



Fortnightly Update #67 - 18.06.2019

Welcome to this update.

Away from the drama of the **leadership** - more on that below - last fortnight saw a momentous step forward for efforts to protect the environment and tackle **climate change**.

Following my Bill which I recently presented to Parliament (calling for a legal requirement to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050) the Prime Minister has now agreed to back the campaign. Legislation will shortly be passed, and the net zero target will become the law of the land.

I'm so grateful to the many people in Cheltenham who got behind this campaign. It was good to see senior ministers acknowledging our town's role in getting us to this point - see an exchange in Parliament between me and the Secretary of State below.

Net zero doesn't mean we need to destroy our economy or jobs. On the contrary, it creates the opportunity for a project of **national economic renewal**. British ingenuity has placed the UK at the cutting edge of technological advances in science and engineering. And as leading business experts including Lord Adair Turner and the CBI agree, we can harness and perfect new technologies, and sell them to the rest of the world.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): This is hugely welcome. A legal commitment to net zero will help to preserve our planet while encouraging the kind of tech and innovation that we can export around the world. It is hugely welcome in Cheltenham, too.

I congratulate the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State on their decisive and historic leadership on this issue. What is the plan to ensure that other countries face up to their responsibilities, too?

Greg Clark: I commend my hon. Friend for his well-supported Climate Change (Net Zero UK Carbon Account) Bill and for his fantastic speech in support of it, in which he urged us in this direction. It is a source of great pleasure to me that we can meet his ambitions.

We will have an early opportunity to advance this cause with our international partners and with all countries around the world if, as I hope, we succeed in hosting the next conference of the parties, which takes place next year.

Here in Cheltenham, I'm opposing proposals to close **Cheltenham's recycling centre to general rubbish and garden waste**, as well as reduce the **number of recycling banks across the town. It simply risks leading to:**

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.

In other news, I called for a debate to mark the centenary of **GCHQ**, so that Parliament can pay tribute to the brilliant men and women who work, with precious little public recognition, to defend our nation.

At the many summer fetes that have been taking place around Cheltenham, talk of the **leadership** contest has come up of course. In the first round I backed my former boss, Matt Hancock who, as Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, was a vital supporter of **Cheltenham's Cyber Park**, when I called on him to step in at a critical time; and in his current role is regularly (!) lobbied by me on the issue of **Cheltenham General Hospital**. Matt would have made a strong One Nation leader, but has dropped out of course. At the time of writing (on the train heading up to Parliament...) I am reflecting on last night's Channel 4 leadership debates before deciding who to back next.

Upcoming Events

In terms of upcoming events, I have agreed to publicise a Fraud Awareness talk that NatWest are putting on tomorrow (Tuesday 18 June). It's running from 10-11am at the Cornerstone Centre in Whaddon, and will be followed by a personal budgeting session. All are welcome.

On Friday 28 June, do come and check out the plastic **Bottle Deposit Machine** which I have arranged to come to Cheltenham to demonstrate how a future scheme might work. **It will be parked on the High Street for most of the day. Worth trying it out!**

Support Cheltenham Businesses

Lastly, I wanted to make a plea to support our local businesses. If we don't, we risk eroding what makes Cheltenham vibrant and unique. **Favourite Beers** on Hewlett Road is run by a great local man, Leigh Norwood, and he published the message below. Please do support them if you can! [READ MORE HERE](#)

"The big message has got to be 'Use us or Lose us' - If people want the sort of facility that Favourite Beers provides, they really do need to make use of us - in fact this applies to all local independent local businesses, not just us..."

Thank you 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 **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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Since the last update, Alex has:



CLICK THE VIDEO ABOVE to watch the Secretary of State for Energy, Greg Clark's announcement about the Government's historic commitment to making the UK carbon neutral by 2050

IN PARLIAMENT

- Called on other nations to match the UK's **commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050**. Alex was commended by the Secretary of State for his successful net zero campaign [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Called for a debate to mark the centenary of **GCHQ** to allow MPs to pay tribute to those described by Alex as the "brilliant men and women who keep our country safe in an increasingly complex and dangerous world" [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Attended several leadership hustings
- Pressed the Cabinet Office on what is being done to **encourage more people with disabilities to stand for election**. Alex noted the talent that exists in Cheltenham, including at National Star College [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Called for the latest tagging technology to be used more widely by the courts as a "**powerful tool**" to **punish offenders**, by tracking movements (thereby robustly restricting liberty) instead of simply enforcing home curfews [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Met with the **Chief Whip** and all Government PPSs (parliamentary private secretaries) at **9 Downing Street** for talks on driving the Government's core policy priorities amidst a leadership campaign
- Backed the policy of naming and shaming employers who break the law by underpaying staff, but stressed the importance of **reducing tax on the lowest paid to put more money into families' pockets** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Following discussions with recent graduates working in the hospitality sector in Cheltenham, Alex called on the Education Secretary to allow more university **degrees to be offered over a shorter timescale (e.g. two years rather than three)** to drive down costs. (Alex recognises that some degrees will inevitably require three years, or longer) [READ MORE HERE](#)

- In an 'Urgent Question' called by Labour following a legal judgment regarding local housing allowance rates, Alex stressed the importance of town centre affordable housing in Cheltenham. Alex welcomed the **2018 Government decision to award £3m to Cheltenham** to support the viability of housing on the derelict **North Place** site [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Raised the case of his constituent, sentenced to a term of '**Imprisonment for Public Protection**' with a tariff of four years who has now served thirteen years in custody. Alex made clear that his constituent deserved to go to prison, but raised concerns about "Kafkaesque" prison sentences where defendants do not know if and when they are going to be released [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Was interviewed by the **Football Association**. Alex called for the FA to use their financial muscle to support the army of volunteers in places like Cheltenham who spend hundreds of hours organising football competitions for bodies such as the **Cheltenham Youth Football League** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Supported the [Space Chase Summer Reading Challenge](#) 2019 at a special reception to help boost participation in schools
- Hosted a Leckhampton constituent for tea in Parliament to celebrate her **90th birthday**
- Attended **APPG on Loan Charge** - Alex is supporting his constituents who have been hit with a retrospective demand for payment by HMRC in respect of sums said to owe from many years ago. It has left some on the brink of bankruptcy and despair
- Chaired the **APPG on Legal Aid** meeting on Criminal Legal Aid Review. Alex supports better funding for legal aid - a service that many assume they will never need but which is fundamental to the rule of law and upholding basic British freedoms
- Welcomed 40+ **constituents to Parliament** on another constituency tour day. Alex has now arranged for 1,500 local people to visit Parliament. If you'd be interested in coming on a future tour, please contact Alex's office (alex.chalk.mp@parliament.uk)

IN CHELTENHAM

- Welcomed crucial step forward for Cheltenham's cyber future - publication of plans for infrastructure works, including the **upgrade of Arle Court roundabout, using the £22 million secured from Government**. Consultation events are taking place on 18 June, 2pm-7pm, Jurys Inn Hotel and 20 June, 5:30pm-9pm, St Mark's C of E Junior School [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Spoke out against the Council's plans to **close Cheltenham's Swindon Road recycling centre to general rubbish and garden waste**. The plans will now go out to public consultation. [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Welcomed progress in Alex's campaign to prevent **anti-social behaviour in the QEII playing fields and car park**. In response to a request from Alex, the **Council** indicated that they have **allocated funding for new height barriers** to stop camper vans and other high-sided vehicles entering the car park

- Written to the County Council regarding **BMW staff parking on residential roads in Benhall**. Meanwhile, BMW have announced **plans for a temporary car park for their staff to ease the pressure on Benhall residents** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Welcomed announcement from the Rail Minister **regarding service improvements on the Bristol-Birmingham line:**
 - three additional services running each way
 - faster journey times (up to 10 minute saving on the Manchester-Bristol route) owing to investment to reinstate the four-track railway between Filton and Bristol
- Attended the Cheltenham CityFibre Launch Event hosted by **Bamboo Technology Group**. Ultrafast fibre (1000Mbps) is now available to businesses in Cheltenham [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Welcomed public consultation events **regarding the plans for Cheltenham's new £20m+ secondary school** on 13 and 27 June (13 and 27 June, 4:30pm-7:00pm at Hatherley & Reddings Cricket Club GL51 4XA)
- **Backed the proposed super-surgery on Prestbury Road**, which will offer state-of-the-art GP facilities, 23 dedicated consulting rooms, an on-site pharmacy, a wide range of treatment rooms for paramedics and healthcare assistants and over 60 parking spaces. Alex has been raising concerns that the closure of the Seven Posts GP Surgery could leave local residents in Oakley, Whaddon and Prestbury facing a 10 mile round trip to Cleeve. So getting a new, locally based GP surgery in Cheltenham has been a key priority. Formal approval has already been granted by the local NHS for the new super-surgery. Plans have now been submitted to Cheltenham Council's Planning Department. A decision is expected by the end of July
- Made a speech at the 5th anniversary celebrations in the Pavilion, Up Hatherley, for local debt charity, **Christians Against Poverty**
- Attended the **Network Rail Level Crossing** Open Day on Alstone Lane to educate local people about level crossings
- Joined local **D-Day commemorations** at the **Exmouth Arms** for a screening of the Longest Day
- Met a local **Senior Young Onset Dementia Nurse**, who Alex has nominated for the **NHS Parliamentary Awards**
- Supported the **Warden Hill Family Fun Day, Charlton Kings** summer fete, **Sacred Hearts Church** summer fete
- Visited **St James' School** to meet pupils and visited the **Ridge Academy** to see the transformation that has taken place as the school becomes an academy
- Supported the **Old Pats' Beer Festival** raising money for Cheltenham Samaritans
- Attended a briefing event with the local **NHS Clinical Commissioning Group** and Laurence Robertson and Richard Graham MP
- Supported the **Cheltenham Open Doors Art Exhibition**, meeting local artists across town who had opened their home to exhibit their work

IN THE MEDIA

- Written two articles for the **Gloucestershire Echo** about Boots Corner and Brexit [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Been interviewed by **BBC Radio Gloucestershire** about the Government's support for children living in poverty
- Been interviewed by **LBC** about **Brexit and the future of the Prime Minister**

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 Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government has made an assessment of the effect of second hand smoke from residential properties on people in neighbouring properties; and whether he has plans to extend the smoking ban to private homes.**

Seema Kennedy (Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Health and Social Care): *“The Government has made no such assessment. However, the Government remains committed to protecting the public from the harms of smoking and a comprehensive set of tobacco control policies is in place. There are no plans to extend the smoking ban to private homes.”*

- **To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will encourage local authorities and other parking providers to use standard signage for Blue Badge holders.**

Michael Ellis (Minister of State at the Department for Transport): *“The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 prescribe standard signs to indicate disabled badge holder parking spaces on public roads and these must be used by all local authorities in England. Parking providers responsible for car parks may use these signs but there are no plans to make them mandatory”*

POTHOLE, GROT SPOT & HIGH STREET UPDATE

- Received the following clarification from the **Borough Council, following concerns about the use of glyphosate for weed spraying:**

“Weed spraying operations are currently being carried out throughout Cheltenham (dependent on prevailing weather conditions). We use the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) approved chemical herbicides (which contains glyphosate) to treat weeds around trees, obstacles, fences, along walls and road signs to reduce the need for strimming and to improve the visual appearance of grass growth around fixtures. We also apply it to footpath surfaces and roadside channels.

“As part of an overall review next year the council will be seeking to reduce the use of glyphosate and other weed control chemicals and move toward alternative methods of

controlling weeds.”

PHOTO GALLERY



Supporting the Aerospace in Parliament event



Attending the City Fibre launch event at the Queen's Hotel



Commemorating D-Day and his own relative who fell in the fighting



Supporting the Cheltenham Beer Festival



A presentation at the City Fibre launch event



Supporting the Share a Story campaign for World Book Day



Supporting the Stop MS Campaign



All Government PPSs meeting with the Chief Whip in Number 9 Downing Street



The plans for the new GP super-surgery on Prestbury Road



Alex with his nominee for the NHS
Parliamentary Awards, Tracey Copley-
Boden



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