

# **Memorandum of Evidence from Channel 5 Broadcasting Ltd (Five) to the House of Lords Select Committee on Communications Inquiry into Digital Switchover**

Five welcomes the opportunity to present this brief memorandum on the progress of digital switchover. Our remarks are limited to the current programme of switching off the analogue television signal. We have no commercial interests in radio in the UK, so do not address the other part of the Committee's enquiry.

Five has been engaged in the process of digital switchover from its beginnings. We are on the Board of Digital UK, and play a full role in its activities. We also have a number of specific licence obligations to provide information to viewers about the switchover process, which we fulfil.

We believe the switchover process is proceeding successfully and is on target to be completed by the end of 2012 as planned. Our perception is that Digital UK, Arqiva and the Digital Help Scheme are managing the process in a professional and organised fashion, and as a result disruption to viewers is being kept to a minimum.

The switchover process has been helped immeasurably by the voluntary take-up of digital television by consumers. Around 90% of households have already "gone digital" and Ofcom figures suggest up to 70% of secondary (bedroom, kitchen, etc) sets are also digital. This voluntary acquisition of digital television has made Digital UK's task considerably easier, as the number of households that need to convert sets at the point of switchover is much smaller than it might have been.

Five contributed directly to the take-up of digital television when we launched two new channels, Fiver and Five USA, in autumn 2006. Both channels comprise a mixture of programming originally shown on Five and programming unique to each of them. By extending the range of channels available to viewers, Fiver and Five USA made digital television even more attractive to viewers.

The biggest challenge faced by Five was the move of our main channel from DTT Multiplex A to Multiplex 2 at the end of September last year. This move was necessary to ensure Five would be on a PSB multiplex and hence available at the point of switchover to the same number of households as the other main public service channels, BBC One, BBC Two, ITV1 and Channel 4. The move was timed to reorganise the DTT platform ahead of Granada switchover and the launch of High Definition (HD) services on DTT, and coincided with multiplex moves by other channels.

The move required all DTT receivers to be retuned so they could receive the new channel line-up. Thanks to a co-ordinated effort by Digital UK, Freeview and the broadcasters, there was a major advertising and on-screen campaign which resulted in 96% of all DTT homes having retuned within three weeks of the change taking place.

Five will continue to play a full role in the digital switchover process and looks forward to a successful completion of the programme.

*Channel 5 Broadcasting Ltd*

*February 2010*