

LONDON SET FOR NEW TELLY ERA

...and Christine Bleakley names the date

London will go digital on 4 April 2012, marking the end of analogue TV in the city where television began 75 years ago.

The date for digital switchover in the capital and surrounding areas was announced today by Digital UK, the body leading the process. To mark the occasion, TV favourite Christine Bleakley turned on a light show at Alexandra Palace, where the world's first regular television service began in 1936.

London's switchover will be the biggest in the UK by far, affecting nearly twelve million¹ viewers and extending Freeview coverage to all parts of the capital and neighbouring areas for the first time. With a population of 7.5m, London is estimated to contain more TV sets than any other city in Europe, including nearly four million analogue TVs which must be converted to digital in time for the switchover.²

Analogue BBC Two will disappear in London and neighbouring parts of Berkshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Middlesex and Surrey on 4 April 2012. The remaining analogue channels – BBC One, ITV1, Channel Four and Channel Five – will then be turned off on 18 April 2012.

The change takes place around three months before the London Olympics, and will give local viewers a choice of ways to enjoy widescreen, interactive digital coverage of the Games.

Vivien Morgan, London Manager for Digital UK, said: "Switchover is making television history – the biggest change in broadcasting since colour TV. It's exciting news for all of us as it means more channels, better pictures and easier recording."

Christine Bleakley added: "The big switch is coming to London, and we all need to be ready. Nobody wants to miss their favourite show, so make sure you get set for digital."

One third of UK homes have so far completed the switchover process, while nine-in-ten households are watching some form of digital TV on at least one set. After London, two remaining regions – the north east of England and Northern Ireland – will also switch to digital in 2012, completing the switchover programme in the United Kingdom.

Viewers can follow the switchover at [facebook.com/tvswitchover](https://www.facebook.com/tvswitchover) and twitter [@LondonTVswitch](https://twitter.com/LondonTVswitch).

- ends; notes follow -

Notes to editors

1. The Crystal Palace transmitter group serves around 11,650,000 viewers in the London TV region, which extends far beyond the M25 into the home counties.
2. Source: Digital UK

Wherever you live in the country, get set for switchover with Digital UK's top five tips:

1. Visit the switchover postcode checker at digitaluk.co.uk to find out when your area switches and what your options are.
2. Don't throw out your old TV – even the oldest sets can be converted with a digital box.
3. Remember the Switchover Help Scheme will offer equipment and practical support to older and disabled viewers. It will write to eligible viewers in the run-up to switchover. Visit helpscheme.co.uk for more details.
4. Check out the different ways of getting digital TV, including subscription-free options. Digital UK's postcode checker provides details of digital services available in your area.
5. If you have Freeview, check you know how to retune your TV or box – you'll need to do it at both stages of switchover. For more information visit digitaluk.co.uk/retuning.

Digital TV switchover is the process of converting the UK's terrestrial television system to digital. Between now and 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, Channel 5 and S4C), 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 are available to media free of charge at digitaluk.co.uk/press

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