

## **NORTHERN IRELAND SWITCHOVER BEGINS**

*Freeview viewers reminded to retune as signal is boosted to reach all areas*

**Freeview viewers in Northern Ireland will need to retune their televisions and boxes today as the digital switchover gets underway.**

The start of TV switchover means that hundreds of thousands of viewers in digital blackspots such as Ballycastle, Lisbellaw and Newcastle can get BBC Freeview channels for the first time, while picture quality will improve for many existing viewers.

Homes already watching Freeview will need to retune their TVs and boxes in order to regain their BBC services, which are missing this morning.<sup>1</sup> Viewers watching cable and satellite services will not be affected.

Switchover began in the early hours when analogue BBC Two was permanently turned off at transmitters across Northern Ireland.

The process will be completed on 24 October, when the remaining analogue channels will be switched off. Further Freeview channels from UTV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 will then be available from local transmitters for the first time. Viewers in some areas with Freeview HD equipment will also be able to receive TG4, RTÉ One and RTÉ Two.

The Switchover Help Scheme is still welcoming applications from eligible older and disabled people to get help to convert one television, including a choice of equipment, installation and aftercare. For those who have already signed up, the Help Scheme call centre is available to help with any problems and can be contacted on 0800 40 85 900.

Denis Wolinski, Digital UK National Manager, said this morning: "This is great news for Northern Ireland as many people are receiving new channels for the first time.

"Those viewers who haven't switched to digital should prepare for 24 October, when the last analogue channels will be permanently switched off. Our advice is: get ready now – don't leave it until the last minute."

Digital UK, the body leading switchover, continues to provide support through local advice points, as well as its website and advice line. Switchover roadshows are also running today and tomorrow in Belfast, outside the City Hall, and in Derry/Londonderry, outside the Guildhall, from 9am to 5pm.

Additionally, advice points staffed by local charities will be running from 10am-4pm at the following locations today and tomorrow:

- Ballycastle – Shesburn Recreation Centre, Sheksburn House, 7 Mary Street
- Larne – Larne Library, 36 Pound Street
- Downpatrick – Downpatrick Library, 79 Market Street
- Newry – Newry City Library, 79 Hill Street
- Cookstown – Cookstown Library, 13 Burn Road
- Enniskillen – Enniskillen Library, Halls Lane
- East Belfast – Connswater Shopping Centre (10 October only)

For more information go to [www.digitaluk.co.uk/northernirelandevents](http://www.digitaluk.co.uk/northernirelandevents) or phone 08456 50 50 50.

**- ends; notes follow –**

## Notes to editors

### 1. Retuning and regional services

#### How to retune your Freeview, Top-Up TV or BT Vision equipment:

- Make sure your Freeview TV or box is on and in digital mode. Press 'menu' on your remote control.
- Select 'set up' or 'installation'. If you see picture icons, select the tool box, satellite dish or spanner.
- If you are prompted for a code, try 0000 or 1234.
- Select the full re-tune option. This is sometimes called 'first time installation', 'factory reset', 'default settings' or 'shipping conditions'. Do not select 'channel update' or 'add channels'.
- Press 'OK' if your equipment asks if you want to delete all your channels, don't worry this is normal.
- Channels will automatically be installed. This may take a few minutes and your equipment may shut down and restart.

2. **Channel availability** Before switchover, Freeview channels are available from main transmitter sites only, offering viewers with digital TVs or set top boxes a line-up of more than 40 channels. Switchover will see more than 1,000 local relay transmitters upgraded to digital. After switchover, relay transmitters will broadcast around 15 Freeview TV channels, including BBC One, BBC Two, UTV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 plus associated services such as ITV2 and BBC Three. Digital TV is also available via cable, satellite and broadband.

The Republic of Ireland channels TG4, RTÉ One and RTÉ Two are widely available in Northern Ireland via an aerial, satellite and cable. After switchover, when analogue TV is turned off, most people will be able to get these services via an aerial, either from Freeview in Northern Ireland or via Saorview - the Republic of Ireland digital TV service. Technical differences between Freeview and Saorview may affect the equipment you need and the channels you can receive.

Viewers can use the postcode checker at [digitaluk.co.uk](http://digitaluk.co.uk) to check channel availability in their area. For more information on Saorview, visit [saorview.ie](http://saorview.ie) or call 0844 8008 752.

3. **Channel swaps:** From today, due to a change in broadcast frequencies, some viewers may find that one of their analogue channels moves to a different button on the remote control. All the analogue channels will be switched off permanently at stage two.
4. **The 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 before switchover. More information is available on 0800 40 85 900 and online at [helpscheme.co.uk](http://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](http://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](http://digitaluk.co.uk/press). Follow us on **Twitter** for live updates on switchover at [twitter.com/DigitalUK](https://twitter.com/DigitalUK).

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