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Press release

DIGITAL UK APPOINTS ASKEW TO LEAD BORDER SWITCHOVER

Digital UK, the organisation leading the UK's switch to digital TV, has appointed its first Regional Manager to co-ordinate switchover in Border, the first UK TV region to go digital in 2008.

John Askew, presently Head of Corporate Communications at the Scottish Borders Council, will take up the full-time position on 1 May.

Digital switchover will take place between 2008 and 2012, TV region by region. First to switch will be the Borders counties – Cumbria, Dumfries & Galloway, Scottish Borders and the Isle of Man – where the Regional Manager will play a key role.

Cumbrian-born John Askew will co-ordinate the work of Digital UK's first Regional Advisory Committee, which will be set up shortly to work with local authorities, voluntary groups and charities to ensure everyone knows that switchover is coming and what they need to do to prepare.

John, 51, is a veteran of local government. He joined the Scottish Borders Council in 1996 as its first Public Relations Officer.

"I am delighted to have been offered the chance to co-ordinate this crucial campaign in the Border TV region," John said. "As Border has been chosen as first region to switch to digital, I'm very conscious that the rest of the UK will be watching the process with interest.

"Many households have already switched to digital on at least one set, but there is still a great deal of work to do to make sure that, when switchover begins in 2008, Border viewers have converted all of their television sets."

Andy Townend, Director of Operations at Digital UK, said: "John is the first of our Regional Managers to be appointed, and I'm delighted to welcome him to the team. John's affinity with Cumbria and the Scottish Borders, together with his track record in local government, makes him ideally placed to involve local groups and authorities and make switchover happen here in 2008."

In his current role, John led the development of the Council's communications strategy – overseeing the introduction of a quarterly newspaper, SBConnect, and the Council's award-winning website.

A former pupil of Kendal Grammar School, John trained as a teacher/youth worker at C F Mott College of Education in Liverpool before joining Cumbria County Council as a Road Safety Education Officer. He held similar posts with North Yorkshire and Hereford and Worcester County Council, and was Secretary of the County Road Safety Officers' Association.

John is married to Christine and has two daughters, Claire and Helen. He lives near Kelso in the Scottish Borders.

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About Digital UK

Digital UK was launched in September 2005 as an independent, not-for-profit organisation to lead the UK's switch to digital television. The company:

- Co-ordinates the technical roll-out of digital terrestrial television across the UK, region by region, to a timetable agreed by Government.
- Communicates with the public about digital switchover to ensure everyone knows what is happening, what they need to do, and when.
- Liaises with TV equipment manufacturers, retailers, digital platform operators and consumer groups to ensure understanding of, and support for, switchover.

Digital UK was set up by UK broadcasters at the Government's request. The company is headed by Ford Ennals (Chief Executive) and Barry Cox (Chairman), with a board comprising:

- Public service broadcasters the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, five, S4C and Teletext
- Freeview multiplex operators NGW and SDN
- Two representatives of the supply chain (manufacturers, retailers and aerial installers)

Digital UK is wholly funded by its board members.

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