

Managing the effects of 700mhz clearance on DTT Viewers.

Response to call for input, from Bay TV Liverpool. 17th May 2016 (supplied after closure date as discussed with Helen Yu and Peter Madry).

Q 1

We appreciate that 700mhz clearance affects the whole of DTT, however Bay TV Liverpool is seriously concerned that no reference is made anywhere in the consultation to the effects that are likely to have a potentially marked impact on local tv viewers, some of whom are likely to lose their LDTPS signal alone, out of all the channels they currently receive. In the absence of any attention being paid to the special challenges facing local tv we cannot accept, at face value, the Ofcom assessment of the number of viewers that will need to retune. Tests need to be carried out to establish the likely impact in weak signal areas, since few re-point options are likely to be available to the majority of viewers who will lose signals in weak reception areas for LDTPS.

Q 2

The evidence we have from viewers with reception issues, during and after the launch of Bay TV Liverpool, was that the elderly and those on low incomes are the groups most likely to be affected by problems around re-tuning and equipment that is incapable of reliable reception of LDTPS signals.

Our experience shows that these groups are reluctant to commit to changing equipment, or purchasing signal amplifiers, especially when most TV channels on DTT are being received, despite the fact that they are unable to receive the LDTPS signal. They simply give up and say "It's a pity. I would like to receive local TV, but I am not changing my aerial/television for just one local station. A number of viewers who could receive the LDTPS signal, with a manual re-tune find the process unfathomable, even with the assistance of the D.UK helpline. We suggest that consideration should be given to establishing a 700mhz site visit support service, to carry out independent visits and to offer support in retuning and advice on the potential requirement for equipment change.

Q 3

We are concerned that the survey carried out on households in the Winter Hill transmission area appears to have omitted to address any issues specific to LDTPS. The Liverpool petal on the Winter Hill mast is likely to have issues which are specific to the LDTPS signal in marginal reception areas like Chester and potentially with re-pointing issues relating to the Storeton relay. This calls into question the validity of estimate of the number of households that will need to replace their aerials.

Q 4

No

Q 6

No

Q 7

No

Q 8

On the basis of demographic evidence from BARB data we consider that a significant number of LDTPS viewers may struggle to bear the cost of an aerial re-point or platform change.

Q 9

A help scheme should be funded by government. It should specifically include provisions to address issues faced by households in maintaining their access to LDTPS signals. This must include households that have received our signal, even though they may not have been predicted to receive it in the computer model of DPSA.

Q 10

A viewer information campaign needs to be tailored to include information and advice for viewers of Local TV, which may need to be quite specific to the topography and distribution/incidence of Group C/D aerials. The information campaign website(s) need to include information and advice that addresses issues that are specific to LDTPS.

Q 11

Costs of administering the help scheme are largely based around the experience gained from 800mhz clearance. However, 800mhz clearance, and digital switchover, both pre-dated LDTPS. Households which lose LDTPS signals are very unlikely to be able to resolve the loss of signal by re-pointing their aerials (most LDTPS on one mast alone). Therefore we suggest that there will be a higher incidence of the need to re-equip the households losing LDTPS in 700mhz clearance, and these costs need to be factored-in.

Q 12

No

Q 13

We believe that test transmissions will be of vital importance in identifying problems and addressing the maintenance of LDTPS reception, particularly since re-pointing is seldom likely to be available as a solution. We also believe that a trial of test transmissions, specifically designed to establish the effectiveness of checks on LDTPS signals, should be carried out.

Consideration should be given to establishing a triage team, or teams, trained to help viewers with problems in obtaining LDTPS signals because of 700mhz clearance. This LDTPS triage scheme would

embody information specific to local conditions, which is a service that previous triage schemes have not been required to address.

Chris Johnson CEO

Bay TV Liverpool/Bay TV Clwyd

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