



UP FOR THE CUP: DIGITAL RADIO SWITCH-ON FOR 1.8 MILLION LISTENERS

Today, on Valentine's Day at the National Radio Centre in Bletchley Park, Pete Winkelman, Chairman of MK Dons and David Pleat football broadcaster and ex-Luton Town manager, switched on the new local DAB digital radio transmitters for Herts, Beds and Bucks, meaning 1.8 million listeners in the area can receive local DAB stations for the first time. The largest local DAB switch-on in the UK, which was also attended by Iain Stewart MP, enables local listeners to listen to Heart, Capital FM, Gold, MK FM, Connect FM and BBC Three Counties Radio, and comes just two days before the historic FA Cup 6th round matches which will be broadcast on DAB digital radio.

Capital FM and MKFM are available for the first time in the area, and the reception of Gold will be much improved, as previously it has only been available on medium wave. This improvement in local digital coverage is part of a major Government and radio industry investment in building local digital radio coverage across the UK.

The switch-on was also marked by a unique collaboration between public and commercial broadcasters, as BBC Three Counties Radio, Heart, MKFM and Connect FM broadcast live from the National Radio Centre at Bletchley Park on Valentine's Day.

MK Dons' Chairman Pete Winkelman said: *"This is excellent news for radio and football lovers in the area who will now be able to enjoy coverage of the top local matches in digital quality sound for the first time."*

Ex-Luton Town Manager David Pleat said: *"The local 6th round FA Cup home ties for MK Dons and Luton Town are going to be absolute beltors and now fans will be able to tune in on DAB digital radio."*

Broadcast Minister Ed Vaizey said: *"Boosting local coverage for Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire means the excellent range of local DAB digital radio stations can be received by even more listeners, at home and in their car."*

Ford Ennals, CEO of Digital Radio UK, who hosted the event, said: *"This is a great Valentine's Day present for 1.8 million people and is the largest local DAB switch-on in the UK. Half of*

the homes in Hertfordshire,  Berkshire and Buckinghamshire already have a digital radio, but until now they have not been able receive their favourite local stations on DAB.”

The four new transmitters at Sandy Heath, Epping Green, Zouches Farm and Bow Brickhill take local digital radio coverage from zero to 67.7% of households, and bring local DAB digital radio to the three counties including Luton, Milton Keynes and Aylesbury for the first time. The transmitters at Sandy Heath, Zouches Farm and Bow Brickhill were switched on today, and Epping Green will follow in one week’s time. To receive the new services, listeners with digital radios may have to re-tune their sets – find out more at **getdigitalradio.com/retune**

Local road coverage is also improved, adding over 1,200 km of roads in the area to local DAB coverage for the first time, equivalent to 81.5% of major roads in the area. Digital radios are increasingly becoming available in cars and according to industry data one third of all new cars now has digital radio as standard. One of the major leaders of digital radio in car has been Luton-based firm Vauxhall who are now planning to fit all new Vauxhall models with digital radio, and are offering digital radio adapters for all existing cars via their franchise dealer network. BBC Three Counties Radio is running a special programme on DAB digital radio from the Vauxhall factory on the launch day, to cover the Vauxhall build progress.

Many listeners in these areas already have digital radios and listen to more than 20 national stations on digital radio, from commercial radio and the BBC, but until now they have been unable to listen to their favourite local radio stations on DAB. The importance of local radio stations to listeners has been shown in research carried out by the radio industry regulator, Ofcom. Listeners can check what stations they can receive at **getdigitalradio.com**

This switch-on comes as the Government has said they will make a decision on radio switchover later in 2013. This follows the completion of the successful digital TV switchover in the three counties area in 2011 (nationally in 2012). 42% of homes nationally have a DAB digital radio and digital radio sales reached the second highest level ever, with over 2 million



sets sold. According to GfK, a cumulative total of 16 million digital radio sets has been sold to date in the UK, including DAB radios and internet radios.

The radio industry communications campaign featuring digital radio evangelist D Love who encourages everyone to spread the love for digital radio this spring is currently on air on BBC TV, BBC radio and commercial radio.

Paul Eaton, Director of Digital Radio at Arqiva said: *"We're delighted to be able to bring these services to digital radio in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Research has shown how much people value their local radio stations, so we hope this will make a big difference to the digital radio listening experience in the county"*.

A spokesperson for Global Radio, owners of Heart, Capital FM and Gold, said: *"We are committed to extending digital coverage through local transmitters across the UK and today's switch on, which gives 1.8 million listeners access to our stations on DAB, is another important step for our industry."*

Laura Moss, Managing Editor of BBC Three Counties Radio, says: *"We are delighted that BBC Three Counties Radio will be available to listeners on DAB for the first time, bringing local news and stories to our listener with the digital benefits of easy tuning and scrolling information."*

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- Listeners may need to re-tune their digital radios to receive the new local stations. This can be done using the retune button or selecting retune in the menu. For more information go to www.getdigitalradio.com/retune
- Digital radio coverage is currently 94% for BBC national stations, 85% for national commercial stations, and 66% for local DAB coverage.
- 49.8% of homes in the three counties area have a DAB digital radio, compared to 42% of UK homes (source: Rajar Q4 2012)
- 35.6% of radio listening in the three counties area is to digital platforms, compared with the UK figure of 33% (source: Rajar Q4 2012)
- One third (33.3%) of all new cars has digital radio as standard (source: CAP/SMMT Q4 2012)
- The benefits of digital radio include extra station choice, easy tuning, track and artist listings, and clear digital-quality sound.
- Please see map attached outlining approximate local DAB coverage areas.
- Listeners can find out which stations they can get at their address by using the predictive postcode checker at www.getdigitalradio.com



ABOUT DIGITAL RADIO UK

Digital Radio UK works with Government, broadcasters, manufacturers, retailers, and a wide range of stakeholders to accelerate digital listening, to enable the expansion of the digital radio platform, and to ensure that industry meets the consumer-led criteria to be achieved for a proposed radio switchover. Digital Radio UK's Board comprises representatives from the BBC, RadioCentre, Arqiva, Global Radio, Bauer Media, Real and Smooth Ltd. and Absolute Radio, together with Intellect and the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL RADIO CENTRE

The National Radio Centre is a showcase for radio communications technology - a technology powering the 21st century economy. The centre, based at Bletchley Park, provides the opportunity to get "up close and personal" with the history and technology of radio communications. From the first inventors in the late 19th century through to future radio developments, visitors will find films, interactive displays, hands on experiments and even the opportunity to "go on air" in our state of the art amateur radio station. The National Radio Centre was opened by Broadcast Minister Ed Vaizey in 2012.

For further information

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B B C THREE COUNTIES

heart

gold
AM • ONLINE • DIGITAL

**95-106
CAPITAL
FM**

connectfm

MKFM
DIGITAL RADIO



IMAGES FROM EVENT WILL BE PROVIDED BY 9.30AM ON 14 FEBRUARY