

# Future of channels such as ITV2 and Dave secured as Freeview licences renewed for another decade

Press release

TV lovers can enjoy popular shows such as Love Island and emerging comedy on E4 and Dave for free into the next decade, as ministers extend the licences to operate the platform used to broadcast Freeview.



- Ministers decide Freeview platform will be supported until at least 2034
- Public service and commercial broadcasters can continue to deliver content free-to-air to audiences across the UK
- Channels such as ITV 2, Dave, E4 and Film 4 will continue to benefit from nearly 99 per cent UK availability

The government is extending the five national multiplex licences for the Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) platform – better known as Freeview – until 2034. This will protect for the future the main way audiences currently enjoy a diverse range of digital TV channels for free.

It will guarantee prime spectrum – the radio waves used for transmitting signal – for commercial public service broadcasters (PSBs) such as ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5, so they can reach the maximum number of viewers in the UK as they compete with the streaming giants in a changing media landscape.

TV multiplexes are digital networks which allow many TV channels to be compressed and transmitted all at once over a single radio frequency. Freeview is hugely popular with UK audiences and is broadcast over a number of multiplexes carrying five or more TV channels, radio stations, text

services and electronic programme guides.

The DTT multiplexes guarantee that PSB content is free to air and widely accessible to consumers due to their nearly 99 per cent coverage of the UK. They have become vital for the UK's TV networks – allowing the PSBs to expand their offerings with a host of new channels such as ITV2 and E4.

Media Minister John Whittingdale said:

Today we are guaranteeing the future of Freeview TV and a diverse range of much-loved news, entertainment and documentary channels well into the 2030s.

Securing the future of Freeview means people can continue to enjoy its great content while we also protect a vital medium for our public service broadcasters so they can serve audiences in the years to come.

The government launched a consultation in December 2020 seeking views on the renewal of the multiplex licences expiring in 2022 and 2026 on the DTT platform. In a [response](#) published today, ministers have decided to give Ofcom the power to carry out a renewal of all five national multiplexes until 2034.

This removes any change or disruption to Freeview that could have come about through new ownership and will provide stability and certainty to PSBs about the future of their channels on the platform.

In a further move to support the PSBs, the government will legislate to make ownership of Multiplex 2, which is currently jointly owned by Channel 4 and ITV, contingent on PSB status. It will ensure that PSBs always have a space on the Freeview platform to serve the widest audience possible. The multiplex licences being renewed are:

- Multiplex 2 – expiring in 2022 and carrying the commercial PSB channels ITV/STV, Channel 4 and Channel 5, as well as some of their portfolio channels (e.g. ITV 2, Film 4, E4 and More4)
- Multiplex A – expiring in 2022 and carrying only commercial services including some of the commercial PSBs portfolio channels (e.g. ITVBe and 5USA) and some other commercial services (such as QVC and Quest)
- Multiplex B – expiring in 2026 and carrying PSB High Definition services including BBC One HD; ITV HD, Channel 4 HD and Channel 5 HD
- Multiplexes C and D – expiring in 2026 and carrying a range of commercial channels including Dave, Sky Arts and news channels such as Sky News, Al Jazeera and GB News

ENDS

## Notes to Editors

- As set out in the [government response](#), the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport will shortly bring forward an Order made under section 243 of the Communications Act 2003, which will amend the multiplex licensing regime in Part 1 of the Broadcasting Act 1996 to:
  - Give Ofcom the power to carry out a renewal of Multiplexes 2, A, B, C, and D until 2034
  - Make ownership of Multiplex 2 contingent on PSB status
  - Include a power giving Ofcom the ability to revoke licences for spectrum management reasons with the consent of the DCMS Secretary of State but require that revocation cannot take effect before the end of 2030 and that a five year notice period must apply
  - Remove the requirement for applicants to submit technical plans and marketing proposals
- Remove the power for Ofcom to set a Percentage of Multiplex Revenue (PMR)
  - The current owners of the multiplex licences to be renewed are:
    - Multiplex 2 is licensed to Digital 3&4 Limited (D3&4), a joint ITV and Channel 4 subsidiary
    - Multiplex A is licensed to SDN, an ITV subsidiary
    - Multiplex B is licensed to BBC Freeview, a commercial subsidiary of the BBC
    - Commercial multiplexes C and D are licenced to the communications infrastructure and media services company Arqiva

Published 17 August 2021