

TV SWITCHOVER CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES

Countdown to end of analogue era for 650,000 households

The public information campaign to help viewers in Northern Ireland prepare for the digital TV switchover was launched today with the help of BBC and UTV presenters Donna Traynor and Marc Mallett.

In just six months' time, on 10 October 2012, analogue terrestrial TV services for around 650,000 households will start being switched off. Digital UK and the Switchover Help Scheme will support viewers across the region as they prepare for the biggest change to TV for a generation. The campaign will comprise:

- **On-screen messages:** viewers will soon start seeing special messages covering part of their screens. Captions on Freeview can be quickly removed by pressing the yellow button.
- **The Switchover Help Scheme** is writing to older and disabled people offering them practical help to switch one TV to digital, including equipment, installation and aftercare.¹
- **Advertising:** there will be extensive local advertising on TV, radio and in local newspapers.
- **Roadshows:** the switchover roadshow will tour the region stopping at dozens of locations, offering face-to-face advice and practical demonstrations of digital TV equipment.
- **Guide to switchover:** a few months before switchover, all households will be sent a detailed guide, including advice on retuning Freeview equipment.
- **Charity partnerships:** Belfast Area Partnerships and Rural Community Network are working with Digital UK and the Help Scheme to offer extra information and support to viewers who need it.

Switchover will enable Freeview coverage to be increased to reach virtually all households in Northern Ireland. Viewers who get their TV signal from one of 43 local relay transmitters will see their choice of terrestrial channels increase from four to around 15.

Denis Wolinski, Digital UK Regional Manager for Northern Ireland, said: "We are starting the final countdown to a fully digital TV system for Northern Ireland. The benefits will be felt by hundreds of thousands of viewers who will be able to receive free to air digital TV via an aerial for the first time. Over the coming months we will be making plenty of information available and working with the Switchover Help Scheme to ensure viewers know where to turn for advice."

Nigel Tilson, Switchover Help Scheme Manager for Northern Ireland, added: "The thought of losing TV channels may concern many older or disabled people. But there's no need to worry because help is available. All you need to do is look out for your information pack dropping through the door very soon and, once you receive it, either give us a call or return your completed form and we'll do the rest."

- Digital UK: 08456 50 50 50, digitaluk.co.uk
- Switchover Help Scheme: 0800 40 85 900, helpscheme.co.uk

- ends; notes follow -

Notes to editors

1. The Switchover Help Scheme

People are eligible for the Help Scheme if they are:

- Aged 75 or over, or
- Have lived in a care home for six months or more, or
- Get (or could get) certain disability benefits, or
- Are registered blind or partially sighted

Most people will be asked to pay £40 towards the help, which includes:

- Easy-to-use equipment to convert one set
- An approved installer to supply and install the necessary equipment, and
- A 12 month aftercare service including a free helpline

The service is free for people who are eligible and also on certain income related benefits. For the same price of £40 or free, people in Northern Ireland can also choose a Freeview HD box which can receive TG4, RTE One and RTE Two, subject to coverage in their area. That option also includes installation and aftercare. Other options and equipment are also available, some at an extra cost, and these are outlined in the information pack.

2. How switchover happens

Analogue services will be switched off in two stages at each transmitter group. At stage one, analogue BBC Two is switched off and the first group of Freeview digital channels will become available from relay transmitters for the first time. At stage two, the remaining analogue channels will be permanently switched off and replaced with additional digital TV, radio and text services.

Area	Transmitter group	Stage one (BBC2 analogue off)	Stage two (remaining analogue channels off)
South west Northern Ireland	Brougher Mountain	10 October 2012	24 October 2012
North west Northern Ireland	Limavady	10 October 2012	24 October 2012
Belfast and the surrounding areas	Divis	10 October 2012	24 October 2012

Digital TV switchover is the process of converting the UK's terrestrial television system to digital. Between now and 2012, analogue channels are being switched off region by region and replaced with free-to-air digital TV and radio services (Freeview). Switchover will extend Freeview coverage virtually to the whole of the UK and free up airwaves for new services such as ultra-fast wireless broadband and mobile television. Digital services are also available via broadband, cable and satellite.

Digital UK is the independent, not-for-profit organisation established in 2005 to lead the implementation of digital switchover. It is jointly owned and funded by the public-service broadcasters (BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Five and S4C), and the digital multiplex operators.

The Switchover Help Scheme is run by the BBC under an agreement with the Government to help older and disabled people make the change to digital TV. More information is available from helpscheme.co.uk.

The engineering work for TV switchover is being undertaken by **Arqiva**, as owner and operator of the transmitter network.

Images are available to media free of charge at digitaluk.co.uk/press. Follow us on **Twitter** for live updates on switchover at twitter.com/DigitalUK.

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