



Fortnightly Update #74 - 5.11.2019

Welcome to this 74th update, and my last before the 12 December election. As I write this, Parliament is just a few hours away from dissolution.

A new Speaker was elected yesterday evening. But aside from parliamentary updates, you'll find information below on everything from the amazing **Pittville Breast Cancer Ball** at the **Pump Room**, to updates on the railway station car park - and also of course the fantastic news about our **A&E**. And for those who share my personal bugbear about **potholes**, there was a parliamentary question about that too!

Looking forward to December, this is going to be the most important poll in a generation. I will be standing for re-election, and I have posted a video on FB explaining why. You can view it [HERE](#). With the number of media outlets descending on Cheltenham (from Sky News to the BBC Radio 4 Today programme!) all the pundits recognise that this is a local contest which will have a very significant impact on the national result. Only this evening, I heard the Cheltenham contest being put under the microscope once again - this time by LBC Radio.

During the dissolution my office will still be dealing with urgent casework, and details should be sent to alex.chalk.mp@parliament.uk or by phone on 01242 210473.

Election Contact Details

Please note that from midnight I will not be able to respond to any replies to this email, unless you are highlighting an urgent casework issue to my office. To contact me in my capacity as a parliamentary candidate kindly email me on alex@alexchalk.com. Please note that I have less administrative support, but I will do my best to respond as quickly as possible.

Best wishes,

Alex Chalk

Alex Chalk MP

P.S I have been asked to let you know that the wonderful local respite centre for disabled and autistic children, **Hop Skip and Jump**, will be remaining open after a successful campaign. You can read more [HERE](#)

P.P.S One of my very innovative constituents has created a new app, called **I Am Me**, designed to help young people to cope with the pressures of growing up in today's fast-paced world. [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 the full privacy notice on Alex's website [HERE](#)



CLICK ABOVE TO WATCH MATT HANCOCK'S ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT THE FUTURE OF OUR A&E



Since the last update, Alex has:

IN PARLIAMENT

- Backed Sir Lindsay Hoyle to be the next House of Commons **Speaker**
- Secured confirmation from the Health Secretary, after a long campaign, that **Cheltenham's A&E will not be closed as part of the Trust's forthcoming consultation** [WATCH HERE](#)
- Called for police officers who made the devastating discovery of deceased migrants in the lorry in Essex to receive counselling and support. Alex referred to the **TRiM (trauma risk management) protocol** used by Gloucestershire police to provide swift support to police officers [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Met with the **Home Secretary** to speak up on behalf of a Cheltenham constituent who is the widow of a senior police officer. Pension rules currently stipulate that if she enters a new relationship, her spousal pension payments will cease. Alex argued that this places surviving spouses in an invidious, and unfair, position
- Pressed the Government to ensure that **EU nationals in Cheltenham and beyond are being supported to navigate the EU Settlement Scheme** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Urged the **DUP Brexit spokesperson** to acknowledge the benefits to **Northern Ireland** business of being able to access the single markets of both the UK and the EU [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Pressed the Government to consider allowing more Parliamentary time to scrutinise the **Withdrawal Agreement Bill** [READ MORE HERE](#)

- Provided PPS support to the Foreign Secretary at a parliamentary Urgent Question regarding the case of **Harry Dunn**, who was killed in a road accident outside a US military base
- Sat on the Delegated Legislation committee for the **'Freedom of Establishment and Free Movement of Services (EU Exit) Regulations 2019'** [READ MORE HERE](#)
- Met with representatives from the ONE Campaign to **back the campaign to end extreme poverty and preventable disease across the globe by 2030**. Alex made clear his view that the UK's international aid budget should no longer be focused exclusively on development, but on conservation (in particular nature-based global solutions) too
- Attended the APPG for **Children Who Need Palliative Care reception** to review new data describing the medical and nursing workforce challenges facing NHS and voluntary sector children's palliative care services in England
- Attended several hustings ahead of the election of a new **Speaker to the House**
- Met with the **Chancellor and other South West MPs** to discuss the future Budget and specific issues for consideration in Cheltenham and the rest of the region
- Met with representatives from the **RSPB to discuss Alex's support for their campaigns in Cheltenham and Parliament**
- Been elected **Chair to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Cyber Security**
- Chaired an **APPG Pro Bono panel meeting** on the importance of improving public understanding of the legal system, to empower citizens to seek lawful remedies
- Co-hosted a **Taste of Gloucestershire event** with neighbouring MP **Richard Graham**. The event saw several Gloucestershire suppliers showcase their produce in Parliament
- Met with students from **Leckhampton Primary School** on a visit to Parliament
- Heard from the Prime Minister in a meeting of the 1922 Committee following the General Election announcement
- Provided PPS support at a Westminster Hall debate on **UK Foreign Policy**
- Attended an **APPG for the Loan Charge** meeting to discuss Sir Amyas Morse's review on the policy. Alex made the point to Sir Amyas that his constituents affected by the loan charge were decent, law-abiding, people who had been given professional advice that the schemes were lawful. In those circumstances, seeking to recoup considerable sums many years after the event had the effect of pushing hundreds of people to the financial edge.

IN CHELTENHAM

SCHOOLS

- Met with a Cheltenham parent affected by the **Bournside Bus Crash** to discuss concerns that the **legal case in France remains outstanding, over three years later**. Alex has since held a meeting with the minister at the **Foreign Office, and called on him to urge the French authorities** (whilst remaining respectful of their right to investigate matters as they see fit) to progress the case with all due expedition

COMMUNITY

- Supported the **Diwali Festival at Pate's Grammar School**

- Opened the **Pittville Breast Cancer Ball** at the **Pump Room**, with a speech to the guests
- Joined **Cheltenham's Round Table group** for their fireworks planning meeting, and also volunteered at the (wet!) Racecourse event on Saturday evening
- Met a local resident to discuss concerns about the **2Pigs application for a sexual entertainment licence** during the Festival
- Supported the **CAMRA Cheltenham Beer Festival**
- Attended the **Cheltenham Cricket Club** fireworks party
- Welcomed the update from **Borough Council that the new height barrier at the Queen Elizabeth II playing fields**, which they agreed to install after concerns raised by Alex and local residents about travellers entering the site and other anti-social behaviour issues, **should be installed at the end of November.**

PLANNING

- Contacted the planning team at the **Borough Council to raise local residents' concerns about the excavation works which were taking place at the Oakley Farm site, despite no planning application being submitted for the site.** The Council provided the following response:

"The excavation works currently taking place at Oakley Farm are in connection with an archaeological investigation of the site. Several long trenches will be dug over the next few weeks and there is likely to be on-going activity on site until the completion of the investigation.

The Borough Council and County Archaeologist were given advance warning of these works and are fully aware of what is going on."

RAILWAY

- Received the following update from Great Western Railway, **after Alex complained about a series of train cancellations** between Cheltenham and Paddington:

"There was an issue with some Sunday service cancellations back in August, and to an extent in September. We have agreed a new driver contract with our trades unions that bring Sundays into the working week for drivers. This does not apply retrospectively, so that does mean that Sundays remain outside the working week for our current cohort of drivers and we rely on volunteers. This was exacerbated in the summer because of the number of staff on annual leave, and things were even tighter this year as we had a number of local drivers on training courses, so that they can drive high speed services in the new timetable which starts in December.

This put considerable pressure on our Sunday schedules. It was short term but incredibly frustrating and inconvenient for our customers. To reduce the impact we used buses, and a turbo shuttle service to get passengers through to Swindon, but this did not replace all the services lost and was not ideal.

Having gained agreement on Sunday working, we are now recruiting a further 300 drivers, with almost half already recruited and in training. This will mean we have a wider pool of spare drivers, with all new drivers having Sunday as part of their contracted hours.

Generally performance is improving and cancellations are much reduced, but there is more to do, and while we now have the long term solution in place, we will need to complete the current round of training to be fully out of the woods for this year. This is almost done, and without the added

pressure of summer leave, I trust Alex is now finding services are running well."

- Received the following update from **GWR on 18 October regarding the station car park improvement works:**

Highlights of last week:

- *Base course installed for the Phase 1 area*
- *Surface course commenced for Phase 1*
- *Bases for lighting columns Phase 1 installed*

Key tasks this week:

- *Manholes and tree pits to be installed (we've increased the size of trees to be installed at three locations in response to your concerns about screening and the extended pits are now being dug)*
- *Further surface course Phase 1 (continuing next week)*
- *Work on the forecourt area to prepare the base for the cycle hub (Phase 3)*

ROADS

- Highlighted residents concerns that the area of of the **High Street outside the Strand pub was dug up by Severn Trent Water, despite only being fully resurfaced by the County Council and received the following response:**

"The work carried out by Severn Trent Water was to repair a leaking water main and was carried out under an emergency notice. As the road surface is new the reinstatement should be of a very good standard and as with all Utility reinstatements will have a minimum 2 year warranty period."

NHS

- Welcomed confirmation from the Health Secretary that the proposed closure of Cheltenham's A&E has been taken off the table, following a campaign backed by around 20,000 local residents [READ MORE HERE](#)

CYBER

- Welcomed the **Housing Secretary**, Robert Jenrick MP, to Hub 8 on Cheltenham's High Street, to show **him the town's new shared working space for cyber sector SMEs, designed to support the development of the cyber technology ecosystem**
- Visited **Craft Consulting** in Fairview to discuss **Alex's cyber vision for Cheltenham**

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Taken part in a **climate change panel event** at St Andrew's Church, organised by **Vision 21 Gloucestershire**. Questions were posed from young people across Gloucestershire, from CLC to All Saints' Academy

IN THE MEDIA

- Written columns for the **Gloucestershire Echo** about **Brexit** and the election

- Been interviewed by **Newsnight** about the election
- Been interviewed on the **Kay Burley Show on Sky News**
- Interviewed by Adam Boulton on Sky News

Written Parliamentary Questions

- ***To ask the [Secretary of State for Transport](#), what steps the Government is taking to encourage local authorities to use recycled plastic to repair potholes.***

George Freeman (Minister of State, Department for Transport): The Government is committed to exploring innovative ideas and processes for more environmentally friendly ways of constructing, repairing and maintaining road surfaces.

As part of the [Live Labs](#) research programme in conjunction with the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport ([ADEPT](#)) and private partners, the [Department for Transport](#) announced in January 2019 funding of £1.6 million to [Cumbria County Council](#) to extend a trial for the selection and testing of recycled plastic in surfacing and structural treatments on the local road network. This trial will assess the suitability and durability of the plastics additives from minor patching work and pothole repairs through to major resurfacing.

As part of the Live Labs programme, projects will be evaluated and the findings disseminated to highway authorities throughout the [UK](#). The Government will encourage local highway authorities to adopt those policies, processes and new ways of working, successfully trialled through the Live Labs Programme.

- ***To ask the [Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport](#), what steps the Government is taking with the [Advertising Standards Authority](#) to ensure subscription services do not mislead consumers into signing up for their services when they make a purchase through a website***

Nigel Adams (Minister of State, DCMS): Advertising in the [UK](#) is regulated by the [Advertising Standards Authority \(ASA\)](#), which enforces the Code of Non-broadcast Advertising and Direct & Promotional Marketing (CAP Code) in non-broadcast media, including online, print, outdoors, video-on-demand, direct marketing and cinema, through a system of self-regulation. [The CAP Code](#) incorporates all relevant legislation, and sets standards for accuracy and honesty to which advertisers must adhere, including specific conditions on advertising to children, causing offence and social responsibility. It is regularly reviewed and updated by the industry to ensure it remains effective, and proposed changes to the Code are routinely subject to public consultation. [The Code](#) includes rules designed to ensure that advertisers do not mislead consumers, reflecting that the ASA is recognised by the government, the courts and [Trading Standards](#) as the ‘established means’ for the enforcement of misleading advertising legislation. On the specific issue of subscription traps, the Code also includes rules designed to ensure that advertising for promotions must state all significant conditions likely to affect a consumer’s decision to participate in the promotion. The ASA has also published guidance to advertisers on how to ensure that advertising of free trials and other promotional offer subscription models are compliant with the Code.

- ***To ask the [Secretary of State for Work and Pensions](#), what steps the Government is taking to tackle ageism in the workplace.***

Mims Davies (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions): The [Equality Act 2010](#), provides strong protection against direct and indirect age discrimination in employment and

makes it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against an employee or a job applicant because of their age, unless the employer can justify it as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

To tackle ageism in the workplace, [Business in the Community](#) have produced a toolkit which provides guidance and support to employers in getting started with age inclusion in the workplace and includes a three-step process based on Look, Listen, Act. <https://age.bitc.org.uk/all-resources/toolkits/getting-started-age-look-listen-act-toolkit-will-guide-and-support-getting>

More widely, Government is taking steps to ensure that older workers are supported to remain in or return to the labour market, the Government has removed the [Default Retirement Age](#) meaning most people can choose when to retire, and extended the right to request flexible working to all employees with 26 weeks' continuous service with their employer.

In February 2017, the [UK Government](#) published "Fuller Working Lives: a partnership approach" to set out the role employers, individuals and Government can play in supporting fuller working lives.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/587654/fuller-working-lives-a-partnership-approach.pdf.

The Government has also appointed [Andy Briggs](#) as Business Champion for Older Workers to spearhead the Government's work to support employers to retain, retrain and recruit older workers. Andy Briggs and the Business In The Community Age at Work leadership team actively promote the benefits of older workers to employers across England.

- ***To ask the [Secretary of State for the Home Department](#), whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a fixed penalty offence for harassment.***

Victoria Atkins (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, Minister for Women): "The Government takes all forms of harassment extremely seriously.

Unwelcome advances that intimidate, degrade or humiliate, are an abuse of power and are unlawful. This Government has incorporated sexual harassment into the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy for the first time, in recognition of its disproportionate impact on women.

Several criminal offences already cover sexual harassment in public places, including the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the [Public Order Act 1986](#), the [Protection of Freedoms Act 2012](#), the [Sexual Offences Act 2003](#) and the [Equality Act 2010](#). Together with the [Government Equalities Office](#), we are working to better understand the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace and in public places. This autumn we will be running a nationally representative survey that will go out to 12,000 respondents. We will then consider next steps when we have access to this important evidence."

- ***To ask the [Secretary of State for the Home Department](#), what steps the Government is taking to ensure that the [Life in the UK](#) citizenship test questions are intelligible and accessible to applicants of all backgrounds and age groups.***

Seema Kennedy (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department): "The [Life in the UK](#) test is based on the Life in the UK handbook, "Life in the UK: a guide for new residents". The

test is administered by [PSI](#) on behalf of the [Home Office](#). The questions were set with the assistance of linguistic experts and professional question writers.

The tests have a number of accessibility features which are available to all candidates. These include the ability to adjust settings and use audio. Additional tailored access arrangements can be provided by test centres.”

PHOTO GALLERY

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Cheltenham A&E will not close, Health Secretary says

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The plans for Cheltenham's A&E unit were outlined in a consultation document called Fit for the Future

The BBC headline following the Health Secretary's announcement about Cheltenham's A&E



Alex being interviewed for Bloomberg in the US



Alex being recognised for his work to protect bees and other pollinators



A bottle of whiskey donated by Alex to charity in Cheltenham!



Alex speaking at the APPG event on public legal education



Opening the Pittville Breast Cancer ball at the Pump Room



Supporting the Mayor's Charity Auction at St Vincent's and St George's



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