

MEMO FROM THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND – A WARNING

Dear Margaret Simcock, Federation Chairman

The NFBUK is extremely worried about the proposed changes to BBC local radio in England as reported in Appendix 1 below and outlined on our [website](#). The proposed changes are a **material change** to the BBC schedule for local BBC Radio and will result in the afternoon and weekend shows becoming regional, and late night shows being replaced all together with a national show, with many presenters losing their shows and jobs, in essence ripping the heart and soul out of the local public broadcasting service. With the BBC moving content off air and online which will instantly deepen the digital divide between those people who are online and those who are not. The NFBUK set up an emergency petition to stop the cuts and handed it into the Director General of the BBC and to the Prime Minister on the 18 May 2023, with the help off [Gosport Voluntary Action](#) and the [National Pensioners Convention](#) and he was sent an update late last week. However, we are keeping this petition open and we would be very grateful if your WI Group could support the petition please.

We have 19 MPs supporting us so far and 5 Members of the House Lords, and 217 supporting organisations from across England supporting it. We had an opportunity to speak in the House of Commons on Thursday about our petition and we are very encouraged that the politicians on both sides of the House are voicing concerns over what is happening. With many coming together to voice concerns on this issue, including MPs from [Humberside](#), [Norfolk](#) and the [West Midlands](#).

The public were not consulted on these changes and it is clear the impact on listeners who are blind, visually impaired, disabled or are elderly, have not been taken into consideration, as if they had, these changes would not be happening. The NFBUK did ask for the BBCs Equality Impact Assessment and a Public Value Test (see Appendix 2) on the proposed changes to local radio through a Freedom of Information request but the BBC said it was exempt to providing this information. This will be the start of the death of local radio, the start of local communities becoming disconnected and being uninformed of what is going on in their local community. It is clear from this emergency petition many organisations feel the same way.

It is imperative these proposed changes are stopped, as local radio is the lifeline for many blind, visually impaired, disabled and older people, which keeps them company and entertained, as well as keeping them connected and informed of what is going on in the local community where they live. It is a vital public broadcast service which needs to remain local. Making these cruel cuts and changes to the daily schedules will further isolate many people who are all ready marginalised from society and disconnect them from what is happening locally where they live.

We emailed the updated petition direct to the Director General yesterday afternoon, however we are keeping this petition open and will resubmit it next Wednesday, the 7 June 2023, as we are going to a meeting in Portcullis House about local BBC radio and will want to share the new total with MPS at the meeting. We know the BBC can u-turn this decision as the NFBUK were instrumental in stopping them turning off the BBC Teletext Service in January 2020 and we hope with your support we can do the same with BBC Local Radio. We already have 215 supporting organisations, 17 MPs and 4 Lords and we would be very grateful if you could support it to please.

The petition is asking the Director General of the BBC to undertake urgent action to:

- Please do not make any changes to any of the local BBC radio shows and schedules on weekdays and weekends. This also includes all shows and schedules after 2.00pm on weekdays and over the weekend period in the 39 BBC local radio stations in England.
- Ensure all online news content gets broadcasted live on all relevant local BBC Radio Stations throughout all of the day and at weekends.
- Publish the Public Value Test / Public Interest Test for all proposed changes to local BBC radio.

- Publish the Equality Impact Assessment on all the proposed changes on the BBC local radio listeners.

To Support The Petition:

Please reply to this email to sarahgayton@yahoo.co.uk and /or to admin@nfbuk.org with a YES, with your name please and / or with your organisations name.

The NFBUK have secured a meeting with the BBC over the cuts, which is going to take some time to organise, so if you could let us know as soon as possible please if you can support it, I would be very grateful. The more support we have before the meeting the stronger our petition will be.

Kindest regards

Sarah Gayton

Street Access Campaign Coordinator

Phone 07903 155858 Any day

Phone 01827 714673 Not on Tuesday

sarahgayton@yahoo.co.uk

National Federation of the Blind of the UK <https://www.nfbuk.org/>

Reg. Charity No. 236629 (England & Wales) SC 040134 (Scotland)

Sir John Wilson House, 215 Kirkgate, WAKEFIELD, West Yorkshire, WF1 1JG

Contact+ 44 (0)1924 291 313 admin@nfbuk.org