

Reference: 01700337

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

13 November 2023

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information concerning digital terrestrial TV coverage of TG4 and RTE channels in Northern Ireland. This request was received on 16 October 2023 and we have considered it under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Your request

“Information sought:

(1) Records created after 1 January 2018 relating to digital terrestrial TV coverage of TG4 and RTE channels [TG4, RTE 1, RTE 2] in Northern Ireland, or, in the alternative a current map showing coverage and an % estimate of households covered in N Ireland.

Format in which information is sought

By email, either directly in the body of the email or as an attachment in any standard format eg xls,xlsx,doc, docx, pdf, rtf, txt

Any other information

I have obtained the attached map which shows coverage of the three Irish TV channels, TG4, RTE 1 and RTE 2 across Northern Ireland in 2012; there were, at that time three, transmitters [Black Mountain, Carnmoney Hill and Brougher Mountain] which specifically transmitted the three channels. I understand that, in 2018-2020, five additional transmitters were established in Armagh city, Whitehead town north of Belfast, Divis in west Belfast city, Newcastle town in county Down and Strabane in county Tyrone. Coverage was estimated at 94% of NI households in 2012. I am trying to obtain a current map of coverage, akin to the 2012 map, and to get an % estimate of NI households which can presently receive the three channels through Freeview provided by the NI Mux or from the Saorview overspill.”

Our response

We have searched our records and have identified some information relevant to your question. The data that we hold is in the form of a map that I explain below.

Work carried out in 2017-2019 that was planning for some changes to spectrum use in the UK, Republic of Ireland and Europe (called 700 MHz band clearance) estimated that coverage of the

TG4, RTE1 and RTE 2 services was 94% of households taking into account coverage provided by the three transmitters in Northern Ireland and coverage from transmitters in the Republic of Ireland combined. The changes to the spectrum use involved making changes to the three transmitters, and may have led to a slight reduction in coverage. To maintain coverage, five smaller additional transmitters (at Armagh, Divis, Newcastle, Strabane and Whitehead) were added to supplement the original three at Black Mountain, Brougher Mountain and Carnmoney Hill. I have attached a map in Document 1 taken from a planning document from that time that shows the current predicted combined coverage. The latest estimate is that combined coverage of the services you have enquired about remains at 94% of households in Northern Ireland.

If you have any further queries, then please send them to information.requests@ofcom.org.uk quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

Information Requests

If you are unhappy with the response you have received in relation to your request for information and/or consider that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you ask us for an internal review of our decision, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom.

The following outcomes are possible:

- the original decision is upheld; or
- the original decision is reversed or modified.

Timing

If you wish to exercise your right to an internal review **you should contact us within two months of the date of this letter**. There is no statutory deadline for responding to internal reviews and it will depend upon the complexity of the case. However, we aim to conclude all such reviews within 20 working days, and up to 40 working days in exceptional cases. We will keep you informed of the progress of any such review. If you wish to request an internal review, you should contact information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Further information about this, and the internal review process can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office [here](#). Alternatively, the Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF