

8 August 2008

Press release

digitaluk

DATE SET FOR FIRST DIGITAL SWITCHOVER IN WALES

The date for the start of the switchover to digital television in Wales has been announced today by Digital UK, the independent body leading the process.

West Wales will be the first area to switch to digital, starting with the Kilvey Hill transmitter group, serving the Swansea area, on 12 August, 2009. This will be followed by the Preseli transmitter group, serving south-west Wales, and the Carmel transmitter group, serving parts of South and Central Wales, on 19 August and 26 August respectively.

The dates were revealed in a special event at the National Botanic Gardens in Llanarthne. Dates for other parts of the Wales will be announced in the coming months.

After switchover, around 20 of the most watched Freeview channels will be available via an aerial to virtually all households served by these transmitters for the first time; many households will receive approximately 40 channels¹.

Gwenllïan Carr, Digital UK's National Manager for Wales, said: 'Today is a real milestone in the programme for switchover in Wales. From 12 August 2009, thousands of viewers in the West Wales area will be able to enjoy digital television and radio free through their aerial. By 2010, Freeview channels will be available to more than 1.3 million Welsh homes.'

Latest research in Wales indicates that nine out of ten adults are now aware of digital switchover, and an overwhelming 94% of people in West Wales have already switched².

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 from 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, or on certain disability benefits. Those in the first areas to switch will be contacted from February 2009. Everyone eligible will be offered help and sent information packs in time for switchover in their area.

To continue watching TV via an aerial after switchover, viewers will need to convert their television using a digital box or upgrade to a fully digital model. Subscription and non-subscription digital TV services are also available via satellite, cable and broadband. A postcode checker on the Digital UK website (www.digitaluk.co.uk) can tell viewers which options are available in their area now and after switchover. The Digital UK helpline can also be contacted on 08456 50 50 50. A Welsh language helpline is available on 08458 48 48 48.

- ends; notes follow -

Notes to editors

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 (plus S4C in Wales) 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 approximately 40 digital 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 www.digitaluk.co.uk to check which channels are available in their area.

How switchover will happen:

- Six months before the switchover of a transmitter group, 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.
- At the start of switchover, 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.

Transmitter group	Area served	Stage 1	Stage 2
Kilvey Hill	The Swansea area	August 12, 2009	September 9, 2009
Preseli	South-west Wales	August 19, 2009	September 16, 2009
Carmel	Parts of south and central Wales	August 26, 2009	September 23, 2009

² Digital UK / Ofcom Tracker Survey (to June 2008)

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 implement 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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