



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA



DUNCAN BAKER MP
LOCAL, LISTENING, LONG TERM

Mr Tim Davie
BBC Director General
BBC Broadcasting House
Portland Place
London
W1A 1AA

Friday 9th June 2023

Dear Mr Davie,

We write to you collectively as Members of Parliament for Norfolk to express our deep concern for the planned cuts to our local radio station, BBC Radio Norfolk, and the 38 other services across the country that will also become subjected to extensive reductions.

We must make it known that BBC Radio Norfolk remains one of the most popular local BBC radio stations in the country, attracting 167,000 listeners every week, with the average person tuning in for just under eight hours per week. Currently, it broadcasts a minimum of 86 hours of content per week that is made in Norfolk and importantly, aimed at, and tailored for a Norfolk audience.

However, we understand that under the planned changes, this number would drop to 44 hours – a significant reduction of practically 50%. To subject such a widely used service to this level of reduction, we fear, will not only be very disappointing for the many listeners – as there clearly are - but also prove damaging to those who work within the service that as a result, could be left unemployed, and out of a job they love.

What is even more astonishing is that there has been absolutely no consultation with any audiences. To our knowledge, at no point has there been any dialogue with listeners on the proposed changes, nor has any evidence been shown of any research into its potential impacts. The BBC is a renowned public institution, and therefore it is the public's opinion, above all else, that should be held paramount in all corporate decisions.

More broadly, we understand that these cuts will serve as part of the wider 'Digital First' initiative which plans to both modernise and digitalise local radio across the country; but for example, in doing so, it will take BBC Radio Norfolk's Saturday and Sunday Breakfast programmes, which currently serve a potential audience of 911,000, and attempt to widen their scope to a further 5.8 million – over 7 more counties. A dizzying increase, and again, with little or no idea of what impact it may have.

More so, under the plans, we dread that stations will see an unwelcomed reduction in content unique to their local area, and a replacement of more generic, regional offerings. But we must stress that people do not tune in to local radio to hear about happenings 100 miles away – they want to hear about things to which they can relate; information that is relevant to where they live - to imagine that constituents in

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Norfolk could be listening to a host from Essex talk about news in Cambridge, frankly, sounds like the furthest thing from 'local news' to us. We hope that you will consider this.

It's no secret that our sense of community and self-identity are largely created through the shared media we consume – and considering that our constituencies are home to some of the highest age demographics across the country, the radio is often a primary means through which constituents are able to do this. 92% of over 55s regularly listen to live radio, undoubtedly in many cases, as a means of accessing news and hearing about local matters. To therefore cut BBC Radio Norfolk's services by nearly 50%, without consultation, would not only be a grave misjudgement of your demographics, but also potentially damage the station's well-earned local reputation.

Indeed, BBC Radio Norfolk has become one of our most valued local radio stations and is listened to by people in all corners of our county; its 43 years of success is a clear testament to that. But by slashing broadcasting hours to this extent, that will all be called into question. We therefore sincerely hope that you will reconsider these cuts to our local radio and prevent the abolition of what has played an integral role within the fabric of our local communities for years.

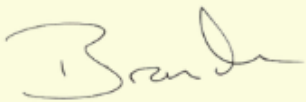
Yours sincerely,



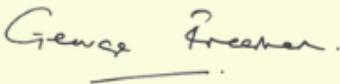
Duncan Baker MP

Member of Parliament for North Norfolk

Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP – Great Yarmouth



George Freeman MP – Mid Norfolk



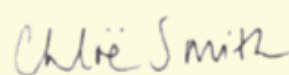
Clive Lewis MP – Norwich South



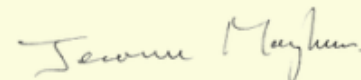
Rt Hon Liz Truss MP – South West Norfolk



Rt Hon Chloe Smith MP – Norwich North



Jerome Mayhew MP – Broadland



Richard Bacon MP – South Norfolk



James Wild MP – North West Norfolk

