The Richmond Park slaughter

If you think the government is confused when it comes to Brexit, Sarah Olney, the new Lib Dem MP for Richmond Park is in a league of her own, as Rev Peter Mullen explains.

O joy, joy and more joy! Here's a treat rarer than any blue moon: A radio interviewer with brains, articulate and sharp enough to ask the killer follow-up question to any politician's fumbled reply. They can't do this on The *Today* Programme. But is it perhaps not can't but won't for fear that such an intelligent approach might pierce the fog of cliché in which the BBC usually manages to conceal its modus operandi of obfuscation and prejudice?

Sarah Olney, the newly-elected MP for Richmond Park, came on TalkRadio to be interviewed by the very sharp Julia Hartley-Brewer. Julia was noteworthy among radio journalists for her ability to think sequentially and to speak in sentences. From the very beginning, she was on top of her game – which is more than you could say for the flaky Ms Olney.

She began, "When are you going to hold the second by-election?"

The flummoxed Olney stayed flummoxed.

 "I mean, you want a rerun of the referendum on our membership of the EU. That was won by the Leave campaigners with a bigger majority than you got."

Waffle punctuated by squirming silence.

 "Fewer than 50% of the Richmond electorate voted for you. Leave got 54%. But you want a second referendum. Why not a rerun of this by-election?"

"There wasn't a clear result to the referendum."

"Yes there was!"

A very long silence.

"If you can't answer a few simple questions, people might wonder if you're up to the job of being their MP."

An even longer silence.

Enter Olney's spin-doctor:

"We have to go."

"No you don't!"

"Sarah has another interview to do."

"But how can she? This time was booked with us"

Exit Ms Olney, pursued by her quavering minder. Leaving Julia to speak the closing soliloquy:

"She doesn't feel she's up to these questions — which is a bit of a shame, isn't it?"

(*If you want to hear this amazing interview yourself, you can listen to it here.*)