

Tim Davie, Director General, BBC – via email
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Shropshire Council
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Date: 2 February 2023

Dear Mr Davie

Please save BBC Radio Shropshire for the sake of the county's most vulnerable and isolated people

You're a busy man so I'll get straight to the point: the people of Shropshire need you to reverse the proposals to effectively merge BBC Radio Shropshire with other local West Midlands radio stations. If you continue with the merger, you will deny the people of Shropshire not just a radio station – but a lifeline that connects and informs isolated communities. It is no exaggeration to state that BBC Radio Shropshire improves people's mental health and wellbeing, holds local government to account, and – because of the disastrous floods that we experience every year – actually helps to save lives.

On behalf of the people of Shropshire – whatever their politics – I must urge you to reconsider your proposals.

Let me explain.

Shropshire is unlike most other counties. We're one of England's biggest counties, with a population spread thinly across a very large rural area. Our population is disproportionately older and is only getting older still. These are exactly the type of people for whom a strong public service local broadcaster is vital not just in times of crisis. It's no surprise that BBC Radio Shropshire has long had some of the best RAJAR figures of any local station precisely because it is right for Shropshire. It is even more important with ever dwindling local media diversity in an area where around 25% of population are "digitally excluded" either because of lack of skills or lack of access to digital infrastructure or equipment, a situation compounded by Shropshire's rural nature. Your proposed move would end up impacting most on those who rely on a strong local public service radio station.

Taken singularly, each of these facts points to isolation; taken together, I'm sure that you can see that BBC Radio Shropshire is not a luxury – it is a lifeline.

I do not use that expression lightly, nor with hyperbole. During the recent floods, isolated people in isolated places needed their radio station to keep them abreast of dangers to life; likewise



during the pandemic; but perhaps more than that, BBC Radio Shropshire connects some of the country's most isolated people to the outside world. (It also plays a vital role in local democracy – the presenters have grilled me many times: not necessarily a pleasant experience for me, but essential for listeners of all political hues.)

Imagine being old or ill and living in a village in the Shropshire Hills: you might go days without speaking to another living soul. Your DJs, your news items, your phone-ins all serve to connect vulnerable, isolated people across Shropshire: for these people, BBC Radio Shropshire is a friend, someone to gossip with and get the news, someone to laugh with, someone to keep you safe and sane.

People in Shropshire lack the media choice of people in the cities; neither do we enjoy the same digital reach. Tuning in, adjusting the volume, making a cup of tea, and listening to presenters who they've known for years is part of life here. BBC Shropshire is part of their community because it is a lifeline.

So please: once again, on behalf of all Shropshire Council's members, I urge you to reconsider your proposals. Don't turn BBC Radio Shropshire into a distant, disconnected and increasingly less relevant voice, and keep vulnerable, isolated people connected to their communities.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Lezley Picton
Leader Shropshire Council

cc: Rt Hon Michelle Donelan, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport – michelle.donelan.mp@parliament.uk
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