

The Rt Hon. Nicky Morgan MP
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and
Sport
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

Councillor Tudor Evans OBE
Leader of Plymouth City Council
Labour Councillor for Ham Ward

Plymouth City Council
Civic Centre
Plymouth PL1 2AA

T 01752 304950
E tudor.evans@plymouth.gov.uk
www.plymouth.gov.uk

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Dear Secretary of State

I am writing to congratulate you on your appointment as Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. The City of Plymouth welcomes you in your new role and I would personally like to take this opportunity to invite you to visit our city, to view first-hand the world class facilities, capabilities and expertise that the city has to offer.

We frequently demonstrate to Government that Plymouth is united in working together to tackle our challenges, and to create confidence that we have the right structures and relationships in place to manage our own affairs. However we're also keen to establish an ongoing dialogue with Government where we work together on a set of clearly identified issues that will have benefits for the city; the wider South West Peninsula; and for the Government. I would particularly like to draw your attention to our Mayflower 400 commemorations and the scrapping of free TV licences for people aged 75 or over.

Mayflower 400 - with the support of funding from DCMS in the last financial years, the Mayflower national trail has been created, the national bookable tourism product has been developed, packaged, businesses trained, and the product has been taken to export intermediaries, the travel trade, through the major conferences, trade media and familiarisation visits. Tours of the Mayflower 400 national trail are now being carried out by tour and cruise operators and are being booked. Furthermore, with DCMS support engagement across related organisations such as the Arts Council, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the BBC, a wide and exciting cultural programme is now in place. The year-long programme from November 2019 to November 2020 will include art, music, theatre, exhibitions, digital innovation, literature, crafts, festivals, debates and more; exploring every aspect of the Mayflower story and the relevance of its dramatic themes to our lives now.

We have approached DCMS to ask for continuation of support through this financial year, to enable the project to realise all of the benefits and opportunities and to ensure trade and communications activity with established partners can continue. This would enable the project to capitalise on a key part of the commemoration planning: the immediate run up to and launch of the programme itself

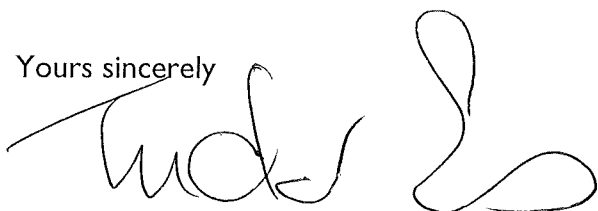
along with ensuring a longer-term legacy. We would really welcome your personal support in helping us to achieve these ambitions

TV Licences for people aged over 75 - you will know that the BBC plans to scrap free TV licences for millions of people aged over 75 with the exception of those on Pension Credit from June 2020. I note that the evidence shows that Pension Credit is hugely under claimed, which means that in the future many pensioners will now miss out on their free TV licence. We know that many over 75s are not able to afford this cost as they are on a fixed income, and already struggling to meet their bills. With rising prices in other areas like food, gas and electricity, having one less thing to have to afford can be a real help – a full TV licence costs £150.50 a year. I note also the research undertaken by The Campaign to End Loneliness, which found that 40% of older people say their television is their main source of company, and recognise that supporting the continuation of TV licences for over 75s supports this council's ambition to tackle loneliness for older people.

Analysis by the House of Commons library shows this will affect 11,000 households in Plymouth. This will include 4,800 households in Plymouth Moor View, 5,000 households in Plymouth Sutton and Devonport and 1,200 in South West Devon. I am deeply concerned about the impact this will have on our residents. The free TV licence was introduced by the Labour Government in 2000, in recognition of the fact that as people get older, the TV becomes an ever more important way of keeping in touch with the world. During the 2017 General Election campaign, the Conservatives promised in their manifesto to protect free TV licences for this age group until 2022. I am therefore writing to ask for your commitment to oppose the change to this scheme which is an important measure in tackling loneliness amongst the older citizens of Plymouth.

Congratulations once again on your appointment and we look forward to your response and welcoming you to Plymouth.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tudor Evans', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Councillor Tudor Evans OBE
Leader, Plymouth City Council