**. This is great news for local and regional economic development and will support Cheltenham's future as the UK's premier cyber security hub. The first train to Cheltenham from London will also leave earlier at 0533 compared to 0733 today, and the last departure will be at 2133, rather than 1948
- Called on the **Borough Council once again to scrap the Boots Corner closure**, following the release of "**devastating**" **leaked results from a survey of local businesses conducted by Cheltenham's Business Improvement District**, which explode the myth that the closure is good for local businesses [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Joined residents in celebrating the news that **Cabinet 129, which serves the Cirencester Road area**, has at last been upgraded to superfast broadband by BT Openreach after months of delays [WATCH HERE](#). **With Cabinet 129 ticked off, the overwhelming majority of the 'e-poor' broadband cabinets Alex inherited when he became MP have now been upgraded**
- Opposed the Borough Council's proposals to **close the Swindon Road Recycling Centre to general rubbish and garden waste**, as well as reducing the number of recycling banks across the town, as they launched a consultation on the plans. You can respond [HERE](#)
- Welcomed plans for the **£4.3 million redevelopment** of the former Monkscroft Villas site in Hesters Way. [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Congratulated businesses taking part in an initiative led by Cheltenham's Business Improvement District to clean up Regent Street this week, which Alex is strongly supporting. **The businesses participating were Keith Scarrott Shoes, Lumiere, The Find, The Workplace, India Jane, Moo Moo Clubrooms, Fever, Kibousushi, Everyman Theatre, House of Fraser, Cheltenham Borough Council and Ubico**. One of the 'before and after' pictures is below:



- Expressed his shock about a diner at **Brasserie Blanc** being hit by falling masonry [READ MORE HERE](#), as well as the break-in at **Bickers jewellers in Montpellier** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Welcomed the County Council's announcement that, following **the resurfacing of Gloucester Road which is due to commence shortly**, the highways team will move onto resurface **Coronation Square in Princess Elizabeth Way**.The

carriageway is in need of essential resurfacing work because it has reached the end of its life span and will be resurfaced from Thursday **8 August** to Wednesday **14 August**. To keep disruption to a minimum, work will take place between 9:30am to 3:30pm (excluding weekends) and the road will still be open during peak travel times. Other roads due to be resurfaced in Cheltenham this summer include:

- **section of A46, Bath Road**

- **section of A46, Berkeley Street**

- Held two constituency surgeries
- Taken part in a clean-up with local residents around **Tivoli and the Bournside Road** area
- Met **Pittville residents** to discuss their concerns about the parking situation at Pittville Pump Room
- Supported the **Cheltenham Cricket Festival** with the **Local Answer**
- Officially re-opened **Grays dry cleaners and cobblers on the lower High Street**, following last year's fire which caused them to close part of their business and refurbish their building
- Met the **Cheltenham Festival of Performing Arts** to discuss legislation surrounding safeguarding, the interpretation of which is creating serious bureaucratic burdens. Alex has agreed to take this up with ministers
- Visited the **Gloucester Law Centre** to support the **Take your MP to Work** campaign and highlight the importance of Legal Aid, as we reach the 70th anniversary of this vital provision.

IN THE MEDIA

- Written two articles for the **Gloucestershire Echo** regarding the **Boots Corner Closure** and the **election of the new Prime Minister** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Been interviewed by **BBC Radio Gloucestershire** and **LBC Radio** regarding Boris Johnson

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 Questions

- To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a national parking exemption badge to assist people with (a) Thalidomide and (b) other disabilities that have difficulties in using the clock system on Blue Badges.

Michael Ellis (Minister of State, Department for Transport): “*The Department has assisted local authorities by providing guidance to local authorities who may want to consider*

issuing an exemption letter to the Blue Badge holder which would clarify the position in the event of a Penalty Charge Notice being issued. Blue Badge holders affected with upper limb disabilities eg. Thalidomide can use marked disabled bays on-street without needing to display a parking clock alongside their Blue Badge.”

- To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the Government plans to bring forward legislative proposals to implement the EU Single Use Plastics Directive 2019/904 which came into force on 3 July 2019.

Therese Coffey (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs): “There is a two year transposition period for the EU Single Use Plastics Directive. An assessment of the legislative work required to transpose the directive is being carried out.”

- To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the Government plans to bring forward legislative proposals on the use of alkaline hydrolysis as an alternative to traditional cremations.

Edward Argar (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice): “The Government currently has no plans to bring forward legislation in this area.”

High Street, "Grot Spot" and Casework Update

- Gas works have started in the Hesters Way area, which may cause some traffic disruption. For more information call Wales and West Utilities on 0800 912 2999
- Waterstones are opening their own cafe to replace the Costa cafe currently in their store [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Chaplais Kitchen will be opening in Montpellier at the start of August [READ MORE HERE](#)
- A sale has been agreed for the Sandford Ale House to Burlison Inns, meaning that this fantastic Cheltenham pub can continue to thrive [READ MORE HERE](#)

PHOTO GALLERY



Officially re-opening Grays cobblers and dry cleaners on the Lower High Street



Congratulating Emily from Cheltenham Specsavers on their nomination for the

Responsible Business Champion 2019 Awards



With MPs who passed the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill to increase prison sentences at Committee stage.



Attending Theresa May's leaving reception at No 10



Joining local residents to clean up Tivoli and the Bournside Road area



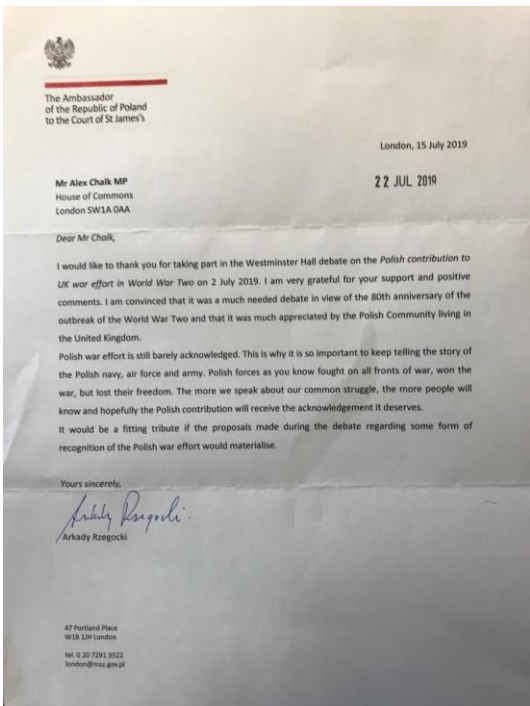
Supporting the Local Answer at the Cheltenham Cricket Festival



Gloucestershire's flag flying in Parliament Square - one of 50 county banners that featured last week as part of a celebration of our nation's heritage



The new PM's debut at the 1922 Committee



Grateful for this kind letter from the Polish ambassador thanking me for my contribution to the debate in Parliament on Poland's contribution to the British war effort.



Supporting the Family Hubs Network in Parliament with Dame Esther Rantzen



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