

COUNTDOWN BEGINS TO END OF ANALOGUE ERA

TV switchover begins for thousands of viewers on 7 September 2011

The dates for digital TV switchover in much of the West Midlands are being announced today, setting out the timetable for the biggest change to broadcasting for a generation.

Switchover at the Sutton Coldfield transmitter group will see the five analogue TV channels switched off permanently and the Freeview digital service boosted to reach virtually all households in the region. Thousands of homes previously in digital blackspots will be able to receive Freeview channels for the first time.¹

Digital UK and the Switchover Help Scheme have launched a public information campaign to ensure viewers are ready for the change. The campaign includes roadshows, advertising and an information pack sent to every home. The Help Scheme packs - which will land on the doormats of older and disabled people any day now – include info on how to apply, all the available options including equipment, installation if needed, aftercare and prices.²

Analogue signals will be switched off in two stages at each transmitter group.³ The dates for switchover in the Midlands are:

Transmitter group	Area	Stage one (BBCTwo analogue off)	Stage two (all analogue channels off)
Sutton Coldfield	Much of the West Midlands	7 September 2011	21 September 2011
Fenton	Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme	7 September 2011	21 September 2011
Oxford	Oxfordshire, parts of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire	14 September 2011	28 September 2011
Waltham	Much of the East Midlands	17 August 2011	31 August 2011

Peter Monteith, Digital UK's Regional Manager in Central, said: "Today's announcement paves the way for a new era in broadcasting for viewers in the West Midlands. We are preparing for the end of the analogue TV era and the dawn of a fully digital age in which everyone can enjoy extra choice and easier recording. Digital UK and the Switchover Help Scheme will ensure people know about this important change, and that advice and practical support are available."

Digital has also launched a Facebook page for switchover in the Central region where people can get updates on the process, at tinyurl.com/2whjsl7.

- ends; notes follow -

Notes to editors

Get set for switchover with Digital UK's Top Five Tips:

1. Visit the switchover postcode checker at digitaluk.co.uk to find out when your area switches or ring the advice line on **08456 50 50 50**.
2. Remember the Switchover Help Scheme will offer equipment and practical support to older and disabled viewers. It will write to eligible viewers in the run-up to switchover. Call 0800 40 85 900 or visit helpscheme.co.uk for more details.
3. Don't throw out your old TV - almost all sets can be converted with a digital box.
4. Check out the different ways of getting digital TV, including subscription-free options. Digital UK's postcode checker provides details of digital services available in your area.
5. If you have Freeview, check you know how to retune your TV or box – you'll need to do it at both stages of switchover. For more information visit digitaluk.co.uk/retuning.

1. **Extending digital coverage:** Turning off analogue TV signals will allow digital terrestrial TV (Freeview) coverage to be boosted to reach virtually all homes. At the completion of switchover, Freeview services are predicted to be available to 98.5 per cent of UK households.
2. **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 40 85 900 and online at helpscheme.co.uk.
3. **How switchover happens:** Analogue services will be switched off in two stages at each transmitter group. At stage one, analogue BBC Two is switched off and the first group of Freeview digital channels will become available from relay transmitters for the first time. At stage two the remaining analogue channels will be permanently switched off and replaced with additional digital TV, radio and text services. Previous date announcements in the Midlands:-

Area	Transmitter group	Stage one (BBC Two analogue off)	Stage two (All analogue channels off)
The Bromsgrove area	Bromsgrove	6 April 2011	20 April 2011
The Stratford on Avon area	Lark Stoke	6 April 2011	20 April 2011
Herefordshire, south Shropshire and parts of Gloucestershire	Ridge Hill	6 April 2011	20 April 2011
North Shropshire and south Cheshire	Wrekin	6 April 2011	20 April 2011

Digital TV 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 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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