# BBC director general urges end to Freeview as debate intensifies over UK terrestrial TV future



A contentious debate has emerged regarding the future of traditional television in the UK, particularly surrounding the potential phasing out of terrestrial broadcasting in favour of internet-based services. Current BBC Director General Tim Davie has called for an ambitious move towards ending terrestrial television, suggesting that the corporation should make the transition entirely to online platforms such as BBC iPlayer. In his view, a comprehensive switchover is essential as viewer habits evolve, and he argues that it could enhance both financial and social benefits for the BBC and its viewers.

Davie, who has held his position since 2020, made his stance clear during a recent address, emphasising that “now is the time” to confirm plans for an IP switchover in the 2030s. This includes coordinating with the government and the broadcasting sector to support a more interconnected digital future. However, existing legislation guarantees the continuation of terrestrial TV until at least 2034, although there is currently a government consultation on the matter. This could open the door to significant changes sooner than many anticipate.

Opposing Davie's vision, former BBC Director General Tony Hall has raised alarms about the implications of such a shift. Hall voices concerns that a forced transition to internet services could disenfranchise around eight million viewers—many of whom are vulnerable populations, including the elderly and those with disabilities—who predominantly rely on Freeview. “While planning for the future is essential, we must recognise that these individuals rely on broadcasting as it exists today,” he stated, underscoring the importance of considering all viewers in the debate. Hall articulates a need for a balanced approach where advancing technology does not come at the expense of those most affected by it.

The calls for safeguarding traditional broadcasting are further echoed by advocacy organisations, notably Silver Voices, which represents the interests of older viewers. Its director, Dennis Reed, has highlighted the urgency for ministers to clarify their position before the next general election, underscoring that a transition to IP-only services could spark substantial public resistance. He suggested that if all forms of broadcasting are set to undergo major changes, it would prompt a robust campaign advocating for the retention of Freeview, addressing both the interests of the elderly and the broader viewing public.

In a significant parliamentary development, Conservative MP David Mundell has secured a debate on the future of terrestrial broadcasting. He stated, “Terrestrial TV is a lifeline service… the needs of ordinary viewers must be prioritised,” reflecting the sentiment that the media elite often overlook the concerns of everyday viewers. Mundell emphasised the need for further dialogue regarding the direction in which BBC services should evolve, suggesting that halting the transition to solely internet-based services may be in the public interest.

While this dialogue unfolds, the realities of changing media consumption patterns cannot be ignored. As mobile and internet streaming becomes increasingly popular, many broadcasters are finding it essential to adjust their distribution strategies. Nevertheless, the debate surrounding the BBC's role, its commitment to public service broadcasting, and the possible marginalisation of vulnerable groups remains crucial.

In the coming months, as the government continues its consultation and debates intensify, the future of traditional broadcasting in the UK will be closely scrutinised, with the echoes of both advocates for the vulnerable and digital transformation proponents creating a complex landscape.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2065795/bbc-bosses-freeview-tv-cut), [[2]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2022/12/07/bbc-must-ready-end-terrestrial-tv-broadcasts-decade-says-tim/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2065795/bbc-bosses-freeview-tv-cut), [[5]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2022/12/07/bbc-must-ready-end-terrestrial-tv-broadcasts-decade-says-tim/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2022/12/07/bbc-must-ready-end-terrestrial-tv-broadcasts-decade-says-tim/), [[6]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2022/12/07/bbc-must-ready-end-terrestrial-tv-broadcasts-decade-says-tim/)
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* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2065795/bbc-bosses-freeview-tv-cut), [[2]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2022/12/07/bbc-must-ready-end-terrestrial-tv-broadcasts-decade-says-tim/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2065795/bbc-bosses-freeview-tv-cut)

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2. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2022/12/07/bbc-must-ready-end-terrestrial-tv-broadcasts-decade-says-tim/> - In December 2022, BBC Director General Tim Davie stated that the BBC should plan for a full switch-off of terrestrial TV and radio by the end of the decade. He emphasized the need for the corporation to consider transforming into an internet-only broadcaster, highlighting the importance of ensuring that everyone is connected and can access TV and radio via the internet. This shift aims to modernize the BBC's distribution methods and adapt to changing audience behaviours. ([telegraph.co.uk](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2022/12/07/bbc-must-ready-end-terrestrial-tv-broadcasts-decade-says-tim/?utm_source=openai))
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