

*Alex Chalk has been the MP for Cheltenham since 2015. Love Local Magazines spoke to him about his job, his views on important local issues and found out what's on the agenda for Cheltenham in 2020.*



**Alex Chalk**  
MP for Cheltenham

**PLEASE NOTE:**

*This interview was conducted before the outbreak of the Coronavirus and therefore contains no reference to COVID-19 or the current situation. For any recent news and updates from Alex Chalk, please visit [www.alexchalk.com/news](http://www.alexchalk.com/news)*

■ **What made you want to become an MP?**

I wanted to put myself among the great problems of our society and play a part in their solution.

■ **If you weren't an MP what would be your ideal job?** My old job: A criminal barrister, prosecuting and defending in cases of terrorism, homicide and serious fraud.

■ **What are your key priorities for representing Cheltenham in 2020 and beyond?** I will be campaigning for Cheltenham General Hospital to host a new "Gloucestershire Cancer Institute" to attract the best clinicians to the county. Second, I want to see progress on making the Cheltenham cyber vision a reality, following the huge government backing. Third, I will be working nationally to help chart a route to Net Zero,

*"Securing the best possible NHS services in Cheltenham will always be my top priority."*

following the landmark legal commitment that I spearheaded in Parliament. Fourth, I will also be speaking out on the issue of anti-microbial resistance, which presents a massive challenge for medicine and our society more generally. And fifth, I will keep campaigning for more resurfacing of Cheltenham's roads!

■ **What will be the biggest priority for Cheltenham in 2020?**

Securing the best possible NHS services in Cheltenham will always be my top priority. The total budget for the local hospital's trust went up by 7% last year, and massive additional funding is in the pipeline. I will be meeting ministers to ensure that Cheltenham gets its fair share of support and that local services are protected,



including at Cheltenham General. Other crucial local issues include ensuring promised support for schools, particularly special educational needs (SEND) funding, hits the frontline.

■ **Is Cheltenham's A&E closure postponement just a short term reprieve?**

It was announced last year that the A&E will remain open and its future assured. It will not be on the table as part of any wider planned review. It is very disappointing that some have resorted to spreading misinformation on this issue.

*The parking charges in Cheltenham are far too high.*

■ **The state of our roads has been described as disgraceful – how can this be fixed once and for all?**

The key solution is resurfacing. I have said for many years that simply filling



in potholes is an expensive and wasteful sticking plaster. I am delighted that message has hit home and major resurfacing works are now underway in Cheltenham, and large stretches (e.g. Tewkesbury Road and London Road/Bath Road) have been fixed. Now the local authority needs to finish the job, including in blackspots like St James' Square.

■ **Boots corner is now open again, what are your own personal thoughts on this?**

I'm glad it has reopened, but the truth is that it should never have been closed in the first place. Boots Corner has been an expensive fiasco, wasting nearly £2m of precious public money at the same time as penalising over 60,000 motorists. No credible case was ever presented for the closure, and the execution itself was bungled. It has been a sorry chapter in Cheltenham's history.

■ **Should local councils be charging for parking in our high streets if we are trying to save them?**

Some level of charging is only sensible, but the parking charges in Cheltenham are far too high. Our town is by far the most expensive place to park in Gloucestershire, and that sends out the wrong message to visitors. I will continue to call on Cheltenham Borough Council to cut charges and introduce free parking after 6pm and on Sundays. It's time to show that Cheltenham is open for business.

■ **What's the best way for your constituents to contact you?**

The best way is through my email address, which is [alex.chalk.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:alex.chalk.mp@parliament.uk)