

I was chatting to a friend of mine from Germany the other day and apparently they already have done their digital switchover and can receive free HD. In the UK, most people I know (men mostly, because the talk was about gadgets), thought we'd get the free-view HD too, once analogue TV was switched off. It came as a surprise to me that anyone was contemplating not giving free access to HD in this country. Most of us would like to have the existing five channels, available as digital HD channels (BBC 1 & 2, ITV, Channel 4 & 5), or something similar. I think the extra BBC digital channels are very good, particularly News 24, but most people (such as my parents) don't want to channel hop. For them, a few good quality channels (that's the picture & sound as well as the content), are preferable to a lot of lesser quality channels. If you were to give us the choice of say HD TV for all, or TV on our mobiles for example, then the overwhelming majority would go for the HD. I go abroad quite often and British TV really is much better than most countries, especially when it comes to news and documentaries.

It would be a great shame to see us become the poor relation of Europe, because someone has quietly sold off the FreeView bandwidth, which should be there to give us all High Definition TV. The problem seems to me to be that someone (by the sound of it Ofcom) is suggesting that selling our TV bandwidth off to the highest bidder is in the public interest. I know to you this must sound like the view of one guy, or a "this bloke in the pub said", sort of view, but most of us do want good High Definition TV channels. However, we do not want the expense of getting Sky or Cable, where you have to pay hundreds of pounds to get channels like the "Free" BBC HD channel.