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# One million homes make switch and stop paying for BBC

🕒 JULY 7, 2021 BY 👤 MIKE BUCHANAN 💬 1 COMMENT

Some **good news** in yesterday's *Times*. You can subscribe to the paper **here**.

*“ One million UK households have stopped paying for BBC services in the past two years, its annual report revealed yesterday.*

*The dramatic drop in the number of licence fee holders comes as the BBC faces a further revolt from 260,000 pensioners who have **declined to make arrangements to pay the £159 fee after free licences** for older viewers ended last August.*

*The corporation blamed the 700,000 drop last year on changing audience habits and said that its enforcement operations have been restricted by the pandemic. It lost 300,000 in the previous year.*

*Julian Knight, Conservative chairman of the Commons media select committee, said it was “clear the BBC is haemorrhaging support amongst a significant proportion of the British public”. He added: “The broadcaster – if this trend continues – could soon reach vanishing point where evasion is so widespread as to undermine faith in the TV licence system. This is fast becoming a crisis for the BBC.” The number of licences in force has remained steady for a generation, gently rising to 25.8 million around 2017. There was then a fall of 84,000 followed by 300,000 in 2019-20 and 700,000 last year.*

*The annual report, released yesterday, does show the BBC’s success at reining in the salaries of its highest-earning presenters. **Zoe Ball**, the Radio 2 Breakfast Show host, volunteered to take a pay cut which will reduce her salary below £1 million, while other discussions led to an overall 10 per cent drop in the amount paid to the “on air” talent earning above £150,000. Gary Lineker, the sports presenter, remains the highest earner on its “public service” output with a £1.36 million salary.*

*“ Tim Davie, the director-general, said most conversations about salary cuts had been “mutual and constructive”. However, he was forced to defend the decision not to publish the full salaries of those who appear on “commercial” shows produced through BBC Studios, such as Claudia Winkleman on Strictly Come Dancing. The BBC said its commercial arm was not underpinned by licence fee revenue and needed to be on a level playing field with other production companies. Knight said it was “time for the BBC to commit to full transparency on its talent bill and drop the smoke-and-mirrors approach”.*

*There was concern from the BBC over the drop in the number of viewers under the age of six, with Davie saying competition was “incredibly intense” from rivals such as Disney and YouTube. However, he said the BBC would not “drive up our hours by acquiring lots of cheaper cartoons”.*

*Davie said he was proud of the BBC’s role informing, educating and entertaining Britain in record numbers during the “extraordinary circumstances” of the pandemic.*

*Richard Sharp, who became BBC chairman this year, said that “against a landscape of unprecedented market pressures, it has kept delivering world class programming across all genres”.*

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