

VIEWERS WAKE TO A DIGITAL DAWN

Freeview signals move to full power ■ Homes should retune again

The final stage of digital TV switchover in parts of south and central Wales is on course to complete today, extending digital terrestrial television (Freeview) coverage to all households served by the Carmel transmitter group.

All terrestrial TV signals were turned off shortly after midnight and a team of engineers worked through the night on the switch to all-digital TV services. Analogue services will remain switched off permanently, allowing new Freeview channels to be broadcast from 18 local relay transmitters serving areas such as Llanelli, Builth Wells and Rhayader for the first time.¹

When the transition is completed by late afternoon, Freeview, BT Vision and Top Up TV equipment should be retuned in order to receive all the channels available.

Broadcasters are planning several changes to the Freeview service on 30 September, so viewers should retune again on that date in order to keep their equipment up to date.

Switching off the analogue signal makes it possible to extend the level of Freeview coverage to reach 98 per cent of households in Wales. Viewers receiving their signal from relay transmitters will see the number of TV channels available free via an aerial increase from four to around 20 (see notes).

Digital TVs or analogue sets converted with a digital box will be able to receive BBC One, BBC Two, ITV1, S4C, Channel 4 and Five – plus additional digital channels, digital text and radio services.

Emyr Byron Hughes, Digital UK's National Manager for Wales, said: "I'm pleased to report that the technical transition went according to plan and, from today, many more viewers will be able to receive digital TV free via an aerial. People have responded really well in adapting to the change and preparing in good time."

Digital UK, the independent body leading switchover, continues to provide support through local advice points (see notes), its website (digitaluk.co.uk) and helpline (08456 50 50 50). A switchover roadshow is also running today in Carmarthen.

The Switchover Help Scheme is still welcoming applications from eligible older and disabled people to get help to convert one television – including a choice of equipment, installation and aftercare. Eligible people who have already converted a TV set without assistance can still apply to convert a second set. Help Scheme engineers will be working in the area over the switchover period to help with retuning and viewers can contact the Help Scheme on 0800 40 85 900.

- ends; notes follow -

Notes to editors

1. To retune your Freeview, Top-Up TV or BT Vision equipment, follow these steps:

Note: These instructions are a guide only – each product works slightly differently. Your instruction manual will explain the process for your particular product. Make sure you do a full retune following the guide below. Some product menus have 'add channels' or 'auto search' functions which may not restore all channels.

- Switch on your digital box or digital television
- Press 'menu' on the remote control
- Select 'set up' or 'installation' option
- Select 'first time installation' option (sometimes called 'factory reset', 'full retune' or 'default settings')
- Press "OK" if your equipment asks if you want to delete all your channels - don't worry this is normal.
- Channels will be automatically installed. This may take a few minutes; your equipment may shut down and restart.

For more information on retuning visit digitaluk.co.uk/retuning

- Stage one of switchover at the Carmel transmitter group took place on 26 August, when analogue BBC Two was turned off and replaced with BBC digital channels.
- A Welsh language helpline is available on 08458 48 48 48.

Advice points are open on 23-24 September, from 10am to 4pm at the following locations:

Builth Wells: Builth Community Support, High Street

Carmarthen: Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services, The Mount, Queen Street

Llandrindod Wells: The Metropole, Temple Street, LD1 5DY

Llanelli: Age Concern Sir Gar, Murray Street

Digital TV 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 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, 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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