

The recent news that the analogue spectrum of the UHF bands when vacated by the current TV broadcasters is to be auctioned would appear to me to be a totally irresponsible action by Ofcom and the Government.

I personally work in the retail and service sector of the TV industry. Obviously I am one of many dealing with the public at the sharp end of analogue switch off and the conversion to digital reception.

Generally I would say a large percentage of customers now seeking a new digital TV are somewhat confused. We as a retailer made the decision some time ago to sell only IDTV's. Every one of those sets is also sold as HD ready. Every customer in our shop will see HDTV demonstrated to them from some source or other, and without exception each one is more than impressed. Then without exception each one of those customers has to be told that they will not receive that performance from their new TV unless they subscribe to a pay TV operator.

The most popular of the demonstrations running in the shop is the BBC HD Trial channel; this will always lead the customer to assume they will be able to receive this via their aerial and Freeview. It has seemingly become one and the same in the public perception that digital reception, flat panel TV's and HDTV are one and the same. Now the conclusion that I have reached following the Ofcom announcement to auction the analogue spectrum to the highest bidder is this.

1. Ofcom and the government are totally out of touch with the public and trade organisations on this issue and their investigation into same are largely inaccurate.
2. Auctioning the available spectrum will undoubtedly lock the most popular digital free TV system in the UK into a standard definition only future. Thus playing into the hands of Mr Murdoch and Mr Branson.
3. The UK would then become the poor relative in the world of digital terrestrial TV after being so innovative in its development.
4. The Government seem hell bent on cashing in on yet one more situation which ultimately alienates the public.

The only obvious solution to this appears to be to ring fence a portion, if not all of the available UHF spectrum. This would then allow for a logical evolution of digital TV in the UK with the least amount of confusion to an already confused public. We in the trade already have many reception difficulties without compounding the situation by allowing other users to share the available bandwidth.

UHF bands 4 and 5 should remain purely for TV reception and the development of High Definition broadcasting should be given the highest of priority for a very speedy inception.