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Press release

digitaluk

BARONESS BACKS ONLINE SWITCHOVER GUIDE FOR COUNCILS

Baroness Andrews, Communities and Local Government minister, is encouraging councils to make the most of an online guide and checklist launched this week to help them prepare for digital TV switchover.

Switchover is happening region by region across the UK between 2008 and 2012, and will make digital terrestrial television (Freeview) available to virtually all households. Digital TV provides more channels, digital radio and interactive features, and has implications for many services provided and commissioned by councils. In a letter sent today to all council leaders, mayors and chief executives in England, Baroness Andrews says:

“Switchover need not be an extra burden for councils but it will be an issue for many of your residents, particularly those who more vulnerable. Digital UK and the Switchover Help Scheme, which helps people who are aged 75 or over, registered blind or partially sighted, or on certain disability benefits, are doing all they can to inform and support these residents but they may still come to councils for help, through council offices, call centres and member surgeries.

“Lead members and officers will also need to consider the strategic, technical and practical implications for their council.”

Launched on Wednesday, May 14, 2008 by Digital UK, the online guide is available at www.digitaluk.co.uk/localgov. It explains the issues councils and their strategic partners need to consider in the countdown to digital switchover: the implications for services such as schools, housing and social care; the need to protect consumers from mis-selling and rogue traders; and the implications for energy efficiency, waste disposal and planning.

The site also provides information about the extra help available to people most likely to need it through the Help Scheme and Digital Outreach Ltd, Digital UK's community partnership with the voluntary sector.

Simon Crine, Director of Corporate Affairs at Digital UK, said:

“Digital switchover is coming sooner than many councils realise and our online guide aims to help them ensure their residents and tenants are fully prepared. Through the guide and our network of regional and national managers, we're here to help.”

- ends; notes follow -

Notes for Editors

- The first four TV regions to go digital are Border, West Country, Granada and Wales, between 2008 and 2010.
- Digital UK can provide short case studies of councils who are already preparing for digital television switchover.

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

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

The Switchover Help Scheme is run by the BBC at the request of the Government to offer help to an estimated 7 million households in making the switch to digital television. Every eligible person will be offered practical help to convert one of their TV sets to digital in the run-up to switchover in their television region. People are eligible if they are aged 75 years or more, or if they are registered blind or partially sighted. Also eligible are people who get (or could get) attendance or constant attendance allowance, mobility supplement, or disability living allowance.

Images and video clips are available to media free of charge from vismedia.co.uk

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