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Press release

digitaluk

NORTH EAST SWITCHOVER BEGINS

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

Freeview viewers in the North East will need to retune their televisions and boxes today as digital switchover gets underway.

Analogue BBC Two was turned off last night at transmitters across the region, marking the start of a process that will see Freeview coverage boosted to reach all areas.

From today, thousands of homes in digital blackspots will be able to get BBC Freeview channels for the first time as engineers switch on digital signals at local relay transmitters, 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 will be missing this morning.¹

The process will be completed on 26 September, when the remaining analogue channels will be switched off. Further Freeview channels from ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 will then be available from local transmitters for the first time.

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.

John Askew, Digital UK Regional Manager for the North East, said this morning: "This is great news for viewers across the North East as many people are receiving new channels for the first time.

"Those viewers who haven't switched to digital should prepare for 26 September, 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 Newcastle, Sunderland and Middlesbrough.

- digitaluk.co.uk/tyneteesevents
- **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.

Regional services

As with analogue terrestrial TV, Freeview signals will overlap in some areas, enabling viewers to receive two or more regional variants of BBC and ITV channels. Most Freeview equipment will automatically load all versions, placing one at the top of the channel list and any additional channels in the 800s. Viewers can prioritise their preferred regional services by completing a 'manual retune'. Alternatively, they can be made easier to find by using the 'favourites' feature on their digital TV or box. Advice on retuning is available at digitaluk.co.uk/retuning or by ringing 08456 50 50 50.

- 2. 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.
- 3. 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.
- 4. Homes watching TV from the Bilsdale transmitter** will need a wideband aerial to be sure of receiving all available Freeview channels after switchover.

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

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