

OPINION



# MARK FLETCHER

Bolsover MP

## I don't want to hate BBC but it may now be beyond saving

**L**ate last month, I was one of a number of Conservative MPs who met with the leadership of the BBC. The meeting – long planned – came only days after the corporation once again became embroiled in scandal, with the Martin Bashir story hitting front pages around the world.

It feels like one thing after another with the BBC. Yes they absolutely have upsides; often their dramas are very good (the ending of Line of Duty being an exception!) Radio 2 always feels like an old friend, and the World Service is an essential source of news in



Mark Fletcher MP says the BBC can often seem like it is a million miles away from life in Bolsover.

countries where they don't have such a free press.

But, as I said to the BBC leadership, you can't help but feel those working in the BBC – and particu-

larly their news coverage – look down on working class communities in the North and Midlands.

The coverage of Brexit was borderline farcical, wall-to-wall cov-

erage of anti-British stories and negativity. You can argue they've done the same with their Covid coverage, which many people seem to have given up on.

The BBC feels a million miles away from life in Bolsover. The liberal metropolitan views that seep into every pore of the corporation jar with my constituents. There is that constant sense of 'we're better than you and we will tell you what is right'.

Add to that their creeping sense of mission (their local radio stations and local news coverage have had a devastating impact on many local newspapers and commercial providers) as they

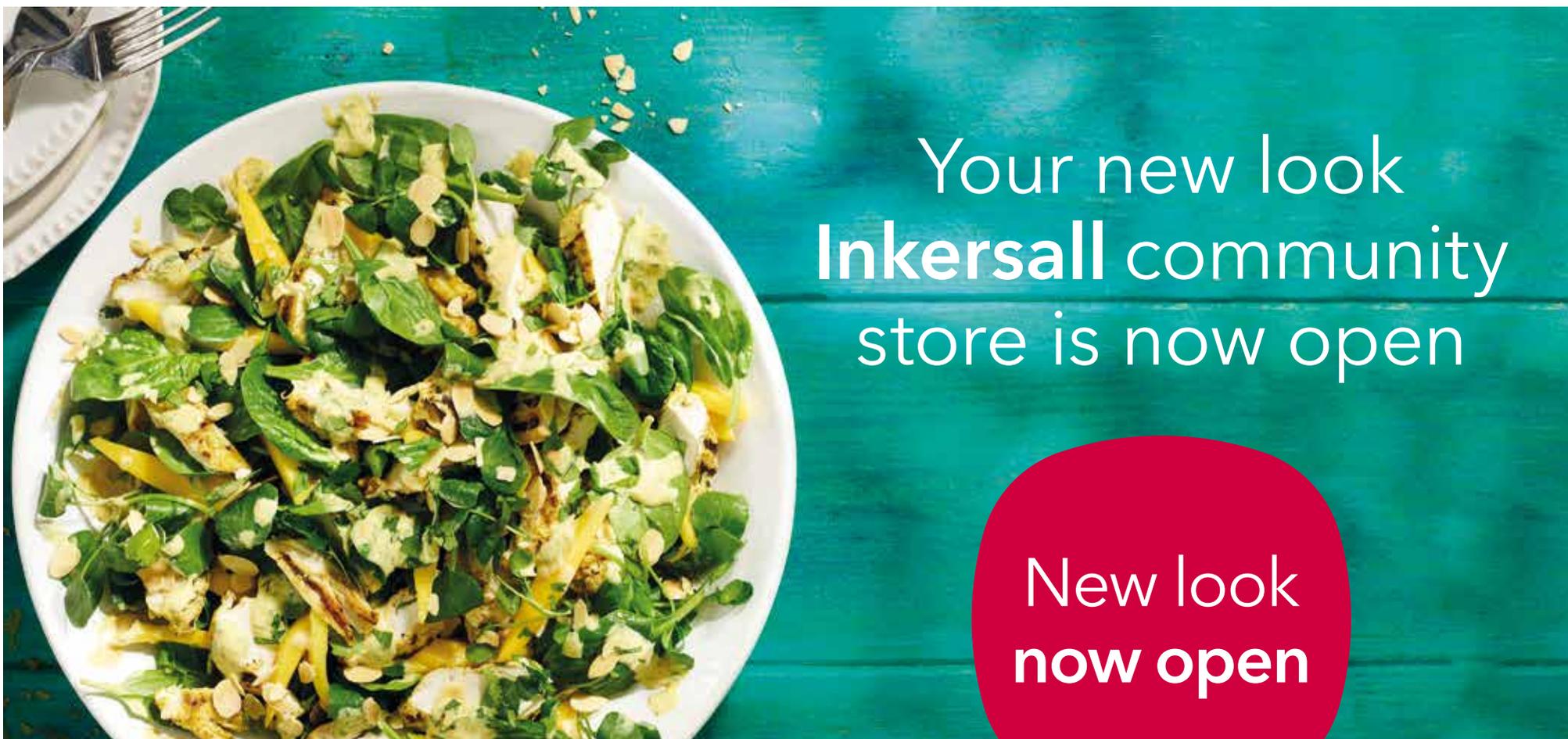
bafflingly look to take over the podcast market with the awful BBC Sounds, and we find ourselves with an out-of-touch media behemoth.

I don't want to hate the BBC. I want them to be impartial, to give a range of voices to different people and to be accurate. But I've given up defending them.

Time after time they've let us down, and I think the rotten way they treated over-75s on the licence fee showed they may well be beyond saving.

The Bashir stories created recent headlines, but I suspect many had already reached the conclusion that no-one can save the BBC from itself.

On another note, I had the pleasure of receiving my first vaccination recently at the Winding Wheel in Chesterfield. Thank you to all volunteers and staff who did such an amazing job in sorting us all so quickly. We are now rattling through first and second jabs very quickly; let us hope that means we can have a normal summer!



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