

# **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

Wednesday 4 June 2008

Session 3

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## LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

17<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2008, Session 3

### CONVENER

\*Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)

### DEPUTY CONVENER

\*Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP)

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

\*Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP)

\*Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP)

\*Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)

\*Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)

\*David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)

\*Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD)

### COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD)

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Tricia Marwick (Central Fife) (SNP)

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con)

\*attended

### THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

John Askew (Digital UK)

Simon Crine (Digital UK)

Paul Hughes (Digital UK)

Trisha McAuley (Scottish Consumer Council)

Wilf White (Digital Switchover Help Scheme Ltd)

### CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Martin Verity

### SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Jane-Claire Judson

### ASSISTANT CLERK

Ian Cowan

### LOCATION

Committee Room 4



## Scottish Parliament

### Local Government and Communities Committee

*Wednesday 4 June 2008*

[THE CONVENER opened the meeting at 10:00]

### Decision on Taking Business in Private

**The Convener (Duncan McNeil):** Good morning everyone, and welcome to the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Local Government and Communities Committee in 2008. I remind everyone to switch off their mobile phones and BlackBerrys.

We move to agenda item 1. Item 5 is on the committee's work programme, and such items are normally taken in private. Do members agree that we should discuss agenda item 5 in private?

**Members indicated agreement.**

## Digital Television Switchover

10:00

**The Convener:** Under agenda item 2, the committee will take oral evidence on implementation of the switchover to digital television. We will hear from the Scottish Consumer Council, Digital UK Ltd, and the Digital Switchover Help Scheme Ltd. In our first panel, we have Trisha McAuley, who is head of corporate resources at the Scottish Consumer Council. Welcome to our committee.

**Trisha McAuley (Scottish Consumer Council):** Good morning.

**The Convener:** Panel 1 is a panel of one. Would you like to make any introductory remarks?

**Trisha McAuley:** I will start by saying that we have from the outset supported the principle of the digital TV switchover—with the caveat that its full value will be realised only if its implementation is managed in such a way as to mitigate the risk to vulnerable people. If it is delivered properly, the switchover could bring real benefits to consumers. We are wholly committed to supporting the process, and we acknowledge the amount of work that Digital UK has done.

The Scottish Consumer Council wanted to add value by ensuring that a means exists for hearing the voices of people who might not normally be heard. A high proportion of our diarists are older people, disabled people, people on lower incomes, and—obviously in the Borders—people who live in rural areas. We have employed a project co-ordinator called Heather Batsch. She lives in the Borders, in Jedburgh, and wears two hats because she also works with the local councils for voluntary service. She has made positive efforts to go out and find the people we want to hear from—the people who might not normally be heard.

Obviously, the changeover policy has an element of compulsion. We are therefore concerned that the brunt of the expense and disruption should not be borne by the most vulnerable people in society.

In Scotland, we still have a digital divide in terms of access to personal computers. There is a real danger that we will exacerbate that divide if we do not properly manage the process of digitalising TV. We therefore very much welcome the committee's interest. Switchover will happen in five months, but time is fast running out and our diarists tell us that a lot remains to be done to help them to understand what is going on.

**Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP):** I declare an interest in that I am a native of Selkirkshire. What has been the experience of switchover in the

Borders? To what degree has the public understood the technicalities of switchover?

**Trisha McAuley:** I want to draw a distinction between awareness and understanding. Digital UK will be able to give you much more information on the statistics than I can, but the high-level statistics for the population as a whole show that there is good awareness and good understanding. However, issues arise to do with people's detailed understanding of the options. For example, people ask what to do with recording equipment, whether they need a new aerial or have to do something to their old aerial, or whether they need a new radio. Such issues are coming to light from our diarists.

Our findings resonate with some of the more quantitative statistics. It is clear that we have still to understand the more detailed issues that affect people on lower incomes. People also need to understand the help scheme and whether they are eligible to apply to it. Some people have bought equipment who may well be eligible for help.

**Alasdair Allan:** Do the retail outlets understand the issues? What kind of advice are they offering to members of the public?

**Trisha McAuley:** Digital UK manages an accreditation scheme for retailers: I understand that it is stepping up training for them. We have found—again—that advice is patchy. As members will see in our submission, we complemented our work in the Borders with work at national level, which showed that even digital advisers who were approved under the accreditation scheme were giving erroneous information. There is still a bigger job to do, particularly in the Borders, to ensure that not only local retailers but supermarkets provide accurate information. People who live in the Borders travel up to big department stores in Edinburgh and we have found that those are the places where there is less help. It is obvious that they will not get the same type of help if they go to Asda and buy a digibox as they will if they go to their local retailer, but they still go there.

**Alasdair Allan:** Are you content that sufficient measures are in place to cope, after switchover, with the problems that you outlined as possibly arising from concerns that people in vulnerable categories—people who will be left without television—have?

**Trisha McAuley:** We do not know yet and need a bit more convincing. You might be aware that a pilot was carried out in the Copeland area of Cumbria at the end of last year. Digital UK published a positive report on it, which said that on the whole it was a good pilot, that everything worked well and that the few people who needed help got it.

However, we have bigger challenges in the Borders: the population is twice that of the

Copeland area and is much more sparsely distributed. At the back of the report on the pilot, there is a report from the local stakeholder group that emphasises that many people had problems that resonated with the ones that we discovered, but that is not in the main body of the text. There is a big job to do. Digital UK recognises that, but we think that the challenges are bigger.

**The Convener:** What could we do to ensure that all retailers are able to get accreditation and to give proper advice as digital switchover rolls out?

**Trisha McAuley:** That is very much a training issue. Digital UK has instigated and upped a training programme; it will be able to tell you more about that.

There is also a role for trading standards officers in the Borders. The unfair commercial practices directive was implemented at the end of May, and our advice from the Office of Fair Trading is that, if retailers give consumers the wrong advice, they fall foul of the law in that they are presenting material disinformation. For example, if retailers tell consumers that they can receive digital TV on a set but omit to mention that it is not possible to record on that equipment, they fall foul of the law. However, consumers cannot enforce that; it is up to trading standards officers to do it.

A bigger job needs done in the Borders with the trading standards department. We have been in contact with the department and will work with it to try to take that through. We hope that Digital UK will do that, too.

**The Convener:** This may not be an appropriate question for you, but what representation have you made to the big retailers as a result of your work?

**Trisha McAuley:** We have made no such representations.

**Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD):** Thank you for your advance written submission. It is interesting to read it alongside the submission from Digital UK, both of which flag up a number of issues. A particular concern that has been flagged up to me is the difference between the service that will be received on the Selkirk transmitter and the service that will be received on the relay transmitters. I understand that roughly 70 per cent of customers in the Borders will receive their signal through the Selkirk transmitter and will have access to about 40 channels after switchover but the other 30 per cent, who are on the various relay transmitters, will receive roughly half that—about 20 channels. There is a major concern among people who will get a second-class service, which you highlight in your submission. What else could be done to provide viewers who will be on the relay transmitters with a service level that is more like the one that viewers on the main service will receive?

**Trisha McAuley:** I do not have technical expertise on the matter, but the Treasury will auction off a huge release of the spectrum after digital switchover, and we have told the Office of Communications that we fail to understand why none of that spectrum has been set aside to fulfil public-value criteria as opposed to market criteria. Ofcom has listened carefully to that argument and is still considering it. We remain to be convinced about the release and would like more information about how that spectrum could be used to ensure that Scotland's disadvantaged communities do not lose out.

We are particularly concerned not only about the inability to have the same number of channels, but about the digital divide, to which I return. What about the new Gaelic TV channel? What about local TV, which is coming on stream? What about the e-government services that our Government is developing? We need to make it crystal clear that elements of our population will not lose out on those aspects of digitisation.

**Jim Tolson:** That answer shows that there will be a two-tier service for transmitting programmes. That is not directly attributable to the licence fee, which is for the BBC, but many members of the public will feel that they are paying the same licence fee but are not receiving the same service.

Will you help us to understand the recording situation more? I understand that many customers will be set up with a digital TV service that may or may not include the ability to record one channel or more. Will customers be able to use existing video or DVD recorders with the new equipment when that comes on stream?

**Trisha McAuley:** I refer you to Digital UK for the technical stuff. Our information is that people do not know the answer one way or the other. People in the Borders do not know the answer to that question.

**Jim Tolson:** If we cannot obtain the answers today, we will be unable to explain the situation to the public.

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** A number of my constituents in Skelmorlie and Largs and some of the convener's constituents in Wemyss Bay and Inverkip are concerned that, although they have the equipment, they cannot receive the channels. The fact that people pay the licence fee but do not receive the full service is an issue, as Jim Tolson said. I am sure that you agree that we want everyone in Scotland to have the same access.

**Trisha McAuley:** Absolutely.

**Kenneth Gibson:** For many vulnerable people, particularly in Alasdair Allan's constituency of the Western Isles and on the island of Arran in my constituency, we want the service to be rolled out.

The help scheme is good, but it is restricted to people who are aged over 75, people who receive disability living allowance or attendance allowance and people who are registered blind or partially sighted. That is a fairly small group of the people who might have difficulties with or confusion about the switchover. Digital UK has an outreach scheme: what would you like to be developed to ensure that more people have access to the service and to let them know what they can obtain?

**Trisha McAuley:** Before the Government established the help scheme, which is a policy of the Government and not of Digital UK, we lobbied hard to say that far too many people would fall through the net and that the scheme would not cover all the options. Perhaps the committee wants to do something about that, but we feel that nothing can be done about it now, because the scheme has been set in stone—it has been decided and that is how it will work. All we can do is ensure that as many people as possible know about the scheme as early as possible. More work needs to be done on that.

**Kenneth Gibson:** Should the categories of eligible people be expanded to include, for example, pensioners who are not quite 75 but who are around that age?

**Trisha McAuley:** Absolutely. People who are just under 75 are precisely the sort of people whom we would like the net to cover, but I am not sure whether the scheme can be changed now.

**Kenneth Gibson:** Are pensioners resistant to paying £40 for boxes to be installed, for example?

**Trisha McAuley:** People are not so much resistant as confused.

**The Convener:** Do we know how many people in Scotland will benefit from the help scheme?

**Trisha McAuley:** I do not know. The representative from the Digital Switchover Help Scheme Ltd would be better placed to answer that.

**The Convener:** I will ask that question of the other panel.

**Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP):** I apologise for arriving late.

**Trisha McAuley:** I did not notice.

**Bob Doris:** I have read your submission thoroughly and I commend you for its detail. An important aspect is the new Digital Outreach programme, which will target information to people who do not fall within the remit of the Government's help scheme. I am interested to know more about that.

I would have thought that Digital UK would want to use voluntary sector organisations that already have social and community networks to convey information. You made the good point that raising awareness of a scheme is different from achieving understanding of it. Digital UK might have missed a trick by not using the voluntary sector, which already has such a social network. Will you give me more information on the Digital Outreach scheme?

10:15

**Trisha McAuley:** What Bob Doris described is my understanding, although it is Digital UK's scheme, so it can tell you about it. My understanding is that the aim is to facilitate capacity building in the local voluntary sector to enable the sector to support people who do not qualify for the help scheme. There is concern that the outreach scheme has been introduced only recently because, as I said, the challenge is pretty phenomenal. A lot of hard work has been going on in the Selkirk area, but there are five months to go, with the summer holidays in the middle, and there is still a great deal of work to do.

We have had word back that Digital UK is doing a good job in holding events and meeting stakeholder groups, but we also have anecdotal evidence that some small voluntary groups are finding the expense and the time that is needed to attend meetings—which could take a day in the Borders—quite stiff. For an organisation with a small budget of a couple of hundred pounds a year, someone having to travel across the Borders and put petrol in their car or take a day off puts a big hole in that. We would like some of the out-of-pocket expenses to be met regularly, because that would help.

**Bob Doris:** So Digital UK's outreach scheme should not just be wishful thinking, but should be followed up with hard cash to voluntary sector organisations to allow them to go into communities to play their part.

**Trisha McAuley:** Again, you will need to speak to Digital UK about that, because there is cash behind the scheme. Digital UK has commissioned an organisation to pull all the work together. However, people are not being reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses—they are still spending that money. Digital UK needs to involve as many organisations as possible, because the challenge is pretty phenomenal. In the "Report on the first digital TV switchover—Whitehaven/Copeland, Cumbria", the stakeholder group evidence at the end states:

"The voluntary sector had made a significant contribution to assisting people with conversion. There was concern about the extent to which this could be relied on or mobilized for wider switchover."

The switchover in the Selkirk area will be bigger and another switchover is coming next year for the rest of the Borders. That is a big rural area. Resources are being mobilised, but we emphasise the challenges that lie ahead.

**Bob Doris:** Thank you for that answer—I will raise the issue with Digital UK.

**Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab):** I am interested in the points about retailers. You might not be able to answer my question; if you can, it might be with just anecdotal evidence. Is there any evidence that suggests that although retailers understand the issues it is not in their interests to explain them properly to people who inquire?

**Trisha McAuley:** We do not have any evidence on that, so that is hard to gauge. I would like to think that retailers are not doing that, but I cannot guarantee it. There is also a risk that traders might tell people that they need aerials. We have no evidence of any widespread scams and I know that Digital UK is watching out for that. That is a risk as we progress, so we will keep our fingers crossed.

**Patricia Ferguson:** We can pursue the issue further with Digital UK.

The final paragraph on page 3 of your written evidence states:

"Most of our diarists have seen leaflets or heard broadcast advertising about digital switchover and nearly everyone found the information easy to understand. However, our diarists also told us that the information was not accessible to all".

That seems to be a wee bit of a mismatch. Were those diarists speaking on behalf of other more vulnerable people?

**Trisha McAuley:** Yes. The message was that the information is quite high level and that more detail is needed. People said that it was all right for them, but not for their gran or their next-door neighbour if, for example, that person does not have good sight.

**Patricia Ferguson:** Jim Tolson and Kenny Gibson pointed out that not everyone will have access to all the stations. I am interested in that, particularly given that for many years I could not get Channel 5 in the middle of Glasgow, although I must say that when I got it I was glad that I had not had it for all those years. My understanding is that about 28,000 people in the Borders do not get any digital service and that they will get about 20 channels after the switchover. Is there an understanding of that? Will there be some kind of offsetting of the fact that they will not get 40 channels, but will get 20, whereas at present they get only four or five?



**Trisha McAuley:** I meant to raise that issue earlier, but the conversation moved on.

Many people still do not understand why the analogue signal should be switched off. As I have said, there are clear benefits in doing so. The spectrum is simply full up, and those of us who do not receive a good signal will not receive a better signal until the switchover. My mum and dad, who live in Skelmorlie, do not get Channel 5, albeit that they are not interested in getting it.

**Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):** What kind of outreach work do you recommend? It has been suggested that Digital UK could fund more work through the voluntary sector, but is it more a matter of recognising people in church groups or whatever who could be trusted intermediaries? Formal work by an organisation is not necessarily needed. Did that come out in any way in your work with the diarists?

**Trisha McAuley:** Yes, it did. From our experience of consumer research among disadvantaged groups over a long time, that is the best approach, and I understand that that is how Digital UK and Digital Outreach are working. The committee might want to question those organisations about that. Such an approach is definitely the way forward. Capacity building is a key issue.

**The Convener:** That concludes our questions. We thank you for your attendance, for the helpful way in which you answered our questions and for the helpful paper that you submitted.

**Trisha McAuley:** Would it be remiss of me to raise one more issue?

**The Convener:** You have come a long way.

**Trisha McAuley:** Only from Glasgow.

One thing has changed from the Whitehaven and Copeland changeover that I fail to understand and about which I have not spoken to Digital UK. There was a double switch during that changeover. On the first day, BBC2 was switched off; there was then a four-week period during which people got used to fiddling about with all the channels before all the analogue channels were switched off. According to the research, that caused a lot of confusion among most of the population. Most people would have preferred a single switch—they thought “Let’s just do it”—although the elderly and more disadvantaged people thought that they needed that time. I cannot understand why the decision was made to halve the transition period to two weeks. There are bigger distances to travel in the Borders, and I would like to know a bit more about that decision. We have concerns about the matter, which has just come to our attention.

Thank you for allowing me to say that.

**The Convener:** You have given us one of our first questions for the next panel.

**Trisha McAuley:** I apologise to Digital UK for not having asked it that question.

**The Convener:** Okay. Thank you. We will take a moment to switch panels.

10:22

*Meeting suspended.*

10:24

*On resuming—*

**The Convener:** I extend a special welcome to our second panel. Simon Crine is director of corporate affairs at Digital UK; John Askew is Digital UK’s regional manager for the Border region; Paul Hughes is Digital UK’s national manager for Scotland; and Wilf White is director of policy for the Digital Switchover Help Scheme Ltd.

I give the panel the opportunity to make some introductory remarks before we proceed to questions.

**Simon Crine (Digital UK):** I thank the committee for inviting both the Digital Switchover Help Scheme and Digital UK to the meeting. We are delighted to have the opportunity to report on progress in the Border Television region, and in the Selkirk area in particular. We welcome the work that the Scottish Consumer Council has carried out, such as the digital diary project, which has greatly added to our understanding of what is going on there. Over the next half hour—or however long you wish—we will demonstrate that we are addressing the issues, concerns and questions that Trisha McAuley raised in her presentation.

We are confident that the Selkirk transmitter group switchover is on track and on time. In many ways, awareness and understanding of switchover in the area are higher than they were in Whitehaven and the surrounding Copeland area at the same stage.

Last, but not least, both the help scheme and Digital UK have a particular care and concern for the needs of not only those who are eligible for the help scheme, but those who are on the edges of the scheme and the wider general public who may require and request more information about, and more support in, handling the switchover process. We are alert to that, and over the next six months, as we ramp up to switchover on 6 and 20 November, you will see us responding to the points that the Scottish Consumer Council and others have raised.

**The Convener:** Thank you for those comments.

Trisha McAuley mentioned the concern surrounding the time period for the switchover. Can you reassure her and the committee that the situation is in hand, and that it does not perhaps deserve the concern that she has raised?

**Simon Crine:** It is perfectly proper to ask why we have shortened the switchover period from four weeks to two weeks for this project. The short answer is that views in Whitehaven were divided over the benefits and disbenefits of a four-week switchover. Many consumers would rather have switched all on one day, but some consumers—they tended to be those who were older and more vulnerable—appreciated having that switchover period in which to get themselves ready and make their own arrangements. It also provided time for the help scheme to do the effective job that it did in Whitehaven.

In the case of the Selkirk transmitter area, we weighed up the evidence and came to the conclusion that a two-week switchover would be appropriate and manageable. That decision was taken jointly by Digital UK and the help scheme, and supported by our other partners in the switchover project. It is probably worth saying to you and to Trisha McAuley that that does not set a precedent for the future. We will consider each switchover on its merits: we will assess the possible challenges in an area and then decide on an appropriate switchover period. At this moment in time, we are absolutely confident that we have made the right decision and that we and the help scheme will deliver all that we need to deliver over a two-stage switchover with a two-week interval.

**The Convener:** You suggested that there was divided opinion on the first switchover in Whitehaven, which influenced the timing. Has public opinion solidified around the all-in-one switchover?

**Simon Crine:** The issue is not susceptible to infinite consumer and market research; it is something that we have to test in the fire of particular switchovers. As the committee knows, the UK will, over the next four years, go through something like 70 transmitter group switchovers that will vary in size from the Selkirk project to projects involving millions of households at the same time.

I have no doubt that, over the next 18 months or so, we will come to a settled view about the best timescale for switchover. Four weeks worked very well in Whitehaven, where there was a mix of views; the timescale in Selkirk is two weeks, and we will listen closely to what viewers and consumers in Selkirk have to say and consult our colleagues before we go on to make decisions about future switchover timetables.

**The Convener:** You said that you welcomed the Scottish Consumer Council's work, such as the digital diary project and the mystery shopper exercises. Those perhaps raised quite significant problems. Have you taken that into account? What work is taking place with retailers to ensure that a tick in the box by them equals knowledge, training and the giving out of appropriate advice to consumers?

10:30

**Simon Crine:** Two things need to be gently separated in the Scottish Consumer Council's submission to the committee. The first is the situation in the Selkirk transmitter group area. The second is the broader situation facing retailers across Scotland. In the case of the Selkirk transmitter group area, there is a limited number of retailers. I can say that, with the support of our manager on the ground, John Askew, we and our retailing colleagues are having and will maintain a dialogue right through the programme until the switchover date.

The consumer research that was brought to you today ranges wider than that. The mystery shopping was carried out not just in the Border area but throughout Scotland. The short answer is that, with our partners in the retail trade—and I stress that they are partners in this enterprise—we recognise that there is more to do. They have to do more, and we have to do more to support them as they educate their staff about exactly what switchover means and what the options are for consumers. Staff will then be able to point consumers in the right direction even if they are not able to answer all their questions.

I could list all the things that we have done, such as the regular contacts that we have made with retailers and the introduction of the digital tick logo on all equipment that is ready for the switchover, but the most important thing that we have done in recent months is that we have committed ourselves to creating a retail workforce who will go out and about and assist retailers in training their staff. They will keep an eye on the information that is provided at the point of sale and monitor the balance of analogue and digital equipment that is on sale. Since we last reported, we have decided that the challenge before us requires the devotion of a greater resource, and we are in the process of recruiting the retail workforce.

**David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con):** When I was looking at the list of organisations that are collaborating on the project, I did not see any reference to TV Licensing. I appreciate that pensioners have free TV licences, but one would have thought that TV Licensing would be an appropriate source of information for many other customers. Is that office involved as a

stakeholder and in informing people about the switchover?

**Wilf White (Digital Switchover Help Scheme Ltd):** Contacts are made with TV Licensing. I work for the BBC as well as for the Digital Switchover Help Scheme, and we have made sure that TV Licensing and the Digital Switchover Help Scheme will work closely together as we proceed towards switchover.

**David McLetchie:** When people get reminders about their TV licence, are they being provided with information about the digital switchover?

**Wilf White:** I think that we can do that. We have not done that so far, but it is under discussion.

**David McLetchie:** When we get to the stage when millions of people are being switched over, as opposed to a relatively small number in a rural area, that approach might provide another string to the public information bow.

**Wilf White:** Yes. That is a very good idea.

**David McLetchie:** As I understand it, 82 per cent of homes in the Border switchover area already have digital television, although that might not extend to all televisions in each household. Is the essential issue the 18 per cent of households that do not have digital television? The other 82 per cent are already digital ready.

**Simon Crine:** Our primary duty is to ensure that everybody knows when the day of switchover is coming and roughly what they have to do to convert their first television set. We are also keen to provide clear information about how people can switch over all the televisions in their household. That is why we reported to you in our written evidence that, in more than half the homes in the Selkirk transmitter group area, people have already converted all their televisions.

**David McLetchie:** Right, but essentially the focus is on the 18 per cent that do not have digital television. We are talking about 18,000 households.

**Simon Crine:** Yes. That is broadly correct.

**David McLetchie:** Mr Tolson raised the two-tier delivery of freesat channels. He said that some areas of the Borders will get only 20 channels—although that is 20 more than they get at present—whereas others will get the full 40 channels. Was that two-tier split also prevalent in the pilot area, or did people get the full 40 channels?

**Simon Crine:** In the Whitehaven transmitter group area, people now have 20 and not 40 channels.

**David McLetchie:** Is that the result of technical issues, given that the same relay-type transmitters are prevalent in the Borders?

**Simon Crine:** Yes, but the key point to register with the committee is that those 20 television channels are the most-watched television channels in this country. By and large, they are the channels that the public service broadcasters—BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5 and Teletext—provide. Those 20 channels are the core of television watching. We regard that as a good offer.

Of course, people who are unable to get the 40 channels in that way have other ways to get multi-channel television. It is important also for the committee to register that we live in a world where getting television through an aerial is only one, albeit important, means of receiving television; there are now others. Indeed, in the past two weeks, the freesat launch has been announced. Freesat and freesat from Sky both offer the same subscription service with many more than 40 channels. People can access 200 or 400 channels, depending on their taste.

**David McLetchie:** And time.

**Patricia Ferguson:** As you probably heard, I explored with Trisha McAuley whether retailers are giving customers all the information that they need. She made the interesting point that people in the Borders neither wish nor have the opportunity to shop for television equipment in the Borders area and that many will come to Edinburgh or go to Carlisle to do that.

Given the Copeland project, we would expect retailers in Carlisle to be fairly familiar with the products. Has your work extended into Edinburgh and the surrounding area where people in the Borders are most likely to shop?

**Simon Crine:** I will ask Paul Hughes, our Scotland manager, to respond.

**Paul Hughes (Digital UK):** We have engaged with the industry, including the multiples—the big stores such as Comet and Currys—and the independents. We are in the process of organising a series of training days that will be focused on stores in the south of Edinburgh. As Simon Crine mentioned, we will have a retail support person who will deal with each ITV franchise area. They will go around each area, training store staff.

In terms of stores in the STV central area, the picture at the moment is variable. That said, there is in-store branding on display. Members may have seen the big pink wall in most multiples on which a range of information is displayed. We are still a long way from the switchover in the STV central and north areas. The picture is encouraging.

**Patricia Ferguson:** Do you have coverage in supermarkets, too?

**Paul Hughes:** Yes. We are engaging with the supermarkets. Obviously, that is a different form of retail—one that we call unassisted.

**Patricia Ferguson:** In its submission, the Scottish Consumer Council said that direct mailings to people on their possible qualification for the help scheme were going out only five months ahead of time, instead of the planned eight months. Why is that? Have you done any work to ensure that people can access the help scheme in time?

**Wilf White:** Yes. There has been a little confusion over the five-month and eight-month periods. The eight-month period is the qualification period during which, if someone is receiving the right benefits or if they reach the age of 75, they become eligible. It was never the plan to send out option packs at the beginning of that period. In order to know exactly who in each area is eligible, we need first to ensure that we have all the data from the Department for Work and Pensions and other authorities.

One of our great fears in running the help scheme is that we will leave people behind or send packs to people who are not eligible. We have to get things absolutely right. We now have the data and we are sorting them out. We know exactly how many people in the Border TV area are eligible according to those data, and we are preparing the option packs, which will be out before the end of the month. That will give people plenty of time. The full eight months was not available in Copeland, but no one was left behind. I shall not rest unless we achieve the same thing in Border. My objective is to ensure that no eligible person is without television. I think that we have enough time to reach them in the five months.

**Patricia Ferguson:** I realise that your introductory leaflets give information and that there is a help scheme, but I am concerned that people who are eligible for the scheme will have already done something to ensure that they can receive television after switchover. I wonder whether enough information has been available in the period between the issue of the initial information and the issue of the help scheme packs to ensure that people understand that they can wait, that the help scheme is coming and that they will still have enough time to make whatever changes are required.

**Wilf White:** That is an important point. People are always free to make their own arrangements. In Copeland, the vast majority of people had already done so. In the Border TV area, 65 per cent of those aged over 75 and 81 per cent of the severely disabled have already switched to digital television, so the majority of people have made the switch without the help scheme. However, we want to assure people in those groups that they

can wait and that help will come if they do not want to switch to digital television themselves.

**Patricia Ferguson:** I understand that it is a plus from your point of view if people make their own arrangements rather than wait but I am concerned that people are making those arrangements who can ill afford to do so. They might be sacrificing something else in their lives because their television is so valuable to them. How can we ensure that people do not get into that situation?

**Wilf White:** It is not a plus from my point of view if people make their own arrangements. We are completely neutral. We are here to help everyone who is eligible for our help. If they choose not to take it, that is a matter for them, but we certainly do not want to discourage anyone from waiting for help.

We are reassuring people that help is on its way. Now that the scheme is up and running nationally, we will be doing more to raise awareness of it. Some of you might have seen the adverts that began this week in the local and regional press. Our local radio adverts will begin next week, and we will have captions on television screens that tell people, "Help is here. Call this number and you'll find out whether you're eligible."

We faced two difficulties. First, we did not want to raise awareness of the scheme too early because we did not want people to phone in and ask whether they were eligible before we had the data. If they had done so, we would have been unable to tell them the answer. We need to give people a clear answer to their clear question.

Secondly, we did not want a lot of people to start asking for help who live well outside the regions that are switching. In Copeland, we had people asking for help who lived in Brighton. We did all that we could to tell people that they were eligible for help only if they lived in Copeland. We do not want to create more confusion for vulnerable people who, as the Scottish Consumer Council reminded us, find the switchover rather threatening. We want to give people clear messages about who is eligible and when. We want to give them a straight answer when they phone us to ask, "Can I get help now?" We want to answer, "Yes."

**The Convener:** How many people are eligible in the Borders? How many do you estimate are eligible in Scotland? What is the value of the scheme to those people?

**Wilf White:** DWP's data state, precisely, that 102,721 people are potentially eligible for help in Border. However, we know that some people who meet the criteria are not included in DWP's data. When we introduced free TV licences for the over-75s, we found that some people were not included in the database because they had never

developed any pension entitlement or claimed benefits. We have to ensure that we reach those people as well.

I do not have an equally precise number for the whole of Scotland because, as Paul Hughes said—

**The Convener:** It is 102,000 in the Borders.

**Kenneth Gibson:** That is the entire population of the Borders.

10:45

**Wilf White:** That figure is for the Border TV region. Sorry—the ambiguity of the term “Borders” is the problem. I am talking about the Border TV area. The figure for those affected by the Selkirk transmitter is 18,309.

I do not have an equally precise number for Scotland because, as Paul Hughes said, the switchover for STV central and STV north is quite a long way away, and people's eligibility will change as time goes by. We do not yet have the data, but I imagine that the proportion would be reasonably similar to that in the Border TV region. In that region, there are 322,000 homes and 103,000 people who are eligible for help, so broadly speaking the proportion is a third.

**The Convener:** Thank you.

**Jim Tolson:** Despite some of this morning's evidence, I remain extremely concerned about a two-tier digital television system in the Borders, and I will pursue some of the points that I have already raised with Trish McAuley.

It is a great concern that some 20 to 30 per cent of customers in the Border area will receive a much lesser service than other customers in that area. Although Mr McLetchie ably steered Simon Crine towards focusing on the fact that the number is small, I suggest that you have to provide, as much as is reasonably practicable, a service that is equal for all and gives consumers real choice.

Many consumers who currently have a digital service got it so that they could have a choice. However, they then find that, whether they have 200 to 300 channels or 40 to 60 channels, they restrict themselves to the channels that they watch most. When the new service comes on board, that may provide choice, even if it involves a small outlay that costs less than a monthly subscription to one of the other digital services on the market. That choice is extremely important for all consumers, not just the 20 or 30 per cent who do not currently receive a digital service.

We did not get an answer to the technical questions from the previous witness, so I hope that you can help me out. What practical action can be taken to ensure that people who are on the

relay transmitters have the option of having their service boosted? How can we help them, particularly in the five or six months that we have left until the switchover, to make that change?

Furthermore, many consumers who have digital and analogue services will be using old DVD and video recording equipment. Is that equipment compatible with the new system? There seems to be some confusion about that.

I have another quick question. My Westminster colleague, Mike Moore, operates the Borders digital forum. Has Digital UK had any discussions with the digital forum? If so, what successes have come from that?

**Simon Crine:** I will take those questions in reverse order.

John Askew and I attended the most recent meeting of the Borders digital forum, and we greatly welcome its contribution to the dialogue on switchover. Every such forum helps us to get the message out to people that the switchover is coming and to ensure that they know where to get good, safe information about it—that includes information not only from retailers but from Digital UK and the help scheme.

You are right that there is an issue with recording equipment, but we and, indeed, consumers are addressing it. The truth is that the market is driving the changes quickly. People are moving towards personal video recorders—hard-disk recorders that, at a press of a button, record whatever programme people want—and are deciding that they would prefer to record programmes in that way in the future.

At Digital UK, we will ensure over the next five months that viewers in the Selkirk transmitter group area understand the strengths and weaknesses of their current recording systems and the problems that there will be, particularly for those who record one programme using an old video cassette recorder while watching another. We will make absolutely sure that people will know about that—indeed, our TV advertising and other information materials in the Selkirk transmitter group area already do that. However, we recognise that that is a sticky problem for some viewers, and we are concerned to address it.

I am afraid that I can reassure you less on the question of the relays. You summarise the situation correctly. Those who get their signal from the main transmitter at Selkirk will get up to 40 channels; those who get their signal from one of the relays—which are usually there for good geographical reasons, because the signal will not pass in any other way—will get the 20 most popular television channels that are run by the public service broadcasters. It is worth saying that the driving force behind the roll-out of the

switchover was to get public service broadcasting out across the country.

If you were to ask me why we cannot roll out all the channels to all the relays, my short answer would be that it is not within the power of Digital UK or the broadcasters to do that. It is for the commercial multiplex operators—forgive the jargon—to decide how far they can roll out the services that they have to offer. One should not forget that, throughout the country, 90 per cent of the population will enjoy up to 40 channels.

**Jim Tolson:** That was a helpful answer, in that it provides a degree of clarification. You are saying that the operators decide how many channels people will get from the relays or the main stations. Is there any technical reason why the relay transmitters cannot be upgraded to full transmitters or cannot carry the full signal? If there is a technical reason why that cannot be done—for example, if making that change would have a cost implication—I will understand that. However, I seek clarification on that.

You almost gave me the full explanation when I talked about the existing recording equipment that people have. With the current analogue system, a customer can record only the channel that they are watching. With the changeover to the digital system, will they have the same recording capacity? Other customers require to watch one channel while recording another, but that is a separate matter. Can you clarify that point, please?

**Simon Crine:** Let me bring John Askew in on the recording point.

**John Askew (Digital UK):** Yes, I can help with that. At present, a viewer who has an analogue television and an analogue video recorder can record independently. Both devices have tuners, so the viewer can record one programme and watch something else. What people are finding difficult is the idea that both of pieces of equipment will be plugged into one digital box and will share the signal, so they will be able to see only one programme at a time. It is possible to get digital boxes with two independent tuners, which overcomes the problem. Nevertheless, in the work that we are doing with people on the ground, that is the top issue that people raise and ask questions about. They do not understand that, at the moment, the television operates independently of the video recorder and that it would not do so if, in the future, it had to share the signal through the digital box.

**Jim Tolson:** Thanks for that clarification.

**Simon Crine:** On your point about roll-out, I am not a technical expert and I would have to consult much cleverer people than myself about that. My hunch is that there is no overwhelming technical

issue but that it is a matter for commercial decision making, taking into account the cost of rolling out the digital system to those remaining relays. It would be for those who know more about the technical matters that are involved to make that judgment.

**Jim Tolson:** I appreciate that, Mr Crine. That is perhaps an issue that I will investigate further outwith the committee.

**Kenneth Gibson:** Good morning, gentlemen. I thank Paul Hughes for taking the trouble to come all the way to my constituency office some weeks ago. I also attended your reception at Our Dynamic Earth and got a Digit AI, which my nine-year-old son sleeps with every night and is very fond of.

My question follows on from Jim Tolson's line of questioning. The argument in parts of my constituency is not about getting 20 to 40 channels; it is about getting any channels. The report that we received from the clerk says that, after switchover, about 1.5 per cent of households in Scotland—about 75,000 people—will not be able to get digital television. My concern is that we should be trying to achieve 100 per cent digital access.

Your written submission states that 78 per cent of people in Scotland already have digital equipment. However, the people in Largs and Skelmorlie, in my constituency, who have bought such equipment cannot get digital channels. What steps will be taken to ensure that people who have already made the changeover and have bought the equipment—DAB radios and digital televisions—can get any channels? I am sure that you will agree that it is unacceptable that people cannot do so.

**Paul Hughes:** A culture change is happening at the moment. We are moving away from the idea that television is available only through an aerial and offers only four or five channels. The post-switch figures are slightly better than the figures that you mentioned. The latest Office of Communications figures say that 98.9 per cent of the population will get three multiplexes after switchover. The rule of thumb is that anyone who receives analogue television at the moment will receive digital television after the switchover. Nobody in your patch will lose access to television as a result of the switchover.

I am happy to go to the communities that have never had television and show them the options that are available with digital television and work out the best options for them, whether it is Freeview, satellite subscription services or whatever.

**Kenneth Gibson:** What about people who have gone to the trouble of buying the equipment, but

will have to wait two or three years until we have the Scottish television switchover?

**Paul Hughes:** I suppose that the issue depends on how you look at it. They are the people who will benefit most from the project—the project is designed for them. There was an element of unfairness in the fact that only three quarters of the population could receive digital terrestrial television, commonly known as Freeview. I accept that the switchover affects people in that group differently, and that they cannot switch to Freeview at the moment. However, they will benefit the most from the switchover when it happens.

**Kenneth Gibson:** If I had bought the system, I would be pretty miffed at having to wait two years for the service when somebody a couple of miles up the road can get it just now. Surely, there must be a way of resolving the matter in the short to medium term, rather than making people wait two or three years to access something that should be available.

**Paul Hughes:** We are not in a position to change the 98.9 per cent figure to 100 per cent.

There are 14 main transmitters in Scotland that offer digital services at the moment. They serve roughly 82 per cent of the population. There are a further 211 relay transmitters that serve the rest of the population. That gives you an idea of the scale of the work that is taking place to provide as much terrestrial television as possible. With the advent of satellite in the 1980s, the Government said that it would no longer go down that road.

There is a difference between theoretical problems and the reality that one finds when one goes out in the field. The issues that you raise sound like they are big issues, but when one goes to such areas, one finds that people are pragmatic and are aware of the issues that they face—someone who lives in an area in which it is difficult to receive analogue or digital terrestrial television knows that that is the case before we turn up. However, we can help them to find ways of receiving digital television. The reality of the situation is less problematic than it might seem in theory.

**Kenneth Gibson:** I was surprised and pleased that such a high proportion of people were eligible for the help scheme. Earlier, when you were talking about helping folk around the edges, it seemed to me that you are being more flexible than you need to be if all you are doing is following the letter of the contract. How flexible are you? For example, if someone who is over 72 but not yet 75 comes to see you, do you approach that case in a different way?

**Wilf White:** We have to operate strictly in accordance with the eligibility criteria that are set for us by the Government. We cannot help your

theoretical 72-year-old except by referring them to Digital UK. I was talking about the fact that there are people in the population who are over 75 but who do not necessarily appear on the DWP database. We will be encouraging them to come forward, and we will try to help them as well.

We cannot help people who do not meet the criteria that the Government set. I emphasise the fact that the BBC did not set those criteria; we operate the scheme on behalf of the Government. Those who would like the eligibility criteria to be wider need to talk to the secretary of state, rather than me.

**Kenneth Gibson:** Can you tell us a bit more about the Digital Outreach scheme?

**Simon Crine:** The Scottish Consumer Council referred to our partnership with Digital Outreach, which is a consortium of four national charities, including Age Concern, Help the Aged and Community Service Volunteers. It covers the first four television regions in the UK to switch over, and its job, which has been started very effectively in the Selkirk transmitter group area, is to commission local charities to provide advice, information and assistance to those who might need extra help or have questions that are not answered by our literature.

The local partner in the Selkirk transmitter group area is The Bridge, which used to be the three councils of voluntary service that came together under one roof. It is the local co-ordinator of Digital Outreach's local activities in that area.

11:00

**The Convener:** On the help scheme, I am thinking about the deaf and loop systems and things like that. Is there any additional help for people with disabilities? Will loop systems be disrupted by the switchover?

**Paul Hughes:** We have already spoken to the cross-party group on deafness. We showed it the work that we had done by that point and that we have created films that use British sign language to communicate information about the switchover. The group's response was very positive.

**Bob Doris:** Could you tell us more about the Digital Outreach scheme and give an example of it in action? If there are Borders residents who use English as a second language, what kind of outreach work are you doing to assist and prepare them for the switchover?

**John Askew:** We have not done a great deal of work with people who have English as a second language. Not that many residents of the Scottish Borders present themselves as using English as a second language. However, all our material is available in other languages on request, and we

have been working with colleagues in the national health service and social work who can advise us on where we need to make such information available. We certainly want to ensure that we offer it wherever it is needed.

**Bob Doris:** That is important. The number of such people is small, so they might be even more excluded and least likely to ask specifically for more information. I am glad to hear that you are working on that.

I am also glad to hear that you are using existing networks of voluntary and community organisations, which is the right way to go. Those are the most trusted people in local communities. We heard from the Scottish Consumer Council that Digital Outreach might have been a bit tardy in setting up and becoming active in the Borders. What are your thoughts on that, particularly given that in other regions, including STV north, switchover will be coming online next year? Are you starting to work with the community and voluntary sector organisations in those areas so that they have the capability and resources to hit the ground running?

**Simon Crine:** The Bridge was contracted to start work on 6 May, which is six months before switchover in the Selkirk area, and it did so. It is early days at the moment, but we are content with the progress that it is making.

To make progress, The Bridge is doing two or three things. First, it has arranged a rolling programme of local meetings, presentations and briefings for the clients of the various local charities. Secondly, it is disseminating information and material to those who might use it directly and those who care for others who might need more information about the switchover. Thirdly, it is planning to form a network of what you might call drop-in centres in the Selkirk area on or around the two switchover dates. Therefore, someone who wants to get a little bit of information or reassurance at the time should be able to knock on the door of The Bridge or one of the other local charities and get that extra little bit of support.

**Bob Doris:** Have you contacted any voluntary sector organisations or charities in the STV area, where the switchover will potentially start late next year?

**Simon Crine:** Paul Hughes will say more about that, but the main thing to understand is that we have yet to put in place a similar partnership for STV central and north. The contacts were made by Paul Hughes's team. John Askew is itching to say something.

**John Askew:** I simply wanted to add that we have been working with the voluntary sector ahead of signing the formal Digital Outreach agreement. I have been in post for two years now

and I have a colleague, appointed last September, whose whole-time job is to work with the community in the Border area. We have been working with organisations such as The Bridge and Scottish Borders Elder Voice and have held whole rounds of meetings and drop-in sessions.

**Paul Hughes:** We are quite some way from that in the STV north and central areas, but one of our major areas of activity this year will be our large presence at the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations event, "The Gathering". We are also creating transmitter plans for each of the transmitter area groups, which will involve looking for organisations that might work in this field. Our engagement with the third sector is very much under way.

**Alasdair Allan:** You have given some information about the number of people in the Selkirk area who are eligible for the help scheme. What was the take-up of help in Cumbria? Are there any lessons that we can learn from that example?

**Wilf White:** Although the response from the Copeland area was lower than we had expected, I do not think that that necessarily sets a precedent. Copeland is a different case. For a start, it was always plagued by very poor analogue reception; in fact, we found that, because much of the area could receive only channels 1 to 4, more than 70 per cent of people in Copeland had already switched to Sky. You cannot move for Sky dishes in the streets of Whitehaven. The figure for the Border area is much lower, at around 44 per cent, so we expect there to be a higher take-up of help in that area.

**Alasdair Allan:** When, a while back, Simon Crine and Paul Hughes visited me in my constituency, we discussed the fact that, in certain parts of Scotland, there will be multiple cut-off dates. Perhaps my constituency is unusual in that it will have three different cut-off dates, but how are people in such communities being prepared for that?

**Paul Hughes:** As we said on our visit, the Western Isles is one of the more complicated areas, and communicating information about the multiple cut-off dates is one of the specific challenges that we face in creating area transmitter plans. I do not think that the problem is insurmountable; we simply need to find a form of words that explains a complicated situation in an easily digestible way. We do not have the ability—or, indeed, the wish—to reinvent the wheel; again, we will work with stakeholders such as yourself, the local MP, the local authority, the local media and groups in the community that can tell us the best way of going about this. In any case, much as the situation in the Western Isles is complicated, the fact that the area is neatly defined by a



boundary of water makes it easier to use local papers and radio stations, for example.

**Jim Tolson:** The first digital switchovers in the UK have taken place in predominantly rural areas, but your massive switchover programme covers the whole country. What assurances can you give the committee and the public that you will be able to cope with it and bring it in to timescale and to cost?

**Simon Crine:** That is the \$64,000 question and it will be answered only at the very end of the programme. At the moment, I believe that you should place your confidence in the plan that has been put together by Digital UK and the Digital Switchover Help Scheme. We have left no stone unturned in planning what needs to be done when for every switchover. In some ways, the switchover that has taken place in Whitehaven and the switchover to come in the Selkirk area are but a foretaste of a programme that, in 2009, will be relentless as one transmitter after another switches over. Indeed, in some cases, switchovers will overlap. Everything depends on the quality of the planning. Both organisations are ready for the programme.

**The Convener:** We are the Local Government and Communities Committee, so I have a question about the role of local government and housing associations in planning communal aerials. What work is being done with those groups? What impact—in cost, planning and inconvenience—will digital switchover have on councils and housing associations?

**Paul Hughes:** The answer to your question is complicated and lengthy. The quickest way for me to respond is to point out that we have just launched a new local government website and have sent a letter to all local authority chief executives and leaders in Scotland highlighting the website's existence. We will tour the country to meet each one of them and to highlight the resources that we have made available. The website's address is [www.digitaluk.co.uk/localgov](http://www.digitaluk.co.uk/localgov). It includes a checklist that indicates what the impact of switchover on each area of local government may be and how each local authority can best plan and work with Digital UK to ensure that it is prepared.

**The Convener:** What do you estimate the impact of switchover to be? To grab local authorities' attention, have you outlined the possible costs to them on your website?

**Paul Hughes:** We proceed on a case-by-case basis. Costs vary depending on the area of local authority work that is involved. One obvious area in which switchover will have an impact is housing. The first step that we advise local authorities to take is to assess what they need to do; some

authorities will find that they need to do more than others. Switchover affects any area that provides television as a service, including social work, schools and hospitals; everyone must prepare for it. On our local government website, there is a list as long as your arm that can help local authorities with the process. I assure any local authorities that are taking note of our evidence today that, if we have not been to see them in the past two weeks, we will definitely visit them in the next six to eight weeks.

**The Convener:** What level of planning is needed? Are you instigating that work? Are there good examples of local authorities in which audits are already under way?

**Paul Hughes:** Yes. Housing associations are also affected. North Glasgow Housing Association saw switchover coming a long way in advance and decided to invest heavily in ensuring that all the aerials in its housing stock were prepared for it. John Askew may want to comment on the situation in the Borders, but switchover for STV north and STV central is quite a long way off and there is time for us to work with all local authorities in those areas. Clearly, some people are leading the way—I can provide the committee with a list of examples.

**The Convener:** That would be useful.

**John Askew:** Scottish Borders is an interesting case, as it is one of the few places in which the transmitter area and the council area are virtually coterminous—only one local authority is involved. From the start of the process, Scottish Borders Council has been very supportive. Its chief executive took a report to his management team, to which we made a presentation. We went through the implications for the council, service by service. Colleagues in social work have been especially keen to help because of the impact of switchover on older and more vulnerable residents, who have been the focus of much of this morning's discussion. The housing sector is also well prepared. We are aware that 15 of the 18 housing associations that operate in the Scottish Borders have already made preparations; the other three are in a position to report that they will be ready in time.

**The Convener:** Is there any indication of the cost of switchover to housing associations in the Borders and to Scottish Borders Council? How has that cost been met? Has it been met solely from housing association and local authority budgets, or has support been made available to them?

**John Askew:** I am not aware of any direct financial support that is available from Digital UK. We provide support in kind and make our resources available, but the cost of converting

communal aerials, for example, has fallen largely on the housing sector.

**The Convener:** Do you have an indication of what the process has cost?

**John Askew:** I do not have detailed costs, but I suspect that they vary on a case-by-case basis, as Paul Hughes said.

**The Convener:** Thank you for your attendance this morning. Your evidence has been helpful and we appreciate it.

## Budget Adviser

11:15

**The Convener:** I refer members to the paper entitled, "Scrutiny of the budget process 2009-10: appointment of an adviser". As you recall, we agreed to recruit an adviser to assist with our consideration of the budget process in 2009-10. Do members agree to ask the Parliamentary Bureau to approve the recruitment of an adviser for up to 15 days?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** Are members content with the remit and person specification for the post, which are set out, along with the adviser's duties, in annex A to the paper?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**Johann Lamont:** Are we not able to be consistent and use the adviser that we have used before? Must we go through the whole process again?

**The Convener:** We must go through the selection process again.

**Johann Lamont:** That is a pity.

11:16

*Meeting continued in private until 12:27.*

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