



Reception of Welsh TV services in North Wales

Note to the National Assembly for Wales's Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Further to questions raised at last week's committee session regarding reception of the ITV Cymru Wales service in North Wales, we have now consulted with technology colleagues.

They advise that - as illustrated by the attached Ofcom map of the Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT or "Freeview") transmitters in Wales - there is no technical reason why the vast majority of households in Wales should be without Welsh television services.

However, Ofcom has advised there are a number of factors that may determine the consumption of English TV services at the expense of Welsh TV services in some households. These are:

- Consumer choice - where some viewers (for example, incomers from the North-West of England) may prefer to watch services with which they are familiar, or where hoteliers may be catering for holidaymakers' preferences;
- Inheritance viewing - where people moving into homes where Freeview aerials are already tuned to Granada/BBC North West region transmitters do not realise that their televisions or set top boxes can be readjusted to receive Welsh services;
- Limitations to channel availability from relay transmitters in certain areas of North-East Wales (e.g. Wrexham Rhos¹) and the availability of a larger number of channels from the Granada region transmitters.

With reference to Llandudno, the area receives Welsh TV services from one of the many transmitters in the vicinity. However, we are advised that the Storeton transmitter on the Wirrall also radiates to this part of Wales. If tuned to Storeton, households in Llandudno will receive English, not Welsh, regional programmes. Viewers will be watching, for example, ITV's Granada news service instead of ITV's news service for Wales.

Tuning advice

Freeview customers using the newer TV and set-top boxes are given a choice of TV regions with the option of installing, in the case of ITV, their preferred region at Channel 3. Most TVs and boxes then put other regions in the 800s on the electronic programme guide (EPG), while some appliances only store the one requested.

¹ Relay transmitters such as Wrexham Rhos and Cefn Mawr carry fewer channels than larger transmitters such as Moel y Parc or Winter Hill (Bolton). But they do carry all the services paid for by the BBC licence fee as well as the other public service channels - ITV Wales, S4C, Channel 4 and Channel 5. Viewers receiving TV signals from a relay who want to receive a wider range of channels whilst retaining the Welsh channels should consider alternative reception options such as digital satellite.

Older boxes will either put the first ITV region found at channel 3 or the one with the strongest signal. Other regions are placed in the 800s on the EPG. It is possible to change the allocation but to do this requires the TV or box to be manually tuned.

This is not too difficult to do but requires the manual and knowledge of the frequencies in the area. The Digital UK helpline on 08456 50 50 50 may be able to help as this was set up to assist viewers during Digital Switchover and advisers have a good knowledge of sets and boxes and retuning methods. Affected viewers should check to see if they have other regions stored in the 800 numbers.

Satellite and cable services are set up to match the terrestrial coverage. Sky and cable viewers will receive the region associated with the address registered to their viewing card, so if this is not correct, they will not get the correct region. Freesat boxes allow the viewer to enter the postcode directly into the box or set and so will receive the region associated to the postcode supplied.

We understand that Ofcom is planning to undertake more research on this issue. In the meantime, we hope the above explanation will be of help.

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