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Press release



SCOTTISH BORDERS WAKES TO DIGITAL DAWN

UK's first full-scale TV switchover nears completion

The final stage of digital TV switchover in the Scottish Borders is on course to complete today, extending digital terrestrial television (Freeview) coverage to all households served by the Selkirk transmitter group.

All terrestrial TV signals were turned off shortly after midnight and a team of 20 engineers worked through the night on the UK's first full conversion of a transmitter group to all-digital TV services. Analogue services will remain switched off permanently, allowing Freeview channels to be broadcast from 11 local relay transmitters serving areas such as Peebles, Eyemouth and Hawick for the first time.

Switchover was completed at the Selkirk main transmitter at 3am and the new line up of digital channels is expected to be available from all local relays by around 4pm (see notes). When the transition is complete, Freeview, BT Vision and Top Up TV equipment should be retuned in order to receive all the channels available.

Prior to switchover, only about half of households - those receiving their signal from the Selkirk main transmitter - were able to get Freeview services. Those relying on local relay transmitters could only watch analogue channels (BBC One and Two, ITV1 and Channel 4) via an aerial.

Switching off the analogue signal makes it possible to double the level of Freeview coverage to reach 98 per cent of households. Viewers receiving their signal from relay transmitters will see the number of channels available free via an aerial increase from four to around 20 (see notes).

Digital TVs or analogue sets converted with a digital box will be able to receive BBC One, BBC Two, ITV1, Channel 4 and Five, plus additional digital channels such as BBC Three, BBC Four, BBC News, ITV2, ITV3, E4, More 4 and digital text services.

John Askew, Regional Manager for Digital UK, the body charged with leading the implementation of switchover, said: "I'm pleased to report that the technical transition has gone smoothly and from today many more viewers will be able to receive digital TV free via an aerial. The success of this first full-scale switchover is a tribute to the years of preparation by all those involved and to the people of the Borders who are leading the way for the rest of the UK."

Digital UK is working closely with the Switchover Help Scheme and will be providing support through local Advice Points (see notes), its website (digitaluk.co.uk) and helpline (08456 50 50 50). A switchover roadshow is also running today in Hawick.

- ends; notes follow -

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 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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