

18 April 2012

Press release

digitaluk

LONDON SWITCHOVER COMPLETE

UK's biggest TV region is digital; Minister hails 'smooth process'

Digital TV switchover was completed in London this evening, making the capital a digital city ahead of this summer's Diamond Jubilee celebrations and Olympic Games.

Analogue signals were switched off at the Crystal Palace transmitter shortly after midnight by Mark Thompson, Director General of the BBC. Engineers have been working through the day to make new digital services available from local 'relay' transmitters across the region.

This process was completed at 1715 this evening, when Freeview channels began broadcasting from the last transmitter to switch, the Otford mast in Kent.

More than 400,000 viewers in London and surrounding parts of the Home Counties can now receive all the public-service Freeview channels for the first time.

Digital UK – the broadcaster-funded body co-ordinating switchover – and the Switchover Help Scheme have spent six months preparing viewers across the region. Extensive advertising, roadshows and 3,000 volunteers from local charities have all been used to raise public awareness. Advice points have been operating across the region today offering face-to-face support, while 700 trained staff have been available for callers to the Digital UK advice line.

David Scott, Chief Executive of Digital UK, said: "Today is an historic day for TV in the London region as we say goodbye to the old analogue system forever. Viewers have responded extremely well and many are enjoying the benefits of digital TV for the first time."

Communications Minister Ed Vaizey said: "The London switchover has been the biggest undertaken in the UK so far, with almost 12 million viewers now receiving a better picture quality, fantastic new channels and a range of exciting extra services.

"By Autumn, the last few remaining regions will make the change to an all-digital future and I'm delighted at how smooth the process has been to date."

Around nine in ten UK households have now completed the switchover process. The last places to switch will be Kent (May-June); the North East (September); and Northern Ireland, where the UK's last analogue TV signals will be turned off on 24 October 2012, completing a six-year programme of engineering work and public communication.

- ends; notes follow -

Notes to editors

Switchover Help Scheme: People aged 75 and over, eligible for certain disability benefits, registered blind or partially sighted or living in care homes are entitled to practical help from the BBC-run Switchover Help Scheme. For £40, they will be given equipment to switch one TV per household to digital. They will be able to have that equipment installed if they want it, a demonstration of how it works and a number to call while they get used to things. If they're eligible and also on income-related benefits, the help will be free. Everyone eligible will be contacted directly. More information is available on 0800 40 85 900 and online at helpscheme.co.uk.

Digital TV switchover is the process of converting the UK's terrestrial television system to digital. Finishing in October 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 and Channel 5) 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.

Contacts

Joe Smithies
joe.smithies@digitaluk.co.uk
020 7462 5915

Chris Cain
chris.cain@digitaluk.co.uk
020 7462 5442

digitaluk.co.uk / **press**