

27 October 2009

Press release

digitaluk

SEVEN MILLION VIEWERS TO LOSE ANALOGUE TV

Biggest overnight change to TV in UK history

More than seven million TV viewers will say goodbye to the analogue era next week, as the digital switchover reaches the north west of England.

One year after the switchover programme formally kicked off in Scottish Borders, around four million viewers have completed the process and no longer receive analogue TV signals.

But that figure will almost double as switchover reaches the urban conurbations of the north west, an area including five cities, five counties and 7.2 million viewers – ten times as many as any switchover region completed so far.

Switchover will begin in the north west (the Granada TV region) shortly after midnight on 4 November, when analogue BBC Two is turned off at the Winter Hill transmitter near Bolton and all 70 of its local transmitters.

Four weeks later, on 2 December, the remaining analogue channels BBC One, ITV1, Channel 4 and Five will also be permanently switched off, and Freeview signals boosted to make the option of digital TV through an aerial available to virtually all homes in the region. Almost half a million north-west viewers will gain Freeview coverage through the process.

The region is well prepared, with new research from Digital UK showing 99% of north-west adults are aware of switchover. Of those yet to convert to digital, many will be waiting for the Freeview signal to become available in their area.

David Scott, Chief Executive of Digital UK, said:

“Never before in this country has a change in television affected so many people in one night as the digital switchover in the north west.

“We believe the region is well prepared, but some people will need a bit of extra help – which we’re determined to provide.”

Digital UK’s two-year information campaign in the north west has included booklets sent to every household, roadshows, advertising across all media and messages on analogue TV channels. Over thirty advice points will offer face-to-face support across the region during switchover itself.

The night before switchover begins, BBC One *Strictly Come Dancing* star Tess Daly will mark the occasion by unveiling a spectacular TV-themed light-and-sound show, projected onto the exterior of Manchester’s iconic Urbis building.¹

- ends; notes follow -

1. Media invite to this event available on request.

Notes to editors

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

Follow us on Twitter for live updates on switchover: twitter.com/Digit_AI

Contacts

Farimah Saadat
020 7544 3126
farimah.saadat@fishburn-hedges.co.uk

Chris Cain
020 7462 5442
chris.cain@digitaluk.co.uk

digitaluk.co.uk / **press**