

SPRING 2019

# CHELTHENHAM LIFE

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EXCLUSIVE

Max  
**WILKINSON**

The man tipped to be our next MP



# Welcome...

With more and more people concerned about the direction the country is heading in, this issue of Cheltenham Life focuses on the local man taking on the Conservatives to be



people who have got it wrong in Westminster for decades.

The next election in Cheltenham is a straight choice between Max and the Conservatives. Max is the MP we need to protect our schools and NHS and deliver real, positive change.

Max Wilkinson's commitment to getting things done to help people and make the world a better place is catching the eye of people across town. His work in important areas like housing and the environment shows he can represent all of us.

Max comes from a normal background and has an impressive record of action as a local councillor. He isn't afraid to talk about the issues ignored by other politicians either. He represents a new generation and a fresh voice in the debate, rather than the same old politics from the

# DEMANDING BETTER FOR OUR CHILDREN



Max Wilkinson is tackling Cheltenham's housing crisis

We all know that the housing market just isn't working for the majority of us.

Whether you're a younger person paying huge rent, a family needing an extra room for a new baby or an older person looking to downsize, things aren't fair. And that's before you even start to think about the chronic lack of affordable homes to buy and rent for people on low incomes.

That's why Liberal Democrat Max Wilkinson has been working to put things right. He led the campaign on the council to secure £100 million for hundreds of local homes for young people and families.

### DELIVERING REAL CHANGE

"I just couldn't sit quietly anymore while I knew so many people were getting a raw deal," said Max. "I've spent most of my life living in rented accommodation so I know how difficult it can be. When you're earning a normal wage and spending so much on renting a place that maybe isn't up to scratch, it just feels wrong."



£100 MILLION  
The amount Max Wilkinson helped secure for local housing

### A BETTER DEAL FOR ALL

The Cheltenham scheme will be a combination of homes to rent at affordable, social and market rates and any revenues can be invested back into the system.

Max said: "It's about time that politicians at all levels took this seriously. I wanted to show that local politicians could roll up their sleeves to make a difference. The scheme will mean our town is able to offer a better deal for everybody. It's good for young people and families who can make their homes here instead of having to move away."

"And it's good for the local economy, because it will help local businesses to recruit and attract workers."

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Everybody's talking about...

**Max Wilkinson**

# A strong local voice for Cheltenham

*Cheltenham Life* talks to campaigner Max Wilkinson about why he's standing to be our town's next MP.

What makes you the right person to be Cheltenham's next MP?

I never really planned to get involved in politics. It was my life experiences that made me realise that if I wanted to make a difference, I had to get involved. Making a difference doesn't just mean talking about the things that are wrong in our community and our country – it means campaigning and working to change things. That's true whether we're talking about the little things like making sure councils fix our roads and pavements or bigger issues like fixing the housing crisis.

Where I see something going wrong, I think about how we can all work together to put it right, so the vast majority of people – the people I live alongside and work with - can have a better life.

Tell us about your life in Cheltenham.

I've lived here for about 10 years after I moved for work as a reporter for the Echo, back when it was based in Clarence Parade. As soon as I left there, I was asked to get politically active and I've been campaigning ever since. I've been a borough councillor for five years, representing communities as diverse as Oakley and the Park area, so I have a handle on the sorts of issues that affect people across the town.

I live in the town centre with my long-term partner Emma, who is a secondary school English teacher.

How has your life experience and work shaped what you stand for?

I've always been appalled and angered by the bad deal we all get in the housing

market – particularly younger people and families, but older people too. My own experience is paying through the nose for a series of pretty poor properties and dealing with some difficult landlords. After I became a councillor I made it my mission to keep bringing up the housing problems that people face until people took them seriously and tried to do something about them. It must have worked because eventually I got unanimous backing and the council is now investing £100 million in homes for young people and families. It's early days, but I'm proud to be making a difference.

How do you see the Brexit issue?

It mostly makes me quite sad. That's not just because I'm pro-European, but mainly because it has divided communities, friendships and families. I'm also sad about Brexit because whatever you voted for, you are probably not going to get what you want and you certainly didn't vote for three years of Westminster politicians squabbling over one issue while public services are ignored. Just look at the latest hospital downgrade plans and the struggle that our schools have every day for evidence of things being overlooked. I know we can do much better than this.





# ACTION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

“I’m doing all I can to avert a climate catastrophe.”

Max Wilkinson is a real champion of sustainable transport

It’s easy to ignore things that we can’t see before our eyes, but more and more people are realising we can’t afford to ignore the impact of climate change any longer.

As students across the country called on politicians to act by going on strike for the day, Max Wilkinson led local action to declare a climate emergency in Cheltenham. He persuaded the borough council to agree to make the town carbon neutral by 2030, in line with the United Nations’ warning that the world has just 12 years to avert a catastrophe.

“The sight of school pupils taking to the streets because they’re taking notice of the warnings on climate breakdown made me feel I had to do something positive to respond,” said Max.

“That’s why I called on the local council to declare a climate emergency and I’m relieved that councillors agreed, because it shows there’s local willingness to change things.

“I’ve always believed in taking action on the environment, which is why I’ve done all I can to champion the cause of sustainable transport, including walking and cycling for people who are able to. It’s good for the planet and makes us all healthier too.”



Max is on the side of concerned local parents like Rowena Kay, who is speaking to him here outside Lakeside Primary.

EDUCATION

## Investing in local schools & ending Conservative cuts to education

After years of cuts, many schools in Cheltenham now lack the basics to provide the education our children deserve. Max Wilkinson tells us how he’s working to ensure every child gets the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Building a stronger country for the future depends on our willingness to invest in today’s children.

They’re the people who will be working in our public services and private businesses to drive the UK’s long-term success. We owe it to them to give them the opportunity to thrive. That’s why we need to properly fund schools, but sadly that isn’t happening.

Liberal Democrat campaigner Max Wilkinson said: “I went to a normal comprehensive school that was literally falling down around us after years of Conservative governments, so I know what it’s like. We owe the next generation far better than that but, sadly, this government is letting them down.”

The situation is now so desperate that local headteachers are starting to speak out, with one stating that ‘Gloucestershire can no longer afford to run its education system’. Independent research shows that between 2015 and 2020, Gloucestershire schools are set to be £11.1 million worse off, equating to a £147 cut per pupil.

Max added: “Schools are having to ask parents to pay for basic equipment. Frankly, it’s a national disgrace.

“The Lib Dems are the party of education. We would make fairer funding for schools a top priority, along with other reforms to free up teachers to do what they do best and foster a love of learning in young people.”

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## WHO WILL SAVE OUR NHS?

Conservative cuts have left the NHS on the brink. Max Wilkinson and the Lib Dems are demanding better for patients and families.

The NHS turned 70 last year, and people across the country paid tribute to one of the UK's best-loved institutions.

Protecting it for future generations is a key priority for Max Wilkinson and the Liberal Democrats. The party has a policy, backed by leading experts, to promote health and care using a ringfenced tax rise of just 1p in the pound.

"I don't know anyone who hasn't relied on the NHS at some point in their lives," said Max. "Unfortunately, over the last few years we've seen that pressures on our precious health services have become so great due to underfunding at the national level. Whether it's cutbacks to our A&E department or threatened

removals of general surgery from Cheltenham General, we deserve better than we're getting from this Conservative government."

Mental health is also a top priority for Max. He said: "The fact you can't see physical symptoms with mental illness often means it is overlooked. We desperately need to put mental healthcare on a par with physical healthcare.

"Mental illness wrecks far too many lives. We urgently need much greater support, especially for young people."



Max Wilkinson is working with local doctors like Dr John Boyes

## Max's plan for our NHS:

- 1 Increase NHS funding by putting a penny in the pound on income tax to give our health and social care services the cash they need.
- 2 Ensure mental health is given the same priority as physical help.
- 3 Limit the amount elderly people have to pay for social care.