

COUNTDOWN BEGINS TO SWITCHOVER

The date for the switchover to digital TV in parts of west and central Wales was announced today by Digital UK, the independent body leading the process.

The switchover at the Blaenplwyf transmitter group, which serves parts of west and central Wales, will start on **10 February 2010**. The process will make Freeview available to virtually every home in those areas – including, for the first time, more than 11,000 households served by local ‘relay’ transmitters.

When analogue signals are switched off and replaced with digital broadcasts at these relay sites, the number of channels available free via an aerial will increase from four to around 20.

Analogue services will be switched off in two stages at each transmitter group. At stage one, BBC Two will cease broadcasting in analogue and the first group of Freeview digital channels will become available from relay transmitters. Four weeks later, the remaining analogue channels will be permanently switched off and replaced with additional digital services.¹

Gwenllïan Carr, Digital UK’s National Manager in Wales, said: “Today’s announcement is a real step forward for television in Wales. Once the process is complete, virtually all viewers will have the opportunity to enjoy digital TV through an aerial, offering many homes more choice than ever before.”

As part of Digital UK’s national information campaign, leaflets explaining switchover and the options available for going digital will be sent to every home in Wales. These will be backed up by both national and local radio and television advertising. Six months before switchover, on-screen captions reminding viewers to get ready will appear on the television sets of those still watching analogue broadcasts. Digital UK is also working in partnership with local charities and volunteers to provide advice and assistance for those who may need a little extra help.

Letters will be sent to every household eligible for help from the Switchover Help Scheme, which offers assistance and equipment to convert one television for people aged 75 or over, registered blind or partially sighted, on certain disability benefits or living in a care home for six months or more. Those eligible will be contacted directly, offered help and sent information packs in time for switchover.

Also today, Digital UK will hold Wales’ first stakeholder group meeting. This is designed to bring together organisations who are interested and involved in Wales’ digital switchover – including representatives from broadcasting, Welsh Assembly Government, Welsh Local Government Association, the voluntary sector, Digital Outreach Limited and the Switchover Help Scheme.

- ends; notes follow -

Notes to editors

Wales switchover dates in full

Transmitter group	Area served	Switchover stage 1	Switchover stage 2
Kilvey Hill	the Swansea area	12 August 2009	9 September 2009
Preseli	south west Wales	19 August 2009	16 September 2009
Carmel	parts of south and central Wales	26 August 2009	23 September 2009
Llanddona	north west Wales	21 October 2009	18 November 2009
Moel y Parc	north east Wales	28 October 2009	25 November 2009
Long Mountain	parts of east and central Wales	4 November 2009	3 December 2009
Blaenplwyf	parts of west and central Wales	10 February 2010	10 March 2010
Wenvoe	Cardiff, Newport and south east Wales	3 March 2010	31 March 2010

- 1. Freeview channels** After switchover, virtually all UK households will receive the most-watched free to air digital channels and text services. These will include the public service channels BBC One, BBC Two, ITV1, Channel 4, S4C and Five, plus associated digital channels such as ITV2, E4 and BBC Three. Viewers who receive their television signal from a main transmitter will receive more than 40 channels, including Freeview channels plus optional subscription services such as Top Up TV and Setanta Sport. Those who receive their television from a relay transmitter will receive around 20 channels. Viewers can use the postcode checker at digitaluk.co.uk to check which channels are available in their area.
- 2.** To continue watching TV via an aerial after switchover, viewers will need to convert their television using a digital box or make sure they have an integrated digital set. Subscription and non-subscription digital TV services are also available via satellite, cable and broadband. A postcode checker at digitaluk.co.uk can tell viewers which options are available in their area now and after switchover. The Digital UK helpline is on 08456 50 50 50.
- 3.** Wales has eight main transmitters and 198 relay transmitters. A map showing their location can be found at: www.ofcom.org.uk/tv/ifi/tech/transmaps/wales1.7.pdf

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 lead the implementation of 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 under an agreement with the Government to help older and disabled people make the change to digital TV. Every eligible person will be offered practical help to convert one of their TV sets to digital in the run-up to switchover in each 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. Most people will be asked to contribute £40 towards the help. The service is free for people who are eligible and also get pension credit, income support or income-based jobseeker's allowances.

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

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digitaluk.co.uk/press