

Mobile TV trial goes live in UK

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In a UK first, EastEnders, Coronation Street, CSI and Lost are just some of the TV programmes up to 400 O2 customers, living and working in Oxford, will be able to watch live on an advanced mobile phone from next week.

O2 and Arqiva (previously known as NTL Broadcast) have teamed up with Nokia as well as the leading terrestrial and satellite broadcasters to kick-off the UK's first trial of full multi-channel mobile TV. 16 channels are being offered to O2 customers, including BBC ONE, BBC TWO, BBC News 24, ITV 1, ITV 2, Channel 4 and Five, which will provide a core of mainstream channels coupled with programmes from British Eurosport, Cartoon Network, CNN, Discovery Channel, MTV, ShortsTV, Sky News, Sky Sports News and Sky Travel.

Customers will be able to select their favourite programme from an on-screen service guide, search for specific items as well as set their handset to alert them when a show starts. The trial will run for up to six months and is designed to test and showcase the televisual capabilities of the next generation mobile services. It will look at how people choose to catch up on their favourite TV shows, how they watch the latest music videos and keep up to date with the news and sport when on the move, and provide an understanding of how much customers are willing to pay for the service.

The service is based on the new DVB-H (digital video broadcasting - handheld) transmission technology and works by beaming a signal to a digital TV receiver, which is attached to Nokia's 7710 smartphone, transforming it into a portable TV. DVB-H is ideally suited to sending high-quality, digital TV pictures from a single source to multiple users in a way that complements the one-to-one video streaming which is already possible via today's GPRS and 3G mobile data networks.

Dave Williams, O2's chief technology officer, said: "Increasingly, new forms of content are making their way onto mobile devices - music, in particular,

is already booming - and the latest buzz is about television. There will be many millions of mobile TV viewers worldwide by 2010.

"As an emerging industry, mobile TV will require a willingness of operators, regulators, broadcasters and handset suppliers to strike new deals. Regulators need to licence new spectrum, which will allow global economies to exist, broadcasters and publishers will need to tackle digital rights issues and operators develop workable revenue sharing partnerships. By establishing relationships through activities such as this, we hope that potential challenges will be minimised and mobile TV becomes a commercial reality sooner than is currently possible."

Hyacinth Nwana, Arqiva's managing director, mobile media solutions, commented: "We've pulled together an extremely strong and varied 16-channel line-up, reflecting the range of content that our original research identified as desirable for a mobile television service. In Europe all evidence points to mobile TV being mass market. Oxford will address the critical success factors such as scalability, consumer experience, content mix and consumer choice."

Mark Selby, Nokia's Vice President, Sales, Multimedia, added: "The Oxford trial is an important step in the roll out of mobile broadcast TV, building on the recent successful trial in Helsinki, Finland. Consumer reaction and usage patterns will help the broadcast and mobile industries understand what content viewers want to see on this exciting new technology. The Oxford trial will add valuable new research and it will be followed by multiple trials in Europe, Asia and America. Nokia is pleased to be working with O2, Arqiva and the many content producers participating in this trial."

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