

York Older People's Assembly

Wilberforce House, [REDACTED]

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Lord Hall,
BBC Corporate Affairs,
BBC,
Room, 5045,
Broadcasting House,
Portland Place,
London.

Dear Lord Hall

BBC Consultation on Free TV Licences for 75+

I refer to the current consultation on the future of TV Licences for those 75+. In doing so I am responding on behalf of York Older People's Assembly an umbrella body representing older people living in the City of York.

Free TV Licences for those 75+ was introduced in 2000 by the then Chancellor, Gordon Brown. This was a political decision including other benefits for older people like free travel and the winter fuel allowances.

There is no reference in the Conservative Manifesto of 2017 suggesting a change in policy. Indeed the only references to the above benefits was a statement "we will means test winter fuel payments, focussing on the least well off pensioners who are most at risk of fuel poverty".

The BBC is one of our greatest national assets and shouldn't have to endure a massive cut in funding to provide a social welfare measure which is not its responsibility. We have set out below the implications for older people in York if any of the proposals are taken forward.

- There are currently 13,700 households with someone over 75 eligible for a free licence.
- If the qualifying age was raised to 80 years old 4,840 households would lose out.

- If the benefit was linked to pension credit those eligible would reduce to 2,240 with 10,960 losing out.

In York, as elsewhere in the country loneliness is emerging as a major issue with 1 in 4 older people view the TV as their main form of companionship, this underpinned the original decision taken by Gordon Brown that this would assist in the alleviation of loneliness. The cost of the current licence of £154 from April is not an insignificant sum for those on low incomes.

In summary it is our view that the BBC should not be asked to make judgements about the distribution of income between social groups. We are therefore totally opposed to the changes suggested and believe the Government should reconsider the proposal in its entirety.

This letter is being sent to Rachael Maskell MP for York Central and Julian Sturdy MP for York Outer together with the appropriate Ministers for Culture and Work and Pensions.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Cannon
Chair York Older People's Assembly