

House of Lords Select Committee on Communications  
- additional evidence from Digital UK  
16 February 2010

The Committee would welcome further evidence from Digital UK on:

1. What work Digital UK is doing to resolve the issue of regional overlap – we heard from you that this is a fiddly problem but solvable. In this morning’s evidence session with consumer groups, we heard that someone in the Granada region has switched over to a Sky package due to ongoing problems with having to frequently retune in order to stop receiving transmissions from Wales.

Terrestrial TV signals, whether analogue or digital, have always overlapped in parts of the UK, and it’s normal for people in some areas to be able to receive more than one regional service. Where this occurs with Freeview, TV equipment will usually load more than one version of a channel and some viewers may find that their preferred services appear further down the channel list.

Regional overlaps are generally solvable. Freeview viewers can use the ‘favourites’ facility on their remote control to prioritise preferred regional services or manually retune their equipment to bring their preferred channels to the top of their electronic programme guide. Digital UK provides detailed advice on retuning on 08456 505050 and online at [digitaluk.co.uk/retuning](http://digitaluk.co.uk/retuning).

Whilst a manual retune can resolve the problem, some viewers do not find that process particularly easy, as it requires them to identify and input the relevant frequency numbers. The positive is that it can be done in a few minutes.

Inevitably, some viewers would like more channels and prefer alternative technologies. Satellite and, where available, cable provide equally valid alternatives to terrestrial TV signals (Freeview) and Digital UK is committed to platform neutrality. Freesat from Sky and from the BBC and ITV offer subscription-free alternatives and hundreds of channels. The consumer, not Digital UK, chooses the right platform for him or herself.

2. Evaluation of Granada Switchover – has DUK conducted an evaluation yet? What are the findings? If not when will an evaluation be conducted?

Digital UK undertakes an evaluation of all transmitter switchover projects three months after they conclude. This includes an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the public information campaign and independent qualitative and quantitative research into the consumer experience. The Granada report will be available in April 2010.

3. Paragraph 25 of the following paper highlights areas under review by Digital UK: <http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/DSO%20Background%20Paper%20March%2009.pdf>. What is the progress on these areas under review?

Digital UK published a report on the switchover of the Whitehaven transmitter in April 2008 in which this paragraph occurred. (It has been followed by a report on the Selkirk transmitter group in the Border TV region in February 2009 and will in due course be followed by a report on the Granada switchover.) To take the Whitehaven points referred to in Para 25 above:

- *The two stage switchover and transition period.* Digital UK has undertaken an extensive research and consultation process which terminates shortly. The recommendation – shortly to be considered by the Digital UK Board - is to continue with a two stage process in the interests of the small but potentially vulnerable minority of viewers who leave preparations for switchover until the last moment.
- *Explanation of channel line-up.* Digital UK has elevated public information concerning Freeview channel line-ups (approximately 15 channels from the relay transmitters, covering less than 10% of the population as against approximately 40 channels from the main transmitters covering 90% of the population) in all its publicity and information. Criticism of the binary variation in channel line-ups on the Freeview platform has abated although not disappeared entirely. Viewers of relay transmitters who want more than 15 channels have a choice of Freesat, subscription satellite and cable services.
- *Consultation between landlords and tenants.* Digital UK emphasises the importance of thorough consultation of tenants by landlords prior to the upgrading of or installation of new television reception systems in rented properties and social housing. The overwhelming majority of landlords are preparing for switchover in good time and consulting their tenants appropriately.
- *Explaining the value of the Help Scheme.* The Help Scheme is responsible for informing eligible consumers and the wider public of the benefits of the Help Scheme. Digital UK supports the Help Scheme by conducting its advertising, and is working with the Scheme to ensure that the benefits of the Scheme are articulated clearly, compellingly and consistently across all above the line and below the line communications. Digital UK notes that public understanding of the Help Scheme has improved since April 2008.

4. We heard from the consumer panel this morning that DUK are very good at modifying the communications campaign in light of the Consumer Expert Group feedback – what changes have been made?

Digital UK has consulted with the CEG on its communications plans from the beginning and took on board the advice given from the group. The CEG plays a valuable role as a critical friend of Digital UK and the Switchover Help Scheme.

The Group commented extensively on research results and draft campaign materials to help ensure that the communications were clear and accessible, and that alternative formats were available where appropriate. Representatives from the CEG also attended specific working groups on housing, consumer protection and communications and advised at an early stage on the development of materials for charities and the voluntary sector. The Group encouraged Digital UK's pioneering collaboration with the charity and voluntary sector through Digital Outreach Ltd.

5. A further explanation of what Digital Outreach does and whether any work is being done to improve the links between the Help Scheme and Digital Outreach.

This point is mainly directed towards the Help Scheme, which will doubtless provide its own response. For the record, and as the originator of the relationship with Digital Outreach and the Third Sector, Digital UK offers the following summary of the objectives and services provided to it by Digital Outreach.

Digital Outreach Ltd is a not for profit company specially created by Age UK and Community Service Volunteers to raise awareness and understanding of digital TV switchover and the Help Scheme for eligible individuals amongst potentially vulnerable consumers and citizens. Digital UK and Eaga PLC for the Switchover Help Scheme have complementary contracts with Digital Outreach.

Digital Outreach manages:

1. National, regional and local community outreach
2. Information mailings to local charity and voluntary and community sector networks.
3. Training for local charity and voluntary sector staff and volunteers
4. A rolling programme of presentations, meetings and one-to-one activities advice
5. The allocation of a small grants programme funded by Digital UK for local charities and community organisations to facilitate switchover-related activities and events.
6. Switchover Advice Points and related activities at the time of switchover