

In the past, the free-to-air broadcasting that so many UK viewers value has always been allowed to develop in line with technological advances like colour, widescreen and stereo sound – making these features universally available to all. HD television is the next such advance.

Without a sufficient allocation of spectrum for HD there is a risk that a viable Public Service Broadcasters (PSB) HD offering on digital terrestrial television DTT will not be possible for the next generation of consumers; this would result in a second class television service for millions of viewers who have already invested in both the digital terrestrial platform and 'HD Ready' TVs in time for digital switchover.

Universal access to DTT is a key part of the Government's plans for achieving full digital switchover by 2012. Every household in the UK is paying for the digital switchover by investing in digital TV and it is this consumer investment that will allow the spectrum to be freed. A DTT platform without HD will be less competitive against cable and satellite and risks undermining the platform - the most popular free-to-air option;

There is clear citizen value in universal free-to-air DTT. The 2006 Digital Terrestrial Trial of HD television, undertaken jointly by the PSBs, indicated an overwhelming demand for HD on DTT with 85% of respondents indicating that they believed the availability of HD on DTT was "very important";

HD is one of the biggest changes since the introduction of colour in the 1960s and is of major importance to the future of the DTT platform. 'HD Ready' televisions have been available for two years;

In July 2005 sales of 'HD Ready' sets overtook non-HD sets and nearly three million have been sold to date. These figures prove consumer demand has been strong and expectations are growing. Universal availability of HD programming must therefore be allowed to evolve in line with those expectations;

Since the launch of Freeview in 2002, DTT has proven itself as the platform of choice for millions of consumers throughout the UK. To date it is estimated that more than 9.3 million homes have invested in the platform;

The spectrum which Ofcom proposes to auction is the only available spectrum that can be used for HD. There are, however, additional spectrums available which could be used for other uses, such as mobile television and wireless broadband services.

High Definition (HD) television should be made available on all platforms, including free-to-air digital terrestrial television (DTT), commonly known as Freeview. I do not want to subscribe to satellite or cable; I enjoy the free to view service provided by DTT and want to be able to watch HD television via DTT. The British public should be allowed to view HD television without having to pay a subscription.

HD is the new global standard for television and such services are already available to subscribers via cable and satellite in the UK. The sales of HD televisions and the take up these HD services show that there is a demand for HD television in the UK and the DTT medium should provide as many HD channels as possible.

I urge Ofcom to ensure that, as an outcome of the Digital Dividend Review (DDR), sufficient spectrum is reserved for public service broadcasting in HD to ensure that the social value of universal digital terrestrial television is not lost and the public interest is protected.

I am asking for specific provision for HD services on DTT to preserve the social value of British television and prevent the creation of a second class television service for licence fee payers.

Paul Tulloch