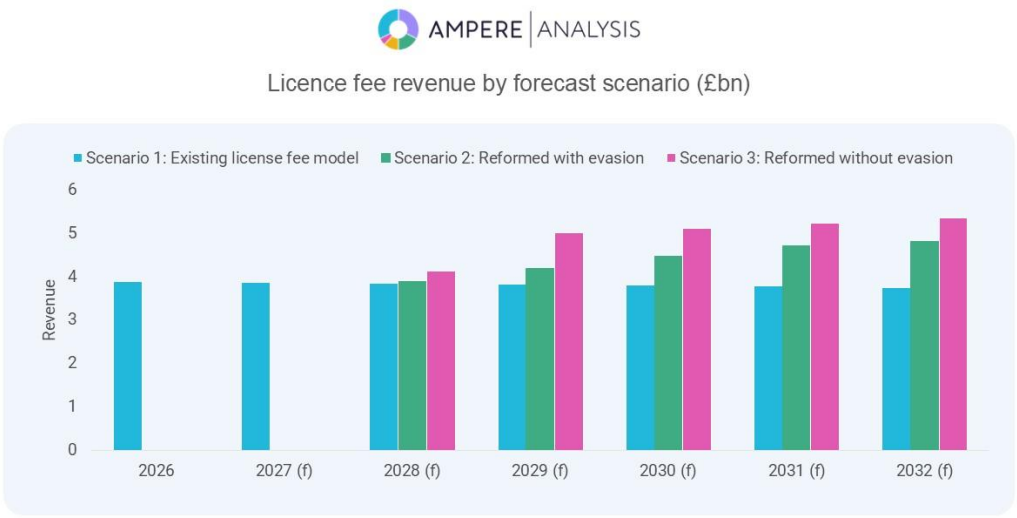
Licence to bill? Extending the TV licence fee to streaming could raise up to £1.6bn more for the BBC

Alternatively, a wider licence could cut the annual fee to £150 while maintaining the BBC's 2026 licence fee income in real terms, if all liable households paid.

London, 23rd November 2026: Ahead of the publication of the long-awaited government White Paper on the future of the BBC Licence Fee, Ampere Analysis has modelled how extending the TV licence to cover on-demand streaming could affect the broadcaster's funding. By 2032, extending the licence to streaming at the current fee could generate up to £1.6 billion a year more than the baseline forecast. The modelling forms part of a forthcoming Ampere report on BBC funding, due for publication in December alongside the government's Charter Review White Paper.

Ed Ludlow, Research Manager at Ampere Analysis, says: "Extending the licence to streaming could generate up to £1.6bn a year to the BBC by 2032, and would better reflect how audiences now watch television. With costs having risen across the board in the media sector in recent years, this shift could future-proof the BBC for the times ahead."



Source: Ampere Markets Operators

Key findings

- **One in 10 UK households watch live television or use BBC iPlayer without paying.** Ampere's consumer data suggests that, as of Q3 2026, well over 90% of

households watch licensable content. However, according to the BBC's own figures, only 84% of eligible households pay the licence.

- **A reformed licence fee would be close to universal.** In Q3 2026, Ampere's consumer survey found that 99% of UK internet users watched linear channels or used on-demand and streaming services monthly. With perfect enforcement, extending the licence fee to these services would raise £1.6bn in extra revenue for the BBC, based on the current licence fee (which rises with inflation annually).
- **If evasion rates remain similar to today's, extending the licence could still generate an extra £1bn in revenue by 2032.** The most optimistic scenario assumes that new enforcement methods will eliminate evasion.
- **Alternatively, a widened licence fee with perfect enforcement could allow its price to be reduced to £150 in 2028.** This would be a reduction of 17% from the £180 fee that households currently pay for a colour licence.
- **According to the BBC, licence fee income fell 24% in real terms between 2017 and 2025.** Reforming the current system would reverse this trend. Under the existing model, Ampere forecasts that licence fee revenue will drop further from roughly £3.9bn in 2026 to £3.8bn by 2032. That is a small fall in cash terms, but a larger one in real terms given inflation, which has hit the production sector particularly hard. Both extension scenarios would more than reverse that decline, giving the BBC a more stable base from which to invest in content through the next charter period.

Sam Khoury, Senior Analyst at Ampere Analysis, says: "Widening the remit of the licence fee at current prices would significantly increase the BBC's funding, strengthening its long-term financial position and ability to compete with local and global rivals. Alternatively, in the context of ongoing cost of living pressures in the UK, the government could opt to reduce the price of the licence fee payable by the extended pool of consumers. Coupled with a reformed enforcement mechanism that effectively reduces evasion, this would still improve the BBC's financial outlook relative to the status-quo."

Ends

Notes to Editors

- “Years” refer to the BBC’s financial year ending 31 March of the year listed, in line with the BBC’s annual reports. For example, 2031 covers April 2030 to March 2031.
- The forecasts cover licence fee revenue only. They exclude commercial income, such as from BBC Studios, and other government funding.
- Revenue is calculated as television households × share of households paying × licence fee.
- All scenarios start from the current licence fee of £180, which took effect 1st April 2026, assuming subsequent annual increases of 2%
- Some households are exempt from the licence fee or pay a reduced rate, such as certain over-75s, visually impaired people and black-and-white licence holders. The forecasts adjust for these households.
- The level and speed of adoption in each scenario depend on the assumed enforcement mechanism for the licence fee. Scenario 1 assumes the licence fee and its enforcement continue as they are today. Scenario 2 assumes a long-term evasion rate of one-in-ten households applied to the wider pool of people expected to pay. Scenario 3 assumes an enforcement mechanism that immediately captures everyone expected to pay.

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About Ampere Analysis

Founded in January 2015, Ampere Analysis is a new breed of media analyst firm. The company’s experienced team of sector-leading industry analysts specialises in sport, games, pay and multiscreen TV and next-generation content distribution. Our founders have more than 60 years combined experience of providing data, forecasts and consulting to games publishers, the major film studios, telecoms and pay TV operators, technology companies, TV channel groups and investment banks. www.ampereanalysis.com