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Press release

digitaluk

COUNTDOWN BEGINS TO TV SWITCHOVER

More than half a million homes across the north of Scotland were given an important date for their diary today – the day they'll make the switch to digital television.

Viewers in the Shetland Islands will start the switch on **5 May 2010** when the first analogue signals are switched off at Bressay transmitter group and replaced with digital channels.

The Orkney Islands, served by the Keelylang Hill group, will follow on **12 May 2010**, with Caithness next in line, making the switch on **2 June 2010**.

The switchover will then progress to parts of the West Highlands and Islands in July. Angus, Perth, Aberdeen City and Shire, Morayshire and Inverness will begin the transition in the autumn.

Digital UK, the independent organisation leading the digital switchover, teamed up with well known celebrities including BBC Beechgrove Garden's Jim McColl and presenters of the north edition of STV News at Six, Kirstin Gove and Norman Macleod, to launch the countdown to large parts of the country going digital. For some viewers the switchover is less than 10 months away.

John MacNeil, Digital UK's Assistant National Manager for Scotland, said: "Today's announcement is a huge step forward for TV in Scotland. In less than ten months the process will start here in the north. After switchover, virtually all viewers will have the opportunity to enjoy digital TV through an aerial, offering many homes more choice than ever before."

Switchover will make digital TV through an aerial (Freeview) available to almost all households in the north of Scotland. Viewers served by local 'relay' transmitters will get Freeview for the first time, seeing the number of channels available through an aerial rising from four to around 20.

As part of Digital UK's Scotland-wide information campaign, leaflets explaining switchover and the options available for going digital will be sent to every home. These will be backed up by both national and local radio and television advertising. The team is also touring the country speaking to local residents, organisations and local authorities about the switch to digital.

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 it.

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 those 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.

Viewers can find out which transmitter they're likely to be watching, and what their options are now and after switchover, by entering their postcode at www.digitaluk.co.uk, or phoning the helpline on 08456 50 50 50.

- ends; notes follow -

All switchover dates announced today

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. At stage two, a fortnight later, the remaining analogue channels will be permanently switched off and replaced with additional digital services.

Transmitter group	Area served	Stage one	Stage two
Bressay	Shetland Islands	5 May 2010	19 May 2010
Keelylang Hill	Orkney Islands	12 May 2010	26 May 2010
Rumster Forest	Caithness and north Sutherland	2 June 2010	16 June 2010
Eitshal	Lewis, Wester Ross, North West Sutherland and parts of Harris and Skye	7 July 2010	21 July 2010
Skriaig	Skye, Harris, North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist and parts of Barra	14 July 2010	28 July 2010
Angus	Angus, Dundee, Perth and parts of Fife	4 August 2010	18 August 2010
Durris	Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire	1 September 2010	15 September 2010
Knockmore	Morayshire, Strathspey and parts Easter Ross	8 September 2010	22 September 2010
Rosemarkie	Inverness and Great Glen	6 October 2010	20 October 2010
Torosay	South West Highlands and Islands	13 October 2010	27 October 2010

For a map showing the location of these transmitters, visit www.ofcom.org.uk/tv/ifi/tech/transmaps/stvnorth1.4.pdf

Digital TV 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 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, 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, have lived in a care home for six months or more, get (or could get) certain disability benefits, or are registered blind or partially sighted. Most people will be asked to contribute £40 towards the help but for those on certain income-related benefits, it's free.

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

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