

# FROM THE CLOCK TOWER



SUMMER 2004

[www.chrisgrayling.net](http://www.chrisgrayling.net)

From the Clock Tower is a twice yearly update from your local MP Chris Grayling. The Epsom and Ewell parliamentary constituency covers the Borough of Epsom and Ewell, Ashted, Nork, Tattenhams and the Preston area of Tadworth.



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Chris Grayling MP



## 25,000 back Epsom Hospital Campaign - now divorce looks like the only option

**More than 25,000 people have backed the campaign to secure the future of Epsom Hospital. But local MP Chris Grayling has accused the NHS of stacking the odds against Epsom by asking questions in a way that favours either the Sutton or St Helier options, and has warned that the whole review process is now in a state of chaos. He has written to NHS management in Surrey asking them to do detailed work on the implications of splitting Epsom and St Helier hospitals.**

"I no longer have confidence in the process the NHS is going through," he says. "The initial work done by NHS managers shows that none of their options are affordable. Yet in London they are going out of their way to sort out problems with the Sutton and St Helier option, but aren't doing the same with the Epsom option. It's now clear that we need to break the ties as soon as possible. Breaking up the Trust won't be easy - but if Epsom Hospital is destined to be downgraded anyway, we have nothing to lose."

Senior NHS figures met on June 17th to discuss the future of local hospital services. They claimed that

Epsom is the least affordable of the options available to them, and said that rebuilding Epsom to provide a modern centre for the area would cost the same as building a brand new hospital - a claim disputed by Chris. "The costs they have put forward include refurbishing at considerable expense buildings that are virtually new, and they say it will take five years longer to rebuild Epsom than building a new hospital. These are simply not credible."

In April and May around 900 people attended a series of public

meetings about the NHS's plans, addressed by Chris and representatives of all the other political groups in the area. Since then, local NHS managers have received thousands of letters and cards from members of the public, and more than 25,000 signed a petition in support of the Epsom option.

"I want to pass my very great thanks to everyone who has been helping with the campaign. I know that the strength of feeling has had a real impact on the management of the NHS in Surrey, and made it much more likely that they will reject the London option and agree to file for divorce between Epsom and St Helier."

*Collecting signatures for the Hospital Petition in Epsom Town Centre*



## MP says "No" to European Constitution

*Chris is holding a public meeting for those concerned about the Constitution during July.*

**Following the Prime Minister's decision to back the European Constitution, Chris has joined up with a group of local businessmen and other well-known figures in the local community to form what will be the No campaign in Epsom and Ewell in the forthcoming referendum. He says he will oppose the plans during the debates to be held on the subject at Westminster this autumn, and will lead the local campaign against the plans as vigorously as possible when the issue is put to a referendum sometime between now and 2006.**

At Westminster he is pressing the Prime Minister for further information about the scale of the transfer of sovereignty to the European Union under the proposals.



"When the Prime Minister made his statement to us following the European Council meeting, he provided virtually no information about the wide range of areas where Britain has given up its national veto over what the EU does," Chris says.

"But when you read the detailed documentation about the Constitution, it is quite clear that there are now virtually no areas of Government activity which are totally outside the EU's responsibilities, and where it does not have some power at least to intervene in what happens in Britain."

## Vitamin Battle

**Chris is leading opposition to a highly controversial European Directive, which seems set to lead to the banning of a large number of vitamin tablets and food supplements in the UK. The Food Supplements Directive was passed last summer, despite a nationwide campaign against it. Around a million people signed petitions against the plans, which were presented to the House of Commons by Chris and other MPs.**



Although the Directive has passed into law, many aspects of the way the measure is implemented have yet to be decided and it may not be too late to change some of the details of how it will work. As the Shadow Minister responsible for vitamins and food supplements, Chris has been pressing Health Minister Melanie Johnson to hold talks with the European Commission about the issue, and has also organised a renewed national campaign

against the possible vitamin ban.

"It is ludicrous to think that vitamin tablets that we buy off the shelf in health stores and supermarkets may be banned for reasons that have nothing to do with safety but everything to do with trying to make sure that in future we have standard vitamin pills across the whole of Europe. It's this kind of measure that makes so many people unhappy with what the European Union now represents," says Chris.

*Campaigning on the Vitamin issue with Actress Jenny Seagrove and Tim Yeo MP*

## Mast Controversy

Chris has backed the campaign against a controversial mobile phone mast proposal in Worcester Park. "Residents are furious that a mobile phone company would consider putting a mast close to a school, against the wishes of parents. It is much better to hold open discussions and find sites that everyone can agree on," he says.

## New push for Equitable Life pensioners

Chris has continued to press for an investigation by the Parliamentary Ombudsman into Equitable Life. "I have written to the Ombudsman asking her to look into the actions of the regulator during the 1990s, to see whether policy holders were properly protected. This is the only way to finally determine the issue of compensation for those who lost money."

## MP Swap

In April, Chris took part in a BBC programme where he "swapped" constituencies with Liverpool Labour MP Louise Ellman for two days. He spent time in Liverpool, visiting places ranging from run-down housing estates in Toxteth to a recording studio under threat of closure. Louise then visited Epsom and Ewell, and met people suffering from antisocial behaviour, saw some of the safety issues facing racehorse trainers on the Downs and dropped in at a day centre in West Ewell.

# Post Office Closures Attacked

*Chris Grayling joins local residents to campaign to keep a Post Office on the Wells estate*

**Chris Grayling has strongly criticised the Post Office after it rejected local appeals to keep the Post Office on the Wells estate open. The move means that Epsom has only one post office left, the main office in the town centre. All the other sub-post offices have been closed.**

"The way the Post Office has gone about its closure programme is absurd," he says. "They have decided which local post offices to close based solely on which of the postmasters and postmistresses are willing to accept a pay-off. There has been no proper consideration of how to maintain a good spread of local post offices. The result is that Epsom has fewer post office branches than many much smaller places - and as a result there are long queues in the town centre branch."

Attempts to persuade the Post Office to think again proved fruitless, despite a meeting between Chris, local residents and Post Office managers. "They made a show of listening," he said, "but then went ahead with the closure plan anyway."



## The blight of antisocial behaviour

**Chris is calling for tough police action against those guilty of antisocial behaviour this summer and has called for a change in the law on footpath closures in areas blighted by troublemakers. He also wants local retailers to make sure they use new laws which prevent the sale of spray paint to teenagers.**

In recent weeks he has held discussions with a number of people who

have suffered from antisocial behaviour, including residents in the Farriers area of Epsom where local allotment holders have been driven off their land by groups of troublemakers, and local businesses in the area which are suffering from criminal damage on a regular basis. He has also backed calls by residents in the centre of Epsom for alleyways to be closed off to avoid late-night vandalism. He has also met police to discuss the problems.

"People have every right to be fed up with what is happening. We don't have enough police in the area, and there is often little likelihood of those causing the trouble being caught and punished properly. So it's no wonder that the problem keeps getting worse. I would like to see police being given the power to close off at least temporarily some of the alleyways being used by troublemakers and I think the Traveller site in Kiln Lane should be closed."

# AROUND & ABOUT

## Chernobyl Children's Lifeline Appeal



Helping wash cars to raise money for the Chernobyl Children's Lifeline Appeal.

### A visit from your MP

If you would like Chris to attend an event or to visit your organisation, please contact the constituency office at 212 Barnett Wood Lane, Ashted, KT21 2DB or telephone 01372 271036.

### Visits to the House of Commons

If you are part of a local school or organisation that would like to arrange a tour of the House of Commons, please contact Chris's office at Westminster. You can ring the office on 020 7219 8194 or write to Chris at the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

### Surgeries

Chris holds surgeries every fortnight on a Friday afternoon. The venues rotate between the constituency office in Ashted, the Epsom Conservative Club, Stoneleigh Library and Tattenham Corner Library.

For details of the next surgery date and to book an appointment, please ring the constituency office on 01372 271036.

## Community Safety Day

With Councillor John Sullivan, attending the Ebbisham Centre Community Safety Day.

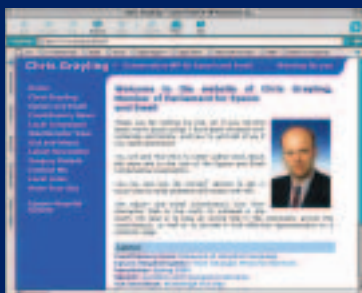


## 10th birthday celebrations



With local GP Dr Tim Richardson at the 10th birthday celebrations of the Old Cottage Hospital in Epsom.

## Keep updated



Chris's website, [www.chrisgrayling.net](http://www.chrisgrayling.net), contains information about the area, local news and details of how to contact him, as well as electronic copies of this newsletter. You can also leave your views on the special bulletin board.