

Our letter to Boris Johnson calling for an end to BBC attacks

Today, Ed Davey and I have written to the Prime Minister, calling for him to reverse plans to scrap the BBC licence fee.

The British Press is by no means without criticism, but at its best, the BBC remains a beacon of independent journalism as well as high-quality entertainment. That's why Liberal Democrats will fight tooth and nail to save it. Read our letter in full below:

Dear Boris,

We were dismayed to see on Sunday morning your government make yet another attack on the BBC with the **reported plans to scrap the TV licence and make the British public pay a TV subscription fee instead.**

This was not in your manifesto and appears to be yet another thinly veiled step in your government's efforts to undermine and thereby dismantle the BBC.

Dominic Cummings has previously described the BBC as the "mortal enemy" of the Conservative Party.

The fact that Ministers are already consulting on plans to decriminalise non-payment of the licence fee from 2022, having so recently dismissed this option in a government review just 5 years ago, is yet more evidence that these plans are not sensible, considered reforms, but a deliberate and sustained attack led by one of your closest advisors, Dominic Cummings.

Mr Cummings has previously described the BBC as the "mortal enemy" of the Conservative Party. Of course, the BBC is not perfect, and all political parties have their gripes with the broadcaster. However, this does not justify the sustained attempts to undermine and hamper the BBC as we see your government doing time and again.

Whatever its faults, **the BBC strives to provide impartial journalism and a platform for different views.** In depriving them of funds your government is not only obstructing their ability to invest in British talent, but risking putting TV content into the hands of US corporates. The BBC is one of the four most internationally recognised British brands and is incredibly important as an influential tool abroad.

Under the Tories' plans, the fee for viewing the BBC could at least double compared to the cost of the licence fee.

That is why these announced plans are so alarming. Any civil system will mean

a higher cost of collection and will also likely lead to higher evasion rates and higher penalties. These plans will cost the BBC hundreds of millions of pounds and if you pursue the subscription model, **the fee for viewing the BBC could at least double compared to the cost of the licence fee. The losers will be the British public.**

We believe that the TV licence fee should be set independently so the BBC can be truly independent of politicians of all colours and should be structured so those less able to pay are treated fairly.

The plans you have set out were not in your manifesto and therefore you have no mandate to pursue them. We write in the hope you will consider our concerns and act accordingly in keeping the BBC licence fee.

We look forward to a swift response.

Your sincerely,

Ed Davey and Daisy Cooper

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[Meet your Election Review Team](#)

Last month, the Chair of the Election Review, Dorothy Thornhill, was announced. Now, we're pleased to be able to announce the full review team.

They bring a wide range of skills and experience, in the party and outside to the review and will help the Chair ensure the review that is conducted is thorough.

Meet the team:

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[If not us, who? If not now, when?](#)

That's the saying I live my life by, because taking action is the only way to change things in this world, and bugger me this world needs some change.

That saying has led me to a lot of places. I joined the party, started delivering leaflets, knocked on doors, stood for council and stood for parliament because I needed to act.

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Author:

The spring conference motions – explained

Is a full programme of training, events, networking and parties not enough for you? At spring conference this year we have a huge package of policy motions, which all members have the chance to debate, amend and vote on. Here's a quick run-down for you! And if you haven't yet, book your place right here:

[Book now →](#)

F4 – Hong Kong

This motion introduces new party policy on the human rights situation in Hong Kong. It calls for:

- Extending of the right to abode to all British National (Overseas) citizens
- The government to use its relationship with China to persuade Beijing to not end the protests through military force
- An indefinite suspension of export licenses for crowd control equipment to Hong Kong.

[Read the full motion here](#)

F6 – Children's Social Care

(England only)

This motion updates party policy on children's social care. It calls for:

- Extra funding for children's social care
- Higher priority for looked-after children in the education system
- More care places for children who need it
- A new scheme to help older looked-after children find accommodation to transfer into when they are ready to live independently
- The government to review allowances and pay for foster carers
- An exploration into whether an allowance scheme for kinship carers (who

- look after children of their relatives) should be set up
- A national workforce strategy for social workers and children's home managers

[Read the full motion here](#)

F8 – Electoral Reform

This motion updates party policy on electoral reform. It calls for:

- The use of Single Transferable Vote as the voting system for all Parliamentary elections and English local elections
- The voting age to be lowered to 16
- The rights of EU citizens to stand and vote in local elections to be protected, and extended to general elections when they've lived here for 5+ years
- The use of Alternative Vote for elections to single positions like directly-elected mayors in England
- The scrapping of voter ID law plans
- A legal requirement for local authorities to inform citizens of the steps required to be successfully registered to vote. This includes a far greater effort to register under-represented groups

[Read the full motion here](#)

F13 – Supporting The Trans and Non-Binary Communities within the Liberal Democrats

This is a business motion (one that deals with how the party works internally). It seeks to improve accessibility to Liberal Democrat events for trans and non-binary people and protect their rights by:

- Requiring Lib Dem HQ and all conference venues (Federal and Regional) to have at least one gender-neutral bathroom
- The option to have your preferred pronouns on your conference pass
- The option to include your preferred pronouns on speaker's cards
- Training for presenters at party events on how to avoid unnecessarily gendered language

[Read the full motion here](#)

F16 – Welcoming Child Refugees

This motion calls on the Government to fulfil its existing obligations to provide sanctuary to child refugees, as well as to:

- Extend family reunion rights so child refugees in the UK can sponsor family members to join them
- Provide specialist legal advice for all child asylum seekers
- Resettle 10,000 unaccompanied child refugees from elsewhere in Europe over the next 10 years

[Read the full motion here](#)

F17 – Student Mental Health Charter

(England only)

This motion calls on the Government to legislate for universities to ensure a strong provision of mental health support for students by:

- Developing a Student Mental Health Charter for universities in consultation with students, universities and mental health charities
- Including in the Charter guaranteed access to quality mental health support and the recording and reporting of waiting times
- Ensuring all universities have the aim to reach zero suicide

[Read the full motion here](#)

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Author:

Not all your recycling is actually being recycled

When a person puts their empty plastic bottle in a recycling bin, they understandably assume it gets recycled.

When I was the Cabinet member for the environment on Rochdale council, and when we sent our paper and cardboard to be recycled, we knew it had new lives as cardboard inserts to kitchen roll.

The plastic bag tax introduced by the Liberal Democrats in the Coalition government was hugely successful, but it was only ever intended to be the first step.

However, this is not always the case.

Far too often our waste, including recyclable items, are sold to private contractors who can incinerate or export waste to unregulated facilities.

We've all become aware of the devastating effect that plastic pollution is having on our oceans.

This isn't the fault of our cash-strapped councils, who need to balance good waste management with ever-decreasing funding from the government.

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