

COUNTDOWN BEGINS TO NORTH WALES SWITCHOVER

The dates for the switchover to digital TV in north Wales and parts of east and central Wales were announced today by Digital UK, the independent body leading the process.

- The **Llanddona** transmitter group, serving north-west Wales, will be the first in the area to start switching on **21 October 2009**.
- The **Moel y Parc** transmitter group, serving north-east Wales, will follow on **28 October 2009**.
- The **Long Mountain** transmitter group, serving parts of east and central Wales, will follow on **4 November 2009**.

Gwenllïan Carr, Digital UK's National Manager in Wales, said: "Today's announcement is a real step forward in the digital TV switchover programme. One year from today, the switchover process will start here in north Wales, and for the first time, many viewers will have the opportunity to enjoy digital TV through an aerial, offering many homes more choice than ever before."

Latest research indicates nine out of ten people in north Wales are now aware of digital switchover, and 90% 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 (55%) in the area have already converted all their sets to digital
- 83% recognise the 'digital tick' logo
- 85% are comfortable with switchover

At the start of switchover at each transmitter group, BBC Two will cease broadcasting in analogue and the first group of Freeview digital channels will become available. Four weeks later, the remaining analogue channels will be permanently switched off and replaced with additional digital services. Around 20 of the most-watched Freeview channels will then be available via an aerial to a majority of households in north Wales; some households will receive 48 channels.¹

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 local 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 directly, offered help and sent information packs in time for switchover.

Chris Crilly 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."

Any viewers in the north of Wales who receive their signal from the Winter Hill transmitter near Bolton, or one of its relays, will switch over on 4 November 2009, Digital UK also confirmed today.

- 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
Llandona	north west Wales	21 October 2009	18 November 2009
Moel y Parc	north east Wales	28 October 2009	25 November 2009
Long Mountain	parts of east and central Wales	4 November 2009	3 December 2009
Winter Hill	Liverpool, Manchester, Lancashire, Cheshire and north Staffordshire	4 November 2009	2 December 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.

*The Long Mountain transmitter will broadcast approximately 20 of the most popular Freeview channels.

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, or if they are registered blind or partially sighted. Also eligible are people who get (or could get) attendance or constant attendance allowance, mobility supplement, or disability living allowance. Most people will be asked to contribute £40 towards the help. The service is free for people who are eligible and also get pension credit, income support or income-based jobseeker's allowances.

Images and video clips are available to media free of charge from vismedia.co.uk

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