

Consultation on renewal of DTT multiplex licences
TV & Broadcasting Team
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DTG response

Background

The Digital TV Group (DTG) was established by industry in 1995 as the cross-industry association for digital television in the UK, with the initial main purpose of drafting the technical standard for the digital terrestrial television (DTT) distribution and reception, the very subject of this consultation. These requirements for interoperability, for what was the first digital terrestrial television service to launch in the world, were agreed by industry consensus and set out in the DTG D-Book in 1996. This exceptional cross-industry collaboration continues to reflect innovation in technology and market needs with a new annual edition. It is uniquely implemented across the entire distribution chain, from playout encoding through to the television, set-top box, or recorder. The D-Book continues to specify the core requirements for every digital television in the UK market.

The general case for multiplex licence renewal

This response makes the case for the long-term extension of all multiplex licences and, given the DTG's broad industry interests and unique position, it will not comment on the specific arrangements for each multiplex.

DTT is currently the only universally-available technology, implemented in all televisions, enabling free-at-the-point-of-use television for virtually everyone in the UK. Until this is replicated by other technologies the case for the long-term renewal of the existing DTT multiplex licences is unequivocal. The following points should be considered:

a. **Consumer investment and affordable receiver availability**

There is a large installed base and a wide choice of affordable consumer electronics receivers (also known as devices) on the market that support DTT. These are developed through industry collaboration to robust technical standards, uniquely approved and implemented through cross-industry consensus and rigorously tested. Available devices include Freeview and Youview televisions, set top boxes and recorders.

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b. **Industry adoption and investment**

The eco-system, encompassing everything including content, broadcasters, platforms, the distribution network, and consumer electronics devices is stable, reliable and resilient. Industry has made, and continues to make, significant investment in the entire DTT value chain.

c. **Regulatory and commercial certainty required to sustain investment**

Regulatory and commercial certainty is a key dependency for continued investment across the DTT eco-system, historically 12 years renewal terms have underpinned multiplex licensee, content partner, supply chain and consumer confidence.

d. **Ten-year technology lifecycle**

Technology adoption lifecycles are a key factor, as illustrated in the faster moving mobile telecommunications market¹. Generations of mobile technologies 2G, 3G, 4G and 5G each taking at least 10 years to achieve take-up, and with all technologies continuing to coexist. An alternative free-at-the-point-of-use system to DTT, and not subject to a broadband contract, with equal or enhanced technology capabilities and reach would be likely to take more than 10 years after market preparation to reach full migration and consumer adoption in a horizontal market².

e. **Ease-of-use and accessibility**

Replicating the comparative ease-of-set-up and ease-of-use, together with the accessibility of DTT services and devices when compared with more complex internet technologies would need to be addressed if multiplex licences were not renewed. A cross-industry supported and Government funded transition would need to be established if the multiplex licences were not renewed.

¹ Ofcom Enabling 5G report P.9 fig.2

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0022/111883/enabling-5g-uk.pdf

² Horizontal market in this context refers to the consumer electronics retail market for televisions, set-top-boxes and recorders able to receive free-at-the-point-of use television services, without subscription.



The context of the DTG response is based on members sharing the following objectives³:

1. To support the DTG in representing, in an authoritative and independent manner, the widest spectrum of interests in digital broadcasting, and the development of digital broadcasting systems based upon DVB and other appropriate published and open technical standards.
2. To support a non-discriminatory approach that enables an open and competitive market to develop in service provision, receivers, and conditional access, consistent with *European Union Directives*⁴ on Television *Transmission* Standards.
3. To support the DTG in the development of public standards integrated digital TV receivers and set-top box products meeting the needs of broadcasters and consumers in an open and competitive market situation.

Please note:

The DTG's membership is uniquely drawn from the entire television ecosystem. Therefore, this submission has been written to reflect the diversity of views using feedback from the DTG's membership and as such raises areas for consideration but does not necessarily represent the views of all DTG member organisations. The DTG is made up of member companies who may also be submitting an individual response.

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³ Extract from Digital TV Group (DTG) Articles of Association and DTG membership agreement

⁴ The DTG recognises that whilst it is currently correct to remain consistent with EU Directives adopted by the UK, it will align any future UK policy development, regulatory and legal requirements.



APPENDIX 1

Additional Information on Industry's DTG D-Book Approach

Principally, and in the interests of international harmonisation, the D-Book references international technical standards. Where these are unavailable or not yet stable, the DTG publishes full UK technical requirements and contributes to relevant international standards development organisations, where appropriate. Where it is subsequently possible to reference an ETSI or other standard, the specific D-Book section will be simplified.

As a set of critical implementation guidelines, the D-Book ensures that there is a wide choice of consumer electronics devices available in the market from a range of international manufacturers.

DTG Testing is an independent industry test facility that allows manufacturers to have prototype products verified for interoperability against the D-Book. DTG Testing supports the consumer electronics sector by ensuring device interoperability at the prototype stage. It continues this support when receivers are sold by testing new services across receivers in the DTG Zoo; a fully connected and operational receiver collection.

As platform technology complexity increases, the importance of interoperability and conformance against tests is self-evident. That interoperability underpins the ongoing success of Freeview and Freeview Play.

The D-Book has successfully supported the introduction of HD, DVB-T2 as well as the clearance of the 700 MHz band – which was completed in August 2020.

Past editions of the D-Book introduced HbbTV references for Freeview Play and the MHEG to HbbTV transition. In addition, support for HEVC and HDR for IP delivered services was introduced.

The D-Book continues to support the development of products and services, including enhancements to coexistence testing; defining the profile of UHD; supporting compatible receivers for broadcast; and bringing the HbbTV requirements up to date with recent work by the HbbTV Association and DVB.

The DTG continues to welcome contributions from members on the evolution towards hybrid distribution systems which will feed into the development of future D-Book versions. The DTG continues to ensure European and international harmonisation wherever possible while meeting the needs of the rapidly developing and highly successful UK TV market.

