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The Voice of Leaseholders

Embargo: Immediate (00.01am Monday 13th October 2008)

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Leaseholders case for help with Digital Switchover goes to Parliament

Last week we released analysis compiled by the Federation of Private Residents Associations highlighting the problems of those who live in a flat or **who** share a communal TV aerial experience when it comes to upgrade or adapt TV equipment to receive digital TV before the current analogue signals are turned off.

Ahead of the latest 'switchover' for viewers in the Border region on November 6th, Michael Moore MP has secured a debate on the issue in Westminster Hall on Tuesday this week.

The FPRA are strongly recommending that flat-dwellers check with their landlord or managing agents now to find out whether the building in which they live is ready to receive digital TV.

Federation Chairman, Bob Smytherman said.

"We are delighted that the issue will be debated by MP's on Tuesday morning as we believe flat-dwellers could face higher prices for aerial upgrades or new installations as contractors will have inevitable capacity problems as many landlords delay the improvements needed due to the financial crisis or the bureaucracy of Section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant act procedures which can take in excess of 3 months to get any expenditure approved?"

"The FPRA who are represented on the Housing expert group to inform Digital UK of the issues faced by flat-dwellers will be providing member associations with the necessary advice to try and avoid residents facing a BLANK screen when their area switches off the current analogue signals."

"With the Border region next for switching over to Digital next month now is a good time to update members on the issues facing 1000's of flat-dwellers from

England and Wales over the next few years and hopefully the debate in Parliament will highlight the problems faced by many leaseholders as they are switching to Digital and any specific difficulties with upgrading communal TV equipment can be resolved before the switchover takes place?"

The first large-scale switchover starts on 6th November 2008 and will involve 52,000 homes in the Scottish Borders. During 2009, a further five million UK households across the Border, West Country, Wales and Granada TV regions will have analogue services replaced with digital terrestrial TV (Freeview).

Notes to Editors:

The Digital television switchover debate has been called by Michael Moore MP and will be discussed at Westminster Hall on Tuesday morning between 9am - 11am

The FPRA have produced a checklist for flat-dwellers to help prepare for Switchover:-

Once you have checked that your building is able to receive a digital TV signal, you will need to upgrade or adapt all existing TV equipment - If you haven't already done so.

Adapting or upgrading TV equipment can be simple and inexpensive. The simplest way is to connect a digital box to your TV set. Alternatively you can replace your existing TV with a Integrated Digital TV (IDTV) which is a TV with a digital box built in which provides Freeview through an aerial which we believe will likely to be the simplest option for many members with a communal TV aerial.

There are four main ways to receive a digital TV signal through a digital box:

- Through a satellite dish (Sky, Freesat from Sky, freesat)
- Through an existing aerial (Freeview, Top Up TV, BT Vision)
- Through a cable (Virgin Media, Smallworld)
- Through a phoneline (Tiscali)

What does digital TV switchover mean for your residents?

If you live in a flat or share an aerial with another household it is likely that you receive your TV signal through a communal TV aerial system. A large number of these will need to be upgraded or adapted to receive digital TV. Check with your landlord or managing agent to find out whether your building is ready to receive digital TV now to allow time for you to take the best option for you block.

Note: There is NOT Government help to fund the costs to upgrade communal aerials

Individual aerial reception

An individual aerial reception system is when a single TV aerial or dish feeds a single household. Individual aerial reception systems are relatively easy to convert to receive digital TV signals. Most households access television services using a dedicated aerial, satellite dish or cable connection. Aerials and satellite dishes can be self-installed or installed professionally; cable and broadband services are always installed by the service provider

Communal TV aerial systems

A communal TV system provides television signals to a number of users from a single set of aerials and/or dishes. This can be used with all types of properties, from small numbers of detached houses where for example planning constraints restrict the use of roof mounted aerials, to tower blocks and even entire estates of several thousand households.

<u>ITV Region</u>	
<u>Border</u>	
<u>West Country, Granada</u>	
<u>Wales</u>	
<u>West, STV North</u>	
<u>STV Central</u>	
<u>Central, Yorkshire, Anglia</u>	
<u>Meridian, London</u>	
<u>Tyne Tees, Ulster</u>	

The Government have set up a Help Scheme for individuals, but NOT Landlords or Managing agents

This has been set up to help people to switch one of their TV sets to digital and provide you with easy-to-use equipment that suits your needs

- This scheme will help with installing equipment in your home
- This scheme will fit a new dish or aerial, BUT ONLY where they can. Your Landlord/Managing Agent MUST provide new or upgrade existing communal systems
- The help scheme will give you an easy-to-understand demonstration of how everything works in your flat.

- The help scheme will provide someone you can call for help while you're getting used to things.

Over seven million people in the UK will be eligible to receive help. If you are eligible for the Help Scheme we recommend you get in touch personally in plenty of time to ask if you need help.

The key highlights so far are:

- Awareness among those living in flats and understanding of the implications has also been steadily increasing although main set conversion remains a concern with many flat-dwellers behind those in houses -those living in flats generally with more barriers to consider when going digital.
- Communal aerial systems and issues of responsibility are the main causes of slower conversion rate than in houses.

Digital UK are to commission research to evaluate and monitor progress and attitudes amongst the private rented and long leasehold residential housing sector in the Manchester area. The aim of the project is to measure the level of progress made by private sector landlords to upgrade communal TV systems and likely intentions for conversion.

FPRA would welcome your own experiences so we can inform Digital UK of real practical difficulties.

Digital UK have produced publications 'Calling All Landlords' and 'Calling All Flat Owners' leaflets and a 'Tenants' Chest' which is a box of switchover materials which can be provided to your organisation when you have your AGM all of which are provided free of charge.

The FPRA would also be keen to know whether there is a capacity problem for your organisations to find installers which is forcing up the cost of going Digital.

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The FPRA is a non-political, not-for-profit advice, support and lobbying organisation for our members who include private residential leaseholders, tenants' and residents' associations and residential management companies as well as those companies where the leaseholders together own the freehold of their own residential block.

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