

SWITCHOVER TAKES OFF IN WEST COUNTRY

Exactly one year to go before analogue TV signals are switched to digital

The switchover to digital television in the West Country will start on **Wednesday April 8 2009** it has been announced today by Digital UK, the independent organisation leading the process.

The **Beacon Hill** transmitter group serving south Devon, including Torbay, will be the first to switch from an analogue signal on this date. The **Stockland Hill** transmitter group serving south west Somerset, west Dorset and south east Devon, including Exeter, will switch to digital on **Wednesday May 6 2009**.

Digital UK Regional Manager Bill Taylor and campaign mascot Digit AI launched the official 'one year countdown' at Exeter International Airport.

During 2009, five TV transmitters in the West Country will switch to fully digital signals, making Freeview channels available across the region for the first time - nearly a million households will be now receive digital services via their aerial. The three remaining transmitter groups (below) will switch between July and September 2009 – the specific dates will be announced later this year:

Huntshaw Cross:	Serving north Devon
Redruth:	Serving west Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly
Caradon Hill:	Serving east Cornwall and Devon including Plymouth

Information leaflets explaining switchover and the options available for going digital are being delivered now to every home in the West Country TV region.

Bill Taylor, Regional Manager for Digital UK in the South West, said: "Today is a real milestone in the programme for switchover in the West Country. Exactly one year from now, the first transmitter will change from an analogue signal to a digital one. Every household across the region will need to ensure that every television is set up to receive a digital signal. It is a good time to start preparing with only 12 months to go now – check to see what services you can expect to receive now and after switchover by calling the Digital UK helpline or visit our website."

Latest statistics from Digital UK and Ofcom (Tracker Survey Q4 07) show that 96% are aware of switchover taking place in the West Country and 86% know what they need to do. More than eight in ten households have converted one television set and over half have converted all televisions in their household.

Anne Linington from Age Concern Torbay said: "Our biggest concern is reaching elderly and vulnerable people during this process and making sure that they understand what needs to be done ahead of switchover. We will be working hard on helping Digital UK communicate the message wherever possible and providing elderly people with the right advice and help where it is needed most. For some, it will be complex and maybe more difficult to switch and so we need to support these viewers over the next year."

Research from Ofcom shows that most aerials will continue to work after switchover and only 5-10% of households will need an aerial upgrade – people can check the strength of their existing aerial by visiting Teletext page 284. The average cost to repair or replace a standard aerial will vary from £80 to £150. Digital UK recommends that if residents need work done on their aerial ahead of switchover, they use contractors who are RDI and display the digital tick logo – it means they are approved and security-checked with the relevant qualifications and insurance.

Dave Maynard is an Exeter-based Registered Digital Installer and assesses other aerial installers at Exeter College, enabling them to become RDI qualified. Over 100 have already been trained since the course started in May 2007.

He said: “Customers should expect high standards from an aerial installer and my advice is always to use a contractor who is a member of a registered trade body because they can then be guaranteed that the person has proved their competence and passed a criminal record check. Through RDI, people can be assured they will have good quality materials and workmanship used.”

Viewers can check whether they are able to receive a digital signal already by visiting Digital UK's website www.digitaluk.co.uk and entering their postcode. This gives details of what services you can receive before, during and after switchover. The Digital UK helpline can also be contacted on 08456 50 50 50.

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Notes to editors

Private aircraft kindly supplied by Capital Aviation at Exeter Airport

Digital UK/Ofcom Switchover Tracker Survey

Digital UK publishes quarterly results of joint research carried out with Ofcom measuring switchover awareness and other key indicators. Figures quoted are from the survey carried out between 1 October and 21 December 2007. Sample size was 2,830 adults.

Digital UK is the independent body implementing the UK's switch to digital television. The company communicates switchover to the public; manages the upgrade of 1,154 transmitters for digital; and works with industry to ensure understanding and support for switchover. Digital UK was set up by the public-service broadcasters, and offers independent switchover advice to the public through its helpline (08456 50 50 50) and website (digitaluk.co.uk).

Switchover will create a fairer situation in which everyone has access to a choice of affordable digital TV services. Between 2008 and 2012, all TV services in the UK will go completely digital, region by region. The UK's old analogue television signal is being switched off and replaced with a digital signal, a process that will also allow the UK to remain a world leader in broadcasting.

The Digital Switchover Help Scheme is run by the BBC on behalf of the Government to help eligible people make the change to digital on one of their TV sets. 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 jobseekers allowance.

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