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FREEVIEW GROWTH BUCKS MARKET TREND

Freeview is the only major UK broadcast platform which is growing its viewer base, according to official data included in Digital UK’s annual update published today.

Jonathan Thompson, Digital UK CEO, uses his introduction to the report to highlight another ‘tumultuous year’ for the UK media but also one in which the values of public service broadcasting, including independence, accountability and universal access have taken on greater importance.

The report highlights progress in Digital UK’s role leading development of Freeview which remains the UK’s most widely watched television service. Report headlines include:

- Freeview growth – unlike satellite and cable which are either shrinking or flat – the number of homes watching a Freeview-based service* on their main set has grown by more than seven per cent since 2016, from 10.7 to 11.5m homes (source BARB, see notes).
- Freeview Play – the hybrid standard for connected televisions and set-top box from leading manufacturers is growing fast and on track to pass four million sales in 2018 with a new five-year £125m funding deal to enable further development including a Freeview mobile app
- Ultra HD – streamed live events including The World Cup and Wimbledon in crystal clear Ultra HD for Freeview Play viewers as part of a BBC iPlayer trial
- Spectrum changes – Digital UK’s work to co-ordinate clearance of Freeview signals from the 700MHz spectrum band is on track with information and help provided to 12 million homes

Jonathan Thompson says: ‘We have good reasons to be optimistic about the future. Unlike most other established platforms which are struggling to maintain their share of the market and in some cases shrinking, the number of homes watching Freeview is growing.

‘Now more than ever, we need to articulate a clear vision of Freeview’s role in the future of UK television...and in doing so we can achieve our goal of delivering the world’s best free TV service – easily accessible and available to all, with high-quality British programming front and centre.’

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Notes

Check out the report online at www.digitaluk.co.uk/update2018

*Freeview-based digital terrestrial services include BT TV, YouView, TalkTalk and EE TV

Changing main set viewing (source: BARB)			
Platform (main sets)	Q1 2016 (million households)	Q1 2018 (million households)	% change
Digital Terrestrial (eg Freeview, BT TV)	10.7	11.5	+ 7.5
Sky subscription	9.1	8.7	- 4.3
Virgin TV	4.1	4.1	0

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About Digital UK

Digital UK supports Freeview viewers and channels. The company manages strategy, policy and service development for digital terrestrial television (DTT) in the UK and provides day-to-day technical management of the Freeview Electronic Programme Guide (EPG). Digital UK is owned by the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Arqiva and has also led development of Freeview Play, a hybrid platform bringing together free-to-view DTT and catch-up services in a range of TVs and set-top boxes.