

Arqiva's Response to Ofcom's consultation on proposed switchover-related changes to DTT licences

This part of the Arqiva response is not confidential. The response included in the annex attached is confidential and should not be summarised or otherwise disclosed.

About Arqiva

Arqiva has a 50-year history in transmission and has helped pioneer the technologies of the digital age. Formerly the broadcast division of ntl Group, Arqiva was purchased in 2005 by an international consortium led by Macquarie Communications Infrastructure Group.

Arqiva is responsible for the entire analogue transmission networks for ITV1, Channel 4 and five and played a leading role in the introduction of digital terrestrial television, for which we have built national networks carrying the Digital 3 & 4 and SDN multiplexes. The network for Digital 3 & 4, with its regional structure, is one of the most complex digital terrestrial TV networks in the world.

Arqiva has recently signed a contract with the BBC to plan, build and operate the networks for its two high-power post-DSO multiplexes and future DAB requirements and Arqiva is also the preferred supplier for the Digital 3 & 4 multiplex.

All of the above is underpinned by Arqiva's Spectrum Planning Group which has extensive experience of planning analogue and digital TV and radio networks and which also offers a coverage prediction service for Arqiva's radio communications customers.

Response to Consultation

Response to Questions 1 & 2

Given the commercial and political imperative of securing a smooth transition from analogue to digital, Arqiva agrees that it will be essential for Ofcom to secure clarity and certainty from the multiplex operators on progress towards achieving their switchover objectives and to maximise co-operation amongst those operators.

Response to Question 4

It is a sensible and proportionate proposal to require all reasonable endeavours on the part of the multiplex operators to communicate to consumers the need for re-scanning of DTT receivers at switchover, although arguably consumer support for digital TV, and hence the DSO process, would be boosted if consumers were reminded even pre-DSO of the desirability of re-scanning.

Additional Comments

Section 1, Response to 1.14 of Consultation

Arqiva does not object to the responsibility for holding WTA licences transferring from the Transmission Providers (of which Arqiva is one) to the Multiplex Operators. However Arqiva does not see that such a move would provide greater certainty of compliance with the frequency allocations of those WTA licences as the means to achieving compliance will remain with the Transmission Providers.

Section 3, Response to 3.3 of Consultation

The statement that Ofcom has made in respect of Channel 5 moving to a PSB multiplex, assumed to be one of the BBC's, "at DSO" is ambiguous. Could Ofcom please confirm exactly what is meant by "at DSO"?

Just for clarification Arqiva would like to point out that the "coverage" obligations are actually transmission obligations intended to ensure that post-DSO DTT channels serve essentially the same geographical area as the equivalent analogue services today. As analogue and DTT have different transmission characteristics, it would not be possible to guarantee exact replication of analogue reception, not least as many households are satisfied with sub-standard pictures and will be difficult to reach with satisfactory reception of DTT.

Section 3, Response to 3.5 of Consultation

At present some of the Multiplexes are broadcasting from 81 sites (i.e. if Ferryside is included).