



RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON BUILDING REGULATIONS AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES (BROADBAND)

Response by the Digital TV Group

About the Digital TV Group

Established in 1996, the DTG is an Industry association whose members co-ordinated the UK launch of digital terrestrial television. Its membership has grown to more than 100 organisations representing all sections of the digital television industry including broadcasters, network operators, consumer electronics manufacturers, retailers and consumer groups.

Given the wide collective industry knowledge and experience of its members, the DTG is ideally placed to comment on matters relating to the universal availability of digital services. Members of the DTG have played and are playing an important role in current cross-industry and government initiatives to drive towards switchover and the corresponding take up of digital services.

This response has been drawn up in consultation with its members and represents a consensus of the views expressed. Individual members may, of course, have particular objectives and may submit their own responses to this consultation, which may differ in detail to this collective response.

The Digital TV Group

Liss Mill, Liss, Hants, GU33 7BD

tel: 01730 893 144

email: office@dtg.org.uk

website: www.dtg.org.uk

Contact for this consultation response: Marcus Coleman, Director General

Comments on the Consultation

The Digital Television Group (DTG) has a very strong interest in the rollout of Digital and Broadband services and it is therefore very disappointed not to have been included on the original circulation within the consultation document. The DTG is also surprised that a Government department is holding a consultation, which has a direct impact on the Digital Television Action Plan, without ensuring that all interested parties have an opportunity to make formal representations.

In addition to the DTG, the Confederation of Aerial Industries (CAI) also plays a very active part in the rollout and installation of Digital Television and Interactive services and it is therefore important that they too are given an opportunity to respond.

Nevertheless the DTG on behalf of its members are pleased to offer the following comments by way of response to this consultation.

There are over 4 million households in England, Scotland and Wales that are located in Multi-Dwelling Units (MDUs). The DTG and CAI have for a number of years been focussed on the challenge of converting these properties to provide them with access to a full range of Digital Television and Broadband services. Members of the DTG and the CAI have already converted or upgraded approximately 1 Million Households i.e. approximately 25% of the total and they are continuing to work with landlords, Local Authorities and various Housing Trusts to ensure that they are aware of the benefits of upgrading to digital.

DTG Recommendations

The members of the DTG propose that existing analogue installations should be upgraded wherever possible to a fully Integrated Reception System (IRS) to allow direct access to all Digital services in the major living areas of each household or apartment without interference or restriction to that access imposed by either old or non-compatible wiring. We would therefore strongly recommend that building regulations be directed towards the provision and distribution of full digital services in every home.

The installation of coaxial cable (for television and interactive services) and Cat 5e cabling (for telephony and broadband services) and associated ducting to each room from a central, easily accessible point with access to the various antenna feeds will enable consumers to benefit from the full range of digital services, information and entertainment both broadband and otherwise. No matter whether the home is an apartment, a flat, a terraced house, semi or fully detached, no matter how big or how small, the provision of the right infrastructure will ensure full, simple and easy access to the digital future.

Illustrated are two examples of cabling, one for a single house and one for an apartment in a block of flats, that are flexible enough to be deployed in any new build or refurbishment. Whilst the two examples may look very different they are based on a single system concept that connects every room to every other room via a central hub in a 'star wire' formation in both co-axial and telephony cabling.

This star wire system allows every room to communicate freely not only with the outside world, but also internally with every other room. It allows any service, programme or channel to be received in every room. In addition it allows the output of a VCR, DVD player, DTT, Cable or Satellite set top box situated in the living room to be enjoyed in any other room. All current and foreseeable digital services can be received and distributed through the star wire system.

The star wire system is not a new concept. Many thousands of homeowners already enjoy the benefits of a star wire infrastructure that has been overlaid on their buildings. What is new is the idea that all homes can benefit from the high quality digital communications that the right star wire system can provide when it is built in to the fabric of the structure.

Industry Standards

The CAI has recently followed the example of BSkyB in advising its members to only use benchmarked cable for all its installations and the CAI is also in the process of benchmarking terrestrial aerials to ensure that all future installations are capable of receiving Digital signals broadcast in the local area. BSkyB through its Sky Homes division operates a code of practice with all its contractors to ensure that they install full IRS systems in all MDU conversions or new builds.

Summary

The digital future is more than just broadband. Whilst broadband is an important part of that future it is only a small part. Ensuring that all MDU HHs have access to a full range of Digital services including Digital Television should therefore be the Government's primary objective. Only by specifying and installing the appropriate infrastructure will Households be able to access the benefits of the digital future.

The DTG therefore urges Government to do everything possible to encourage the deployment of IRS systems as part of any review or upgrade to Building regulations.