

WHITEHAVEN SET TO COMPLETE SWITCHOVER

Whitehaven will become the country's first all-digital town tomorrow morning (Nov 14), eighty-five years to the day since the birth of broadcasting in the UK.¹

Starting at 2am, the town and surrounding area of Copeland in Cumbria will complete the process of digital TV switchover, as all remaining analogue signals are turned off.

Analogue BBC One, ITV1 and Channel 4 will be replaced by a series of digital channels broadcast in the area for the first time. This completes the switchover process begun on October 17, when analogue BBC Two came off air and the first digital channels became available through an aerial.

From tomorrow, people in Whitehaven and the surrounding communities will need to retune Freeview boxes in order to receive the following digital services free through an aerial:²

- 20 Television channels: BBC One, BBC Two, BBC Three, BBC Four, CBeebies, CBBC, BBC News 24, BBC Parliament, BBCi interactive broadcasts, ITV1, ITV2, ITV3, ITV4, CITV, Channel 4, Channel 4+1, E4, More 4, Five, Community Channel
- 10 radio networks: BBC Radio 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 Live, BBC Radio Five Live Sports Extra, 6 Music, BBC 7, Asian Network, 1 Xtra
- Digital text services BBCi text, Teletext, Teletext Cars, Teletext on 4

Ford Ennals, Chief Executive of Digital UK, said:

"We've been very impressed by the response of people in Whitehaven to becoming the first all-digital community. I'm particularly grateful for the hard work of the many organisations and volunteers here who have been instrumental in helping their friends and neighbours prepare for switchover.

"Our research³ suggests that nearly all 25,000 homes³ in and around Whitehaven are ready for the completion of this process which will transform many people's experience of watching television.

"We estimate that around 500 households still need to take action to prepare for switchover. On top of that we know that social housing providers and the Help Scheme are still waiting for some householders to get in touch to arrange delivery or installation. Nevertheless, we believe that the vast majority of people in Whitehaven are well prepared and are looking forward to receiving the extra channels.

"I would urge anyone still relying on analogue television to take action today or risk being left with a blank screen. Those who may need some advice or assistance should call us on 0845 6 505050 or visit one of the help centres⁴ we are operating across the Copeland area."

Peter White, Chief Executive of the Digital Switchover Help Scheme, said:

"So far the Digital Switchover Help Scheme has helped over 2,000 eligible people in Copeland convert to digital. The scheme stays open for a month after tomorrow's switchover – December 13 is the deadline for applications from Copeland residents for help from the scheme. We urge those who are eligible, who need help, but have yet to apply, to get in touch now. There will be ongoing support available until April next year."

- ends; notes follow -

Notes to editors

- ¹ The first British broadcasting transmission was made on November 14 1922, when the BBC began its daily radio service from masts atop Selfridges on Oxford Street, London.
- ² Freeview channel line-up is subject to change by broadcasters. All channels are already available in the area on digital satellite (Sky or freesat from Sky).
- ³ GFK/NOP interviewed 108 adults (16+) for Digital UK and Ofcom between October 17 and November 1. 98% of households reported having digital television equipment.
- ⁴ Digital UK is running Help Centres at four locations across the Whitehaven switchover area. The centres, run in partnership with Age Concern Northwest Cumbria, provide advice and practical assistance with digital television equipment.

Digital UK is the independent body implementing the UK's switch to digital television. The company communicates switchover to the public; manages the upgrade of 1,154 transmitters for digital; and works with industry to ensure understanding and support for switchover. Digital UK was set up by the public-service broadcasters, and offers independent switchover advice to the public through its helpline (08456 50 50 50) and website (digitaluk.co.uk).

Switchover will create a fairer situation in which everyone has access to a choice of affordable digital TV services. Between 2008 and 2012, all TV services in the UK will go completely digital, region by region. The UK's old analogue television signal is being switched off and replaced with a digital signal, a process that will also allow the UK to remain a world leader in broadcasting.

To ensure that everyone can benefit from digital TV, there is a **Digital Switchover Help Scheme** for people who need it most. Around seven million households with a member who is over 75, severely disabled, blind or partially sighted will qualify for special help to convert one television set. The help carries a £40 fee – except for the poorest eligible households, for whom it is free. Eligible households will be contacted in advance of switchover.

Images of switchover and Digital UK are available to media, free of charge, from vismedia.co.uk

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