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Press release



REPORT REVEALS LESSONS FOR UK SWITCHOVER

A report on the UK's first digital television switchover is published today, highlighting lessons to be applied across the rest of the country as analogue signals are turned off over the next four years.

The report from Digital UK, the independent body established to co-ordinate switchover, is based on research into the experiences of 25,000 households in Copeland, Cumbria, including the town of Whitehaven. In a two-stage switchover during October and November 2007, four analogue television channels were replaced with approximately 20 Freeview channels.

The timing of Copeland's switchover was brought forward to test plans for the nationwide programme to upgrade the UK's terrestrial television network to digital. The next switchover will be for viewers served by the Selkirk transmitter group in the Border TV region, which will go fully digital from November 6 this year. It will be followed by 14 switchovers affecting 4.6 million households during 2009, with the rest of the UK switching to digital TV by the end of 2012.

The report includes the following findings:

- **Viewers were well prepared.** Everyone was aware of the switch, and **95%** understood what to do in order to be ready. Virtually all households had converted their television by the completion of switchover on November 14.
- **Most found it straightforward.** **81%** had no problems with their digital television equipment and **50%** found installing equipment easier than they thought.
- **Some needed extra help.** Approximately 10% of households took up the Switchover Help Scheme. Digital UK estimates 5% rang its help line or visited one of its locally run help centres. A further 5% of households sought help or advice from retail outlets.
- **Some aerials needed replacing.** Digital UK estimates that up to **5%** of homes needed a new roof-top aerial and that up to **30%** of set-top aerials needed changing.

The report also highlights areas that will be reviewed by Digital UK for future switchovers.

- **The two-stage switchover** and 'transition period'. Analogue BBC Two was turned off first on October 17 and remaining analogue channels removed on November 14, following a four-week transition period. There were mixed views on the merits of the two-stage process and transition period during which viewers had to toggle between analogue and digital to access all the channels available. Digital UK is reviewing the role and duration of transition periods.
- **Explanation of the channel line-up.** Some viewers were disappointed that the Copeland area received around 20 Freeview channels after switchover. Most UK households will receive closer to 40 channels*. Digital UK will ensure its future communications materials make clear the variation in channel line-up. It is also discussing with Freeview and manufacturers further steps to ensure consumers are aware of variations in the digital terrestrial channel line-up.

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-Copeland report/2-

- **Consultation between landlords and tenants.** One housing association applied a service charge increase of £24 per annum for a new communal television system. Some residents felt they had not been sufficiently consulted. Digital UK is developing a model for consultation for use by landlords.
- **Explaining the value of the Help Scheme.** Those eligible for the Switchover Help Scheme are required to pay £40 towards the cost of the equipment and assistance provided, unless the recipient is on income-related benefits in which case it is free. There was some initial misunderstanding of who had to pay and of the value of this help. The Help Scheme and Digital UK will ensure the terms of the scheme and what it provides are made as clear as possible in future communications.

David Scott, Chief Executive of Digital UK, said: "This first switchover showed that the approach to informing and supporting the public through switchover was effective. People knew what was happening and where to turn for help when they needed it. I'm enormously grateful to everyone in the local community who helped ensure the switch went smoothly.

"We'll now take on board what we've learned and refine our approach as the switchover programme gathers pace across the country over the next few years. This is a momentous change for UK broadcasting, but one we will make as simple and straightforward as possible for viewers."

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Notes

A copy of the report can be downloaded from www.digitaluk.co.uk/press

*After switchover, most UK households (approx 90%) will be able to receive their television signal from a main transmitter, which will broadcast more than 40 digital channels. These will include Freeview channels plus optional subscription services such as Top Up TV and Setanta Sport. One-in-ten households get their television signal from local relay transmitters, which will broadcast 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.

Research for the report was carried out for Digital UK by GfK/NOP and Blinc.

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 at the request of the Government to offer help to an estimated 7 million households in making the switch to digital television. Every eligible person will be offered practical help to convert one of their TV sets to digital in the run-up to switchover in their television region.

Digital UK press office website – www.digitaluk.co.uk/press
Images and video clips - www.vismedia.co.uk

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