

1. How many people dependent on TV signal currently through local community owned repeater stations?

There are approximately 260 self help relays currently licensed by Ofcom. Not all of them are being used, but Ofcom estimates that up to 12,000 households may currently receive television through a self help relay.

2. Which areas/communities so covered?

Most are in rural areas in Scotland and Wales to help small communities overcome problems with reception caused from mountains etc. There is a list of licensed self helps, description of their location and an estimate of the populations they serve on pages 24/25 of this report: <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv/ifi/tech/selfhelp/guidance.pdf>

The list is based on the schemes that still hold current licences. The population info is from the original planning notes, some of which go back many years, so can only be taken as indicative.

3. What is the alternative(s) to a communal owned repeater station? (You mentioned a satellite option)

Freesat is a new satellite service from the public service broadcasters BBC & ITV. Its marketing itself as "free digital TV for everyone" although requires a one-off payment for a box and dish. Box prices will start from £49, with a high definition box available from £120, plus installation costs from around £80. (Installation includes the satellite dish). There is no subscription or contract. It was launched on May 6 and demand is expected to be high. More details here: <http://freesat.co.uk/>

Sky already offers a similar service.

4. What is the timescale for the Argyll and Bute switchover?

STV North and STV Central start to switch in 2010, finishing 2011. DUK will clarify firm dates around 8-9 months in advance.

5. Who should people contact in Digital UK and OFCOM Scotland for more info?

General switchover enquiries should go to DUK. Ofcom only deal with detailed queries about conversion of self-help transmitters most of which will be answered in the guidance note listed below, but if not its Peter Madry:

Peter Madry
Senior Associate
Broadcast Technical Policy
020 7783 4325
Peter.Madry@ofcom.org.uk

6. Web links to OFCOM and Digital UK?

<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/>

<http://www.digitaluk.co.uk/> (includes useful postcode checker on what to expect post-switchover)

I want to put some basic information up on my website with links to your site and Digital UK. Do you have a simple text on the issues I could put on my site for people to read and then decide to seek more from your sites?

<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv/ifi/tech/selfhelp/guidance.pdf> This guidance is the best document on the subject: "Self-help TV Relays and Digital Switchover". It explains what digital switchover is, what to consider if you wish to retain a relay, and also the other alternatives now available to receive television.