

SKRIAIG SWITCHOVER UNDERWAY

Freeview becomes available for first time

Freeview becomes available for the first time today to viewers in Skye, Harris, North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist and parts of Barra, as the digital switchover gets underway.

Shortly after midnight, analogue BBC Two was turned off permanently at the Skriaig transmitter and engineers started work switching on digital signals at Skriaig and its seventeen relay transmitters. More than 8,000 households in the area will be able to receive Freeview for the first time today.

The second and final stage of switchover takes place on **28 July** when the remaining analogue channels will be switched off permanently. On this date, further Freeview channels from STV, ITV, Channel 4 and Five will also become available from relay transmitters for the first time.

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. For those who have already signed up, the Help Scheme call centre is available to help with any problems and can be contacted on 0800 408 7654.

John MacNeil, Digital UK Assistant National Manager for Scotland, said this morning: "The Skriaig switchover is underway, and many people are receiving Freeview channels for the first time.

"We're now encouraging any viewers who still don't have the necessary equipment to get ready in time for 28 July, when all the analogue channels will be permanently switched off. Anyone who needs advice during this period should contact Digital UK or sign up for the Help Scheme if they are eligible."

Digital UK, the body leading switchover, continues to provide support through local advice points, as well as its website and advice line. A switchover roadshow is also running today and tomorrow in Kyle of Lochalsh.

- digitaluk.co.uk/stvnorthadvicepoints
- **08456 50 50 50**

- ends; notes follow -

Notes to editors

The Switchover Help Scheme: People aged 75 and over, eligible for certain disability benefits, registered blind or partially sighted or living in care homes are entitled to practical help from the BBC-run Switchover Help Scheme. For £40, they will be given equipment to switch one TV per household to digital. They will be able to have that equipment installed if they want it, a demonstration of how it works and a number to call while they get used to things. If they're eligible and also on income-related benefits, the help will be free. Everyone eligible will be contacted directly before switchover. More information is available on 0800 408 7654 and at helpscheme.co.uk.

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 virtually 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 and S4C), 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. More information is available from helpscheme.co.uk.

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

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