



Councillor Keith Aspden
Leader, City of York Council

Councillor Darryl Smalley
Executive Member for Culture,
Leisure and Communities

West Offices
Station Rise
York YO1 6GA

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Ms Helen Thomas
Director of BBC England

Mr Ken MacQuarrie
Director of Nations and Regions BBC

Letter sent electronically

Dear Ms Thomas and Mr Maquarrie,

We are writing to you to express our concerns over the impact that the proposed cost-cutting measures will have on the future of local and regional journalism.

Local and regional media outlets play a vital role in supporting communities up and down the country. In York, BBC radio and regional news programmes are not only trusted and valued local institutions, but crucially give a voice to local communities at a time when local content and engagement within commercial radio and television work is under threat.

This has been further highlighted during the coronavirus epidemic, when local news outlets have been a lifeline to many, as both a vital source of information as well as an invaluable source of community spirit and resilience. Throughout this crisis, local news outlets have worked tirelessly to maintain this vital public service. BBC radio and regional news services have covered major national and local developments, as well as celebrated and highlighted stories of local community resilience and compassion against the backdrop of reduced staffing and stripped back schedules.

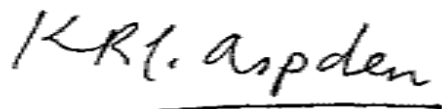
We were disappointed to learn that what was meant to be temporary measures now look set to become permanent following the announcement that the BBC plans to cut one in six jobs in its English regional TV news and current affairs, local radio and online news outlets. As reported, this would see 450 journalists losing their jobs, with BBC Radio York losing up to four journalist posts and Look North and Online for Yorkshire cutting between 12-16 posts, without any meaningful consultation with the audiences and communities these decisions will directly impact.

Whilst we acknowledge the financial challenges facing the radio and media industries, we cannot underestimate the impact that these decisions will have on our local communities. Not only do these plans irreversibly impact regional and local news teams at a time when we are aiming to amplify diverse voices, but the changes also put accessibility of vital news services at risk.

The planned downsizing will directly affect the flow of information to local communities, leaving residents less able to access accurate information and more vulnerable to untrustworthy news sources, threatening the very cornerstone of public debate and local democracy.

We are urging you to carefully examine the impact that these proposed plans will have on local communities and rethink these proposals, which as currently set out would irreversibly damage regional and local journalism as well as representation, diversity and accessibility of trusted news services.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Aspden". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Cllr Keith Aspden
Leader of the Council

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darryl Smalley". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Cllr Darryl Smalley
Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Communities