

DIGITAL RADIO SWITCHOVER – YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Confused about the future of radio? Read our handy myth-busting guide to what you need, when you'll need it, what will happen to your favourite stations...and more.

I hear FM will be switched off in 2015 – is this correct?

It is planned that digital radio switchover will take place no less than two years after certain criteria have been met. The criteria are:

- National digital radio coverage to match FM coverage
- Local digital radio to reach 90% of the population
- 50% of radio listening to be on digital radio platforms

The Digital Britain report gave an aspirational date of 2013 for meeting these criteria. The exact date that the criteria will be met is not certain at this point and plans are being put into place by the radio industry led by DRUK (Digital Radio UK) to accelerate the meeting of these criteria.

However, even after upgrade, FM will continue to be used by local and community stations.

Will BBC Radio 4 (and Radio 1, Radio 2 etc.) be switched off on FM at that time?

It is proposed that all national stations should move to broadcasting only on digital. This includes the BBC.

Will my local BBC radio station (e.g. BBC Gloucestershire) move off FM as well?

Yes, all national, regional and local BBC stations will switchover to digital radio.

Which commercial stations will switch over?

All national commercial stations will switch over. Regional and large local commercial stations are expected to be digital-only, with smaller and community stations remaining on FM.

Will AM services also be switched off at switchover?

AM services will either move to FM or to digital only.

Won't it be expensive to buy a new digital radio?

Not at all, digital radios are coming down in price all of the time and in fact, many digital radios are already cheaper than their analogue-only counterparts. PURE's most affordable product series is the ONE family, which ranges from an SRP of £44.99 to £79.99 and we anticipate introducing lower cost models in the near future. There will always be digital radios available at a lower price point than those from PURE, but with a PURE radio you can feel secure in your purchase, knowing that you'll get the best possible reception, extra features, reliability, the assurance that our radios are manufactured in ethically approved and audited facilities, access to a UK-based support team to help with any of your questions, plus all of our radios come with a two year warranty.

I have more than one FM radio at home – I can't afford to replace all of them.

While statistics indicate that the average household has around five radios, it's also true that only one or two of these radios are used most of the time. Don't forget that you will be able to access local and community FM stations on your FM-only radios. You could also consider investing in one of our portable radios which can be easily transferred from room to room and taken out and about.

Isn't implementing digital radio an unnecessary expense to taxpayers?

Implementing digital radio will cost a fraction of the price of transferring from analogue TV to digital TV. Radio is an important part of British culture with over 90% of the population consuming more than one billion listening hours a week. Digital is much more efficient than FM and in an increasingly digital Britain, to remain relevant, radio must follow suit, offering more features and content whilst remaining a service that is free at the point of access for all listeners.

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I have an FM radio which I am very happy with, why do I need to get a digital radio?

The broadcast industry has come to the conclusion that if radio is to remain analogue it wouldn't have a future in an increasingly digital world. Just as televisions, mobile phones and cameras have all gone digital, it does not make sense to leave radio out and going digital provides you with numerous benefits.

What can a digital radio offer that my FM radio can't?

With digital radio, you'll discover a broader range of music, debate and ideas, all in crystal-clear digital sound. Digital radio offers:

Ease-of-use

Digital radios are much easier to use than analogue radios because they automatically search for all available stations. Once the radio has found all the available stations you just choose the one you want by name. No more trying to remember frequencies.

Wider station choice

You'll be spoilt for choice – as well as many of your existing favourite stations now broadcasting on digital radio, you'll also find great exclusive-to-digital stations, and there are more on the way.

Digital sound quality

Digital radio is not subject to the same interference as analogue radio resulting in crystal-clear, interference-free listening.

Extra features

Even though they're easier to use, digital radios bring you lots more features. There's scrolling text to show track titles, artists' names, news and sports results. textSCAN enables you to pause and control the scrolling text and IntelliText allows extra text information from participating stations to be stored and read on demand. Some models allow you to pause and rewind live digital radio and include the ability to upgrade the radio via USB or Wi-Fi. The latest models on the market are even starting to introduce a visual element to radio allowing synchronised pictures to be added to radio broadcasts showing news, presenters, artists, weather, travel, promotional items and more.

What if I can't receive digital radio in my area?

As part of the criteria put in place before the switchover can take place, digital radio coverage must match FM coverage. Don't worry if you can't receive digital radio yet, it will be rolled out throughout the UK so you will soon be enjoying the extra features and content digital radio has to offer. In the meantime, you could buy one of our radios that has digital and FM, so that, you can get a signal now but will also be ready for a digital future.

Isn't the sound quality of digital radio worse than FM?

Although a small minority prefer the sound of FM, every poll of digital radio listeners has indicated that the vast majority of listeners are more than happy with digital radio sound quality. Our engineers work hard to make the audio within PURE radios the best possible to boost the overall sound quality. Don't just take our word for it; many of our radios have received 5 star awards from the authoritative audio magazine What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision and others. See www.pure.com for more information.

Isn't the digital radio signal prone to freezing and less reliable than analogue?

This is a myth! The digital radio transmission standard is incredibly clever and actually delivers a reception performance that is vastly superior to FM. This means that for an equivalent signal, it is much more likely for digital radio to pick up and hold a signal than an FM radio. If you are in a marginal coverage area, you may experience burbling when listening to digital radio, however coverage is being increased to match FM so everyone will soon be able to take advantage of this quality.

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Why do I want this new content?

Digital radio gives broadcasters more opportunities to make their content available. For example, the BBC can deliver archive content on BBC Radio 7, emerging music on BBC 6 music and additional sports coverage on BBC 5 Live Sports Extra. Commercial radio has also come up with a strong package of special interest stations such as NME, Dabble, Planet Rock, talkSPORT, Premier Christian Radio, Fun Kids, Passion for the Planet and more. Even those who prefer to listen to just one station such as Radio 4 can benefit from digital radio thanks to its ease-of-use, digital sound and extra features such as scrolling text.

Aren't digital radios power hungry and therefore bad for the environment?

No, nowadays there are lots of energy efficient digital radios on the market. The majority of PURE's products are recommended by the Energy Saving Trust. In fact, four Energy Saving Trust recommended PURE radios can be run on less power than a single energy saving light bulb. PURE also has its own ethical and environmental initiative, EcoPlus, as part of which all of our products are designed to minimize their environmental impact and are manufactured in ethically approved facilities. Listening to a PURE radio with the convenient fit-and-forget rechargeable ChargePAK is also a greener way to listen as it saves energy and reduces the amount of toxic materials sent to landfill.

Don't digital radios have a poor battery life and are therefore less portable than FM radios?

While early digital radios were battery hungry, technical developments since then mean that there are lots of very power efficient digital radios on the market such as PURE's range of Energy Saving Trust recommended radios. Most PURE portable radios can also use a ChargePAK, our innovative and eco-friendly rechargeable battery pack. ChargePAKs offer a convenient fit-and-forget solution as they charge whenever the radio is plugged in so they are ready to go whenever you are.

What can I do with my old FM radios? Adding them to landfill is bad for the environment.

PURE is a member of REPIC along with many other major electrical and electronic producers in the UK. REPIC's role is to ensure that electrical appliances at end of life are reused or recycled and provides national WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) compliance solutions. It arranges for collection and reuse/recycling of old appliances such as FM radios from household waste recycling centres, manufacturers and retailers.

Isn't DAB an old standard of digital radio? Why should I get a DAB digital radio when they're likely to switch to DAB+?

As the UK was one of the first countries to take the lead on digital radio, the standard that was adopted was DAB. Though other countries have introduced DAB+ or DMB (other members of the Eureka 147 family of standards), the UK has decided to keep DAB as there were already 10 million DAB digital radios in the UK. At the moment there is no legislation that allows DAB+ in the UK but almost all of PURE's current radio range can be upgraded in the unlikely event of that happening.

How do I know if the digital radio I've bought is DAB+ compatible?

Unless you are taking your radio outside of the UK this is not important; if you are planning on travelling, you are advised to contact the manufacturer to check whether your unit is compatible or can be upgraded. PURE has the largest range of globally compatible radios in the world and the vast majority of PURE's current range can be upgraded by the user to DAB+ though there may be a small charge for this upgrade.

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Can my FM radio be upgraded to digital radio?

While it's technically possible to produce an adaptor to allow you to hear digital radio on your FM radio, no such adaptors exist as the cost would be as high as producing a full digital radio. Most PURE radios have a 'stereo out', which allows you to listen to your favourite digital stations through your existing hi-fi system.

The FM radio in your car however can easily be upgraded to digital radio. PURE's Highway is a complete adapter solution for the car that allows you to listen to digital radio on your car's existing FM audio system. You can also connect an iPod or MP3 player and listen to your favourite tracks through the car stereo. Extremely easy to fit, Highway is powered from the cigarette lighter socket and attached to the windscreen with a supplied flexible mount, just like a portable satellite navigation system. A discreet digital radio aerial is affixed to the windscreen to supply the digital radio signal and Highway then sends the audio to the car's radio on an FM frequency which is picked up just like a normal radio station.

Why can't I just listen to the radio over the internet?

You can of course, listen to the radio over the internet. In fact, PURE has a range of combined digital and internet-connected radios to give you the best of both worlds. However, at PURE, we believe strongly that broadcast digital radio is the future while internet radio is a great way of topping up your listening and adding new features. Research has even indicated that if all current radio listening was done over the internet, the UK's internet infrastructure could not cope. Also, listening to internet radio on your computer or TV ties you to one place and is dramatically more power hungry than listening on a stand-alone radio device.

Won't internet radio replace digital radio?

Internet radio is not a viable solution as the system cannot support the number of potential radio listeners. There is also no current mechanism to reliably and widely deliver internet radio into cars, a very important environment for radio listening. However, a combination of digital and internet listening could be the solution for you, getting the best of both worlds with extra features supplied by digital radio and extra content, like stations from around the world, podcasts and media streaming via your in-home wi-fi connection.

My phone receives FM radio, will phones in the future start integrating digital radio?

Digital radio is very strong in the UK and is rolling out quickly to a number of countries worldwide. When this international market becomes established enough, it will be much more likely for mobile phone manufacturers to include digital radio in their handsets.

Haven't broadcasters including the BBC dropped plans to expand on digital by getting rid of stations like 6 Music because of the costs anyway?

Both the BBC and commercial broadcasters fully support the Digital Economy Act. The BBC has indeed announced plans to axe BBC 6 Music and Asian Network but this decision is still under review. It was done as part of a wider commitment to digital radio and to further highlight the commitment of broadcasters to digital radio, many digital-only stations have launched in the past year including – Dabble, My Baby Radio, Premier Gospel, NME Radio to name but a few. It's worth noting that Planet Rock was threatened with closure but was rescued and now enjoys a very loyal fan base of almost 700,000 listeners.

Does this mean the end of my local radio station?

No! All PURE radios also have FM which will be used to transmit the local and community stations when the switchover takes place. You'll still be able to listen to your favourite local station in the same way you do now, digital radio just opens up the options for further listening.

What will be done with the frequency freed up by moving FM stations?

The FM frequency will be used for local as well as other smaller broadcasters such as community, student and hospital stations.

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What about my car, can I receive digital radio from my built in FM tuner?

The FM radio in your car can easily be upgraded to digital radio with PURE's Highway in-car adapter. Highway (SRP £69.99) allows you to listen to digital radio on your car's existing FM audio system. You can also connect an iPod or MP3 player and listen to your favourite tracks through the car stereo.

Will that mean I have to wreck my dashboard?

Not at all, PURE's Highway is extremely easy to fit. Powered from the cigarette lighter socket, Highway is attached to the windscreen with a supplied flexible mount, just like a portable satellite navigation system. A discreet digital radio aerial is affixed to the windscreen to supply the digital radio signal and Highway then sends the audio to the car's radio on an FM frequency which is picked up just like a normal radio station.

Is it true that digital radios don't come with FM?

Whether a digital only or a combined digital and internet-connected radio, each model PURE makes also comes with FM, so there is no need to sacrifice one for the other. In fact only around half a dozen of the more than 300 digital radios on the market today don't also have FM.