

Greens support National Pensioners Convention protest against introduction of over-75s TV licence



13 June 2019

Green Party members will be at the BBC in Salford today, supporting a protest from the National Pensioners' Convention against the abolition of the free TV licence for the over-75s.

Astrid Johnson, Manchester Green Party member and candidate in the European elections, said: "That our most senior citizens should face the worry and concern, and potential loss of an essential bulwark against loneliness, a crucial entertainment in many people's lives, cannot be accepted.

"But the blame needs to be laid where it is due: at the government that pushed responsibility for funding the fee on to the BBC, when it had previously been accepted as a government responsibility.

"A further concern is that while the BBC has attempted to help some of the poorest older pensioners through sparing those in receipt of the pension credit, this is a blunt instrument that will miss many who need it most.

"Estimates are that 1.3 million pensioners who are eligible to get pension credit don't get it, and so will also miss out on a free TV licence.

"This is a demonstration of the dangers of means-testing, to which the Green Party is opposed. We want universal benefits – like the TV licence for over 75s."

Astrid continues: "More fundamentally, however, we are opposed to the structure of the licence, which operates as a poll tax, the poorest citizens in our society paying the same charge for it as billionaires.

"We very much believe in publicly funded public service broadcasting, but it should be funded from a ringfenced portion of progressive taxation."

Michael Welton, Green Party councillor in Altrincham, Trafford, said: “The BBC is the fall guy for the Government’s cowardly buck passing of this unpopular decision.

“Means testing will exclude the 1.3 million people who are are due pension credit but don’t claim it, many of whom are vulnerable or unwell.

“The Green Party’s policy of funding the BBC via progressive taxation is the only just solution.”

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