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Press release

digitaluk

SOUTHAMPTON CELEBRATES SWITCHOVER COUNTDOWN

Information campaign launches; 42,000 TVs must be converted

Residents of Southampton's 'Switchover Street' will gather today to celebrate the official countdown to the digital TV switchover.

Friends, neighbours and members of community groups from Peartree in Itchen will be joined by staff from Digital UK and the Switchover Help Scheme as a region-wide public information campaign gets underway, with Digital UK's personal postman arriving to hand-deliver the first information to residents.

Digital UK roadshow staff will be on hand to answer questions from residents about the switchover process, as part of a special street party on Peartree Green attended by the whole community along with Digit AI, the friendly robot face of switchover.

Analogue television from the Rowridge transmitter group, which serves Southampton, will start being switched off on 7 March next year.

One in five televisions in Southampton – around 42,000 sets – still receive only analogue channels.¹ Each one will need to be converted with a digital box in time for switchover, or else it will go black.

Digital UK and the Switchover Help Scheme will support viewers over the coming months as they prepare for the biggest change to TV for a generation. The information campaign will comprise:

- **On-screen messages:** viewers will soon start seeing special messages covering part of their screens. They will increase in size and frequency as the switchover gets closer.
- **The Switchover Help Scheme** is writing to older and disabled people offering them practical help to switch one TV to digital, including equipment, installation and aftercare.
- **Advertising:** there will be extensive local advertising on TV, radio and in local newspapers.
- **Roadshows:** the switchover roadshow will tour the region stopping at dozens of locations, offering face-to-face advice and practical demonstrations of digital TV equipment.
- **Guide to switchover:** a few months before switchover, all households will be sent a detailed guide, including advice on retuning Freeview equipment.
- **Charities** will be working with Digital UK and the Help Scheme to offer extra information and support to viewers who need it.

Bill Taylor, Digital UK Regional Manager, said: "We're delighted to join residents of Peartree to celebrate this important milestone in the countdown to digital switchover. We'll be doing everything we can in the coming months to ensure people know about the change, and that advice and practical support are available for everyone."

Caroline Byng, Switchover Help Scheme Manager, added: "The thought of losing your TV signal may concern many older or disabled people. But there's no need to worry because help is available. All you need to do is look out for your information pack dropping through your door in the coming weeks and, once you receive it, either give us a call or return your completed form and we'll do the rest."

People are eligible for the Help Scheme if they are:

- Aged 75 or over, or
- Have lived in a care home for six months or more, or
- Get (or could get) certain disability benefits, or
- Are registered blind or partially sighted

Most people will be asked to pay £40 towards the standard option of help. This includes:

- Easy to use equipment to convert one set
- An approved installer to supply and install the necessary equipment, and
- A 12-month aftercare service including a free helpline

The service is free for people who are eligible and who also receive pension credit income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance or income-related employment and support allowance.

For information about digital switchover, call 08456 50 50 50 or visit digitaluk.co.uk. To apply for help from the Switchover Help Scheme, or to find out if you are eligible for help, call the free helpline number on 0800 40 87 654. Textphone users can call 0800 40 85 936.

- end; notes follow -

1. **Source:** Digital UK switchover tracker.
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 offered 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. **Channel availability:** Before switchover, Freeview channels are available from main transmitter sites only, offering viewers with digital TVs or set top boxes a line-up of more than 40 channels. Switchover will see more than 1,000 local relay transmitters upgraded to digital. After switchover, relay transmitters will broadcast around 15 Freeview TV channels, including BBC One, BBC Two, ITV1, Channel 4 and Channel 5 plus associated services such as ITV2 and BBC Three. Viewers can use the postcode checker at digitaluk.co.uk to check channel availability in their area.

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.

Follow us on Twitter for live updates on switchover: twitter.com/DigitalUK

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