



Freeview response to Digital UK consultation on the allocation of LCN 7

January 2016

1. Introduction

Freeview is managed by DTV Services Ltd, a company owned and run by its five shareholders: the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Sky and Arqiva (the network operator). Its remit is primarily focused on the marketing and communications that support the Freeview television service and its millions of viewers. The organisation works closely with Digital UK to ensure the DTT platform remains appealing and relevant to consumers.

Freeview has responded to a number of Digital UK consultations on its LCN policy in recent years and welcomes the opportunity to comment on proposals to allocate LCN 7. The response below has been prepared by Freeview's management team as champions of our viewers' interests. It therefore does not necessarily represent the individual views of the organisation's shareholders.

The DTT platform, with Freeview at its heart, remains the UK's largest TV platform. Used in three quarters of the country's homes (almost 19 million), it plays a critical role in delivering free-to-air access to the nation's most popular content. Over 10 million homes rely on DTT as the sole provider of television (40% of all households) and changes in the electronic programme guide (EPG) therefore affect a significant proportion of UK consumers.

2. Proposals for the allocation of LCN 7

It is our view that the Freeview programme guide should be simple and easy to use, with channels as logically ordered and easily discoverable as possible. We welcome any initiative to improve the overall consumer experience when navigating the Freeview EPG and are of the view that of the two options for allocating LCN 7 set out by Digital UK, the second offers the best solution for consumers.

This is for the following reasons:

- All Local TV channels would be allocated the same LCN slot irrespective of geography. Locating them all together would mean viewers could access Local TV at LCN 8 from across the UK bringing more consistency to the process of navigation.
- The Local TV channels *currently* located at LCN 8 as well as BBC Four at LCN 9 would retain their current slot thereby minimising disruption for viewers - removing the need for additional re-tuning and/or memorising new channel numbers.
- Fewer channels would need to move LCN slots – only BBC Alba and Channel 4 (Wales) as well as the channels delivered by three providers at LCN 23. This is in contrast to the 20 Local TV channels as well as BBC Four that would have to move under Option 1.

Overall, Option 2 would involve the least disruption for viewers, channels and the platform whilst delivering maximum consistency and clarity. We therefore support Digital UK's recommendation to implement Option 2 at the point at which BBC Three vacates its current allocation at LCN 7. We recognise that the BBC has not as yet confirmed its plans to cease broadcasting BBC Three and therefore the timing for any changes in channel allocation are not known.

In its consultation, Digital UK sets out the support and advice it offers to help viewers find services in their new location when the LCN allocation for a channel changes. Freeview will work closely with Digital UK to ensure viewers are fully informed of forthcoming changes and can find information and advice through the Freeview website and our social media channels.