



Alex Chalk, MP for Cheltenham

Fortnightly Update #64 - 28.04.2019

Welcome to this latest update. I hope you were able to get a break over Easter.

As well as discussing Brexit (inevitably...), since sitting again Parliament has responded to the appalling outrage in **Sri Lanka**. The attack on churches and hotels popular with tourists on Easter Sunday was truly vile, and a primitive attempt to sow division between people of different faiths. I was particularly moved by the tribute paid by Ben Nicholson to his "wonderful" wife and two "amazing" children who perished in the blasts.

There has also been much discussion of the **climate change** protests in London and elsewhere. On that latter topic, on Tuesday I will be presenting my own Bill to Parliament that would enshrine in law a commitment to achieve **net zero carbon emissions by 2050**. This Bill, drafted before the Extinction Rebellion protests incidentally, would make our country the first in the G20 to make this legal commitment. I've said a bit more about the Bill in my video below (apols for the slightly dramatic music!) and I've written in the national media last week too [CLICK HERE](#) (if you have issues accessing this article, you can also find it [HERE](#)).

Otherwise, I have renewed my call for more support for **Cheltenham's special schools**. Teachers there, and indeed in mainstream schools, are having to cope with a dramatic increase in pupil complexity - ie far more challenging and erratic behaviour - for reasons we don't yet fully understand. There needs to be more support, particularly **mental health resources**, for teachers to call on.

There are also updates below on **Cheltenham General Hospital** and my meeting with the head of NHS Improvement about the future of our A&E.

On a lighter note, it was great to **skateboard** (no joke, there's evidence in the pix below...) in SLG's brilliant mould-breaking office in the Lower High Street. It took me back to my 80s skater days!

Thank you for reading.

Best wishes,

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.

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Since the last update, Alex has:

IN PARLIAMENT

- Renewed his call for **more support for SEND teaching** (special educational needs and disability) in Cheltenham. Alex argues that teachers in mainstream and special schools are having to deal with an "**explosion in pupil complexity**" - more challenging emotional behaviour [READ MORE HERE](#) or [WATCH HERE](#)
- Following the "unspeakable outrage" on **Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka**, Alex pressed the Foreign Secretary to offer all possible British support, including from GCHQ, to ensure that those responsible for such "wickedness" are brought to justice [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Held talks with the **Chief Executive of NHS Improvement**, Ian Dalton, to demand that the future of **Cheltenham General's A&E** be assured as quickly as possible. Alex cited the "cloud of uncertainty" which had hung over the service since the 2013 downgrade. He wants to see a commitment to its future, as well as the **restoration of 24/7 services**
- Questioned the **Chancellor of the Exchequer** about schemes to boost take-home pay; called on him to reiterate his support for Cheltenham's government-backed **Cyber Innovation Centre**, which sees the finest minds in GCHQ nurturing local cyber-security civilian start-ups (now valued at over £75m) [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Emphasised the importance of the **continuous at-sea nuclear deterrent** as a "foundation stone" of the strong relationship between the United Kingdom and United States which enjoys "unparalleled security cooperation" to help keep British people safe [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Questioned the **Solicitor General** regarding what the Crown Prosecution Service is doing to ensure **defendants with mental health issues** have a fair trial. Responding, the SG noted Alex's "distinguished history with regard to the prosecution of serious offences at the Bar" [READ MORE HERE](#)
- In a debate following the **Christchurch massacre**, Alex condemned the racism that inspired it as "morally and intellectually bankrupt". He paid tribute to the work of **GCHQ** in seeking out and closing down violent extremist channels online and bringing criminals to justice, and spoke of the value of the **National Citizenship Service** as a tool for bringing people together from all parts of society [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Criticised the "normalisation" of "**utterly toxic behaviour**" online, and called for the Government's social media White Paper (which will set out a plan to address this) to be published urgently [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Called for the practice of **business rates "retention"** (where local councils keep the money they raise in business rates instead of passing it on to the Exchequer) to be rolled out faster. Alex noted that it incentivised initiatives such as **Cheltenham's cyber park** which has the potential to provide a broad pipeline of business rates income to support vital local services [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Called for better - and therefore more humane - decision making regarding **eligibility for disability benefits**. Alex cited the experience of a Cheltenham constituent; all ten members of her ME support group had their initial

refusals overturned on appeal. **It is essential that capability is assessed accurately in the first place** [READ MORE HERE](#)

- Arranged a meeting between Education Minister, Nadhim Zahawi, and Principal of **The Ridge Academy, Peter Hales**, to discuss special needs support in Gloucestershire
- Welcomed **Cheltenham residents** to Parliament for a **tour** and Q&A. Alex has now hosted over 1,250 people in Parliament; if you're interested in joining a future tour, please respond to this email
- Provided PPS support at several Health debates, including an [Urgent Question](#) on the availability of **medicinal cannabis**. Alex attended the following debates (but as PPS is precluded from participating):
 - the NHS mandate
 - **tobacco** licensing
 - **mental health** support
- Launched his upcoming **Ten Minute Rule Bill** on enshrining into law net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Alex will be presenting his Bill on Tuesday 30 April. If his Bill is successful, the UK will be the first G20 to make this legal commitment. You can find [READ MORE HERE](#) or [WATCH HERE](#)
- Was elected onto the **All Party Parliamentary Group on Short Lets** to consider issues such as Air BnB lettings and the implications for urban areas such as Cheltenham
- Attended an event organised by the **RSPB** as part of their new campaign '[Let Nature Sing](#)'

IN CHELTENHAM

- Met staff, ranging from designers to chemists, working at Cheltenham beauty brand company **SLG** in the Lower High Street
- Welcomed the Government's investment of up to **£3 million in Gloucestershire College** as part of the new Institute of Technology programme to boost local skills. [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Updated local businesses about his work in Cheltenham and Brexit developments in Parliament at the annual **Cheltenham Chamber of Commerce** lunch at the **Mayflower** restaurant
- Visited the site of the future **Cynam Workspace Hub** in the lower high street
- Met local representative from the **Royal College of Nursing** to discuss the latest priorities for nurses in Gloucestershire
- Met a local **polio** survivor to discuss how Alex can support the **One Last Push campaign**, which aims to eradicate polio worldwide
- Supported the **Gloucestershire Eye Therapy Annual Coffee Morning** at **Emmanuel Church** in Leckhampton

- Supported the new Plastic Free Shop at the **Global Footsteps** cafe on **Portland Street** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Met the **Cotswold Film Company**, run by two local Cheltenham young entrepreneurs (including a former Balcarras pupil), to discuss support for expanding small businesses
- Supported the **Easter Egg Hunt** in **Hatherley Park**
- Visited **Cheltenham's new holistic community gym, the Armoury**, which aims to tackle the stigma surrounding mental health problems. [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Visited **Forever Clinic** on **Clarence Street** to discuss potential regulations of aesthetic procedures such as Botox and fillers
- Visited **Logical Utilities HQ** on Imperial Square, the only energy consultants in Gloucestershire, who offer full carbon footprint analysis, energy management and bill validation support services
- Joined pupils from **Balcarras School**, from the Sustain Young Enterprise group, for a **litter pick** in **Charlton Kings**
- Held a constituency surgery
- Welcomed the transformation of the former **Springbank Shopping Centre**, a longstanding local grot spot [READ MORE HERE](#)

IN THE MEDIA

- Written an article for the **Telegraph** about **climate change**
- Interviewed on **LBC** about Brexit
- Written three articles for the **Gloucestershire Echo** about the £10 million funding boost for **Cheltenham's hospitals**, Cheltenham's employment levels and his **Ten Minute Rule Bill** - [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Been featured in a **Punchline** article regarding his Net Zero Ten Minute Rule Bill [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.

Written Parliamentary Questions

No responses from ministers received this time!

POTHOLE, GROT SPOT & HIGH STREET UPDATE

- Received confirmation from the County Council that they have issued Section 81 defect notices to Severn Trent Water for **repair work to be undertaken to a series of manhole covers on London Road**, following concerns raised by Alex
- Contacted the Borough Council to highlight local businesses' concerns about the Council's decision to terminate **their off-street business permit parking scheme** (N.B this is separate from the County Council's on-street business permit parking scheme)
- Been in contact with the Borough Council to raise local residents' concerns about the lack of bins at the **Clyde Crescent Play Area**
- **Sofiko**, a new vintage shop, is opening on Henrietta Street shortly



- **Chaplais Kitchen** will be opening in Montpellier shortly



- **Coffee 1** are now open in Montpellier Gardens



- **Tom Howley** will soon be opening in Montpellier



PHOTO GALLERY



Back Alex's Ten Minute Rule Bill for Net Zero emissions by 2050!



Hearing from Greta Thunberg in Parliament



Visiting the new Plastic Free Shop on Portland Street



At Sandford Lido on a glorious Easter Sunday



Taking a skateboard tour of the new SLG offices at the Brewery



In Montpellier Gardens over the Easter Weekend



With Pete Hales (The Ridge) and Nadhim Zahawi MP



Joining Young Enterprise pupils at Balcarras for a litter pick



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