

[Congratulations to Dr Antoni Chan of the Royal Berkshire Hospital](#)

Last Wednesday I met my constituent Dr Antoni Chan of the Royal Berkshire Hospital who received the award for 'Best Care by a Rheumatologist' from the National Ankylosing Spondylitis Society. Voted for by patients, the Patients' Choice Awards recognise those health professionals who have gone above and beyond to help people with axial spondyloarthritis including ankylosing spondylitis (AS). Dr Chan received a large number of nominations describing him as "inspiring" and "amazing", going "above and beyond his role".

The award was presented at the Houses of Parliament on 3 December, to coincide with the launch of NASS' new campaign Every Patient, Every Time.

Many congratulations to Dr Chan for his outstanding work.

[A managed exit without signing the Withdrawal Agreement](#)

I will be writing soon about how this is our best way forward. It is not "crashing out" but cashing in, as we will keep the money the EU wanted to extract via the Withdrawal Agreement.

[May day](#)

Yesterday Mrs May at last admitted she could not win the vote. She had to accept the Withdrawal Agreement was disliked by far too many MPs.

It was therefore a curious decision to spend the first half of the campaign rushing round the UK as if appealing to voters in a General Election, and to spend most of the last week-end wooing businesses as if they had some kind of bloc vote.

The Prime Minister did not once approach me about my intentions. Maybe she accepted my view and realised she could not change it. Her Chief of Staff told me I would be invited to a one to one meeting with her which never materialised. Several other MPs I have talked to were also left alone, when the government needed every Conservative to vote with it to give it any

chance of winning. They had already lost the support of the DUP.

Stirring the country up did help generate a lot of constituency and nationwide correspondence. I received more messages to oppose her Agreement than to support, and many positive messages about the approach I took in the Parliamentary debate. It also shifted opinion against the Agreement. One recent poll says 62% wanted the Agreement voted down and only 25% support it.

Mrs May implied she can get some reassurances about the Irish backstop and then try again to get it voted through the Commons. That is very unlikely, given the magnitude of the opposition to it. There should be no doubt that this is a completely unacceptable surrender of powers and money by the UK for no good reason. This is allied to the very worrying treatment of Northern Ireland as some new country called UK (NI), to be treated differently for customs purposes and with different legislation to the rest of the UK. Even if the whole backstop was removed completely I would not vote for this one sided and unfair Agreement, and nor would a good many other Conservative MPs. What bargaining power would we have left for a better Future Partnership after signing away powers over laws, borders and money?

Only a large defeat will send a clear message to the EU that a few cosmetic changes to the Agreement will not be sufficient to get Parliament to change its mind, and to get them to understand we will be leaving with no Withdrawal Agreement unless they radically change their approach. The Prime Minister's decision not to press the vote means there would have been a big defeat.

I have given Mrs May and her team plenty of advice to avoid this outcome which they have ignored. This Agreement is Mrs May's Agreement, and this latest Project Fear campaign was her campaign. The more they run Project Fear and the more extreme they make it, the more most of the public shrugs its shoulders and scorns politicians who mouth such nonsense. Mrs May was unclear when she would bring this Agreement back for a vote, and unclear over whether it was even feasible to get changes to the legally binding text of the Withdrawal Agreement as opposed to the less important text of the vague Political Declaration.

Many MPs are asking why Ministers were made to go out and assert that the vote would definitely take place today, and why they had to maintain the fiction they would win. This has removed confidence in Mrs May from some more MPs who used to support her.

[Wokingham Borough Council announces free car parking in its car parks in](#)

the three Saturdays leading up to Christmas

I am pleased that Wokingham Borough Council will be offering free parking in council owned town and village centre car parks all day on Saturday 8th, 15th and 22nd December. This will be welcomed by shoppers and businesses alike.

NEWS RELEASE



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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FREE SATURDAY PARKING DURING FESTIVE PERIOD

Shoppers are set to get an early Christmas car parking present from Wokingham Borough Council as it announces free parking in its car parks on the three Saturdays leading up to Christmas. Council-owned town and village centre car parks will be offering free parking all day on Saturday 8, 15 and 22 December 2018

For the last few years, car parking on the three Saturdays before Christmas has been free to encourage people to make use of their local shopping areas. The move has proved very popular with both traders and the public.

Car parks included in this festive offer are shown below:

- Polehampton Close, Twyford
- School Lane, Wargrave
- Council offices car park at Shute End, Wokingham
- Denmark Street, Wokingham (**council-managed section only***)
- Easthampstead Road (East and West), Wokingham
- Cockpit Path, Wokingham
- Headley Road, Woodley
- Crockhamwell Road, Woodley
- Lytham Road (East and West), Woodley
- Former M&S car park, Rose Street, Wokingham
- Carnival Pool Multi Storey car park, Wokingham

- MORE -

Cllr Anthony Pollock, executive member for highways and transport, said: "I am pleased to announce that we will be offering free parking for the three weekends running up to Christmas once again. I hope that this can give people a good incentive to visit the array of wonderful shops during the festive period here in Wokingham Borough."

Although parking will be free on the three Saturdays before Christmas, maximum stay limits and disabled parking bays will still be enforced and any vehicles breaching these regulations will be subject to the usual Penalty Charge Notices being issued. The free parking offer only applies to council car parks which are town centre related (not associated with train stations), and does not apply to privately managed car parks.

- ENDS -

Further information:

1. More from Cllr Anthony Pollock, executive member for highways and transport, email: anthony.pollock@wokingham.gov.uk
2. *Anyone parking for free at Denmark Street car park should ensure they are in the COUNCIL-OWNED SECTION (behind Anvil Court and next to Wokingham Library), **NOT THE EURO CAR PARKS SECTION (BEHIND THE POLICE STATION).**

Wokingham Borough Carol service

It was wonderful to hear the massed choirs of Wokingham primary schools, to the accompaniment of the very professional Berkshire Maestro Orchestra. It is an important part of the early Christmas season for me, and this year lived up to expectation. It is good to see many supportive parents proud of their children, and to see the musical talent on display. The solo orchestra pieces were played to a high standard, with a Christmas merriment and verve in them. This year we were in a new venue, at Greenfields in Arborfield. I am grateful to those who laid on the hospitality and made us all feel welcome.