

4 November 2009

Press release

digitaluk

LONG MOUNTAIN SWITCHOVER UNDERWAY

Freeview digital TV channels available for the first time today

Digital television switchover is underway in parts of east and central Wales, bringing Freeview coverage to 24,000 households for the first time.

Shortly after midnight, all TV services were temporarily switched off at the Long Mountain transmitter group. Analogue BBC Two was switched off permanently.

A new digital signal is being made available from Long Mountain and its relays, broadcasting the full range of BBC channels in digital form. Over 24,000 homes in areas such as Llandinam and Llanidloes can receive digital TV through their aerial (Freeview) for the first time today.

Terrestrial TV services will be off air for some viewers until the first stage of switchover is completed by around mid-day today. Once services are back on air, viewers switching to Freeview, BT Vision and Top Up TV should set up their equipment.

The second stage of switchover takes place on 3 December, when the remaining analogue channels will be switched off permanently. On this date, further Freeview channels from ITV, S4C, Channel 4 and Five will also become available for the first time. Virtually all households in the area will then be able to receive a Freeview signal.

Emyr Hughes, Digital UK's National Manager for Wales, said this morning: "The switchover is underway, and many people are receiving Freeview channels for the first time.

"We're now encouraging viewers who still don't have the necessary equipment to get ready in time for 3 December, when all the analogue channels will be permanently switched off. Anyone who needs advice during this period should contact Digital UK."

Digital UK, the body leading switchover, continues to provide support through local advice points (see notes), as well as its website (digitaluk.co.uk) and helpline (08456 50 50 50). A switchover roadshow is also running today and tomorrow in Newtown on the High Street outside Boots.

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 408 7654.

- ends; notes follow -

Notes to editors

- **Channel swaps** From today, due to a change in broadcast frequencies, some viewers may find that one of their analogue channels moves to a different button on the remote control. All the analogue channels will be switched off permanently at stage two.

Advice points

Switchover advice points are running at the following locations today (4 November) and tomorrow (5 November), and again on 3 - 4 December, from 10am to 4pm:

Llanidloes: Minerva Arts Centre, High Street, Llanidloes, Powys, SY16 3LX

Newtown: Age Concern Montgomery, 11/12 Market Street, Newtown, Powys, SY16 3LX

Welshpool: Judge's Retirement Room, Town Hall 40-47 High Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7RR

Digital TV switchover is the process of converting the UK's terrestrial television system to digital. Between now and 2012, analogue channels are being 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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