

Stop cuts to local radio says Green Assembly Member

Key information

Publication type: General

Publication status: Adopted

Contents

[Zack Polanski's Letter to BBC Leadership](#)

Zack Polanski's Letter to BBC Leadership

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29th November 2022

Dear Tim Davie, Rhodri Davies and Jason Horton,

I am writing in my capacity as a Green Party member of the London Assembly, and also on behalf of my colleagues, Caroline Russell AM and Sian Berry AM. We are all very concerned to hear of the plans to cut local radio services and are writing to strongly encourage you to reconsider these plans.

Our role as Assembly Members is to scrutinise the Mayor and represent Londoners. At a time where national politics dominates so much of the national political discourse, it is vital that Londoners are able to hear and engage with stories happening in their local area.

We know that millions of people choose to listen to local radio which encourages a sense of community. With a society that can feel increasingly fragmented and loneliness a real threat, it is really important that people can tune in and feel part of their local area.

Many stories, such as the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis, have huge international ramifications for all of us – and it is right that should be reported on. But equally for peoples’ day-to-day lives, it is important that they have access to hearing conversations between experts and their local representatives be that at the London regional level or on their local council.

We appreciate that, with a cost of living crisis, budgets can be tight but, of the total license fee, just £7.60 is spent on local radio. That's 19 pence per year per station – not only are the social benefits clear but the economic arguments are strong too.

We each represent Londoners across the whole region and the issues we take up are often locally and regionally significant, with a real impact on people's lives. We often rely on BBC Radio London to be able to communicate the work we do and to reach out to Londoners to make sure we hear their voices, and to ask the questions Londoners need in City Hall.

I hope you will think again, and I would be more than happy to engage further with you on this issue.

Zack Polanski
Green Party Member of the London Assembly

[Back to table of contents](#)