

COUNTDOWN BEGINS TO NORTH WEST SWITCHOVER

The date for the switchover to digital television in north-west England has been announced today by Digital UK, the independent body leading the process.

Three million homes across the north-west will start switching to digital on **4 November 2009** when analogue signals are turned off at the Winter Hill transmitter group (the Granada TV region).

Latest research indicates nine out of ten north-west viewers are now aware of digital switchover, and 91% have already converted their main TV set. Other findings from the Digital UK/Ofcom Tracker Survey (to June 2008) revealed:

- More than half of homes (57%) in the area have already converted all their sets to digital
- 82% recognise the 'digital tick' logo
- Nine out of ten viewers are comfortable with switchover

On 4 November, BBC Two will cease broadcasting in analogue and the first group of Freeview digital channels will become available. Four weeks later on December 2, the remaining analogue channels will be permanently switched off and replaced with additional digital services. Forty-eight Freeview channels will then be available via an aerial to a majority of households in the north west; some households will receive around 20 channels.¹

Jo Waters, Digital UK's Regional Manager for the Granada TV region, said: "Most people in the region already have a choice of ways to get digital TV, and after switchover almost everyone will be able to get it through an aerial. We're now taking a roadshow across the region, so people can get personal advice on how to get ready and learn what help is available."

The Digital UK roadshow is running in 45 town and city centres across the region until the end of November. (See schedule in notes.)

As part of Digital UK's national 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 regional radio and television advertising. 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 a little extra help.

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. Those eligible will be contacted in April-June 2009, offered help and sent information packs in time for switchover.

Taniya Butt of the Switchover Help Scheme said: "We're here to do everything we can to make sure that everyone who is eligible gets the message and no one is left behind."

Viewers in the south of the region who receive their signal from the Moel y Parc transmitter group in north Wales will switch over on 28 October 2009, Digital UK also confirmed today. The postcode checker at digitaluk.co.uk tells viewers which transmitter they're most likely to be watching.

- ends; notes follow -

Notes to editors

- Six months before switchover, captions reminding viewers to get ready for digital will appear on all television screens receiving analogue broadcasts. These will last for two weeks, increasing in size and frequency as switchover approaches.

Transmitter group	Area served	Stage 1	Stage 2
Winter Hill	Liverpool, Manchester, Lancashire, Cheshire and north Staffordshire	4 November 2009	2 December 2009
Moel y Parc	North east Wales	28 October 2009	25 November 2009

1. After switchover, virtually all UK households will receive approximately 20 of the most watched free to air digital channels and text services. These will include the public service channels BBC One, BBC Two, ITV1, C4 and Five, plus associated digital channels such as ITV2, E4 and BBC Three. Households that receive their television signal from a main transmitter will receive 48 channels. These will include Freeview channels plus optional subscription services such as Top Up TV and Setanta Sport. Viewers can use the postcode checker at digitaluk.co.uk to check which channels are available in their area.
2. To continue watching TV via an aerial after switchover, viewers will need to convert their television using a digital box or make sure they have an integrated digital set. Subscription and non-subscription digital TV services are also available via satellite, cable and broadband. A postcode checker at digitaluk.co.uk can tell viewers which options are available in their area now and after switchover. The Digital UK helpline is on 08456 50 50 50.

Roadshow schedule

22 Oct	Lancaster town centre	14-16 Nov	Manchester city centre
23 Oct	Fleetwood town centre	14 Nov	Chorley town centre
24 Oct	Lytham St Anne's Sainsbury's	15 Nov	Wigan town centre
25 Oct	Blackpool town centre	16 Nov	Leyland Tesco
28 Oct	Darwen Sainbury's	18 Nov	Bootle Sainsbury's and Dukinfield Morrisons
29 Oct	Accrington town centre and Formby Tesco	19 Nov	Bootle Sainsburys and Oldham town centre
30 Oct	Rawthesall Tesco and Southport Morrisons	20 Nov	Widnes and Altrincham town centres
31 Oct	Bolton town centre	21-23 Nov	Liverpool city centre
1 Nov	Preston town centre	21 Nov	Wilmslow town centre
4-6 Nov	Skelmersdale town centre	22 Nov	Stockport Morrisons
5 Nov	Nelson town centre	25 Nov	West Kirby Morrisons and Knutsford town ctr
6 Nov	Clitheroe town centre	26 Nov	Neston and Macclesfield town centres
7 Nov	Blackburn Asda	27 Nov	Neston town centre and Congleton Morrisons
8 Nov	Burnley town centre	28 Nov	Wallasey Asda and Hanley town centre
11 Nov	St Helen's and Rochdale town centres	29 Nov	Ellesmere Morrisons and Crewe town centre
12 Nov	Leigh town centre and Bury town centre	30 Nov	Ellesmere Morrisons
13 Nov	Ormskirk Morrisons and Eccles Morrisons		

Digital television 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 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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