

FINAL COUNTDOWN TO TV SWITCHOVER

Torbay and south Devon prepare for the end of analogue signals

TV viewers in Torbay and south Devon are getting ready for England's first full-scale digital TV switchover starting on Wednesday, 8 April 2009.

With just days to go until the first analogue channel is permanently switched off in the West Country, Digital UK, the independent body in charge of the process, is launching the final stage of its information campaign for the 84,000 households served by the Beacon Hill transmitter group.

Over the coming weeks, quarter-screen warning captions on all analogue channels will increase in frequency. There will be regular reminders in local media and the switchover roadshow will be at two locations offering face-to-face advice and practical demonstrations of digital TV equipment:

- Wednesday, 8 April and Thursday, 9 April, 9am-5pm – Victoria Street, Paignton
- Wednesday, 22 April, 9am-5pm – Union Street, Torquay

Research¹ from October-December 08 indicates around 13 per cent of households in the West Country have yet to convert their main sets to digital TV. Many may be waiting for Freeview signals to become available in their area via local relay transmitters which are all being upgraded to broadcast digital TV. Currently, Freeview is only available to around 63 per cent of households in the West Country. This will be boosted to 96 per cent per cent when switchover is complete.

The research also indicates high levels of awareness about switchover and that around nine-out-of-ten homes now have digital TV.

Switchover will take place in two stages. The first starts shortly after midnight on **Wednesday, 8 April** when analogue BBC Two will be switched off and replaced with the BBC's full range of digital channels. Stage two will take place two weeks later on **Wednesday, 22 April**. The remaining analogue channels (BBC One, ITV1, Channel 4 and Five) will be replaced in digital form along with more public-service TV, radio and text services.

On switchover days, all terrestrial TV services will be off air during the night and are expected to be restored in most areas by morning. In some areas served by relay transmitters, services will be off air until around noon. At this point, Freeview, BT Vision and Top Up TV boxes will require retuning.

Digital UK is working with local charities and there will be four advice points on switchover days to give extra advice to those that need it. They will be open on Wednesday 8, Thursday 9, Wednesday 22 and Thursday 23 April from 11am-6pm. Locations as follows:

- Preston Baptist Church, Old Torquay Road, Paignton
- The Courtenay Centre, Kingsteignton Road, Newton Abbot
- The Mansion, Fore Street, Totnes
- Church of Our Lady of Lourdes and St Petroc, East Street, Ashburton

The Switchover Help Scheme will continue to offer equipment and advice to eligible households.

Bill Taylor, Digital UK's Regional Manager in the South West, said: "Torbay and south Devon is well prepared for switchover and many viewers are looking forward to getting digital TV for the first time.

"While the process will be straightforward for most people, we know that some viewers may need a bit of extra help so we will be working with all our partner organisations to offer support for those who need it throughout the switchover period. People can call us on 08456 50 50 50 or visit digitaluk.co.uk."

- ends; notes follow -

Notes to editors:

1. Digital UK/Ofcom switchover tracker, West Country transmitter area, October-Dec 08.
 - **Freeview channels** After switchover, virtually all UK households will receive the most-watched Freeview channels and text services. These will include the public service channels BBC One, BBC Two, ITV1, Channel 4 and Five, plus associated digital channels such as ITV2, E4 and BBC Three. Viewers who receive their television signal from a main transmitter will receive more than 40 channels, including optional subscription services. Those who receive their television from a relay transmitter will receive around 20 channels. Viewers can use the postcode checker at digitaluk.co.uk to check which channels are available in their area.
 - **Torbay and South Devon will be England's first full-scale switchover. A pilot switchover took place in Whitehaven, Cumbria in 2007, followed by the Scottish Borders in November 2008.**

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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